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**Globalized Garment Systems: Theories on the Rana Plaza Disaster
and Possible Localist Responses**

by

Elizabeth A. Evans

Accepted in Partial Completion of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Science

Kathleen L. Kitto, Dean of the Graduate School

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MASTER'S THESIS

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Elizabeth A. Evans

5.12.2016

**Globalized Garment Systems: Theories on the Rana Plaza Disaster
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A Thesis
Presented to
The Faculty of
Western Washington University

In Partial Fulfillment
Of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Science

by
Elizabeth Evans
May 2016

Abstract

Since 2005, more than 1,300 people in Bangladesh – the majority women – have died, while producing apparel for Western, especially United States, markets. Today, the US imports 97.5 percent of its apparel, mostly from developing countries such as Bangladesh. However, such import reliance was not always so. By examining past and present garment systems in the United States, my thesis seeks to address injustice in globalized garment systems, and suggest new directions for the future. The Rana Plaza factory collapse disaster thus is presented as a case study of injustice in globalized garment systems. In this thesis, I hypothesize that globalized garment systems stand to benefit from a critical examination using a lens of localism. Drawing from local foods research as an example of academic and cultural convergence towards improved justice, I identify critical themes from localism in foods, and apply them to globalized garment systems.

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Explication and Definition of Important Terms

Injustice – For the purposes of this thesis, I use “injustice” in terms of unfair labor conditions endemic to garment factories worldwide. Injustice, however, is not synonymous with unfairness in that injustice includes ideas around responsibilities (usually lacking) of the state towards its citizens. In the modern era of globalization, as state sovereignty is supplanted by supranational trade agreements such as NAFTA, justice towards garment workers has become a global concern. Young (2004) focuses specifically on issues of injustice in globalized garment production. Young’s work asserts that governments, supranational trade bodies, factory owners, affluent garment brands, and consumers all share collective responsibility for injustice in garment factories.

Unfair conditions endemic to garment factory labor include:

- Child (younger than 18 years of age) labor
- Wages paid less than mandated minimum wage for a state/country
- Withheld wages
- Working hours in excess of 12 hours a day
- One or no days off work per week
- Unsafe factory conditions related to fire hazard
- Improper ventilation
- Unsanitary bathroom facilities
- No meal breaks
- Forced/coerced overtime
- Harassment and threats
- Physical and sexual violence
- Structural failures leading to building collapse

Throughout the globalized garment industry, the majority of the garment factory workforce is comprised of women. Young suggests factory owners prefer women workers because they are less likely (as a result of local custom) to organize and voice demands for improved labor conditions. Young points to this gendered injustice as a failure of collective responsibilities to protect women from exploitative labor conditions.

System – Throughout my thesis I refer to a globalized garment “system.” For example, Chapter Three includes a discussion of the concept of globalization with specific attention to garment production. For ideas on systems thinking, I draw upon Meadows and Wright’s (2009) theories to further an understanding of globalized garment systems. Broadly speaking, Meadows and Wright define systems as a set of interrelated parts characterized by particular patterns of behavior. Such patterns of behavior are directed by the dynamic interrelationships themselves, and can only be influenced (and not caused) by forces outside of the system. To ground abstract systems thinking in my thesis, I suggest that garment systems are product of the interrelationships among:

- Raw material producers such as cotton farmers
- Textile and garment factory owners
- Textile and garment factory workers
- Transnational corporate retail brands
- Brokers and agents between each of the above
- Consumers

Meadows and Wright’s view of systems holds that systems overlap and influence each other as well. For instance, the sociopolitical system (such as labor laws) of a region influences the behavior of the garment system (such as factory conditions) of that region. The globalized garment system is the particular set of behaviors resulting from social (such as activist movements), political (such as strong or weak environmental or labor protections), economic (such as trade policies), and ecological (such as climate change), influences on the interrelationships among parts and actors of the globalized garment system.

Garment – I primarily use the word, “garment,” to mean the articles of clothing made from a variety of textiles, fabrics, and other materials. “Clothes” and “clothing” is sometimes used interchangeably with “garment” or “garments,”

Apparel – In the thesis, I sometimes use the terms “apparel” or “apparel” industry. Apparel is a somewhat more modern term, which includes garments, footwear, and accessories such as hats. “Apparel industry” and “garment industry” is used to refer to the production and retailing activities thereof. Industry publications from the United States tend to use “apparel” whereas industry publications in Bangladesh tend to use “garment/garments.” In this thesis, I primarily use “garment/garments” unless referring to a source where “apparel” is used.

Textile – “Textile” appears in some sections of this thesis, and I use it to mean a material, which is usually knit or woven from raw natural fibers such as: cotton, silk, wool, flax linen, hemp, bamboo, and eucalyptus or synthetics such as: nylon, polyester, acrylic, spandex, and lycra.

Fabric – “Fabric” is a subset of textile, most commonly used in reference to textiles intended for personal (such as for garments) or home (such as upholstery) use.

Chapter 1

Introduction

Prior to the twentieth century, the procurement of garments for the American working and middle classes was a major household economic activity – an investment of time, effort, and money. (Dublin 1993; Cline 2012) Such procurement would most often fall to the women and girl children of the home. (Dublin 1993) If a garment was not handmade in the home, it usually came from a neighborhood dressmaker or tailor. (Whitaker 2006; Yurchisin and Johnson 2010) Until very recently, disposing of a garment before it was worn to rags was unthinkable, in part due to the investment of time and money. (Fletcher 2010; Cline 2012)

The onset of globalization completely reconstructed the landscape of garment provisioning for the average American consumer. (Yurchisin and Johnson 2010) In today's age of neoliberal capitalism and sweatshop-style clothes manufacturing, both the inherent value of garments – and the price – have been reduced considerably. (Cline 2012)

A critique of this modern-day situation in response to an industrialized food system has been evident for decades with food localism. I ask in this thesis, why not a localist response to an industrialized garment system?

Fletcher (2010) draws comparison to fast fashion (a concept explored in greater detail in Chapter 2) with fast food. In both the food and garment industries, fast is characterized by mass production and consumption, low quality goods, and excessive waste. (Fletcher 2010) In

referring to Fletcher's comparison of the food and fashion industries, I aim to discern ways forward from injustice in the apparel industry by drawing upon the strengths of local food systems in addressing some of the problems in quality and fair labor practices in industrialized foods.

Garments occupy a greyspace within the hierarchy of material human need; we are not biologically bound to garments in the way we demand air, water, and food. However, there is a quotidian necessity for clothing, which differs from that of the other manufactured goods of daily survival. A body could survive without a vehicle, a house, a cellphone. Such a person is likely, however, to wear clothing day in and day out. My research and dedication in the examination of garment production through the lens of sustainability has impelled a tremendous amount of thought as to the *why* or more accurately *why not* of more sustainable garment manufacturing. Why not similar justice concerns and conversation surrounding garment production from academics, policymakers, and consumers? I offer that it is the intersection of said greyspace, and the ubiquity of cheap clothing in our culture, which serve to diminish the importance of clothing as an object of sustainability practices and localist research and thought. My thesis has the following premises:

- Garments are a need un-compelled by biological urgency – in instances of threat/hazard/disaster, garment relief, short of blankets, is often overlooked by researchers of resilience in favor of the immediate needs of food and water.

- Garments are experienced as ubiquitously available and relatively long lasting – we readily purchase garments from various outlets, and that item remains available as needed, as opposed to food or water, which is consumed immediately.
- Garments are currently the provenance of fashion in our modern cultural experience – and thereby a disinterest in fashion results in a dismissal of garments from academic or other critical consideration.

The following is my hypothesis: Garments are produced through a multi-modal and abstruse manufacturing process – and the obscured nature of the sources of our garments make it difficult to relate to and imagine them as local. My thesis uses a feminist political economy approach to examine the reason for and aftermath of a globalized garment industry – as well as the presence or absence of relevant localist analyses.

Since 2005, more than 1,300 people – the majority of these women – have died in Bangladesh as a matter of course in garment factory disasters while producing garments for Western markets. Globalized garment systems have mapped a geography of concern – and the Bangladesh industrial disasters exemplify the current crisis of loss of life in factory disasters. Yet such a crisis state is lamentably a byproduct of normalized contemporary garment provisioning in the United States. I aim to understand how this status quo – the deaths of poor women in the developing world working to produce cheap garments for Western markets – came to be, and what can be done to prevent future harm. A feminist political economy approach guides my interpretation of the reason for and aftermath of a globalized garment industry. Further, by exploring and analyzing salient themes of localism in academic discussions and cultural

practices, my work intends to span the conceptual distance between interest in “locally” grown food and concerns about far-flung garment production, especially in Bangladesh. Questions I ask include, what current efforts towards establishing a local garment system exist in the United States? Do they detract from current discourse of local foods or not, and why?

In short, many parallels exist between the academic and cultural call for local foods and the need for locally-sourced garments when both are viewed as an attempt at increased social and environmental justice and sustainability. The first chapter of my thesis is focused on exploring these parallels to extract salient notes and imperatives for a potential local garment movement.

I believe that local clothing as a response to a globalized garment production system stands to benefit from the existing body of literature on local food systems. To support this, my research also examines contemporary modes of garment provisioning through a lens of localism, with the aim of informing and developing an understanding of a more socially just and sustainable garment system. In terms of the current state of garment provisioning in the United States (US), what is at stake is nothing less than the health and wellbeing of some of the world’s most disadvantaged people.

The second chapter of my thesis is a brief examination of the history of garment and textile production and consumption in the United States. This section aims to guide an understanding as to the events of the past, which coalesced into the present day garment provisioning system of the United States.

The third chapter of my thesis explores feminist theories of globalism and feminist political economy. Because the overwhelming majority of garment factory workers are women in both nineteenth century US, as well as modern day Bangladesh and worldwide, feminist perspectives of global economic processes are important to understanding gender disparity in globalized garment systems.

The fourth chapter of my thesis presents a case study of the Rana Plaza factory collapse disaster on April 24, 2013. On that terrible day, 1,134 people were killed as they worked in the garment factories producing garments for US, European, and Japanese firms. The unprecedented scale of this disaster warrants serious critique. However, the case study of Rana Plaza also provides insight into the cultural, academic, and governmental response needed to repair and move away from the injustices endemic to global garment systems.

Chapter Five presents selected academic and cultural efforts towards greater justice in global garment systems. This section of my thesis highlights the activism of companies, citizens, and academics working to reconstruct global garment systems with increased justice. It is this important work I hope to strengthen as a result of my thesis research. Chapter Six is focused on the findings of my research, as well as providing a concluding statement.

Selective Localism— Local Foods in Geographic Literature

Local foods, as an idea framed within the body of geographic literature, is most often presented as an object of discursive activism. By definition, local foods (as an *au courant* movement in the US), and the research therewith, is a response to a dominant paradigm, that of a

globalized industrial food system. Local food as scholarship and way-of-life has been established, respectively, in both academic research and contemporary culture. For example, a visit to the local supermarket proffers local foods in nearly every aisle, identified and glorified by green-colored hangtags demarcating the exalted position of a food item worthy of the local label. The differentiation is rendered apparent – local is green, local is good.

Mention of local foods can be traced to academic databases dating back to the mid-century. For example, a 1940 article from *The Geographic Review* discusses a weak local food supply and reliance upon commodity imports as a threat to social development in Singapore. (Dobby 1940) The ideas forthcoming from that article in 1940 are held by some today; local foods improve people’s food security – they are preferred over import market dependence.

Discussion of local foods (and the “goodness” inherent therein) continues to thrive in modern academic literature, often working a similar idea – that localism is synonymous with sustainability. Sustainability is desirable: Sustainable systems are self-regulating and can maintain themselves for a relatively long period of time in a healthy, almost regenerative way.

Local food systems researchers trace roots of the movement to the establishment of the American Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) of 1933. (Pirog et al 2014) Events of the American Twentieth Century, the Dust Bowl and the Great Depression, forced American family farmers to seek emergency federal aid to compensate for crop and livestock losses. Developed to spare American family farms from economic collapse, the AAA has grown from a measure of

pricing support for commodity producers to the controversial subsidy system, and now to its major food welfare provisions of today.

Instituting a commodity-based agricultural market in the US also allowed manufacturers of value-added processed food products to purchase more and cheaper ingredients, ushering in an era of efficiency and profit above all else. Such growth in a capitalist market necessitates the “treadmill of production” (Duram 2005); a business climate in which a producer must get bigger to increase profits each season, each year, in order to remain competitive. Small producers must scale up to survive, often choosing a buyout over a bust.

Such concentration of wealth and centralization continued throughout the twentieth century. Cheap, subsidized energy and supranational trade agreements such as NAFTA enable a global marketplace, and import/export based economies flourish under the modern paradigm. The result of this concentration of wealth and centralization is food with increasingly obscure sources, for the consumer certainly, for the idea of supermarket-as-source remains strong within the modern American imagination.

Local food system research suggests localism in foods developed as a backlash to centralization. “Health food” publications, shops, and restaurants developed in the 1960s, embedded within counterculture activities, Civil Rights action, and Vietnam War dissention. An important example of such is the school breakfast program instituted by the Black Panther Party in 1969, which was ultimately adopted by the US government. (Pirog et al 2014) Ikerd (2005) credits such dissonant Americans with reshaping American food systems. From these early

counter-conventional food loci, concepts such as “natural,” “organic,” and eventually “local” came to define what is sustainable – foods which are *other* to the globalized offerings at the nearest megamart. (Harris 2010) Local, as a concept understood in the current food culture, has grown to mainstream proportions; Oxford Dictionary designated *locavore* as its 2007 word of the year. By Oxford’s given definition, a locavore is “A person whose diet consists only or principally of locally grown or produced food.” (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/locavore) Oxford does not define the parameters of the *place* of local; such as *where* is local, and *where is not* local. Vis a vis this spatial ambiguity, local is everywhere all at once and therefore nowhere. In terms of marketing and selling “local,” it has been claimed and co-opted for commercial gain by many.

Local food systems as a field of academic inquiry spans disciplines and decades. In contrast, a local garment movement has yet to gain widespread traction or attention. Tragically, globalized garment production is resulting in many tragic and preventable deaths, and yet response is relatively minimal.

Relevant here is the work of pioneering academics that developed ideas around a market for local food provisioning in the United States. By integrating perspectives from industry publications and Non-governmental organization (NGO) research with salient local food system research findings, I hope to provide insight for action strategies to further develop, define, and impel a local garment movement.

Local Foods as Activism

As the conversation surrounding local foods and local food systems has evolved, several emergent subthemes from early frameworks of localism offer cogent modes of inquiry. To be clear, discussion is often firmly grounded with a foundation of activism – to pursue a more localized food system is a *response* to the status quo; an *alternative* to industrial and import-based food supply. (Harris 2010) For the purposes of exploring local food system research within the context of globalization, it is important to examine how local food systems (and the extant discussion in academic literature) very often seek to address injustice inherent to the current mode of food provisioning. Broadly speaking, local food system research and praxis aims to improve upon social conditions endemic to the normalized status quo of globalized food production. As Feagan (2007) demonstrates, this work is characterized by a relocalization of food systems.

Feagan's work addresses relocalization as a matter of shortened food chains. Shortened food chains include considerations of energy intensity, and distances travelled from farm to market to fork. Yet shortened food chains is different from decreased food miles in that food chains address systemic respatialization, rather than the more narrow view of local foods as defined by miles traveled from farm to market. This respatialization calls into question far more than just distance. Relocalization, as illustrated by Feagan, strengthens producer-consumer relationships by "short-circuiting such lengthy industrial food chains." (Feagan 2007, 25) Feagan cites community sponsored agriculture (a model of direct marketing wherein the consumer invests in a share of the farm's forthcoming harvest season). Farmers market activities,

too, are examples of shortened food chains in that they afford an opportunity for increased connection of farmers and end-users, as well as bringing consumers closer to the geographic origins of their food. (Feagan 2007)

Ideas around relocalization, as identified by Feagan, are a guiding theme for my research. While the social, environmental, and economic benefits of local food systems remain a matter of discursive exploration in academic, as well as cultural activities, central to my argument is relocalization as the consideration of place in garment systems. I contend that the consideration of place in production of food commodities has important implications for localism as it may pertain to garment systems in the United States. Considerations of relocalization in garment systems will resurface throughout my thesis, especially in the concluding statements.

Certainly, cultural and academic calls for localism have been most effective in ascribing meaning to foods. Localism offers critical moments of communication and consumer perception. Consideration of the importance of place, then, may be the critical carryover towards a local garment system in the United States. That said, besides a demonstrated desire for local foods, willingness to pay is key. (Jefferson-Moore et al 2014)

In Chapter Five of my work, I reference economic studies that support a consumer willingness to pay for garments resulting from maintaining a living wage to factory workers. To integrate the above salient themes, which characterize local food systems and research, it is first necessary to understand something of the past and present globalized garment trade, which is the subject of the next chapter.

