THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

Edinburgh Research Explorer

Metal free factories

OPEN ACCESS

Metal free factories: Straddling worker rights and consumer safety? ☆

CrossMark

Kanchana N. Ruwanpura

Institute of Geography, School of Geo-Sciences, University of Edinburgh, Drummond Street, Edinburgh EH8 9XP, United Kingdom

ARTICLE INFO

ABSTRACT

The Sri Lankan apparel sector positions itself as the "World's #1 Ethically Sourced Destination", where it is striving to make the "Made in Sri Lanka" label synonymous with quality and reliability, plus social and environmental accountability. A cornerstone of the sector's efforts to be ethically compliant involves strict adherence to the stringent health and safety provisions of numerous ethical trading initiatives. An aspect of these health and safety codes is making factories 'metal-free', assuring the safe handling and disposal of broken needles, purportedly for the benefit of workers. Using workplace ethnography and engaging with debates on governmentality, this article shows the practical implementation of global governance regimes. Management at supplier factories attempt to bestride worker welfare and consumer rights, which suggests that ethical trade initiatives need to pay adequate attention to the politics of global suppliers placed in an uneven development landscape. Consequently this paper shows how efforts to make factories 'metal-free' result in nebulous outcomes because of the divergent health and safety priorities of managers and labour.

1. Introduction

"*What has happened? Why is everyone scrimmaging and opening up the packed lingerie boxes*? I asked perplexed a group of workers, as I was walking down the line and came across an anxious process of boxes getting unpacked, re-sorted, and scurried through meticulously. I could not quite fathom what would lead to the unpacking of boxes, as I was slowly becoming aware of the energy workers expended on sewing, trimming, checking for quality, sorting, and neatly packing lingerie for shipment to the United Kingdom. A worker quipped, "*A health and safety issue, Miss*". My amazement only increased as to why a health and safety issue would lead to the emptying out of packed boxes; this led to me to broach the issue with a line supervisor and production floor manager for more clarification. *Alok*[1] took time to explain the reason for the procedures, which was then confirmed by *Hemanth*; the story was that an operator had lost a needle in the line and they needed to ensure that it had not got entangled with the garments which were about to be shipped. I pushed *Hemanth* to inquire whether this was really a health and safety issue. He replied in the affirmative, saying it was important for them to ensure metal-free shipments for two reasons. First, the buyer would not take kindly to any consumer returning a garment with a needle or metal object in a sold product. Second, it signals to the buyer that they are serious about health and safety standards at the factory.

This encounter took place within the initial weeks of my 7 and ½ month fieldwork at two factory sites in Sri Lanka. It led me to pay careful attention to the ways in which global health and safety standards get interpreted, implemented and practiced in local settings. In particular, I became interested in learning how the desire to make factories metal-free for health and safety reasons lead management to deploy this code in ways which bring to bear its situated nature and contradictions therein (see also: De Neve, 2009; Dunn, 2003, 2007; Dolan, 2008, 2010). Western buyers' penchant to signal to their customers the seriousness with which health and safety at production sites are adhered to translates on the ground to local managers prioritizing standards that are measurable and visible.[2] My fieldwork shows the situated nature of "voluntary" codes because their interpretation and deployment depends on the position within the global production system from which they are negotiated. Reading for the contextual nature of voluntary ethical codes, via metal-free factories, helps unpack the tensions for management–labour relations on the production floor. It uncovers what these stresses mean for the everyday lives of labour, despite the propounded claims of global governance regimes.

The ubiquity of standards in contemporary life and its uneven distribution are noted by Star and Lampland (2009). They

E-mail address: kanchana.ruwanpura@ed.ac.uk

[1] Following ethical convention, I use pseudonyms for all sources throughout.

[2] Where state regulatory functions are delegated to voluntary audit schemes, the task of the auditor as external inspectors is to check the system for self-inspection (Powers, 1997: 131; Hughes, 2004).

underline how there is "always ... economy and ecology of standards", but because standards are enforced ahistorically, without acknowledging how capitalist processes are historically contingent, this leads to overlooking their "quintessentially socio-cultural" aspects (2009: 7–10). Their observations have resonance within global governance regime frameworks which also deploy standards; namely voluntary ethical codes. Gibbon and Ponte (2008) highlight the absence of interrogation of the implementation of governance regimes in the literature and note how this lacuna results in a neglect of the fault lines between representation and practice, multiple interests and contradictions.[3] Because standards usually are perceived as placeless codified rules, there is a tendency to ignore the complexities of the local landscape and actual people (Dunn, 2009: 118; Hughes, 2004: 226–228). Ethnography helps tease out how governance regimes from elsewhere are translated, contextualized and embedded, helping unravel how the movement of these regimes "(re)make connections between sites, evolving in form and effect as they go" (Peck and Theodore, 2012: 23). Research thus needs to address the lacuna in the implementation, practices, deviations and mutations of global initiatives (Gibbon and Ponte, 2008; Peck and Theodore, 2012). The centrality of unpacking code deployment is more than this, however; it also challenges a naturalized view of global justice which can be delivered via voluntary ethical codes – and that business is best placed to be its arbiter and steward (Blowfield and Dolan, 2008).