Chapter Two: A Brief History of Textile and Garment Production in the United States

A critical impulse of my thesis is to explore and better understand how the academic and cultural trend towards localism in food provisioning can inform and direct a burgeoning local garment movement in the United States. This chapter of my research explains how and why the US ceased domestic garment production and shifted to heavy reliance on imported garments. As of 1970, domestic production accounted for 95 percent of US apparel purchases. (Murray 1995) In 2013, the US imported 97.5 percent of its apparel consumption. (Cline 2012) The purpose of this section is to provide historical context for the contemporary US apparel import reliance and identify the critical political and economic forces contributing to the offshoring of apparel production.

In addition to understanding the geographic displacement of garment production in the US, this section aims to situate the Rana Plaza factory collapse (addressed in greater detail in Chapter Four) within the broader political economy of the globalized garment trade. Such contextual information will be part of my analysis of the Rana Plaza disaster and contribute to a wider conversation centered on improving social justice (in the sense of just treatment for factory workers) in the United States. Situating the Rana Plaza disaster within the feminist political economy of globalized garment systems will also provide valuable background and insight for a discussion of localism in garments. Such localism is a response to the current crisis state of globalized garment systems, which will resurface in Chapter Five.

The globalized realities of garment production reflect much of the same injustice as evident by local food systems research. While mainstream media outlets and industry

publications periodically report on these injustices, academia gives sparse attention to the social and environmental inequities of global garment production. I would like to give space to critical examination of modern garment systems, and begin to understand ways forward from past inequities and current realities.

King Cotton and White Gold

Injustice is a recurring theme throughout the history of the US textile and garment industry. King Cotton, and the slaves who produced it, funded the major empire-building events of American economic history. For the purposes of this thesis, I begin the story of US textile and garment production at the time of first European settlement. This starting point serves to reinforce thematic directions of my thesis. In so doing, I acknowledge the American history in textile and garment production, and cotton cultivation in particular, which extends earlier than the arrival of European settlers. For example, evidence of cotton cultivation and loom weaving by Native Americans dating to 500 AD has been found in the Gila River basin of Arizona and New Mexico. (Butzer 1999)

Upland cotton¹ seeds were cultivated successfully at the first European settlement at Jamestown, Virginia. (Yafa 2005; Beckert 2014) It is here the earliest West African slaves labored as well. While US cotton textile production would not expand until later, the beginnings of cotton's importance to the US were evidenced well before the Revolutionary War (even

¹ Upland cotton is the common name for *Gossypium hirsutum*, the cotton plant variety native to North America. Yafa (2005, 16) places *G. hirsutum*'s first cultivation to the Yucatán Peninsula dating back at least 5,000 years.

before cotton; wool, hemp, and flax linen were the principal fiber crops for US textile and garment provisioning). George Washington emphasized domestic textile production as a means of liberation from dependence on English garment imports. (Yafa 2005) While industrialization and mechanization were beginning to revolutionize textile production in England, the technology for mechanization was not yet available in the United States. As such, yarn spinning and textile weaving remained a cottage industry, and garments for daily wear were primarily produced in the home. However during this time, southern states were steadily ramping up cotton production, and the people of the region were clothing themselves almost entirely in cotton garments. (Yafa 2005)

In 1789, George Washington toured the United States' first yarn mill near Boston, Massachusetts. (Yafa 2005) However, this horse-powered factory built by John Cabot was ultimately unsuccessful. Very soon thereafter, Samuel Slater, a former superintendent at an English cotton mill, fled England dressed as a farmer (in an attempt to protect its textile industry, England had refused exit to anyone who worked in the textile factories) and built a cotton factory in Pawtucket, Rhode Island. He used blueprints using English technologies he had memorized. (Yafa 2005) Slater successfully founded a yarn mill based on the water frame technology of English yarn mills. These first cotton mills relied on imported cotton for manufacturing – according to Beckert, cotton manufacturing was “...the first major industry in human history that lacked locally procured raw materials.” (Beckert 2014, 155) In this way, the textile industry was born global, and responsible for reshaping the landscape of industrial capitalism. Despite import reliance at this earliest stage, the market price of factory-spun yarn was still much more

affordable than its homespun predecessor, and so emerges nascent industrial capitalism. In the decades that followed, cotton mills proliferated in New England, and the new American industry expanded to include textile weaving factories (in addition to the yarn spinning factories). The map of America's raw cotton production would soon change as well, in ways most violent and inhumane.

As the cotton milling industry grew in America and England, the demand for raw fibers increased, and cotton cultivation expanded quickly in the Southeastern United States. This expansion was facilitated in part due to similarities between tobacco and cotton production. (Beckert 2014) Eli Whitney's 1793 invention of the cotton gin mechanized the removal of sticky cottonseeds from the valuable fibers, and ushered in the "cotton rush" (Beckert 2014) of the Southeastern United States. Raw cotton processing productivity doubled with Whitney's innovation. As cotton production expanded rapidly, so did the import of slaves from the Caribbean and Africa. Beckert (2014) states, "All the way to the Civil War, cotton and slavery would expand in lockstep, as Great Britain and the United States had become the twin hubs of the emerging empire of cotton."

Southern plantation owners in the US had unprecedented access to slave labor, land, and political influence. The politics of the time were bound to the expansion of the US cotton empire, and plantation owners depended on the powers of the State to supply productive land. Cotton barons often exhausted the rich soil they planted within a few harvest cycles. Instead of investing in soil fertility measures, fresh fields were frequently sought for planting. Cotton plantations expanded westward as the US government violently removed Native Americans from

their ancestral land. (Beckert 2014) The Indian Removal Act of 1830 under President Andrew Jackson ratified such violence. Beckert attributes this deadly and dehumanizing method of land acquisition to the US rise to dominance in global cotton markets.

Cotton harvesting was very labor-intensive. The labor constraints of US cotton production were met with violent solutions as well: “Slave Traders, slave pens, slave auctions, and the attendant physical and psychological violence of holding millions in bondage were of central importance to the expansion of cotton production in the United States and of the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain.” (Beckert 2014, 206) According to Becker’s estimates, in 1830 nearly a million slaves were engaged in cotton production in the deep American South. The domestic slave trade ensured US cotton planters access to labor not available in other cotton-producing nations. The violence of slavery was responsible for the large work force that assured the US’ position as the world’s leading cotton producer and exporter. (Beckert 2014)

One million people working as slaves on newly emptied Indian lands produced the thousands of tons of cotton to supply the booming textile manufacturing industry of New England. The developing industry in the North satisfied labor demands much differently than that which relied on the slavery of the South. I now focus on the roles and experiences of women in the US history of textile and garment industrialization.

The Role of Women in Early US Garment Production

In reviewing the events of the US history of textile and garment production, I give attention to the role of gender. Understandably, textile and garment industry played a role in women's economic advancement in the United States. Prior to urbanization, women (very often young women and girl children) contributed to their household economies by working to produce yarn and cloth from raw wool and cotton. So, women engaged in wage labor by cleaning raw fiber or weaving cloth in the home for payment from local spinning mills. (Dublin 1993) Eventually, large numbers of young girls and women left their parent's home for work in the US textile factories of New England. Dublin calls attention to the spatial distribution of this early home economic activity by women and how it supported New England's earliest spinning mills:

Companies... often had to search at a distance for weavers to take their yarns. A Fall River firm apparently found "the neighboring farmers' wives" so fully employed by Providence spinners that it opened a store in Hallowell, Maine, as a weaving center and outlet for goods. (Dublin 1993, 16)

In addition to discussing the demand for women's work in the textile industry in the early nineteenth century, Dublin also develops conceptual map-making. This imaginary map of nineteenth century New England with Providence, Fall River, and Hallowell, Maine as major sites presents an early example of the spatial diffusion necessary to supply textile production on an industrial scale. I will return to themes of spatial diffusion in later sections as I discuss the modern-day subcontracting system of production in the globalized garment industry.

Dublin's imaginary map also brings me to this question: If early nineteenth century firms needed to expand the bounds of their labor pool and markets beyond city/state boundaries, wither the local? The very nature of industrial textile and garment production calls upon an expansive geographic space. As discussed in Chapter One, local, as pertaining to food systems and food scholarship, has ambiguous and myriad personal meanings. I can imagine the mobilizing potential of local directed towards a local garment movement.

Textile technologies progressed rapidly during the early nineteenth century US, and the early yarn spinning mills gave way to grander-scale textile factories housing the carding, spinning, and weaving operations under one roof. Such factories concentrated at the Pawtucket Falls of the Merrimack River in East Chelmsford Massachusetts (incorporated as Lowell in 1826). The opportunity for wage employment in the textile factories represented a shift in women's life-spaces in the early nineteenth century US, as young women left the family home before marriage for work and life in Massachusetts mill towns. (Dublin 1993)

Dublin links mill owners' records to tax inventories to determine the socioeconomic standing of the families of factory women and then suggests motivations of the women factory workers. The evidence presented suggests that women factory workers largely came from farm families of above-average economic status. Dublin concludes that women were drawn to millwork of their own volition, and not sent away by economic necessity. (Dublin 1993)

The early nineteenth century textile mills were also the sites of some of women's earliest participation in organized labor struggles. Life at the mills in the onset years was largely a boom

time for firms and women workers alike. Women lived en masse in rented rooms at company or private boardinghouses, and civic and social lives thrived in the forms of clubs and classes, newsletters and events. This community activity coupled with the familial closeness of shared quarters invoked a sense of sisterhood, which would strengthen the resolve of the women workers in coming labor struggles. (Dublin 1975; Dublin1993)

With greater capital came increased textile output and competition. Soon, textile firms were not realizing the same measure of profit as they had initially enjoyed. New England mill owners attempted to recoup lost profits with the same strategy to be repeated in the sweatshops of modern-day Bangladesh and elsewhere throughout the current textile and garment industry, by cutting labor costs. The women of the mills were required to operate more spindles and looms at a decrease in paid piece rate. In 1834 and 1836, women struck to protest wage reductions in the mills. Such protest was unsuccessful in stopping wage reductions, and mills were running at full capacity within a week following the strikes.

Life and work in the mills was very often a temporary and transitive station in a woman's life. Because of such transience, women mill workers were easily replaced and, more importantly perhaps, less personally invested in improving the conditions of labor in the mills. Formal trade unions did not immediately develop among women mill workers at the time of the first textile mill strikes. (Dublin 1975; Dublin 1993)

As industrial capitalism advanced in the US, so did the demand for affordable, readymade garments. Soon, behind the automated spindle and power loom, came the foot

treadle sewing machine of 1859. (Yurchisin and Johnson 2010) Prior to the mid-nineteenth century, most Americans wore loosely fitted (and therefore relatively simple to make) home-and-handmade garments. Only the wealthy could afford clothing custom-made by expert tailors. However, the new realities of urban industrial life created a market demand for readymade garments, as women's sewing labor was less available in the home economy. The general stores and dry goods emporiums of the time would usually carry a small selection of garment items for purchase. (Whitaker 2006)

The turn of the century saw major changes in the US garment consumption experience. The advent of the department store in US cities would revolutionize the way Americans, and especially women, purchased garments. By Whitakers' (2006) estimates, as of 1890, over 70 percent of ready-to-wear garments on the market were menswear. At this time, women's garment styles were shifting from complicated Victorian designs to the simpler (and far easier to manufacture) shirtwaist².

The advent of department store shopping and the rising popularity of the shirtwaist necessitated a consistent supply and thus a workforce of fabric cutters and sewers. Even before the widespread advance of the sewing machine, immigrants in their homes in cities like New York and Chicago took on the sewing work for manufacturing firms. Manufacturers would distribute fabrics to neighborhood women, and the work would be performed in the home.

² Shirtwaist was the common vernacular of the time for a woman's blouse. As industrialization spread, shirtwaists (or simply "waists") were increasingly affordable for mass consumption, and a very popular style of the time.

Women often gathered in one apartment to simultaneously sew and supervise children. (Lower Eastside Tenement Museum 2005)

The tenement system of garment construction soon shifted to a factory setting as industrial capitalists invested in sewing machines and concentrated cutting and sewing operations under one roof. Immigrant women continued to serve as the majority of the labor force for the new garment factories. As detailed in the section below, garment factories have proved to be deadly for poor and marginalized women.

In addition to discussing women's labor struggles in the textile and garment industry, it is critical to address the role of gender in garment industry disasters. Factory work in textiles and garments is overwhelmingly the domain of women. Thus, women are overwhelmingly the victims of industrial tragedies in textile and garment factory disasters. The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire of 1911 is one such disaster and will be reviewed further in the following section. I carry forward this theme of gendered vulnerability to garment industry disaster as I examine the Rana Plaza factory collapse in Chapter Four of my thesis.

The Triangle Shirtwaist Fire

The struggles of women in the textile and garment industry continued beyond the earliest movements of the millwomen of New England. By the early twentieth century, the garment factories of New York City employed more people, mostly immigrant women, than the mills of New England. (Von Drehle 2003)

The labor struggles of the time, which have since been largely exported to less-developed countries, imprinted decisively on the American imagination through activist movements. Labor organizers and social agitators protested conditions in garment factories across Manhattan. A surplus of labor had flooded Manhattan's garment industry, mostly immigrant women desperate for work and in a time of scant social security. Such labor surplus led to a proliferation of garment factories with owners and foremen eager to capitalize on the immigrant women's cheap labor. Garment factory work was characterized by low wages, unsanitary and unsafe conditions, and dehumanizing treatment from bosses. (Stein 2001; Von Drehle 2003) Working conditions at the garment factories, often referred to as sweatshops,³ catalyzed labor movements in the newly industrialized urban centers of the United States. Several events alerted the American public to the plight of garment workers. The 1909 Uprising of 20,000⁴ incited garment workers in New York City to leave their positions as pattern makers, fabric cutters, and sewing machine operators to walk out of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory as well as five hundred garment factories across Manhattan. (Von Drehle 2003) The Uprising of 20,000 was a test of the strength for the local 25 Chapter of the International Ladies' Garment Workers Union (ILGWU). (Von Drehle 2003)

³ While the idea of the sweatshop was an important rallying cry for the urban labor struggles of the early twentieth century United States, it was not the first instance of the pejorative term. Prior to widespread industrialization, mid-nineteenth century textile and garment production was often performed as outwork in the homes of workers and paid on a per-piece basis. The earnings were paltry, and the workers were subcontracted through middlemen for the manufacturers (Pugtach, 1998). The profit margins were said to be 'sweated' from labor costs. This early understanding of the sweating system – characterized by subcontracting labor relationships and taking place in spatially diffuse, isolated locations – differs from the widely accepted Department of Labor definition of sweatshops as a workplace in violation of more than one labor code.

⁴ Von Drehle refers to estimates of over 40,000 workers involved in the strike, despite the 20,000 in the name. (Von Drehle 2003 96)

Striking was a courageous move for women workers as they risked future employment and forewent desperately needed wages to mobilize political power. In the time before women were granted access to votes and power asymmetries were enjoyed by men, striking was a critical political process for working-class women. In early 1910, the strike was tentatively settled and work at the Triangle Waist Company resumed. Despite the workers' successful bargaining for increased wages and fewer working hours, unsafe conditions remained in place at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory.

The March 25, 1911 Triangle Shirtwaist Fire highlighted the critical need for protection and regulation of safe working conditions when 146 workers died in a garment factory fire. The cause of the fire was concluded to be a discarded cigarette or match tossed into a fabric cutter's scrap bin. (Von Drehle 2003) The factory itself was a fire hazard; loosely packed cotton scraps, tissue paper patterns, wooden tables, and oily floors quickly converged to produce the worst industrial disaster to date in the United States. The human toll might have been reduced if labor safety codes were in place and enforced. The exits to the factory were locked, trapping workers who might have otherwise escaped. Factory owners locked doors routinely to prevent thefts and suppress walkouts, despite being warned of the danger in case of evacuation. (Stein 2001; Von Drehle 2003) Despite the highly visible tragedy of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire, labor activists were skeptical of the potential for meaningful reform, as the Uprising of 20,000 only a year earlier had not been enough to prevent the deaths of garment workers. (Von Drehle 2003)

The visibility of the Triangle Fire influenced the politics of the time. Public shock and subsequent support for industry regulation rallied in the wake of the tragedy. Ultimately, reform

was realized in New York City and beyond. Funds were appropriated for the creation of the Factory Investigating Commission (FIC) three months after the Triangle Fire, a first initiative for worker protection. (Von Drehle 2003) The FIC hired labor activists to undertake factory investigations throughout New York City. (Von Drehle 2003) Amid the Uprising and the Triangle Fire, working-class labor unions forged tentative alliances with middle-class organizations such as the National Women's Trade Union League (WTUL).

For some time, the well-connected WTUL had concerns about the consequences of unregulated industry for the working poor. The Triangle Fire confirmed the fears of WTUL activists that not enough was being done to protect working-class women, and factory owners could not be trusted to ensure safe working conditions of their own volition. Such cross-class alliances contributed to legislative labor reforms. (Kheel Center 2011) Soon, labor reforms extended beyond garment factories and into other trades. The FIC drafted bills to improve building safety including, but not limited to, fire hazards. It also mandated factory doors be left unlocked during working hours.

The Uprising of 20,000 and the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire exemplified the idea of the sweatshop in the American mind, and demonstrated the need for industry reform. The social and political import of the women activists could not be understated as they helped reshape the labor landscape of the United States. The goals of their activism were realized as safety regulations were codified, and fair labor laws introduced. These women, acting from a place of social and political exclusion, solidified unions and strengthened the collective voice for women's advancement. Socioeconomic status, linguistic barriers, and inequities of power are all agents of

marginalization. Collective organizing and the bargaining power of labor unions remains an important tool in the labor struggles of poor and marginalized women engaged in the globalized garment industry today.

The vulnerabilities experienced by women workers of the early twentieth century US are the same today for garment factory workers worldwide, but in geographically dispersed locations, far less visible to US consumers. Chapter Three of this work investigates the modern sweatshop as well as the social consequences of outsourcing garment production to countries without the labor protections enjoyed today by US workers. The Rana Plaza factory collapse is examined as a case study of globalized garment system injustice with specific consideration given to the role of labor protection and organizations.

In Chapter Three, I refer to theories of modern globalization, driven by the paradigm of neoliberal capitalism. The shifting spatiality of globalized garment systems is discussed as a mutually constituted reality of political economic processes such as international trade agreements. In Chapter Three of my thesis I also highlight the key trade agreements of the modern globalized garment system.

The political economy of modern garment systems can be best understood with guidance from the vast body of research into modern neoliberal globalization. To better focus on the specific issues of modern globalized garment systems, I draw from theories of globalization as presented by geographers as well as garment supply chain scholars. Consideration will again be given to the role of gender and women's work in globalized garment systems, as women are

(still) disproportionately likely to work in garment factories worldwide. They are therefore disproportionately vulnerable to the consequences of globalization in garment systems. The theoretical framework outlined in this section will assist in my analysis of the Rana Plaza disaster in Chapter Four, as well as inform my Chapter Five discussion of the potential for localism in US garment systems.

The labor struggles outlined earlier in this chapter, of women in the garment factories of early twentieth century New York, and the resultant industry reforms, were a harbinger of things to come. As labor unions were strengthened and industry regulations codified, production costs increased for garment manufacturers. Textile mills migrated to the Southeast United States in search of cheaper labor, weaker unions, and fewer industry regulations. The Southeast US offered an abundance of cheap unskilled labor as people desperately needed economic opportunities other than agriculture due to the plummeting price of its primary commodity, cotton. (Yafa 2005) While this meant textiles were still being produced domestically for US markets during this period, the quest for lowest labor costs continues to be a hallmark of the textile and garment industry.

The quest for lowest labor costs has catalyzed the spatial diffusion of global garment production. As the world grows ever-increasingly integrated through the mechanisms of globalization, textile and garment firms are free to select sourcing from the most attractive (cheapest cost) countries. Searching for cheap is supported by neoliberal political economy processes such as free trade policies and agreements like NAFTA. Before moving on to exploring the specific policies and processes of globalization under the paradigm of neoliberal

capitalism governing the global garment trade, I will introduce theories of globalization from a feminist perspective. Feminist theories of globalization are relevant to my study as Akhter (2014) estimates eighty percent of the victims of the Rana Plaza disaster were women, and women represent the majority of the workforce in garment production worldwide.

Chapter Three: Theories of Globalization in Garment Systems

Feminist theories of globalization call attention to the intersection of gender lenses and the processes of globalization. Globalization, in the broadest understanding, is the integration of people and places through increasing economic, political, social, and cultural relations. Nagar et al (2002) point out that "...globalization is not new. Political and economic relations at the global scale have long histories, rooted in colonialism, imperialism and practice of the development industry." (Nagar et al 2002, 258) They go on to specify that the majority of globalization research prioritizes the current discursive and material application of the term. This application tends to concern the neoliberal ideologies of free trade flows of capital and goods, as well as the modern institutions governing and directing such flows, such as transnational corporations and supranational governance bodies like the World Trade Organization. (Nagar et al 2002) It is from this point I will explore theories of globalization from a feminist perspective⁵ with the aim of understanding how the increased interdependence of people and places reshapes the lived experiences of women, specifically women workers in the globalized garment industry.

⁵ Nagar et al (2002) are careful to point out the pluralism of knowledges from the feminist perspective. By engaging with feminist theories of globalization, I wish to acknowledge this pluralism as well, noting the multiple and sometimes incongruent meanings and applications of feminism. My presentation of feminist theories of globalization is a reproduction of my singular perspective at a specific moment in time, shaped by my identities and experiences, and not at all meant to be interpreted as definitive or comprehensive of all the vast feminist theories of globalization.

Nagar et al (2002) argue that the overarching body of globalization research, and its tendency to focus on public and formal spheres of globalization (such as corporations and governance institutions),

...is fundamentally masculinist in its exclusion of the economic, cultural, and political spheres (often casual or informal) that operate in households and communities; in daily practices of caring, consumption, and religion; and in networks of alternative politics where women's contributions to globalization are often located. (Nagar et al 2002, 260)

Their argument maintains that the quotidian realms enumerated in the quote above, often the domain of women, are the backbone of modern society, and to ignore the interaction of globalization on these less-researched realms serves to further marginalize and devalue the role of women. This devaluation may help to understand why, despite the seemingly infinite scholarly critiques of globalization and its consequences, tragedies are numerous and women are still disproportionately vulnerable to the deadly – in the case of Rana Plaza – effects of globalization.

Research and critiques of globalization from the top-down point of view of major actors serve to reinforce the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism, as it posits powerful economic institutions as the central narrative of globalization. As I move on to examine the specific expressions of globalization in the modern garment industry in this chapter, as well as on to the case study of the Rana Plaza disaster in Chapter Four, I aim to integrate a 'ground-up' understanding of globalization from a feminist perspective.

In their book, *Threads of Labour* (2005), Hale and Wills work from a “ground-up” perspective as they investigate the processes of globalization in modern garment systems. Hale and Wills incorporate primary research with women workers in the globalized garment system with explanations of the political economic processes framing the modern garment trade. Their work draws from garment supply chain scholars to explore and unravel the very complex network of actors along global garment supply chains. I refer and return to her work, and the same body of scholarship, throughout the remaining chapters of my research to guide my understanding of the political economic framework of globalized garment systems.

Feminist Political Economy

The case study analysis of the Rana Plaza factory collapse is guided by feminist political economy theory. Feminist political economy examines the processes and forms of globalization through the lens of gender. Such examination often rejects heterodoxical constructions in conventional political economy, which tend to ignore subjective experiences of globalization. (Bergeron 2001) It also emphasizes the formal or public economic sector, which tends to be dominated by men (especially in developing countries) and devalues the work of women, more often participating in private or informal labor. (Sarma 2009) Feminist political economy, in contrast, offers critical insight into the social conditions reproduced in households and communities across generations which culminate in a marginalized and “nimble-fingered” labor force of women. Understanding this social reproduction from a political feminist economy perspective enhances my case study analysis of Bangladeshi women garment factory workers before and after the Rana Plaza factory collapse. In doing so, feminist political economy

discourse approaches an understanding of the complex realities of globalization on the lived experiences of women. In my subsequent analysis of the Rana Plaza factory collapse, I will demonstrate how the proliferation of garment factories in Bangladesh has been at once an accelerator of women's economic liberation as well as a potential threat to women's health and wellbeing.

Additionally, feminist political economy provides a useful framework for examining the Rana Plaza factory collapse as much of it focuses on the emergence of a female paid labor force in the developing world. (Fernández-Kelly 1983; Safa 1981) This emphasis on the "nimble-fingers" (Elson and Pearson 1981, from Bergeron 2001) of a women-based workforce capitalizes on the social exclusion of women, and banks on the unlikeliness of women to protest unsafe working conditions, form labor unions, or demand fair wage standards. (Bergeron 2001)

Bergeron's work is especially important to my argument, and I draw upon her alternative theories of globalization through a feminist lens to suggest ways forward in the globalized garment system. Bergeron discusses organizing at the national level to effect change within modern globalization paradigms. She suggests change may be affected by working within the economic framework, for globalization and its processes and forms are social constructs, and not part of an essential natural order. According to feminist lens, women may retain their own agency and a mode of resistance by viewing their fates as not predetermined within the script of globalization.

Using the human-enacted (and therefore mutable) policies which direct and drive the processes of globalization, women can be empowered to demand changes in the current status quo. Such theories of feminist political economy also will become the analytical lens through which I view the domestic and international responses to the globalized garment crisis. I now turn to an examination of neo-liberal economic policies as they pertain to globalization and the transnational garment industry. These policies will frame an analysis of the situation of women workers in the Bangladeshi RMG industry, touching also on the dissolution of the Multifiber Arrangement.

Neoliberal Capitalism and the Globalized Garment Trade

The second half of the twentieth century saw increasing global economic integration and competition under the auspices of neoliberal capitalism. The theoretic impulse of economic neoliberalism is the removal of barriers to trade, and allowance for the freer flow of goods, services, and capital investments among nations. Further, there is an ideology that the market will self-regulate with an equilibrium arrived at via the interplay between the mechanisms of consumer demand and resource allocation and reallocation by global firms. Neoliberal capitalism propels and requires economic competition. For global apparel brands, this requires maximizing profits and reducing production costs. This model of capitalism promotes a reorganization of functions for US apparel firms.

During the late twentieth century, US apparel firms converted their primary roles from manufacturers to branded marketers. (Gereffi 2002; Hale and Wills 2005) US Firms shifted

production from in-house to complex- and spatially-diffuse networks of subcontractors. The purpose for such shifts was pursuit of lowest production costs. Such rampant profiteering promoted an emigration of textile mills and garment factories to countries where cheap, non-unionized labor was plentiful and environmental output regulations were few.

The athletic shoe and apparel titan Nike led a geographic apparel production exodus and other US brands followed. Nike is often presented as the herald of garment system globalization, as it was among the first brands “born global” (Gereffi 2002, 10), having engaged in overseas sourcing from the outset of its creation. Central America and Asia offered attractive landscapes for subcontracting, as the political economies of countries like Mexico and Indonesia ensured tremendous profitability compared to that which was possible in Beaverton Oregon, Nike’s headquarters.

Between 1983 and 2005, over one-third of US apparel manufacturing jobs were lost (Bureau of Labor). To address job losses and protect domestic industry, the Multifiber Arrangement (MFA) was instituted. The Multifiber Arrangement was one of the first trade agreements governing international trade in textiles and garments. I explain the MFA below, as well as subsequent trade agreements governing international trade in textiles and garments.

The Multifiber Arrangement

From 1974 to 1994, global trade in textiles and apparel was regulated by the Multifiber Arrangement (MFA), a program of quotas according to bilateral agreements among trading nations and managed by the Generalized Agreement of Tariffs and Trade (GATT), the precursor

to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The MFA was originally conceived to protect domestic textile and garment industries in developed nations from the absolute advantage of less developed and newly industrializing countries. Such countries offered a necessary labor-intensive and low-skill workforce. The MFA was not proven to affect textile and garment industry job retention in developed countries. However, the MFA was successful in the global dispersion of garment industry production activities. The quota system encouraged retail firms, largely located in the US and European Union (EU) and with technological and capital advantages, to shift production from one less-developed nation to the next once a quota was near fulfillment. This system enabled firms to develop the technology needed to fill large orders while spanning national and political boundaries and to sustain the perpetual pursuit of lowest cost means of production. (Appelbaum et al 2005)

Provisions of the Multifiber Arrangement offered a major exception to overarching GATT regulations, most notably that of non-discrimination among trading nations. GATT, and now WTO, rules state that tariffs and other restrictions such as quotas are to be applied uniformly to all member countries. The MFA allowed for textile and garment trade to be negotiated bilaterally and exclusively among trading partners. Appelbaum et al (2005, 3) give as an example "...specifying the number of women's wool sweaters the United States could import from Hong Kong in a given year." Gereffi (2001) points out that less-developed countries benefitted from the MFA because it allowed them to compete with low-cost manufacturing powerhouses such as China. As such, it served to protect budding textile and garment industries in countries like Bangladesh. The MFA expired in 1994, and was replaced by the Agreement on

Textiles and Clothing (ATC). The ten-year ATC was a strategy to phase out the MFA quota system, with total elimination of quotas by January 1, 2005. With the conclusion of the MFA and ATC after 2005, global trade in apparel and textiles came under the governance of WTO's neoliberal paradigm and policies.

Increased competition in fashion markets has led to consolidation of firms and concentration of capital. As Appelbaum et al (2005) point out, hyper-powerful transnational corporations such as Wal-Mart exert enormous leverage over manufacturers via buying power. Fernandez-Stark et al (2011) exemplify this as the power to "...determine what is to be produced, where, by whom, and at what price." (Fernandez-Stark et al 2011, 7) Firms enjoying power asymmetries tend to be based in affluent economies such as the US, Europe, and Japan.

Just as the processes of globalization dispersed garment system activities, international divisions of labor tend to follow certain patterns. The most valuable segments of the garment supply chain such as marketing and retail are retained by highly developed countries, and manufacturing activities are the domain of developing and newly industrialized countries. (Fernandez-Stark et al 2011)

It is relevant here to examine the organization of activities within the globalized garment system. Five principal activities comprise the garment supply chain. As Gereffi (2002) discusses, these five interconnected and overlapping networks are: raw materials, garment components, production, export, and marketing. These five activities are usually conducted in disparate spaces, and places, and often each mode will be further subdivided into individual

tasks. For instance, raw cotton fiber grown in India and Turkey may be imported to China where it is distributed to mills in five regions.

This cotton would be processed in a series of steps such as combing, carding, and spinning, with each task located in a different factory. The yarn finishing processes, such as dyeing, may be conducted at the factories where it is spun, or at an entirely new location. The yarns are distributed to an export coordinator, who manages logistics and compliance with export regulations, as well as transportation to the next juncture of textile manufacturing. The yarn may be shipped back to India, as well as Pakistan, to be knit or woven into textiles. Again, dyeing may or may not happen at this stage. The textiles are then exported to factories, for instance in Bangladesh, Vietnam, Mexico, and Lesotho where they are cut into garment component pieces like sleeves, pockets, and collars. Garment components are then shipped to yet another international network of factories to be assembled. Garment finishing and embellishing happens at yet another locus, adding imported inputs such as buttons, rivets, and trims. Completed garments are then packaged for export to major markets in the US, Europe, and Japan, where they are distributed to retail outlets such as branded manufacturer stores (such as The Gap), or department stores (such as JC Penney) or more increasingly, logistics centers for e-commerce firms.

The incredibly complex production and distribution scheme described above is characteristic of the subcontracting system of manufacturing endemic to the globalized textile and apparel industry. (Gereffi 2002; Hale and Wills 2005) Spatial diffusion and decentralization of factories are hallmarks of the subcontracting system. These independently owned and

managed factories operate in a highly competitive market, in that they may be manufacturing the exact same textiles or garments at the exact same moment for the same transnational apparel corporation. (Gereffi 2001; Gereffi 2002; Hale and Wills 2005) In this system, workers are separated from each other by geographic and political boundaries, and may not even know which firms they are producing for at any given moment. (Hale and Wills 2005) This separation and information deficit restricts potential for worker organization into unions.

The retailing and marketing segment of global garment systems is the provenance of advanced economies; of the top ten global apparel brands, six are US based, (Gap, Limited Brands, PVH (Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger), Ralph Lauren, Abercrombie & Fitch, American Eagle Outfitters), three EU based (Inditex {Zara}, Hennes & Mauritz, NEXT), and one in Japan (Uniqlo.)⁶ This market segment is responsible for research and design, consumer communication, and marketing to drive demand. Retailers are the capital-holders in the garment supply chain, with modern technology being a critical component to brand growth and therefore survival. Sophisticated technologies allow transnational retail corporations to respond quickly to buyer demand, design and promote new styles, and replenish store inventories quickly. This technology and emphasis on speed is explained later as “fast fashion.” It is at these nodes along the supply chain that the greatest value is added to textiles and garments. Transnational retail corporations, headquartered mostly in affluent economies, retain this value.

⁶ Taken from data compiled and presented by Fast Retailing (2015) at:
<http://www.fastretailing.com/eng/ir/direction/position.html>

The production segment of the textile and garment industry is highly geographically dispersed, with concentrations in Central America, the Caribbean, China, and Southeast Asia. As mentioned above, retail brands exert tremendous leverage over sourcing locations and prices. Transnational corporations aim to search out manufacturers offering greatest value, often meaning lowest labor costs and fewest industry regulations. (Hale and Wills 2005) The economic scale of retailers such as Inditex/Zara, H&M, Gap and Wal-Mart wields enormous pressure on wholesale pricing, which Appelbaum et al (2005) characterize as a downward squeeze. Pricing pressure is exerted from retailers to manufacturers to subcontractors, with degrees of labor force agency erased at each step as factories are reduced to powerless order-takers instead of partnership dealmakers. (Appelbaum et al 2005)

Figure 3.1 illustrates the nodes of production along the global garment supply chain, as well as calls attention to the often less-considered inputs and outputs of water, energy, and pollution.