Creating metal-free factories falls within health and safety standards. Introduced about two decades ago, its initial impetus was ensuring the safety of children's wear, although with the proliferation of global governance regimes it increasingly became bundled together with broader code compliance. Keeping factories metal free is hence presented as basically about minimizing causes of hazards, such as broken needles, so that workers are prevented from unnecessarily exposing themselves to routine industrial injuries. However, during my time at the factories what transpired was that management efforts to become code compliant with regards to metal free zones were not narrowly limited to ensuring worker welfare. Straddling consumer sovereignty which journeys across spaces and distances through retailer/buyer purchase policies continues to be pivotal too. De Neve (2009) articulates the emphasis placed by buyers on needle protection, when he quotes a respondent saying "Garments have to be 100% needle free; we can't risk having a needle in garments" (2009: 68). It is thus a *sine quo non* for suppliers in the global apparel industry, despite the buyer's emphasis hinting at possible tension between consumer interests and worker rights. This paper unpacks this tension as it transpired on the shop floor of two factories from the perspective of labour. Workers are under pressure to make sure that customer orders hit the high street stores on time but needle-free, leading management to deploy techniques where worker concerns take a backseat. These processes are contradictory and uneven, but the displacement of worker voice is apparent – despite the health and safety standards supposed to be about worker welfare. Management practices in making factory premises metal free and compliant, I show, affect labour beyond narrow workplace issues.

Code practices then are not without tension and stress for management–worker relationships. These shifts are hence worth registering because there is limited understanding of how health and

safety initiatives get translated on the ground. I am ultimately interested in what these initiatives imply for labour; or from whose perspective are ethical codes "voluntary"? Do their interests align with the rubric of this prioritization process by local management? The vignettes traced in the following sections show us the differential outcomes that result when management seeks to create metal free factories in Sri Lanka. The examples demonstrate how "modalities of ethical governance ... replacing social relations with material artefacts of ethical regulation" tends to gloss over complex on the ground realities (Dolan et al., 2011: 6; Dolan, 2010). Moreover, they illustrate how social and historical specificities of places shape standards as well as how daily practices involve issues of management control, concerns around consumer safety and assertion of labour agency. The material conditions within which workers lead their everyday lives implies that labour agency is invariably constrained, and recording it must concede the forces which circumscribe working life transformation.

2. Health and safety: an unproblematic code?

The elimination of forced overtime and upholding freedom of association, for instance, are acknowledged as difficult to enforce and monitor in the ethical codes literature (Hale and Wills, 2007; Hale and Shaw, 2002). Because health and safety standards are deemed enforceable, purportedly straightforward benefits and clear outcomes are often attached to these (Miller, 2012). The tension between process rights of labour and outcome standards, such as eliminating child labour, in implementing health and safety is recorded as a notable duality with regards to corporate codes of conduct practice (De Neve, 2009; Hale and Shaw, 2002). Freedom of association, collective bargaining and living wages, illustrations of process rights, are notoriously contentious to implement and hence to audit; while eliminating child labour, implementing health and safety measures – such as the number of fire exits, fire extinguishers and toilets per quota of workers – exemplify auditable outcome standards (Hale and Wills, 2007). While Dolan (2010) draws upon the discursive terrain of governmentality to argue that codes are a form of power, which they are, my fieldwork evidence suggests that as these instruments are implemented and work their way down the value chain, they bear and shape a life of their own through their myriad and uneven practices (see also Dunn, 2009; Hughes, 2004). My study builds on these approaches to show how workers negotiate codes in their everyday working lives. This paper fills this gap by incorporating the priorities of Sri Lankan companies and the voices of labour to uncover the tensions and stresses of competing interests and agendas in a landscape of material inequity and uneven development.

Taking a cue from auditable codes and aspiring to be an ethically compliant country, the Joint Apparel Association Forum (JAAF) of Sri Lanka positions its apparel industry as the "World's #1 Ethically Sourced Destination", where it is striving to make the "'Made in Sri Lanka' label synonymous with quality, reliability, social and environmental accountability" (www.jaafsl.com). "Garments without Guilt" (GWG) is its mantra. These claims are, however, not necessarily spurious. Heeding the shifts in the global retailer industry and anticipating future changes in the apparel sector, the industry leaders of Sri Lanka's apparel sector are shifting to eco-friendly apparel production, which signals not merely how it positions itself as ethical, but also visionary in anticipating future changes (Goger, 2013). These shifts are possible because the top-end factories in Sri Lanka are purpose-built and have been upgraded to create factory conditions and standards envied by manufacturers elsewhere (Karp, 1999). While the high-end factories are the driving engines behind new industrial standards, other factories have had, at the bare minimum, to adhere to Board of

---

[3] My ethnographic evidence engages with the scholarship on standards rather than global value chain and global production networks, because firm level analysis misses out the governmentality implications across different scales (Gibbon and Ponte, 2008). Similarly, the CSR and ethical trade literature takes standards as a given, with little consideration for embodied, political, unstable and contextual nature of code practices (see Goger, 2013; Rajak, 2011; De Neve, 2009; Blowfield and Dolan, 2008; Dolan, 2008, 2010).