Figure 3.1 Diagram of the Global Garment Supply Chain

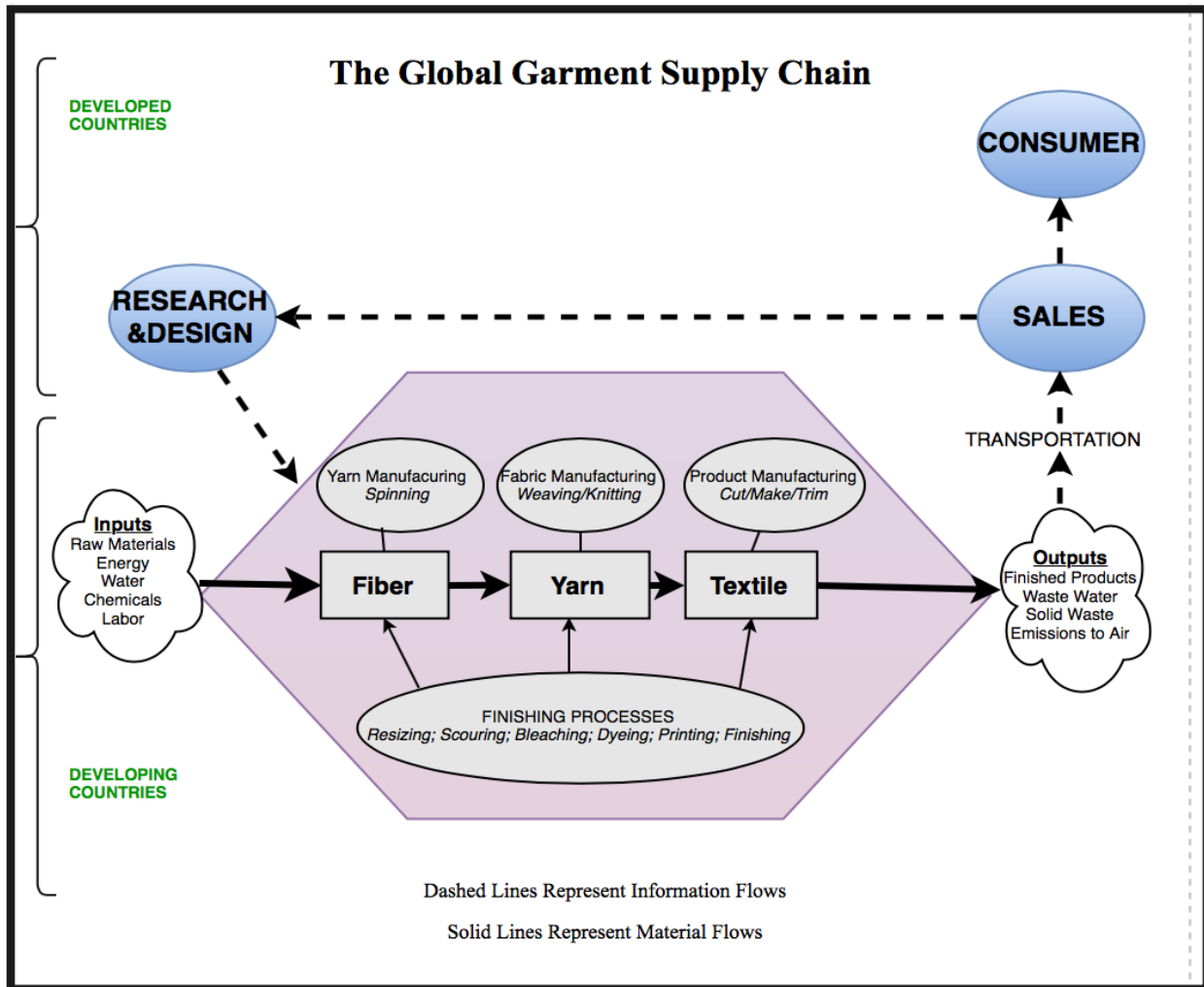


Illustration Credit: Ryan Davis

Adapted From: <http://www.textiletoday.com.bd/oldsite/magazine/22>

The complex subcontracting system of garment and apparel production handily distances retailers from garment factories, and potential Public Relations crises, when ethically objectionable conditions are exposed, or deadly disasters occur. The repercussions for this

opaque production arrangement will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four as I present the Rana Plaza factory collapse disaster as a case study of injustice in the globalized garment system.

Fast Fashion

It is important here to further examine the interaction of neoliberal market forces with the modern garment industry under the auspices of “fast fashion” before moving on to enumerate the culpability of western firms in the Rana Plaza disaster. The offspring of neoliberal trade policy and the global garment system is fast fashion. Fast fashion is a phenomenon of modern times. In *The Guardian* article “Rana Plaza: One Year on from the Bangladesh Factory Disaster,” Jason Burke (2014) describes fast fashion as “...at once a mode of production, a strategy, and a style.”

The retail segment of globalized garment systems, dominated by transnational corporations from affluent economies, competes in a highly saturated market to rapidly produce trends and styles. New styles are designed by transnational brands and marketed via fashion show catwalks, magazine editorials, and the blogosphere. Consumer response data are recorded, and production orders are sent to the international networks described above. The speed of design to both brick-and-mortar and ever increasingly online retail is a distinctive characteristic of the fast fashion system. (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst 2010)

The flexibility of capital afforded to affluent apparel firms through the neoliberal market economy is also a critical element to fast fashion production schemes. Apparel firms in developed economies hold the technology to move money instantly and place orders around the globe. Retail firms, using technologies to gather consumer preference data from affluent retail

markets, demand narrow turnaround times for production orders. The speed is breakneck, especially when considering the piecemeal methodology of garment production and the magnitude of coordination.

Textile and garment manufacturing, especially under the fast fashion system, does not readily lend itself to mechanization. The materials are too soft, the patterns too complex, and the changes in design too rapid. The nature of garment production requires humans to perform the bulk of manufacturing activities. With the rapid shifts in consumer tastes and demands which have come to characterize the fast fashion industry, and capital accumulation and flexibility wrought by neoliberal globalization, retail firms can rapidly relocate sourcing factories with each new trend. To remain competitive, subcontracted factories, in turn, drive wages ever downward, while laboring under oppressive order deadlines. This downward squeeze translates to more work and less pay for factory workers. The downward squeeze of profit margins is accelerated by the contradictions between US consumer expectation and expenditures.

Fast fashion is characterized by the ideology of cheap. (Bhardwaj and Fairhurst 2010) Consumers expect cheap prices for clothing, and this cheapness often translates into low wages and poor working conditions along the supply chain. Factories operate on very narrow economic margins, and lost profits are compensated for by the labor of the low-cost workers.

The US Bureau of Labor shows a decline in consumer garment price indexes from the approximate onset of the contemporary era of fast fashion, beginning in the mid 1990s. This decline in consumer prices is unmatched by any other industry except communication. Even

more recent US Bureau of Labor data show a 7.6 percent decline in consumer expenditure on apparel and related services from 2012-2013, accounting for approximately only 2.8 percent of total household income. This is a sharp decline from 1950 when apparel purchases accounted for 12% of US household income. (Burke 2014, taken from US Bureau of Labor data)

Purchasing clothing was once considered a long-term investment. Contemporary demand evolves in an instant, driven by ever-changing trends and the allure of low prices. The fast fashion system has a very strategic retail approach, offering garments as ephemera in the American imagination. As prices decline, transnational apparel firms insist upon growth. There is little available savings potential in textile input purchasing. The necessary price difference is extracted from labor budgets.

Instead of human beings with the rights afforded them under United Nation's International Labour Organization (ILO) Decent Work Agenda conventions, human labor is managed by retail firms as a budgetary line item, a variable of production from which to force more profit. As the retail sector demands more-cheaper-faster garment production, factory owners have little budget surplus for safety standard implementation. Further, governments, intent on attracting and keeping manufacturing jobs, fail to enact or enforce worker safety standards. The confluence of these forces results in a tragedy scaled to Rana Plaza proportions.

The objective of the preceding chapter is to consider – and provide context for – the idea of localism as it does and does not pertain to garment systems in the United States. To conclude Chapter Three, I would like to consider the interaction of modern US consumers with their

garments, and begin to intertwine local food systems theory with a deeper understanding of global garment systems. Garments almost exist as an abstract, similar to food, in American culture. They come from a shopping mall with federally mandated country of origin-identifying labels attached. I argue that such labeling serves to reinforce an otherness as to the lived experience of the humans responsible for garment production. Drawing heavily from Staszak (2008), I argue that the cognitive/cultural othering process is a powerful social dissonance when constructing the sweatshop imaginary. As Staszak shows, the hierarchical Western Self/Other binary devalues those who are identified as non-self. This devaluing then permits a lower standard of ethic because the Other is by default less-human (Staszak 2008). Themes of otherness will resurface in Chapter Four.

Chapter Four: Case Study of the Rana Plaza Factory Collapse

In this chapter, I examine the Rana Plaza factory collapse as a case study of injustice in globalized garment systems. In analyzing the Rana Plaza disaster, I aim to understand the social consequences of globalization in garment systems, especially as they pertain to women workers. This section is guided by theories of feminist political economy, with consideration to disproportionate injustices experienced by women. I will illustrate how the “comparative advantage of women’s disadvantage” (Kabeer and Mahmud 2004, 134, from Arizpe and Aranda 1981) has resulted in both exploitation of Bangladeshi women workers by Bangladeshi factory owners and foreign firms and alike, as well as a push towards female liberation and economic development in Bangladesh. First, I explore the past and present circumstances of Bangladesh’s readymade garment (RMG) industry in my case study analysis. Such circumstances, taken together with the political economic processes of globalized garment systems outlined in Chapter Two, will provide insight into how and why a tragedy of such large scale could occur as a matter of course in the garment provisioning supply chain in the United States.

Women Workers in the Bangladesh Readymade Garment Industry

In Chapter Two, I highlighted the neoliberal economic policies which catalyze and characterize globalization in the garment industry. I now turn to an examination of the impact of those policies on the lived experiences of women in the Bangladeshi RMG industry. To do so, I will first offer a brief history of textile and garment production in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has a long history of silk and cotton production and export. Raw Bengali silk and textiles proliferated in England's markets dating to the seventeenth century. (Murayama 2006) However, the modern era of Bangladesh's textile and garment industry is the central concern of this case study. In both the historical era of textile production and the modern era of RMG industry in Bangladesh, women served as the labor force to supply export markets with textiles and garments.

After gaining independence from Pakistan in 1971, Bangladesh's manufacturing industry followed familiar liberalization patterns. Jute, the primary export of the 1970s in Bangladesh, was decreasing in value on the global market. (Murayama 2006) To increase competitiveness and attract foreign investment, state-held firms shifted towards privatization.

The establishment of export processing zones, tax holidays, and economic policies highly amenable to foreign investment attracted the capital needed to proliferate Bangladesh's RMG sector. National-level policies, as well as a latent nimble-fingered labor force, made Bangladesh an attractive host for the emerging RMG export sector. The newly-established Multifiber Arrangement assured Bangladesh a place amongst global RMG industry competitors.

It is during this era that transnational companies colonized the factories of Bangladesh and provided initial technologies and knowledge to produce garments for the global market. Because these foreign firms retained the market connections and production capital, Bangladeshi RMG factories served as a finite link in the supply chain, with little potential for advancing along global networks.

Bangladeshi factories' limited linkages converged with weak infrastructure such as unstable power supply, subpar ports, and owner corruption, to posit the RMG industry of Bangladesh and its female labor force in a tenuous situation for the neoliberal forces of the post-MFA era. However, this era also spurred academic inquiry into the Bangladeshi RMG industry as a whole, as well as feminist analysis of the lived experiences of women workers in Bangladesh's garment factories. I refer to this research to situate and enrich my analysis of the Rana Plaza factory collapse.

According to Murayama (2006), in the years immediately prior to the expiration of the MFA, only 24.6 percent of Bangladesh's wage-labor force were women. Murayama (2006), as well as Khosla (2009), attribute this relatively low figure to constraining social customs, specifically the institution of *Purdah*, a religious mandate which proscribes women to remain behind the curtain of the home. The practice of *Purdah* secludes women to the home and restricts interaction with the opposite sex to immediate family members, effectively bounding women's spatial and social lives by the walls of their home. Upholding *Purdah* within the family unit represents greater social standing. Often the decision to leave the home to work in the factories comes at the cost of further social exclusion. Poor women are forced to choose between "pay or *Purdah*." (Murayama 2006, 64) Often, there is, initially, an element of defiance in a woman's decision to reject homebound isolation and work for wages in garment factories.

Remarkably, in some respects, the increased economic standing afforded by wage labor in garment factories can be leveraged to increase a woman's social status. For instance, an unmarried woman may use her salary to offer a larger dowry to prospective husbands, potentially

improving a woman's class status by marriage. (Khosla 2009) A working mother may leverage her pay to keep a female child in school for more years, thus improving the social access of the next generation of women in her family. (Khosla 2009) Further, the future earning potential of a female child may encourage her family to spend money on her healthcare, whereas previously daughters were seen as a liability, and investment in her healthcare or education often neglected.

Khosla (2009) enumerates ways in which employment in the RMG industry has served to strengthen women's individual identities in regards to greater social and economic participation. For instance, the process of traveling to a factory site, arranging the terms of employment, and participating in labor movements may serve to reinforce a woman's independence. Learning the urban dialect spoken in Dhaka, as well as the wearing of *salwar kameez*⁷ (as opposed to *saree*) signify modernity and foster confidence. However, Ahmed (2004) shows defying *Purdah* customs may lead to stigmatization, and diminished marriage prospects. Still, married women report less economic empowerment through RMG factory labor than their unmarried colleagues, as male heads of household control their income. (Akhter 2014)

Reviewing the extant literature on women factory workers in Bangladesh reveals a complex dynamic of benefit and risk. While women may liberate themselves from the isolation of *Purdah* and increase the spatiality and mobility of their lives, this mobility is often perceived⁸

⁷ *Salwar Kameeze* is a style of dress typical to South Asia consisting of two parts: the *salwar*, or pants, and *kameez*, or shirt/tunic. *Saree* is a traditional style of South Asia consisting of a long (typically 15 feet or greater) piece of fabric draped about the body.

⁸ Sexual attack is a constant threat due to weak or non-existent legal protections for women combined with sexist local customs. Women are reticent to report sexual assault for risk of damaging their *izzat*, or honor. (Absar 2002) Therefore, robust or reliable data on sexual assault experienced by Bangladeshi women factory workers while walking to and from factory sites are not available.

as dangerous. (Absar 2002) Women often cannot afford transportation to and from factory sites, and must walk miles to get to work and back home again. Women prefer to walk in large groups to protect themselves from assault and harassment. Absar's interviews with women factory workers report increased mental and physical distress resulting from the long walks after lengthy (often greater than 12 hours) shifts and also due to the constant fear of assault.

Absar's research showed negative health implications associated with factory labor in 100% of women workers including: "eye strain, headaches, backaches, cough, flu, fever, gastric problems, and general weakness." (Absar 2002, 301) Health consequences experienced by women factory workers are attributed to exceedingly long hours on their feet, inadequate rest time, unsanitary conditions, workplace stress, and poor nutrition. A study published in the *British Journal of Nutrition* found an "alarmingly" high rate of Vitamin D deficiency in Bangladeshi women factory workers. (Islam et al 2008) Osteoporosis and early menopause was indicated as a consequence of Vitamin D deficiency in Bangladeshi women factory workers. The authors conclude long hours indoors led to malnutrition and associated pathologies in these women.

The aim of the preceding subchapter is to illuminate the complex dynamics women experience by engaging in wage labor in Bangladeshi RMG factories. While factory work can alleviate some economic burdens experienced by poor women and improve their social standing and visibility, numerous threats exist for factory work. The remainder of this chapter focuses on threats of serious injury or death as part of factory work by analyzing Bangladesh RMG factory disasters. Drawing from peer-reviewed literature as well as media coverage of RMG industrial

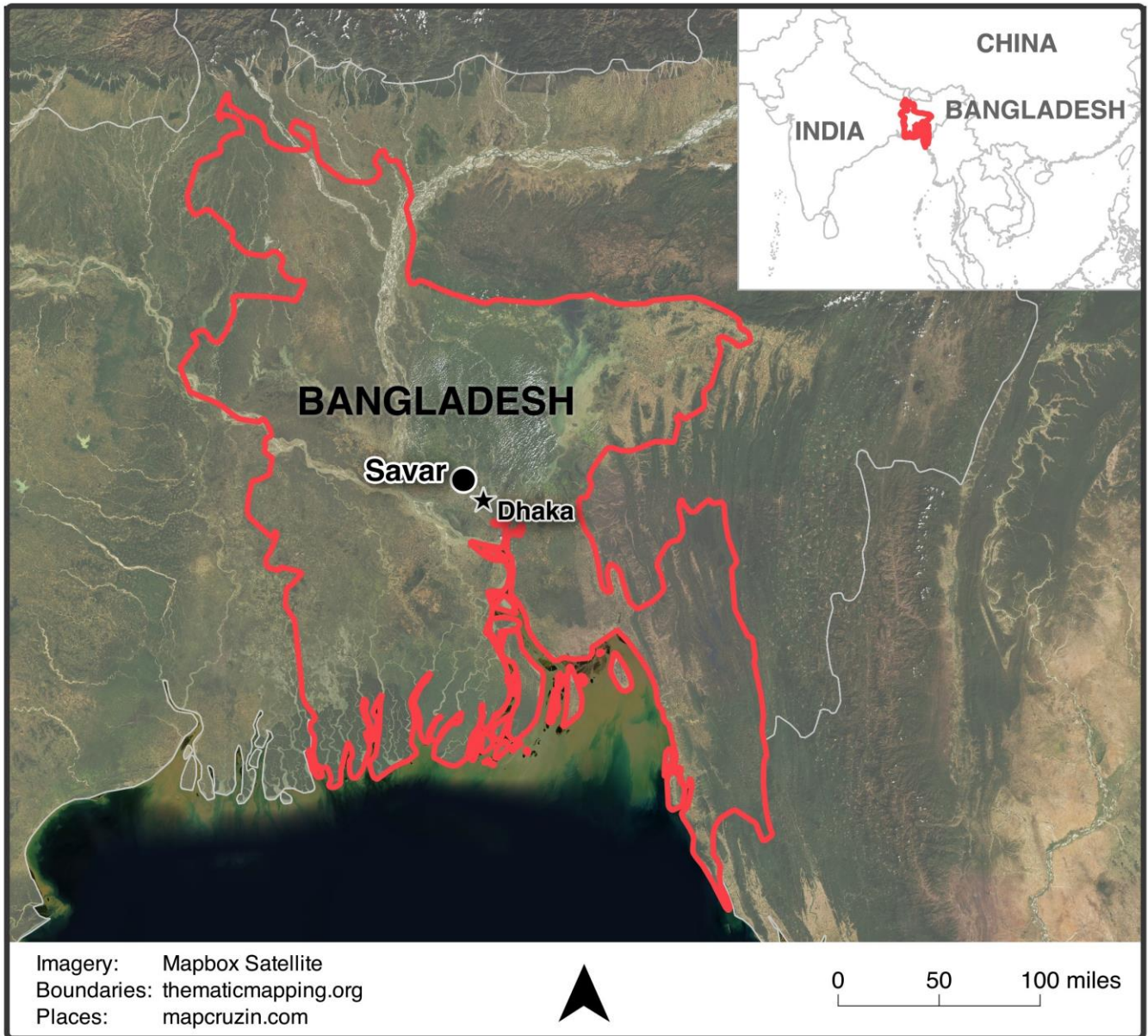
disasters, and non-governmental organization (NGO) reports, I aim to illustrate life and death consequence for impoverished garment factory workers in Bangladesh.

Rana Plaza Factory Collapse

On Thursday April 24, 2013 an unprecedented garment industry disaster, the worst in Bangladesh's history (Stefanicki 2013, from Akhter 2014), occurred at the Rana Plaza compound in Savar, Bangladesh, an industrial hub 24 kilometers northwest of the capital city Dhaka.

Figure 4.1 shows the location of Savar in Bangladesh.

Figure 4.1 Map for Savar Bangladesh



Map Credit: Ben Kane

The first and second floors of the eight-story Rana Plaza building housed shops, offices and a bank. The upper floors were comprised of garment factories, subcontractors filling orders from suppliers for Western firms. An additional, unpermitted, ninth story was being constructed at the time of the collapse.

The previous day workers noticed cracks in the concrete pillars of the building. Municipal engineers were notified and the cracks were documented. The building was evacuated, and the businesses therein closed for the day. The owner of the building, Sohel Rana, a businessman with ties to the ruling political party, insisted the building was safe for the factories to continue operations the following day, despite the opposite being declared by municipal engineers. The offices, shops, and bank situated on floors one and two remained closed the next day. (Akhter 2014)

However the pressures of the fast fashion system demand rapid turnaround times, as detailed in Chapter Two, and do not allow for missed production days. The factories had deadlines to meet, and factory owners demanded work continue. When workers expressed concerns for their safety the following morning, the owner of the fifth-floor factory EtherTex threatened a months' pay dockage (Grinter 2013; Akhter 2014) if they did not return to their posts. Just after 8 am, the structure failed and the building collapsed under its own weight. 1,134 people were killed. Three times that many were seriously injured.

As Ahmed (2004) shows, and Akhter (2014) reaffirms, in the case of Rana Plaza, women were less likely to protest unsafe conditions than men. Akhter (2014) reports most of the men

employed at Rana Plaza factories remained outside in protest of the building's unsafe condition. Women returned to work inside the doomed building under threat of violence, harassment, and lost wages.

Convergent forces pressed upon Rana Plaza that day, much heavier than the combined weight of the garment factory workspaces. The subsequent investigation into the collapse revealed that Sohel Rana had circumvented proper permitting in obtaining permission from Savar's mayor (to whom he was politically connected) to build the compound. Proper authorities were not involved in the planning of Rana Plaza, and claim Sohel Rana and the mayor of Savar had no authority to approve and construct the building, which was situated on an emptied drainage pond – a highly unstable building site. Further, the upper four stories were unpermitted. (Reinecke and Donaghey 2015) Even more, the Plaza's architect said the building plans had not been designed for industrial use. This failure of the local governments to protect workers and enforce safety codes, as part of the permitting process, combined with the economic pressures borne of the neoliberal free market system to produce the deadliest garment industry and structural disaster in Bangladesh's history. Appendix 1 shows a diagram of the Rana Plaza factory collapse.

Tragically, five months prior to the Rana Plaza collapse, a factory fire killed 112 garment workers at the Tazreen Fashions factory in Dhaka. Like Rana Plaza, auditors had alerted management to safety code violations, yet manufacturing activities continued and workers remained at their perilous posts. The systemic failures of garment factory auditing controls to protect workers as standard practice will be examined in more detail later in this chapter. The

Tazreen Factory Fire invites undeniable comparisons to the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire a century prior.

The Tazreen Factory Fire attracted neither strong American outcry nor sweeping domestic industry reforms, and the Bangladeshi government did little to prevent the Rana Plaza disaster. What can explain the lack of empathy? I refer once more to the geographic Other as defined by Staszak (2008). Bangladeshi factory workers are at an empathy disadvantage by spatial diffusion, separated physically and socially, by too many magnitudes of difference, from the American consumer. The result of this othering is an absence of academic and cultural criticism for social crises such as Tazreen and Rana Plaza, despite the direct ties to US consumption (see Figure 4.1). Further in this chapter, I will explore the dimensions of the response to Bangladeshi garment industry disasters.

Table 4.1 shows 29 North American and European firms linked to the Rana Plaza collapse disaster.

Table 4.1 Firms With Direct Links to the Rana Plaza Factory Collapse Disaster

Corporation Name	Headquarters
Adler Modemärkte	Germany
Ascena Retail	US
Benetton	Italy
Bonmarché	France
C&A Foundation	Switzerland
Camaïeu	France
Carrefour	France
Cato Fashions	US
The Children's Place	US
El Corte Inglés	Spain
Grabal Alok (Store 21)	UK
Iconix (Lee Cooper)	US
Inditex	Spain
JC Penney	US
Kik	Germany
KANZ/Kids Fashion Group	Germany
LC Waikiki	Turkey
Loblaw	Canada
LPP S.A.	Poland
Mango	Spain
Manifattura Corona	Italy
Mascot	US
Matalan	UK
NKD	UK
Premier Clothing	UK
Primark	Ireland
PWT (Texman)	Denmark
Robe Di Kappa	Italy
Yes Zee	Italy

Source: Clean Clothes Campaign (2014)

Transnational apparel corporations such as those listed in table 4.1 routinely obscure and deny their involvement with Bangladeshi factories. However, despite TNC denials of involvement, collective responsibilities remain. Young refers to these collective responsibilities as political responsibility, differentiating between perceived responsibility (blame) and legal responsibility (liability). (Young 2003) Political responsibility refers to a whole-system view of accountability, integrating governments, institutions, and individuals at all nodes of the supply chain. Young's work with the anti-sweatshop movement will resurface in the discussion section of my research.

Young describes responsibility along three metrics; connection, power, and privilege. Here I apply her definitions to the specific case of Rana Plaza.

Connection – Institutions and individuals are responsible for damage, injury, and loss of life at Rana Plaza by direct connection to the goods produced there. Transnational corporation brands who profit from the sale of Rana Plaza-produced goods, retail consumers as their end user, and the structures of market governance which control the flow of goods produced at Rana Plaza all hold indubitable connection to the disaster which occurred there. Responsibility is transmitted by this connection.

Power – As identified in Chapter Three, Transnational corporations direct the global garment system. Governments and supragovernmental trade institutions can legislate and enforce factory safety codes. Consumers can be influential, albeit to a lesser extent, by way of purchasing power. Nevertheless, the opacity and complexity of supply chain

sourcing prevails over consumer purchasing agency in the modern American market. As is, consumers simply cannot know about the factory conditions where their garment purchases come from.

Privilege – Political responsibility addresses structural injustices, and as Young asserts, “Where there are structural injustices, these usually produce not only victims of injustice but privileged beneficiaries.” (Young 2003, 43) Rana Plaza remains a case study in the politics of privilege. Young goes on to say “Persons who benefit from structural inequalities have a special moral responsibility to join in correcting them – not because they are to blame but because they are able to adapt to changed circumstances without suffering serious deprivation.” (Young 2003, 43) Transnational corporations benefit from the global garment status quo by netting huge profits. Host governments benefit by reinforcing power relations with export economies. Consumers benefit by availing themselves of access to new, inexpensive fashions and textile goods. Viewing Rana Plaza through a lens of privilege illuminates the hierarchical binary of export/import power politics.

Disasters such as the Rana Plaza factory collapse should serve to increase and improve monitoring of garment factories in developing economies and to protect workers from the deadly mechanisms of globalism. However the threat of cut-and-run (when a retail firm abruptly shifts production orders from one factory to the next in favor of lowest labor costs) dominates in less-developed countries if transnationals find the new standards unfavorable to profit maximization.

Again, the politics of privilege negotiates the complex interrelationships of globalized garment systems.

In the aftermath of Rana Plaza, factory owners were squeezed yet again as they implemented stricter codes and higher wages. The evidence from fast fashion suggests this squeeze will be passed down to workers who in turn must produce ever more goods – and quickly. Factories must continue to demonstrate optimal value to remain competitive, and ultimately wage increases and code enforcement could lead to further risks to workers if their already stretched-to-the-limit productivity quotas must increase, or if they lose their jobs altogether. The response to Rana Plaza failed to address some of the fundamental vulnerabilities of the globalized garment system, which produced such disasters in the first place.

Rana Plaza—The Response

While media coverage of the Tazreen Factory fire failed to mobilize the attention of the world, the images disseminating from Rana Plaza were impossible to ignore. The ruins of Rana Plaza and the accruing human toll demanded a response from governmental bodies and garment industry stakeholders worldwide. I will focus on two of the resultant programs created in response to the Rana Plaza disaster, The Rana Plaza Arrangement and Donors Trust Fund, as well as the Accord on Fire and Building Safety in Bangladesh. Various perspectives on the efficacy of these responses will be discussed, with consideration to both victims of the disaster as well as towards the advancement of a safer and more equitable labor environment for Bangladeshi garment workers.

The Rana Plaza Arrangement (the Arrangement) is the remuneration program enacted to raise funds and distribute compensation payments to victims of the Rana Plaza disaster. The ILO serves as the neutral coordination chair of the Arrangement, and standards in accordance with ILO Employee Injury Benefits Convention no. 121 are applied as guiding principles to determine victims' claims. The Arrangement is established as a cooperative scheme, with representation from agencies of government, trade associations, workers federations, TNC retail brands, and non-governmental organizations. The composition of the Arrangement Coordination Committee is given in figure 4.3. The Rana Plaza Arrangement seeks to receive, evaluate, and determine claims by Rana Plaza victims and dependents to compensate for medical bills, lost wages, burial expenses, and other associated financial damages wrought by the Rana Plaza factory collapse.

Figure 4.3 Rana Plaza Arrangement Coordination Committee

Ministry of Labour and Employment—Bangladesh Government
Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers' Association (BGMEA)—Bangladesh garment industry
Bangladesh Employers Federation (BEF)—Bangladesh garment industry
National Coordination Committee for Workers' Education (NCCWE)—Bangladesh workers' union
IndustriALL Bangladesh Council —Bangladesh chapter of global federation of labor unions
Bangladesh Institute of Labour Studies (BILS)—NGO (Bangladesh)
IndustriALL Global Union—Federation of worldwide labor unions
Bonmarché—Retail brand (France)
El Corte Ingles—Retail Brand (Spain)
Loblaw—Retail brand (UK)
Primark—Retail brand (Ireland)
Clean Clothes Campaign—NGO (UK)

Source: <http://www.ranaplaza-arrangement.org/mou/governance> (2014)

The Rana Plaza Arrangement framework established the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund (the Fund) in January 2014, with the ILO acting as sole trustee. The Fund was instituted to receive and distribute funds for all claims from the Rana Plaza disaster, at a cost of US \$30 million. (Clean Clothes Campaign 2014) Contribution to the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund is entirely voluntary, and open to any corporation, government, organization, or individual to contribute. As of March 2015 the Fund had received US \$21 million, \$9 million less than needed to fully compensate all victims of the Rana Plaza factory collapse. (Clean Clothes

Campaign 2015) The Rana Plaza Arrangement Coordination Committee did not establish any minimum payment levels for TNC brands with direct linkages to the Rana Plaza factory collapse disaster, nor did it create a metric for brands to determine their specific responsibilities to the Fund. According to the Trade Advisory Union Committee (TUAC) to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Fund is (constituted as such):

...an agreement among stakeholders that all brands with confirmed links to Rana Plaza and/or significant ties to Bangladesh, would be asked to make a significant contribution. Donations were supposed to reflect the ability of each brand to pay, their relationship to Rana Plaza and the links they have to Bangladesh. This approach has so far failed. Companies have either made donations smaller than the amount required, or have failed to make any contribution at all. (TUAC OECD Watch 2015, 2)

At the time of this writing,⁹ the second anniversary of Rana Plaza was approaching. To inform Western consumers of TNC failures to adequately compensate Rana Plaza victims, Rana Plaza Arrangement Coordination Committee members IndustriALL Global and Clean Clothes Campaign have leveraged the upcoming anniversary into a social media campaign strategy. The #payup campaign has published reports and mobilized social media activism enumerating the failures of TNC brands to meet their financial responsibility – as determined by the Rana Plaza Arrangement. Several brands have been targeted by the #payup campaign, Benetton being a primary focus. The official brand statement by Benetton minimizes their sourcing relationship with Rana Plaza, despite proprietary garment labels being found in the ruins of the factory.

⁹ Please see the conclusion section of my thesis for a third anniversary update on the Rana Plaza response.

Benetton responded to the increased scrutiny by promising a contribution to the Fund before the two-year anniversary on April 24, 2015, but has yet to make an installment.¹⁰

In addition to Benetton, #payup calls out Wal-Mart and The Children's Place for making too-small contributions to the Fund. Wal-Mart, the world's largest retailer with \$486 billion in 2014 revenue, paid \$1 million towards the Rana Plaza Donors Trust Fund. Wal-Mart was also strongly connected to the Tazreen Factory Fire – it is charged with being the single largest buyer from Tazreen. (<http://www.cleanclothes.org/news/press-releases:2013:04:18:walmart-refuses-to-compensate-tazreen-fire-victims>)

Wal-Mart has not made any known contributions to victims of the Tazreen Factory Fire. Figure 4.4 shows a statement from Wal-Mart on the Tazreen factory fire:

Figure 4.4 – Wal-Mart Statement on Tazreen Factory Fire

“The Tazreen factory was no longer authorized to produce merchandise for Wal-Mart. A supplier subcontracted work to this factory without authorization and in direct violation of our policies. Today, we have terminated the relationship with that supplier. The fact that this occurred is extremely troubling to us, and we will continue to work across the apparel industry to improve fire safety education and training in Bangladesh.”

Source: (<http://news.walmart.com/news-archive/2012/11/26/walmart-statement-on-fire-at-bangladesh-garment-factory>)

¹⁰ As of the third anniversary of the Rana Plaza factory collapse disaster, Benetton has paid in total 1.6 million USD. Clean Clothes Campaign, a foremost NGO in the Rana Plaza aftermath, has criticized Benetton's slow response time.