Investment (BOI)[4] standards on work conditions in apparel factories, with this criterion pre-dating the corporate and ethical trade initiatives of the 1990s (Ruwanpura and Wrigley, 2011). The role of the state in shaping industrial standards is coupled with a long and historically strong labour movement and a solid social welfare development agenda (Jayawardena, 1972). Human and social development concerns were at the heart of Sri Lanka's social democratic polity of the pre-1977 era (Knutsen, 2004). A highly educated labour force with access to good health care provisioning and protective labour legislation illustrate the well endowed social capital of Sri Lankan workers. These are the building blocks that have enabled JAAF to promote its factories, large, medium and small, as being ethically compliant and to fine-tune its factories to meet ethical outcome standards (Ruwanpura and Wrigley, 2011; Ruwanpura, 2011). During my field research, workers claimed that they were by and large content with factory conditions – and there were visible efforts made to uphold health and safety regulations. Yet, the sketch with which I started this paper made me aware of the need to pay attention to "*A Health and Safety issue, Miss*" and it set the backdrop for making me critically interrogate health and safety codes as they are implemented within factories, with a particular focus on the creation of metal-free factory zones.

3. The setting and fieldwork methods

This paper draws upon a 7 and ½ month period of field research in 2009–2010, during which time participant observation and in-depth interviews with 60 factory workers were conducted at two factory settings, denoted as X and Y, in Sri Lanka. One factory employed 1500 workers, while the other had a workforce of around 800 workers, and in this respect they are considered large production facilities in the country. Both factories were located in Kalutara district, which is adjacent to Colombo district, but is well inland from the coastline; they are located in rural and semi-rural areas. Neither of the factories was located in special economic or free trade zones.[5] I visited the two factories on a daily basis, initially with the purpose of building familiarity and rapport with the workers.[6] My time at the factories also offered me the chance to closely observe and sometimes participate in the daily realities of factory life. The focus of this analysis principally relies upon the participant observation part of the fieldwork, because it offers the opportunity to narrate events over a period of time and unearth what it means for workers to work in "metal-free" factories.

Both factories referred to in this study are apparel producers for the export market, with the United Kingdom and the USA being the primary destinations for their finished goods. Each factory specialized in a variety of garments, ranging from lingerie to outerwear, and produced for High Street brands, such as Marks & Spencer, Debenhams, BHS, Tesco, American Eagle, George, Matalan, to more exclusive retailers such as Eddie Bauer, Calvin Klein, Tommy Hilfiger, Levi Strauss, and Lily Pulitzer. The retail end market included low, middle, high, and exclusive ranges, and was subject to demands for ethical codes implementation, through either individual corporate codes or multi-stakeholder initiatives. Audits were conducted for both factories by local commercial auditing bodies employed by the Ethical Trading Initiative (ETI), Fair Labour Association (FLA), WRAP or individual retailers.

The adherence to codes, which include a working environment which is safe and hygienic is an aspiration of local management. While each corporate or multi-stakeholder initiative has its own emphasis and orientation, a core concern of the ETI base code is health and safety. Its website explicitly states: "A safe and hygienic working environment shall be provided, bearing in mind the prevailing knowledge of the industry and of any specific hazards. Adequate steps shall be taken to prevent accidents and injury to health arising out of, associated with, or occurring in the course of work, by minimizing, so far as is reasonably practicable, the causes of hazards inherent in the working environment" (www.ethical-trade.org/eti-base-code).

Both factories I was at had taken necessary steps to create visibly pleasant and purpose built plants, paying attention to broader health and safety requirements noted under this code. At one level the built environments create conditions for management to make bold claims regarding ethically compliant production sites. Often during my time at the factories, senior and middle level spoke to health and safety discourses because they had a discernible basis from which to do so. It was only when pressed about a particular incident that there were protestations about unrealistic expectations placed on suppliers by retailers with regards to codes (Goger, 2013; Ruwanpura and Wrigley, 2011; De Neve, 2009). These dialogues arose through observation and familiarity with factory floor managers; although they realize the importance of buying into discourses of code compliance. How codes are deployed are intricately linked to various scales on the value chain, suggesting that "voluntary" codes are situated and consequently also subject to contestation.