Wal-Mart has attempted to distance itself from Rana Plaza as well. Figure 4.5 shows a Wal-Mart statement on the Rana Plaza factory collapse.

Figure 4.5 – Wal-Mart Statement on Rana Plaza Factory Collapse

“While we did not have production at Rana Plaza at the time of the building collapse, our contribution (to the victims’ fund) underlines our longstanding commitment to raise standards in our supply chain in Bangladesh.”

Source: (<http://www.nytimes.com/2014/03/29/business/international/3-retailers-give-to-aid-bangladesh-workers.html>)

Documents recovered from the Rana Plaza site show a jeans order placed by a Wal-Mart supplier at the EtherTex factory on Rana Plaza’s fifth floor in May 2012. Wal-Mart’s statements on Rana as well as Tazreen attempt similar ideological distancing. Wal-Mart and other brands rely on the plausible deniability afforded them via the indirect sourcing model within the subcontracting system of globalized garment production. This deniability excuses brands from paying compensation, and helps to avoid bad publicity.

The Rana Plaza Arrangement attempts to compensate workers and their dependents for deaths and injuries sustained in the Rana Plaza factory collapse. The crescendo of industrial disaster in Bangladesh calls for systemic reform rooted in resilience concepts that acknowledge the complex interrelationships and roles of garment industry stakeholders in Bangladesh. The proposed Bangladesh Accord on Fire and Building Safety endeavors to coalesce these various aspects into a singular program to ensure worker safety.

The Rana Plaza disaster presented solid evidence that contemporary factory auditing schemes do not work – Phantom Apparel and New Wave Style, located on the third and sixth floors of Rana Plaza respectively, were both registered factories in the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI) database.¹¹ However, BSCI audits do not include investigation of the structural integrity of buildings themselves. From BSCI’s website: “BSCI social audits were performed in the two factories; however audits do not include building construction or integrity. BSCI therefore relies on the local authorities to implement and control national building regulations.” (<http://www.bsci-intl.org/news-events/statement-rana-plaza-building-collapse-bangladesh>) Thus, BSCI oversight means little and was very clearly ineffective in preventing the tragedy at Rana Plaza. Taken together, the statements of Wal-Mart and BSCI, as well as the unpermitted and poor construction of Rana Plaza in the first place, are matters of serious concern. (BSCI 2013; Parker 2013)

The Accord on Building and Fire Safety in Bangladesh (the Accord) attempts to reconcile the complexities of disparate multistakeholder interests in Bangladesh’s readymade garment sector (RMG). As with the Rana Plaza Arrangement, the ILO serves as a neutral chair to the Accord, and ILO Better Work standards are applied as guiding principles. The Accord unites trade associations and labor unions to produce a common framework of standards for factory

¹¹ Business Social Compliance Initiative is a voluntary factory auditing initiative of the European Foreign Trade Association (FTA). Created in 2003, BSCI maintains a framework of social compliance standards in efforts to delineate auditing processes for TNC brands wishing to source from developing or newly industrialized countries. BSCI adopts ILO Better Work conventions as standard, and contracts with companies to perform checklist-style audits at participating factories.

safety. The Accord dispenses of prior unilateral auditing schemes in which TNC brands essentially controlled their own factory inspections.

The Accord binds its signatory TNC brands for a five-year period, protecting Bangladesh's RMG industry and worker livelihoods from TNC cut-and-run. During that time, legal liability holds TNC brands and signatory factories jointly accountable for factory safety, and provides factory-level workers' representation during inspections. Appendix 2 shows a list of signatories to the Accord on Building and Fire Safety in Bangladesh.

The Accord coordinates Bangladesh's garment industry stakeholders in an unprecedented way. Independent inspections under the Accord began in December 2013, with 30 audits conducted in 10 factories. (<http://www.cleanclothes.org/ua/2013/accord>) The Accord has since conducted inspections at 1,103 of the 1,467 registered factories. However, the scale of the required effort is daunting – Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly estimate between 5,000-6,000 garment factories participating in the RMG sector in Bangladesh. (Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly 2014) Clearly, the discrepancy between the two figures shows that most garment factories (and the workers therein) are unregistered with the Accord.

Further, acceptance of the Accord is not universal amongst all TNC apparel brands with major sourcing activities in Bangladesh. A somewhat divisive post-Rana Plaza initiative, the Alliance for Bangladesh Worker Safety (the Alliance), aims to improve garment factory inspection systems to ensure more secure work environments in Bangladesh. The Alliance is supported primarily by US TNC brands, notably mega-retailers Wal-mart and The Gap, as well

as the government of Bangladesh. Several key differences characterize the two initiatives, despite their purportedly similar missions. Notably, the Alliance does not institute neutral ILO oversight or ILO standards, whereas the Accord does institute ILO oversight and standards. The Alliance remains controlled solely by TNC retail brands. This has earned the Accord NGO favor over the Alliance, most notably from Clean Clothes Campaign and IndustriALL. Worker representation during inspections is not afforded by the Alliance, and inspections are carried out by direct employees of TNC brands, whereas Accord inspectors are independent consultants. A major point of departure with Accord-favoring NGOs is transparency in reporting. Whereas both the Accord and the Alliance pledge to publish periodic progress reports, the Accord publishes factory inspection reports, making publicly available the site inspectors' comments regarding individual workplaces.

Academic commentary surrounding the Accord/Alliance divide ranges from commendation to criticism. Dara O'Rourke of UC Berkeley and founder of the GoodGuide for consumers (discussed in further detail in Chapter Five) commends the work being done on both sides. From the April 22, 2014 edition of nytimes.com: "The accord and the alliance are taking on the lowest end of a low-road industry," he said. "They're trying to bring up the worst garment conditions in the world. What they're doing is really, really hard."

http://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/22/business/international/battling-for-a-safer-bangladesh.html?_r=0

The New York University Stern Center for Business and Human Rights has published a comprehensive report addressing the RMG sector in Bangladesh in the post-Rana Plaza era. In

it, the researchers acknowledge both the Accord and the Alliance for their important roles in garment factory oversight as well as their economic and political clout:

...the Accord and the Alliance can play a valuable role in initiating this discussion. Taken together, the initiatives encompass more than 175 global brands and retailers and a significant portion of Bangladesh's export-oriented garment sector. What does not feel like a safe conversation between an individual buyer and an individual supplier becomes much more so when a group of buyers and suppliers address the problem collectively. (Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly 2014, 39)

However, concerns remain. Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly (2014) assert the necessity of even greater systemic reform, inclusive of addressing supply-chain weaknesses inherent in the subcontracting system and therefore more wholly integrative of the 'universe' of factories engaged in Bangladesh's RMG sector. As such, neither the Accord nor the Alliance address what Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly (2014) label "indirect sourcing" models employed by TNC retail brands (with or without brands' knowledge/consent). Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly (2014) also task the government of Bangladesh with reclamation of control over the RMG industry. This directive comes fraught with political tension. *The Virginia Quarterly Review* estimates ten percent of Bangladesh's Parliament are themselves factory owners. (Motlagh "The Ghosts of Rana Plaza," *Virginia Quarterly Review*, Spring 2014)

Domestic reforms have manifested in Bangladesh post-Rana Plaza. The National Tripartite Plan of Action on Fire Safety in the RMG Sector (NAP) seeks to protect garment workers from future disasters. Like the Accord and the Alliance, NAP concentrates on inspections and remediation of unsafe factories. Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly identify NAP's

foremost value as the wider network of factories it encompasses. (Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly 2014)

To conclude, all three inspection-based initiatives share deficiencies. None of the programs include a definitive framework for allocation of capital and funds necessary to remediate factory safety hazards as identified by the inspections process. Neither the Accord nor the Alliance obliges its signatory brands to fund factory repairs; both agendas include language which direct capital burdens towards factory owners. Factories deemed unsafe are proscribed from supplying signatory brands until repairs are made. Such a catch-22 does not serve the higher mission of protecting workers – shuttered factories equal lost income, and expensive regulatory burdens could discourage factory owner from program participation entirely.

Further, there is another point of weakness inherent in any garment industry reform which focuses singularly on supply-side strengthening and remediation. The initiatives identified in Chapter Four ignore a critical element of globalized garment systems – that of consumer demand by privileged economies. The aim of the preceding section is to illustrate the human health consequences exported by reliance on a globalized garment system. I bring forward salient themes identified so far to the next chapter – by examining the intersection of privilege politics with garment provisioning in the US, and in so doing, identifying efforts towards localism in US garment systems.

Chapter Five: Movements Towards Localism in Globalized Garment Systems

In this chapter I will present critical ideas as elucidated in previous sections with the intention of viewing contemporary attention and effort towards localism in US garment systems at both the academic and cultural level – as well as noting important moments of crossover between the two. I raise questions about a systemic approach to sustainability in garment systems, in hopes of promoting a more equitable and sustainable way forward for garment provisioning in the United States. I also highlight potential points of leverage – nodes of progress from which to extend and solidify a burgeoning local garment movement. I address gaps in the research, and work towards bridging theoretical and practical deficits in understanding. As the research towards localism in garments largely does not yet exist, I intend to work from identified leverage points towards a conceptual framework for future expansion.

As seen in Chapter One, local food system research is somewhat advanced in its characterization of food production, food commodities, and food retailing spaces as idiosyncratic place-based constructs. (Blake et al 2010) It is my intention to leverage this expansiveness of localism as typified by local food system research to explore potential application to local garment systems, with consideration towards the complex realities of the globalized status quo.

Academic Efforts Towards Localism in Garment Systems

Academic attention has yet to turn a local lens towards garment systems. While the analysis and critical interpretations of local foods abound in the literature, an understanding of garments using a framework of localism is primarily discussed in media reporting, NGO campaigning, and apparel brand marketing. What is possible then is to apply extant local food system literature with current cultural efforts towards localism in garments to produce a platform for study, a foundation from which to direct thought and practice towards a re-visioning of garment systems in the United States.

The crescendo of local foods as cultural construct and academic theory has been most successful in assigning meaning to food commodities. Geographic representation is embedded within the very notion of local – individual experiences constitute local, consumers' cognitive maps define the boundaries of local. The result is ambiguity in said meaning, in both theory and practice.

In their research, Zepeda and Leviten-Reid (2004) found wide variance in spatial conceptions of local foods. However, as their study demonstrates, local is universally framed as a positive attribute. (Zepeda and Leviten-Reid 2004) Ultimately, while no one can prove what local is, goodness is implied. This goodness is important, as consumption is ever-increasingly pitched as a political act. (Bryant and Goodman 2003) Clearly, alternative modes of consumption are sought in privileged economies by consumers wishing to buy into the assumed goodness inherent of a product marketed as local.

Another concept emergent in local food system research, visibility, may have important implications for local garments. I suggest that ideas around visibility/invisibility, as presented in local food system research, relate directly to the impetus towards greater transparency in global garment supply chains.

Jackson et al (2009) explore the intersection of meaning and morality in the chicken supply chain. When interviewing a buyer from the chicken commodity system, he (the buyer) admits he would encounter greater difficulty in his position if he were forced to confront the reality that "...chicken production is a process 'where something dies'." (Jackson et al 2009, 15) The benefit of clandestinity is clear: "...the scale of the industry and the fact that it takes place behind closed doors allow producers and consumers not to dwell on these potentially unpalatable aspects of the industry." (Jackson et al 2009, 16) The benefits of invisibility serve to preserve the globalized garment trade in its current form as well. An approach to counteract garment supply chain invisibility is the study and praxis of supply chain transparency.

Transparency in the garment supply chain is a critical consideration in any discursive attempts at improving social equity in garment provisioning. Egels-Zandén et al define supply-chain transparency as simply, "disclosure of information." (Egels-Zandén et al 2015, 2) In their article, the authors examine the case of the Swedish denim apparel brand, Nudie Jeans Co. The authors note that "...transparency is currently in vogue and is presented as the solution to numerous problems facing both public and private organizations." (Egels-Zandén et al 2015, 4)

Transparency in its idealized form redirects information to external stakeholders (such as governments, consumers, investors, activist groups), offsetting power differentials in supply chain networks. In their research, the authors denote the multiplicity of meaning and praxis surrounding transparency in supply chains. Such multiplicity, compounded by the unilateral nature of reporting and enforcing corporate transparency commitments, has produced amorphous ideas surrounding supply chain transparency. The authors propose a three-dimensional definition of transparency to structure and direct both scholarly inquiry as well as corporate and governmental policy,

- Naming suppliers involved with production of brands' goods (traceability)
- Providing information about social and environmental conditions at these suppliers' sites
- Examining brands' purchasing practices from suppliers

As such, corporate and NGO transparency initiatives often address one, or two, of the authors' proposed dimensions, but not all three. In the case of Nudie Jeans Co, the authors analyze the brand's aim to "become the most transparent company in the world." (Egels-Zandén et al 2015, 8) The authors note the absence of any prior scholarly inquiry on assessment of corporate transparency policy and praxis. The Nudie report revealed the brand's transparency policies supported two of three dimensions of transparency, but Nudie did not disclose purchasing practices as part of their transparency reporting. Nudie was also somewhat discretionary in its transparency reporting; Nudie published audit summaries instead of full factory audit reports, allowing the brand to control the information disclosed. The authors'

findings highlight a central concern raised by transparency research; that transparency policy and practice gives one perspective rather than the complete story. (Egels-Zandén et al 2015) The authors do make a strong statement about Nudie's transparency attempts: "Although there were cases of selective disclosure, it is important to point out that Nudie in the vast majority of cases disclosed all available information." (Egels-Zandén et al 2015, 17)

The authors discuss a potentially negative outcome of corporate transparency policy and praxis, which highlights the necessity of garment system reform to more wholly connect stakeholder interests. Cautioning against a panacea effect for economically privileged consumers, the authors warn against transparency attempts being the end instead of a means toward improved environmental and social justice in global garment systems. The authors argue that true transparency connects stakeholders at each node of the supply chain, from fiber producers to factory workers to consumers to brand executives. Such connection is facilitated by equitable information sharing, as all stakeholders should have access to the same comprehensive brand data. Importantly, the authors also recommend that corporate transparency policy assessments be inclusive of the resultant factory floor realities of transparency praxis. (Egels-Zandén et al 2015)

Returning to Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly (2014), their report proposes strategies for improving transparency in sourcing relationships in globalized garment systems. Their research highlights the improved transparency available via direct sourcing relationships between buyers and supplying factories. Direct sourcing favors trust-based and collaborative relationships, and is most often favored by brands with emphasis on quality and reputation, versus lowest prices.

Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly cite Fast Retailing inc. and their brand Uniqlo as an example of leadership in direct sourcing models. Direct sourcing models are characterized by long-term order forecasts, connecting buyers and suppliers together for best outcomes, and eradicating the threat of cut-and-run. In this model of direct sourcing, buyers are more strongly invested in their supplying factories, which in turn promotes greater social and environmental compliance.

(Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly 2014)

Academic attention towards transparency in globalized garment systems is encouraging; such discussions may serve as an entrance to examinations across disciplines. Presently, transparency research appears most often as the province of business departments. I would like to illuminate the geographic implications of transparency research, especially in the post-Rana Plaza era of globalized garment systems.

As consumers, NGO groups, as well as TNC brands, work within their spheres towards a more transparent system of garment provisioning. The geographic realities of a garments' life cycle and the incredibly complex pathways traveled from raw materials to processing to point of sale and then to firsthand consumption can articulate relationships among people and resources. Transparency efforts bring spatial materiality into focus, connecting consumers' garment purchases to a place beyond the shop shelves. The moment of transparency calls upon consumers' geographic imaginary, invoking deeper understandings of the people and places from which a garment item is constructed.

Another promising academic overlap between food and fashion exists within the GoodGuide.

GoodGuide was founded in 2007 by Dara O'Rourke, a University of California Berkeley professor and supply chain sustainability expert. Using a proprietary ratings system structured broadly into classifications for health, environment, and society, GoodGuide assesses approximately 1,000 indicators to arrive at a score between 0-10 for products and brands of everyday US consumer interactions. At the time of this writing GoodGuide ranks food products, personal care products, and household chemicals as its central focus, however, GoodGuide also assigns ratings to 182 apparel brands.

GoodGuide aims to rate the top 80 percent of products and brands within these areas of focus. GoodGuide ratings draw upon respective industry standards for chemical risk, life cycle assessment, nutritional evaluation, as well as a firm's' data availability (transparency). As demonstrated throughout this work, no standardization exists for measuring local, and as such, GoodGuide makes no explicit reference to localism in its rating metrics. However, by assessing greenhouse gas emissions, water pollution policies, as well as corporate social responsibility policies and practices, many of the concerns localism aims to address are analyzed and scored to promote more informed consumer decision making.

This informed consumer practice is the essence of my argument. Because the boundaries of localism are undefined and the space of local remains amorphous, a more informed consideration of garment consumption from a place-based perspective is needed to ameliorate

the social and environmental damages innate to globalized garment systems. (Good Guide 2015)
(<http://www.goodguide.com/about/methodologies>)

In its crossover between academic and cultural action, GoodGuide represents the whole-systems thinking necessary to shift apparel provisioning out of the current crisis state of globalization and towards a framework of equitable sustainability. The undefined boundaries of localism accommodate this systemic consideration, creating possibilities for a new, inclusive framework of localism. This new inclusive localism will resurface later in this chapter as well as the concluding discussion of this research.

GoodGuide product and brand ratings can be accessed online at <http://www.goodguide.com> as well as via mobile app for iPhone. The mobile version of GoodGuide offers a barcode scanning feature – streamlining the product search process and facilitating more informed decision-making moments within retail spaces. While the app proffers flexible maneuverability of information procurement, [goodguide.com](http://www.goodguide.com) gives greater detail and insight to a brand or product rating. Appendix 3 shows a screen capture of GoodGuide’s highest-ranking apparel brand Patagonia. (Good Guide 2015)

Cultural Efforts Towards Localism in Garment Systems

I will now explore contemporary cultural actions which promote increased localism in garment systems in the United States. While much of this effort is not explicit in its intended localism, I am illustrating the localism inferred within the effort, borrowing from the impetus of local food system research to consider place in consumption. I have identified dimensions of

cultural efforts spanning industry, consumer, and NGO activities, again framing and integrating a wider view of the systemic approach needed for a meaningful revision of US garment system provision. Viewed respectively, these efforts remain niche. When consumer demand, watchdog groups, and earnest industry attempts to increase sustainability in garment systems are woven together with even incipient academic attention towards localism, cultural sea change comes into view.

As identified in Chapter Two, sweatshops re-emerged as an object of social concern with the Nike scandals of the 1990s. Media reports exposed substandard wages and unjust working conditions in Indonesian factories contracted by the brand to produce its iconic sports footwear.

Such media attention mobilized US consumers to call for better conditions for factory workers – it is from this mobilization that United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) was born. United Students Against Sweatshops represents the collective leverage of college students to influence their respective universities to source licensed apparel from factories meeting social and environmental responsibility standards. United Students Against Sweatshops founded the Workers’ Rights Consortium (WRC) as an independent factory auditing organization to monitor the condition of global supply chain factories producing goods for affiliate universities. To date, USAS activities have influenced 181 US and Canadian colleges and universities to sign on as affiliates of WRC.

Western Washington University is a WRC participant. WRC participation means, amongst other things, WWU discloses licensee factories names and locations to WRC for review

and auditing. As stated in WRC documents, "...through participating in the WRC a university sends a strong message to all concerned parties – students, faculty, licensees and others – that the university is committed to effective code enforcement and to ensuring that the university's licensing operations have a positive impact in the factories where logo goods are produced."

<http://www.workersrights.org/faq.asp> (Workers Rights Consortium 2015)

Western Washington University's participation in WRC illustrates the reconceptualized possibilities for localism in garment systems – connecting spatially diffuse institutions via policies and praxis. By way of campus activism, overseas factory workers involved in the production of WWU logo goods are afforded a layer of protection from unjust conditions. This new version of global localism – glocalism – extends to the campus retailing experience and infuses a garment with information and meaning. Consumer choice is strengthened by this information and supply chain connections are brought into view.

Young commends the strength of the anti-sweatshop movement in its forward thinking approach. Rather than seek redress for damages caused by structural processes responsible for industrial disasters, the anti-sweatshop movement seeks to reform the system (and underlying relationships) which facilitate disasters. (Young 2003) The case of WWU's participation with WRC demonstrates this systemic approach. Rather than isolate one element of globalized garment systems, for instance, a specific apparel brand, USAS, leverages its influence (as member-students of WWU) to address garment retailing policies and praxis from a whole-systems and forward-looking perspective.

It is important to consider industry-level efforts towards localism in garment systems. These efforts perhaps most closely resemble localism in food – and, again perhaps, will be most palatable to consumer understanding – they serve as a point of entry to broader garment systems revisioning. Highlighted industry efforts include producers and retailers engaged in garment systems activities seeking to avoid the current globalized status quo. Again, localism is more implicit than overtly stated, and I wish to invoke the consideration of place innate to local food system research and local foods consumer moments to expand discussion.

One innovative response to globalized garment systems exists as Muses Conscious Fashion Studio. Located in Seattle, Muses operates as a non-profit organization, serving the Seattle refugee population with education, job training, and employment opportunities in the garment manufacturing sector. (<http://www.seattlemuses.com/>) Muses has served women refugees from Burma, Mongolia, and Democratic Republic of Congo. Muses trains workers in various garment production skill areas, and operates a small-scale sewing factory available for contract. The impact of Muses' effort extends beyond its humanitarian mission – by engaging in garment production and creating a skilled labor force, Muses creates greater sustainable apparel industry potential in the Seattle region. As identified in Chapter Three, the global garment supply chain is highly segregated along boundaries of development – design and marketing is largely the provenance of affluent economies, and production and manufacturing is most often concentrated with less-developed countries. Muses helps to close that gap, and potentially shortens the distance travelled from design to consumption. This is an important niche to be filled, and a courageous one. Washington often ranks among states with the highest minimum wage. To

compete in an industry characterized by race-to-the-bottom cost praxis, and with a philanthropic mission taboot, is highly commendable. (Muses 2015)

The apparel brand Everlane (www.everlane.com) employs yet another novel approach to re-localization of garment systems. Everlane operates exclusively as an e-tailer; the brand marketing, communication, and sales activities are conducted entirely online. The exclusive e-tailing model eliminates several cost constraints from a firm's' budget; e-tailing eradicates the costs of brick-and-mortar overhead, as well as the logistical middlemen involved in more conventional retail models. Everlane includes these cost savings in its pricing structure, as well as publishing its costs and pricing structure as part of its “Radical Transparency” efforts. Transparency is central to Everlane’s brand narrative, and is a unique feature of the buying experience at everlane.com. Factory information is embedded in each product page; factory locations, number of employees, and the names of factory owners are furnished to consumers. By working directly with factories and committing to buying relationships, Everlane is engaging with the direct sourcing models identified by Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly as a more sustainable alternative to the subcontract system. (Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly 2014)

Everlane’s innovative model exemplifies what direct marketing looks like in garment provisioning for the technology age. E-tailing strategies with direct sourcing models represent for fashion what the farmers market movement does for food. I again refer to the new localism, the expansive understanding of local which may accommodate garment system realities. (Everlane 2015)

While Everlane's transparency efforts are innovative for the industry, and certainly far exceed that of mega-TNC brands, I wish to return to Egels-Zandén et al and their study of Nudie Jeans Co. Like Everlane, Nudie Jeans Co. focuses on and promotes transparency as central to its brand identity. And while the authors affirm Nudie's policies and praxis to be more transparent than not, they note instances of omission from the brand's transparency reporting when information pertaining to a supplier factory may be perceived as negative. Such omission may serve more than the brand's reputation capital; the authors suggest brands risk breaches in trust between itself and suppliers when they publish negative findings regarding supplier factories. This transparency-trust dichotomy represents conflicted interests, as trust between brands and factories has been shown to increase social sustainability along supply chains. (Egels-Zandén et al 2015)

Therefore, the authors ask, and I echo, whose interests are served by transparency efforts? For Everlane and Nudie Jeans Co., it is notable that neither brand gives great detail about raw materials sourcing; where Nudie Jeans Co. maps country, city, and factory names of its manufacturing suppliers for, say, denim pants, the only reference to raw cotton sourcing is a one-sentence sidebar. Consumers visiting everlane.com can view real-time weather conditions, number of employees, and year of establishment for the brand's supplying factories – but procurement of raw fibers receive varying degrees of mention, and are not mapped along with their manufacturing factories. While I do not wish to devalue the transparency efforts of brands such as Nudie Jeans Co or Everlane, I am promoting an integrative, whole-systems view of

supply chains with considerations of place infused at each modality of production. Such includes transparency surrounding the procurement of raw materials.

Human Geographer Ian Cook (University of Exeter) is an academic leader in calling for reform in global garment systems. By pioneering the Fashion Revolution movement, and dedicating April 24 as Fashion Revolution Day worldwide, he reminds researchers and consumers alike to consider the high human and environmental costs of the clothes we wear. In addition to launching a weeklong Fashion Revolution series of research presentations, garment industry teach-ins, and sustainable fashion-themed artistic and social demonstrations to coincide with the anniversary of Rana Plaza (Cook et al 2015), Cook urges critical inquiry of consumer choices surrounding garment provisioning.

Fashion Revolution ethics implore western shoppers to “Be Curious-Find Out-Do Something” (Cook et al 2015, 2). Action strategies promote a consciousness about an apparel item as well as other consumer goods at the moment of purchase. Fashion Revolution calls upon the purchasing power of western consumers to consider the production cycle of a garment, and act accordingly on concerns for unjust social and environmental conditions along garment industry supply chains. To accomplish such, Cook’s Fashion revolution strategies urge such a consumer to:

Be Curious — Cook promoted Fashion Revolution week with a #whomademyclothes social media movement. His research suggests the first step towards a more environmentally and socially just global garment system is to ask questions surrounding

apparel purchases. To inquire into the origin of an individual garment closes the conceptual space between producer and consumer, reducing the destructive and dehumanizing ‘otherness’ and perhaps improving empathy and concern towards the human experience of garment factory work.

Find Out — Cook maintains www.followthethings.com, a website with the user experience of an online store but with a research emphasis to make available the story behind the sources of consumer goods. From food items, household goods, and apparel, a range of quotidian objects becomes infused with meaning and social and environmental implication. The GoodGuide as well as followthethings.com offer privileged consumers an opportunity to know more about their purchases, and make buying decisions based on this information. (Follow The Things 2015)

Do Something — Cook urges consumers to use their voice to protest problematic social and environmental conditions surrounding garment systems. Unlike Bangladeshi women factory workers, privileged consumers are not constrained by docile custom. It is the duty of consumers in advantaged economies who stand to benefit directly by fast fashion systems via inexpensive garment options and unlimited choice in taste and style, to speak for the factory workers. Cook recommends activism via statements expressed directly to transnational apparel firms, and to consumers’ local and national governance bodies, as well as to the institutions involved in global garment trade policy. Further, Cook suggests leveraging social media as a tool in the establishment of a more just garment

system. By leveraging a large social media followership, fashion industry leaders such as designer Stella McCartney have promoted the #whomademyclothes movement.

Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks

Despite Cooks' research, geographic literature has yet to wholeheartedly scrutinize the modern realities of globalized garment systems and their sweatshops. However, economics has taken up the charge. Economic arguments often diverge from potential localist approaches to garment system reform in their decisively pro-sweatshop positions. Sweatshop apologetics appear within the academic and media reporting of globalized garment systems, most often from the perspective of economists, such as the work of Zwolinski (2007). Zwolinski emphasizes the moment of voluntary choice (by garment workers to enter into sweatshop labor) as "morally transformative" and suggests this be evidence enough that governments ought not regulate against sweatshop conditions both domestically and via trade agreements, as well as impel consumers and activist interests to give up resistance efforts against sweatshops. (Zwolinski 2007, 690) Of course, as illustrated above by locked factory gates at both the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire and the Tazreen Factory Fire, sweatshop labor is often not altogether voluntary.

However, not all in economic academe agrees with Zwolinski's pro-sweatshop position. Miller (2003) argues against economists engaging in sweatshop apologetics, differentiating between sweatshop labor struggles and the forces of neoliberal globalization which gave rise to sweatshop factories. In doing so, he reminds us that sweatshop injustice is defined by the characteristics of the job itself. (Miller, 2003) This distinction becomes important as antisweatshop movements advocate for improvements to the labor conditions in garment factories, and complements a whole-systems glocalism view presented by my work. The rhetoric of antisweatshop activism is not concerned with the dismantling of globalized market

economies, but challenging the conditions of sweatshop employment itself, working towards improvements in labor conditions such as collective bargaining rights, child labor laws, wage standards, fire and building safety code enforcement, and overtime regulations.

Miller continues to demonstrate the validity of antisweatshop movements by reviewing the labor struggles of the industrialization histories and public response (ie, the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire) of now-developed nations. "...in the developed world, the sweatshop phase was not extinguished by market-led forces alone but when economic growth combined with the very kind of social action, or enlightened collective choice, that defenders of sweatshops find objectionable." (Miller 2003, 104) Herein (taken together with further proof in the instance of WWU's participation with WRC) lies the efficacy of modern antisweatshop activism. Reliance upon the "free hand" of capitalist markets has not proven to bring about the social change necessary to protect garment workers in underprivileged economies, and in fact has been shown to perpetuate risk and unsafety. But concerned citizen response is a demonstrated method for social change in garment worker labor struggles.

I would like to further challenge the very notion of free hand market forces upon which pro-sweatshop positions are built. When pro-sweatshop arguments are made, often the language relies on arguments that insist the market is a force which, unto itself and allowed to proceed in its "natural" manner, will lead to positive development outcomes (for sweatshop workers and for the economies in which they are situated). This line of thought reasons that sweatshops are a necessary and unavoidable, if not unfortunate, stepping stone towards improved economic circumstances for the workers and the economies in which they labor. While I agree that

manufacturing activity is a point of entry on the road to development, I challenge the implications of free hand market forces, and more specifically, the language of modern capitalist rhetoric.

I would like to call attention to an article published by *The Economist* in its December 6, 2012 issue. The headline reads “Garment Factory Fires Distinctly South Asian Phenomenon” and goes on to detail the circumstances of the Tazreen Factory Fire, describing the tragedy as shocking (but somehow) not surprising. (<http://www.economist.com/blogs/banyan/2012/12/garment-factory-fires>)

Such language presents the Tazreen tragedy (as well as other garment factory fires in South Asian countries producing goods for export to privileged economies) as “distinctly” endemic to these regions, assigning them discrete provenance. This headline effectively presents garment factory fires as natural events, as if the fires were the result of forces precluding the human element. And in doing so, it fails to interrogate the causal connections of globalization in the garment industry to the 112 human lives lost that day.

It is this equivocation of the market economy forces of capitalism which I would like to challenge as a concluding message to my work. While I am not at all promoting a non-capitalist socioeconomic or political organization of human activities, I insist that globalization not be viewed as a law of nature – inevitable, unavoidable, or inescapable as gravity. Capitalism, and the geopolitical economic arena in which the forces of capitalism are realized (to devastating and deadly consequence as seen in Rana Plaza) is an entirely human construct. To deny the human free will element of capitalism and to espouse the free hand market rationale is to exonerate the

decision-making processes (and decision-makers) from responsibility in globalized garment industry disasters. Capitalism is not a natural phenomenon. Rather, it is human-made and most importantly, human-changeable.

Returning to the geographic literature, I draw from Massey (2004) and her seminal piece *Geographies of Responsibility*. Massey writes, “Capitalism too is 'carried into places by bodies'. Indeed, politically it is important that this is recognised, in order to avoid that imagination of the economy (or the market) as a machine, a figuring which renders it unavailable to political debate.” (Massey 2004, 8) While Massey draws her analogy to a machine, I choose to align economist arguments of free hand market forces with representations of capitalism as a natural phenomenon. Nevertheless, the critical impulse is the same. If we, as consumer-citizens, accept the view of neoliberal capitalist forces as outside of human agency, we abdicate any power to change what will be inevitable consequences. By challenging the view of capitalism as a natural phenomenon, I am challenging the position of pro-sweatshop economists and insisting that sweatshopping is in fact not inexorable, but instead changeable.

Economist sweatshop apologists are not alone in their tolerance or even exaltation of sweatshop labor realities. Paharia et al (2013), in a study to examine consumers’ morally motivated decision-making processes, found that in the instance of a hypothetical Nike shoes purchase, consumers were more likely to tolerate sweatshop labor if the shoes were both highly desirable and the price of the shoes was heavily discounted. (Paharia et al 2013) This “moral flexibility” is certainly concerning, not only as a matter of citizen responsibility, but for the potentially undermining effects of consumer response as a course of resistance to globalized

garment systems. When TNC brands are positively reinforced for creating and marketing desire with each new ad campaign and offering apparel goods for lowest possible price points, where or what is the agent of change?

It is important now to explore the role of consumer agency within globalized garment systems. As demonstrated in figure 3.1, the flow of information emanating from consumers in privileged economies closes the loop and propels the material and labor processes in developing economies. While “voting with your dollars” is one approach, and I am in no way disputing that notion, I am suggesting that the dollar/vote model of activism is reductive, and our role as citizen-consumers should not be simplified to a singular set of transactions. The dollar/vote model is also problematic when taken to the lower and upper limits; if we vote with our dollars, then those who have the most dollars get the most votes? Or perhaps more importantly, those who have not one dollar get no vote? So while I certainly do not suggest against making carefully considered consumer purchases (while always thinking about the place), I argue we convert our role in the globalized garment system ever further towards citizen – and ever further away from consumer. A citizen might not be baited by a bargain, for the sake of the bargain. A citizen might not make exception to sweatshop labor “if the shoes are cute enough.” (Paharia et al 2013, 81) And as figure 3.1 demonstrates, this flow of information is directing the flow of materials and labor along garment supply chains. Fast fashion exists as a response to this demand. Imagine if that demand was for less quantity, higher quality product at a demonstrated willingness to pay?