4. Forks, spoons … and mobiles

Just as my initial weeks at factory X alerted me to 'health and safety' issues, my initial visit to an apparel production factory site during my preliminary fieldtrip to establish contact with management had raised the metal-free issue. When I let the receptionist know of my appointment with the senior manager, she followed protocol asking for my name, phoning the senior manager and requesting me to be seated until he was available. The reception space was meticulously clean, with deep blue divan-type seating for guests on either side, a large-potted green-leafed plant and the reception desk located centrally to welcome any guests, colleagues and apparel sector workers when they came to the office area of the factory to request leave or collect their monthly wages. After about five to seven minutes of being seated, I was informed by the receptionist that I could go into the office area of the factory. Before I did so, however, she inquired whether I had any metal items? I was taken a back and I responded saying "*What do you mean?*" She replied saying "*Hair clips, pins, paper clips – anything like that?* Somewhat perplexed, I said that I didn't have any of these on me; she said it is part of our "*metal-free policies*" giving me an empathetic smile and directing me to the senior manager's office. The essence of this puzzling query dawned on me much later, during my ethnographic fieldwork.

My purpose on the day was to interview the senior manager and gain insight into the pressures and experiences of management

---

[4] The Board of Investment (BOI) of Sri Lanka came into being in 1992, but was preceded by the Greater Colombo Economic Commission established in 1978 to generate economic growth. The 1992 reincarnation gave it a mandate to serve as a facilitation point for investors with statutory powers to govern conditions of investment and labour. Facilitating investment, however, remains its core mission (Gunawardana, 2007).

[5] Lynch (2007) provides a political backdrop of the 200 Garment Factory Programme (GFP) set up in the late 1980s and the rationale for shifting them out of economic zones to the entirety of the country and especially to rural areas. Of the two factories I was based at, one was set up under this scheme – although its ownership had changed, while the other claims to predate the 200 GFP scheme.

[6] A Research Assistant came on board to this project from the start of April 2009 was embedded at both research sites as a way of creating an enabling fieldwork context for long-term (2 years) interactions with the workers. Moreover, once I had developed a particular rapport and familiarity with workers, alongside my regular location at the two factories I also did day or two-day visits to a range of other apparel sector factories – from the large to the medium, to the high-end to the low-end, from rural to urban – located in Sri Lanka to get a sense of the conditions and practices at factories across the country. Elsewhere I have offered greater detail of the politics and dynamics of doing embedded field research (Ruwanpura, 2013).

efforts at being 'ethically compliant' (Ruwanpura and Wrigley, 2011). The *metal-free policy* statement by the receptionist was nagging me and toward the end of an effective 40–50 min interview, I inquired about its nature and purpose. He mentioned that it was part of their health and safety policy, to protect the worker and customer, and noted how their buyer was able to trace the factory production of each garment. He then took a few items of garment from a steel chest and showed how the coding in the label permits such tracing. He went onto say "*Each garment label has its own unique sticker with the same code which gets filled according to the factory, production zone and line where the garment is produced. We file them away in case of RTM (Return to Manufacture) for about a 3 month period. This is about the time span for any merchandise to be returned to us via customer complaints. At the moment, the labelling allows them [i.e. the buyer-retailer] to trace it to the factory and line, but they are also talks of getting narrowed down to the exact worker.*" I listened patiently, fascinated with this level of tracing and the disciplinary implications it is likely to place on management, the production process, and workers. As this was my very first meeting with the manager and I had established contact with him via a friend, I left it at that. I did not want to ask more questions, partly reflecting my ignorance of apparel production processes and even more importantly not having any prior awareness of how *metal-free policies* shaped the factory floor in important ways. This knowledge came later, while being based at the factories.

After the interview with the senior manager, we chatted about my research, its contours, the fact that I had actually never visited an apparel production site and the central import of council-led research in academia in the United Kingdom. His education in the UK. greatly aided the flow of this conversation. Quite unexpectedly he inquired of my interest in looking around the factory – visiting the production floor, the canteen and then having breakfast together, as a group of workers were likely to be at the canteen. I jumped at the proposition. When I stepped into the production area, I saw for the first time the buzzing and whirring of machines, the neatly piled garment items ready for packing or getting placed on hangers, workers sewing away, the cutting machines, the cloth rolls located in the cutting area, and the store area where everything was packed for shipment – all this against a backdrop of Sri Lankan pop songs playing through in-built speakers in the building. I took in as much of the surroundings as I could, but knew that the fine detail would slip my attention at this stage. When we went to the canteen area, a sea of workers were having their morning meal, which was served by the factory for a subsidized fee of Rs 5.00. In a country where using fingers to eat food is the norm, the workers were using forks and spoons to eat local food instead. I turned to the senior manager and inquired as to the reason for this – sincerely he said "*It is about keeping the garments clean, so that they will not get soiled easily – especially the white and beige can get discoloured quite easily.*" He also went onto say "*But there is also a health and safety reason – they often bring in their personal utensils, so the risk of various infections spreading gets minimized.*" Witnessing workers using forks and spoons for their meals was novel, since like most other South Asians, Sri Lankans – across the class spectrum – more commonly use their fingers when eating local cuisine.

The first factory I visited also turned out to be one of my field sites for the seven and half months I spent in Sri Lanka. During that time as a Sri Lanka, I was able to converse with workers about this atypical practice of using forks and spoons for their daily meals. Many of them expressed sentiments such as, "*At the start, when they (i.e. management) teach us this during our induction it strikes us as a bit odd. But everyone is doing it and we get used to it after a point. We don't even think about it.*" It was only the rare exception, who let me know that "*It is expected of us, so we do it. What to do? It helps keep the garment clean we get told. I am of course still not quite used to it – or, even sure*

that I'm holding the utensils properly" said *Janaki*. A few women[7] who expressed their discomfort at using cutlery would only use a spoon to eat as they said that they really had not got the hang of eating with a fork – where rice is more likely to slip through.

Almost all of them brought their own cutlery to the factory on a daily basis as they tended to bring their lunch from home or buy lunch from colleagues.[8] Those using the cutlery provided by the factory canteen were the few who purchased their lunch from the refectory. Many said that they preferred bringing their own forks and spoons because they could take them home to wash carefully, to avoid inadequate cleaning by the canteen staff. In fact they would also usually wash the canteen plates prior to using them.

Workers bringing their eating utensils were common practice for a decade in the factory, when the newly recruited human resource manager attempted to institute a raft of changes in late 2009. Then the workers were informed by the management they would no longer be permitted to bring their individual cutlery. Along with this a prohibition on carrying mobile telephones into the premises was introduced – instead workers were to use the pay-phones provided by the management. The reason offered by the management was that by allowing workers to bring in their individual cutlery and mobiles, the *metal-free zone* policies were being contravened.

Neither of these policies went down well with the workers, leading to a good deal of grumbling. With regards to banning of cutlery, *Jeevika* who had been at the factory for nearly ten years said "*What madness is this? All of a sudden the management realizes – after ten years, mind you – that us bringing our fork and spoon goes against the metal-free policies. Did it dawn on them, all of a sudden? Our buyers have never raised a concern about this practice – why is the management taking this step now?*" Others said "*Metal free policies? What about our health and safety? All the time they talk about health and safety – and when it comes to our health, there is no concern. How can we be sure that the canteen people will clean these utensils properly? If they don't . . . [other people's] . . . saliva is left on the forks and spoons – we could get easily sick. Is that not a health concern?*" *Taraki* said, "*This is a sham, Miss. This concern with metal free policies! All this time we were told to use cutlery because it is a health and safety issue – when the production people want to ensure that garments don't get soiled. Now all of a sudden metal-free policies take precedence – as if a fork or a spoon is going to get into a shipment. If this was the case, we can still smuggle a fork or a spoon from the canteen and put it into a shipment. There has to be something other than this reason!*" *Taraki's* observations on the tensions in the latest claims made by management is important; she points to the ways in which various aspects to the same code were emphasized at different times, with no input from workers (Dolan, 2008; Blowfield and Dolan, 2008).

The ban on mobile phones from the factory premises roused even stronger reactions, with vociferous objections expressed. Women workers, especially the younger ones residing in boarding houses, were annoyed by the lack of empathy, given how mobile phones are crucial for their personal safety and security. *Charita* said "*We know how we have to walk through dark pathways and unlit footpaths when we have to walk from the bus stop to where we live.*

---

[7] I sat with women workers during meal times because the canteen area was segregated by gender and rank – with line supervisors, quality controllers and trainers seated separately from the operators, while management staff having a table distinctly for their use only. My interactions with men workers during the meal times were limited to saying hello or brief acknowledgments about some issue or another.

[8] These were mostly migrant workers who weren't permitted to do their own cooking in their boarding houses or were too tired to their own food preparation. The workers who brought and sold pre-ordered spare lunch packets were doing so as a way of supplementing their monthly wages.

The sister[9] I stay with gets nervous all the time, if I'm even 10–15 min late to arrive from the usual time. I give her calls to reassure her that I'm on the way. She too does the same. If I can not take the mobile to work, how can I call her? I'm not the only one; so many of us have to do this." Others similarly expressed their annoyance saying "*How would they know what it is like, when they travel only by their Pajero's or cars or get private van hire – and get dropped off at their doorstep. They don't travel by public transport. If they did, they would know the difficulties we face in walking through lonely areas to get to our homes.*" The annoyance and frustration expressed by *Charita* reflected the awareness that workers' lives and living conditions were a far cry from the *Pajero*-driving management. Her concerns reflected the realities of being a boarded worker, where public transportation in rural and semi-rural areas was at best erratic and hence they were dependent on factory-provided bus transportation. This invariably meant disembarking at a bus stop that might be a good 20 min walk to their places of residence, through lonely and unlit pot-holed roads and jagged pathways. Her concern revolved around her personal safety and the lack of public transportation and facilities, which made their journey between their boarding houses and workplaces potentially risky to her personal safety. She was not alone. Indeed the issue of personal safety and needing to have mobile phones when workers were commuting after a night shift was expressed by many, and all women were aware of the risks to their safety and security as their commute home involved walking in lonely, windy and unlit paths and roads at odd hours of the day. It was not only women workers who noted the perils of such journeys. Men workers – who didn't ride motorcycles – noted "*Miss, some of these roads are not the safest because they are known for muggings and robberies. This is why when we walk in these we are on the mobile phone talking to a friend or family members, because they then know where we are. This way, we feel safe!*" These sentiments indicate that workers' safety and welfare priorities differed from the latest twist given to a code by local management. Workers concerns also extended to their safety outside of factory premises and their unease about using common cutlery because of its rarity in their everyday life. This disjuncture become apparent when workers' concerns go unheard; for whom were these codes voluntary?