Pollin (2006) analyzes consumer price increases with the aim of exploring potential wage increases for sweatshop workers in Mexico. His findings show a one hundred percent wage increase for Mexican sweatshop workers is achievable via consumer price increase by 1.8 percent. Pollin's research shows such increase falls well within the price range consumers would be willing to pay (nowhere is it suggested or researched that the apparel firm might reduce profits by 1.8 percent — the responsibility for the difference in price falls squarely on the consumer) to guarantee an item be sweatshop-free. (Pollin 2006) While Pollin's data are encouraging, he questions whether TNC firms would pass the increased revenues onto garment workers. However, his research also reinforces that TNC retail firms derive their considerable leverage partly upon the reputation capital of positive consumer perceptions. (Pollin 2006; adapted from Pollin et al 2002) His argument cites the USAS victories in establishing the WRC and adopting codes of conduct for university brand apparel. Pollin's argument demonstrates the possibilities for a citizen-consumer intervention to ensure greater justice in garment provisioning in the United States.

To conclude, I wish to suggest a third sphere of exploration beyond the scope of this thesis. As demonstrated above, the consumer role can and must be elevated to that of citizen-consumer for the critical progress to occur within globalized garment systems. As citizen-consumers, economically advantaged populations might demand increased justice for garment workers in disadvantaged circumstances. International public outcry is a powerful tool. For example, Sohel Rana, the owner and landlord of the Rana Plaza, as well as 41 others, have been charged with murder in Bangladesh for their culpability in the Rana Plaza factory collapse.

Future research might explore potential for governments and powerful transnational institutions to participate in improving labor conditions in global garment systems. The Rana Plaza murder trials are one such example of governmental action to demand justice in garment systems. Many possibilities exist, such as tax credits for firms with demonstrated social or environmental benefit. In the other direction, fines might apply to firms who wish to import from factories with unsafe or polluting conditions. The potential work is seemingly limitless, but so are the opportunities for progress.

As of the third anniversary of the Rana Plaza factory collapse, the Rana Plaza Arrangement Donors Trust Fund has reached its fulfillment goal. 100 percent of claims will be paid to the victims of that terrible tragedy. It is impossible to fully determine what degree sustained citizen-consumer efforts such as #payup and Fashion Revolution contribute to such victories. However, as demonstrated by the example of Benetton in Chapter Four, apparel TNCs did not hasten payments into the fund. It is to some credit of the concerned citizenry and the work of organizations such as Clean Clothes Campaign in sustaining effort (toward fulfilling the Fund) and attention to the Rana Plaza tragedy, and to not allow wealthy apparel corporations to evade liability.

I return to the research of Nagar et al. (2002) to understand how the overarching critiques of globalization, working from the point of view of corporations and supranational institutions whilst ignoring the work of informal activist organizations, fail to mitigate injustices experienced disproportionately by women in the globalized garment system. Globalization discourses are often dominated by a corporate-centric analysis, presenting a world in which the neoliberal

capitalist agenda is inexorable and everywhere – permeating every aspect of our lives – our bodies, homes, communities, and nations. As Nagar et al point out, the internalization of these agendas serves to surrender sovereignty at all scales. As demonstrated in Chapters Three and Four, women workers in the readymade garment industry in early twentieth century US as well as modern-day Bangladesh are denied bodily sovereignty by forced and coerced labor conditions. The lost sovereignty of nation-states, and most importantly the people within, threatens to undermine activist work towards increased localism in garment systems as well.

As globalization processes continue to envelope world economic, environmental, and social policy in the form of supranational trade agreements such as the TransPacific Partnership, nation-states forfeit the agency to represent the will of their citizens. This forfeiture is deeply troubling for a local garment movement, for it is within the citizen sphere from which critical activism forms. The concluding imperative of my work is to reject this internalization, and create space for a more just way forward in the globalized garment system. At the outset of this work, I recommend a way forward which draws upon the realities of modern life in the US – I do not propose a return to handloomed garments or wool cooperatives as the ideal. Iterative steps forward may include independent (non-corporate) retailers stocking apparel items with traceable sources from raw materials to manufacturing, and a more equitable cost and profit sharing pricing scheme. As these steps forward become more normalized, the US consumer appetite for cheap clothing may be replaced by more well-considered (and well-constructed) garment purchases.

As identified in the first section of my work and reinforced throughout, despite all the critical academic attention to localism in foods, a standardized definition for the spatial parameters of local has yet to emerge. Moving forward, perhaps the research and application of localism in garment systems may acknowledge that deficit and therefore be unconstrained by any attempt at the parameters of place. Instead, localism in garment systems offers a holistic approach, which connects producers and consumers and illuminates supply chains. Our clothing is infused with considerations of place. It is the aim of this thesis to impel conversation and direct attention to the places of our clothing.

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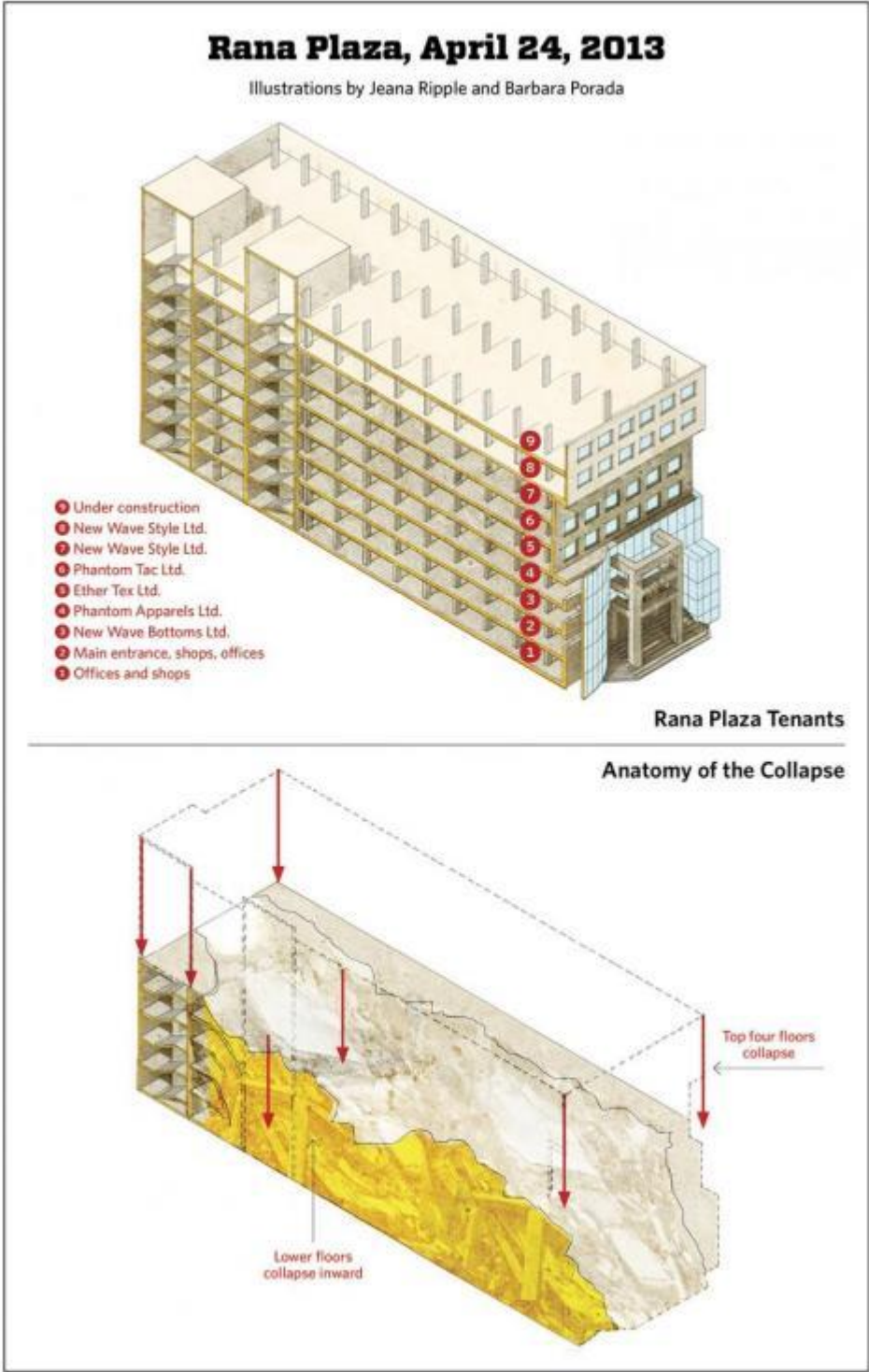
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Appendix 1
Diagram of the Rana Plaza Factory Collapse



Source: <http://www.vqronline.org/reporting-articles/2014/04/ghosts-rana-plaza> With Permission

Appendix 2
Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building
Safety in Bangladesh — Companies

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

Australia

APG and Co
Designworks Clothing Company Pty Limited
Cotton On Group
Forever New
K-Mart Australia
Licensing Essentials Pty. Ltd.
Pretty Girl Fashion Group Pty
Specialty Fashions Australia
Target Australia
Woolworths Australia
Workwear Group Pty Ltd

Austria

Fashion Team HandelsgmbH

Belgium

C&A
Malu N.V.
JBC N.V.
Joglio N.V.
Tex Alliance
Van Der Erve

Canada

Brüzer Sportsgear LTD
Loblaw

Denmark

Bestseller
Coop Danmark
Dansk Supermarked Group
DK Company

Appendix 2
Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building
Safety in Bangladesh — Companies

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

Denmark continued

FIPO Group
IC Group
PWT Brands

Finland

A&M Holmberg
Reima
Stockmann

France

Auchan
Camaieu
Carrefour
Chantal SAS
CMT Winfield
E Leclerc
EMC Distribution
Financiere D'Aguesseau
Groupe Casino Ltd
Monoprix

Germany

Adidas
Aldi Nord
Aldi Süd
Baumhueter International Gmbh
Belotex
Brands Fashion
Chicca
Colombus Textilvertrieb GmbH
Comazo GmbH & Co Kg

Appendix 2
Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building Safety
in Bangladesh — Companies

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

Germany continued

Crown Textil GmbH
Daytex Mode
Deltex
Distra
EIWOTEX GmbH
Ernsting's Family
Esprit Florett Textil GmbH & Co
Full Service Handels GmbH
G. Gueldenpfennig GmbH
Gebra Non Food Handelsges GmbH
HAKRO GmbH
Hanson Im-und Export GmbH
Klaus Herding GmbH
Hess Natur-Textilien GmbH
Horizonte
Horst Krüger GmbH
Hueren OHG professional outfits
Jebsen & Jessen Group
Jolo Fashion
Julius Hüpeden GmbH
Face to Face GmbH & Co
Karstadt
Kik Textilien
Killtec Sport
Lidl
Metro Group
Multiline Group
New Frontier GmbH
OLYMP Bezner
Orsay GmbH
OSPIG Textil Logistik GmbH
Otto Group
Puma
RAWE Moden

Appendix 2
Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building
Safety in Bangladesh — Companies

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

Germany continued

Rewe Group
Rheinwalt Trade & more
GmbH i. Gr.
S. Oliver
Schmidt Group
Steilmann Holding AG
Suprema
Takko Holding GmbH
Tchibo
Transmarina- Handelsgesellschaft mbH
UhlSport GmbH
Uncle Sam GmbH
United Labels AG
Viania
Wünsche Group
Yanis Textil Trade GmbH

Hong Kong

Cronytex Sourcing

Entrade Manufacturing Co.-
Limited
Heli Far East Ltd

*Mosgen Limited**

Techno Manufacturing-Limited
Topgrade International

Italy

Artisana (Chicco, Prenatal)
Benetton
Gruppo Coin/OVS
Teddy S.p.A.

Appendix 2
Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building
Safety in Bangladesh — Companies

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

Japan

Fast Retailing

Netherlands

De Bijenkorf

Bristol

Coolcat

DPDB Group

Etam Groep B.V.

Fashion Linq

G-Star

Hema

Holland House Fashion

Hunkemöller

McGregor Fashion Group BV

MS Mode

O'Neill Europe BV

Teidem

Texsport BV

The Sting B.V.

VDR Fashion Group B.V.

(Lakeside, Shoeby)

Veldhoven group

Verburgt Fashion B.V.

Vingino

We Europe BV

Wibra Supermarkt B.V.

Y'Organic BV

Zeeman

Poland

LPP

Appendix 2
Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building
Safety in Bangladesh — Companies

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

Spain

El Corte Ingles
Inditex
Mango
Mayoral Moda Infantil, S.A.U.
Padma Textiles

Sri Lanka

Comtex GmbH

Sweden

Åhléns/Lagerhaus
H&M
Hemtex
ICA Sverige
Intersport AB
KappAhl
New Wave Group
RNB Retail and Brands AB
Sandryds
Stadium
Ted Bernhardt at Work
Fristad Kansas Sverige AB
Gekås Ullared AB
Gina Tricot AB

Switzerland

Charles Voegelé
*Switcher**
Tally Weijl Trading AG
Vistaprint

Appendix 2
Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building
Safety in Bangladesh — Companies

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

Turkey

Mavi
LC Waikiki

United Kingdom

Arcadia Group
Aristocrate Distributor Ltd.
Bebe Clothing (UK) LTD
BHS Ltd
Bonmarche
BrandCo Management Ltd
Character World
Danielle Group plc
Debenhams
Edinburgh Woolen Mill
Fat Face
Hawkesbay Sportswear-Limited UK
John Lewis
Marks and Spencer
Matalan
Milords
Morrisons
N Brown Group
New look
Next
Nu Sourcing Ltd
OTL Brands Ltd
Primark
Renaissance Sourcing Limited
River Island
Sainsbury's
Shop Direct Group
Tesco

Appendix 2
Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building
Safety in Bangladesh — Companies

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

United Kingdom continued

TV Mania UK Ltd
Wilson Design Source Supply

USA

Abercrombie & Fitch
Accolade Group (Accolade USA, Levelwear)
American Eagle Outfitters
Antigua Group Inc
E5 USA, Inc.
Fruit of the Loom
Glitter Gear, LLC
J2 Licensing, Inc.
Knights Apparel
L.A. T Sportswear, Inc
Lakeshirts Inc.
MV Sport
Outerstuff Ltd
New Agenda by Perrin
PVH
Sean John Apparel
Scoop NYC
T Shirt International, Inc.
Top of the World
Topline, Inc.
W Republic
Zephyr Headwear

Appendix 2
**Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building
Safety in Bangladesh—Unions**

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

IndustriALL Global Union
Bangladesh Textile and Garment Workers League
Bangladesh Independent Garments Workers Union Federation
Bangladesh Garments, Textile & Leather Workers Federation
Bangladesh garment & Industrial Workers Federation
UNI Global Union
IndustriALL Bangladesh Council
Bangladesh Revolutionary Garments Workers Federation
National Garments Workers Federation
United Federation of Garments Workers
National Garments Workers Federation

Appendix 2
**Official Signatories to the Accord on Fire and Building
Safety in Bangladesh—Witnesses**

Source: <http://bangladeshaccord.org/signatories/>

Worker Rights Consortium
International Labor Rights Forum
Clean Clothes Campaign
Maquila Solidarity Network


*Brands not in good standing due to non-payment of dues.

Appendix 3

Screen Capture of Good Guide for Patagonia


GoodGuide

[Personal Care](#) ▾ [Food](#) ▾ [Household](#) ▾ [Babies & Kids](#) ▾



Advertisement ⓘ


Home > Categories > Apparel > Activewear > Patagonia



Stores

Amazon See it

About the Brand



Company Score

Overall Company Score	8.2
Environment	8.2
Society	8.8

More Info


Brand: [Patagonia](#)

Parent Company: [Patagonia Incorporated](#)

Parent Company: [Lost Arrow Corporation](#)


Other Products by Patagonia:
[Apparel, Children's Apparel, Jeans, and
 Pants, Shorts. View all 1 product](#)

Certifications

 B Corporation

Patagonia




GoodGuide Overall Score




Product Rating

Excellent!

Behind the Ratings


	Health	N/A
	Environment	This company's environmental policies, practices and performance place it among the best 5% of companies rated by GoodGuide. 8.9 ✓
	Society	This company's social policies, practices and performance place it among the best 5% of companies rated by GoodGuide. 7.6 ✓

Alternative Products




Patagonia

[See full GoodGuide rating](#)



Maggie's Organics



[See full GoodGuide rating](#)



Marigold

[See full GoodGuide rating](#)

GoodGuide

Source: <http://www.goodguide.com/products/339024-patagonia-reviews-ratings> (2016)