Managers and capital draw upon paternal and feudal relationships invoking family and kin idioms to cement social hierarchies and authority on the shop-floor in contradictory ways (De Neve, 2001; Lynch, 2007; Hewamanne, 2008); yet labour does not always heed their call. The protest of workers, therefore, was not to go away. Senior management through human resource office staff, the production manager, the operations manager and floor production managers explained that the pay phone box was there for the convenience of workers. The workers retorted that it did not resolve their fears when on the road, with the working men saying even more indignantly that the management did not realize that women workers might be subject to sexual harassment and assault when alone on the roads (Hewamanne, 2008; Lynch, 2007). Even more critically, *Ajay*, a male worker with whom I frequently conversed asked "*How does bringing mobiles run contrary to keeping the factory a metal-free zone? Does that mean all factories in Sri Lanka, which are metal-free, not permit mobiles into their factories? We can find out from the factories around, whether this is the case for them too.*" His incredulity was challenging the logic offered by management, if indeed keeping the factory premises *metal-free* was the rationale. He implied that the hidden logic was likely to revolve around disciplining workers who surreptitiously carried and used mobiles on the shop-floor thereby affecting production targets.

The displeasure on both issues, barring cutlery and mobiles, was communicated and expressed to the management via the Worker Council. Concerns regarding cutlery fell on deaf ears, but management had to do a complete u-turn regarding mobile phones and withdrew its ban from the factory. The retraction implicitly conceded that it was a short sighted decision, although the grounds for the decision were never conveyed to the workers. While the voices of labour with regards to mobile phones were taken into account, with one *metal-free* concern cast aside, it was not the same in relation to cutlery. Afterwards a representative from the Worker Council shared with me details of the discussion at their monthly meeting and the decisions arrived at. I was curious to learn the management rationale for coming up with their latest decisions on staying *metal-free*. Subsequently, I broached the subject of making the factory superlatively *metal free* with middle level management and asked about the reasoning behind this initiative. "*How much of a risk is allowing forks and spoons to the factory? Is this brouhaha a legitimate concern about metal free policies?*" I inquired from *Mandika*. He conceded that this was some plan hatched up by Mr. R, the HR manager. "*Yes, bad idea. He was concerned that workers were using mobile phones during their break times – and by doing so they may delay going back to the factory floor. Also, there were complaints from the security staff that those boys on the night shift, especially in the cutting sections, were on the phone because there was less supervision. There was concern that this has an impact on production – so he came up with the idea of banning both mobiles and cutlery because allowing them in was to go against the metal-free policy of the factory.*" I was reminded of what *Taraki* had said about "*There must be another reason for this.*" I pressed him saying "*Why not let both items to the factory again – why was the okay only given for mobiles?*" He mockingly replied, as if I had not already got it, saying "*That would be really bad. The decision was ill conceived. So we said ok to mobiles, because it shows that we respond to worker concerns – and kept the ban on forks and spoons, because it makes it seem as if keeping the factory metal-free was what brought about the decisions. It was nothing about cutlery of course.*" As *Ajay* hinted, I discuss below how management decisions were about disciplining errant workers and making production targets a priority.

Managers deployed rhetoric of keeping factories *metal-free* and "codes" to discipline workers and re-exert control, when in fact this was not the spirit of the code. It was used as a pretext to redress other management concerns – notably in this instance to do with production and disciplining workers. A standard and universal code becomes a means of shaping, directing, and controlling workers and work place situations, distant in both space and time from where the codes were devised and ultimately lending itself to reinterpreting the codes as management finds fit (Dunn, 2007, 2009; Dolan, 2010). Disciplining workers into becoming more productive and "diligent" feeds into these initiatives. It also lays bare how the health and safety of workers is compromised because there is not enough consideration given to the social realities of their lives. Where worker mobility is tenuous because public transport is poor and public roads were of varying standard, mobile phones are not about a lifestyle choice – although they are this too since workers carry expensive handsets with the latest technology; it was quintessentially linked to their personal security. Similarly, their unfamiliarity with using cutlery in their daily lives outside of the factory setting results in a suspicion and discomfort with utilizing common utensils – with which English-speaking middle-class managers cannot empathize because they take it for granted.

Health and safety codes are deployed to meet production targets and avoid consumer complaints, which become the heart of the matter, rather than worker welfare. These instances illustrate the greater emphasis placed on "building partnerships and improving approaches to monitoring and measuring

---

[9] Workers boarded commonly called their landlady's and landlords as *Akka* (older sister), *Aiyya* (older brother), or *nanda* (aunty – used for kin aunts related through the father's family), even though they were not kin relatives.

performance rather than addressing the content of the standards" (Blowfield and Dolan, 2008: 11), with standards getting interpreted and reinterpreted to serve the pressing needs of production. This reinterpretation however is not without tension for management practices, especially where labourers bring their concerns to bear stridently. Straddling consumer welfare and worker rights thus bring with it pressure points for management with regards to ethical codes. However, what the code implies and how it works out in protecting and promoting the welfare of workers remains debatable – with my next case elucidating this point further.

5. Stop and search: needles in a cloth-stack

I now return to the entry-point of this paper: the metal-free factory zone health and safety policy, which is clearly an all important for the apparel sector. My first observation of "*A health and safety issue, Miss*" made me aware of the need to be highly attuned to the needle policies at each factory. The frequency with which I observed workers either walking in haste with broken but found needles in small plastic jars to the needle room or stopping all work and frantically searching for a broken needle reinforced this consciousness too.

Usually the process began with the individual worker carefully looking for a needle or a piece of it in the cut-pieces she/he was responsible for sewing. When this search was not successful, he/she would locate the magnetic sweeper and clean the area surrounding his/her machine; if this effort failed then the entire line would get involved in the search for a broken needle. In situations where a needle broke on a machine at the end of the line and the end product was sorted for packing, then the chaos caused was evident. Everyone on the line would be busy looking for a needle, methodically and slowly: sometimes a futile task, but one which needed to be undertaken nonetheless. The most stressful for the operators, line supervisors, production assistants and production managers was when the packing was nearly done but the threat of an unfound broken needle led to the unpacking of each item – one by one. Failure to locate meant in the words of a production management "*We just have to desperately hope that the broken piece never got to the packaging in the first place – because if it did and the retailer found it, that is a guaranteed RTM* (Return to Manufacturer) *with rebuke and cost!*" He underscores the implications for suppliers with punitive rules of the game, where suppliers use standards as a disciplining technique (Goger, 2013; De Neve, 2009). For Sri Lankan suppliers' intent on brandishing their ethical credentials, a slip of this nature is penalizing at multiple levels – including a dent to their managed reputation. Sri Lanka's attempt at positioning itself as an ethical producer needs frequent stage-management at all discernible levels to avoid a fall from grace.

The most meticulous level of detail and paper trail was set in place for this hazard – and often carefully observed too. In both factories I observed, the Needle Room was a key locus of activity and careful record keeping by the worker-in-charge who always had at least an A-Level qualification. If a needle was broken or had become blunt, then it would be put in a small plastic holder with a tightly closed lid and carefully transported by the relevant operator to the Needle Room, which often tended to be located to the side, at around mid-point of the production floor in a separate glass-walled enclosed office space. The operator taking the dysfunctional needle would hand it over to the in-charge worker of the needle room, who would record the necessary detail of the needle – from the type to size – then hand over a new needle to the operator in exchange. The workers at the needle room would then carefully sello-tape the broken needle onto a piece of paper of similar size and type of broken/dysfunctional needles and then record all its detail in a catalogue. If a broken needle was not found,

a replacement would only be obtained after the line supervisor and production floor manager for the zone signed off on the necessary paperwork verifying that a thorough check had been undertaken. Until the paperwork was produced a new needle would not released, and formalities were signed-off only after a rigorous process of stop and search was undertaken.

At both factories I was told by the staff manning the Needle Room that the inventory, akin to a Damien Hirst piece of artwork with meticulous ordering of broken needles by size and type, can be subject to close scrutiny by senior production staff, auditors and compliance officers of retailing corporations. The needle room staff, therefore, attend to their task with diligence, care, and attention. Records had to be accurate; there was little room for mistakes. Keeping with this spirit, almost all operators understood health and safety in terms of priority given to metal-free garments.

Generating and activating a series of procedures and activities to systematically document and measure each factory's efforts at being metal-free means putting in place systems that can be "reviewed by an outsider" (Dunn, 2007: 39). Discipline is enforced on labour and management alike, rather than them willingly habituating these ethical norms. The impression is that the rights of "free" agents are not ostensibly violated in their work place through audit systems and paper trails (Dolan, 2010; Dunn, 2007). Workers are aware and detest the constraints placed by these new modes of governmentality and as I show later on, the management feel much the same. For them, this is a technocratic layering that does bear upon their work place conditions, resulting in unexpected overtime for both labour and supervisory management, thwarting workers from meeting their targets, violating other codes (overtime) and placing unrealistic stresses on senior management (see also De Neve, 2009). For Sri Lankan managers, their place in the global market as an ethical sourcing destination is an additional layer of compliance that needs constant championing.

During my fieldwork period, at least once a month I witnessed, and sometimes participated in, the search for broken needles on the production floor around one worker or another. The collective search for broken needless was sometimes a welcome break from the monotony of work; at other times, and when the needle could not be located quickly, it lead to tiredness and frustrated mutterings on the part of operators – with line supervisors beckoning "*search, search*". When the stop and search entailed opening up labelled and packaged items of clothing, it led to both despair and irritation on the part of workers. *Nadira* once said to me "*We were just about finishing the packing of the order, when we were told to go through for a broken needle amongst this stack of clothes. It is nearly 3.30 pm now, Miss. It is a real pain because it means OT* (overtime) *for sure. First, we unpack and look for the god-damn broken needle and then we have to repack again.*" Her frustrations echoed another hidden health and safety issue – the fatigue from doing overtime – that gets sidelined, as the health and safety of ensuring metal-free shipments to the UK, Europe and the USA gets priority. Across continents, places, spaces and miles, the consumer's safety remains supreme, ultimately showing that discourses of global justices does not travel similarly across space, with the same code getting interpreted according to varying priorities (Peck and Theodore, 2012).

6. Voluntary, for whom?

Whenever questions regarding the health and safety standards of the factory were broached, therefore, the focal point of the conversation centred on the procedures in place for broken needles, the use of toxic material for cleaning and the wearing of protective gear. It was only my gentle querying about the availability of toilet and healthcare facilities, toilet and water-drinking breaks, leave for

maternity, ill-health, workplace injuries, etc. that would lead the conversation to a discussion of the wider health and safety code that better reflected the workers' needs. The different scales within which consumer, buyer, and Sri Lankan management concerns are raised leads to certain agendas dominating over others – with workers sometimes parroting from a script even as they are aware that some codes have limited bearing on their everyday health, safety, and security.

The health and safety issues referred to by the workers are no surprise when located alongside the sentiments of a senior buying manager for a lingerie company based in the West. She said "*When I do factory visits all over the place* (implying not just Sri Lanka but also the rest of Asia), *I look for five things which I know signals a compliant factory. If they meet the five ticks, I know that the factory is doing all the right things and they are being compliant. They are as follows: (1) The condition of the latrines, bathrooms, and washrooms, (2) The condition of the canteen, (3) Whether the safety exits are observed and extinguishers are in functioning order, (4) The safety conditions of the machines, are they new or old?, and (5) Whether the factory has a needle policy and the way in which the needle room operates. Of these, the needle room is KEY! If these conditions are met, then the factory is likely to be highly compliant – and then I'm really satisfied*". Her focal concern was on outcomes and specific technical procedures. The workers' conditions as women and men, or having to do overtime because of these very systems, did not even make it onto her radar screen. Moreover, the ways in which the social conditions of workers may have a bearing on how health and safety codes ought to be shaped was left out of her analysis. Metal-free shipments and orders signalling ethical compliance – which must include health and safety concerns – displace the local realities of worker welfare to global priorities of consumer interests.

A Human Resource manager at another factory where I did a day visit put it more bluntly "I think this health and safety is a load of hypocrisy. They insist on us sending metal-free clothing items, but how can they ensure that a pin or staple won't get entangled to a bra or panty from the counter? It isn't as if at the High Street shops, there are no pins or staples at the checking-out counter, right? I just don't think that the buyers' emphasis is correct. It comes across to us as a form of subtle bullying; making sure that we know they are in charge." Her frustrations, freely expressed, capture the essence of the ways in which health and safety concerns travel across work settings – and point to the uneven development spatialities underpinning their reception and implementation. Contrary to Blowfield and Dolan (2008) who argue that ethical trade is a form of governmentality advanced through voluntary regulation rather than force, my fieldwork brings out the question of 'voluntary' for whom? The reworking of organizational practices and labour relations through regimes of control and accountability found in audit systems is not even necessarily imbibed by senior management in the Global South with open arms as conveyed by the irritated Human Resource manager. Their analysis of "Foucault's pastoral approach to power (pertaining to), wherein the community of principals exerts power over the community of supply chains" echoes through my research (Blowfield and Dolan, 2008: 17). Yet it is also the case that management across the global economic spectrum does not necessarily sing from the same hymn sheet. Rather management is caught between pressure from buyers and recognizing the local socio-economic needs of labour which can exacerbate harsh conditions. Therefore, even as the "community of principals" bring into its fold those who it thinks abide by formations of its making, the seeming converts on the ground can be sceptical – deeply aware that audits and standards are indeed instruments of power, closely intertwined with terms of global trade not necessarily of their own making (Rajak, 2011; Dolan, 2010; Dunn, 2009; Lampland, 2009). The stop and search operations for needles may help keep

shipments of apparel products metal free but the ways in which they come into conflict with other codes, overtime for instance, and the stresses they place on workers and management alike does not go unnoticed. This, as Goger (2013: 13) points out, raises questions about the dubious moral authority of Western retailers and standards; and how ethicality is "situated, embodied" and emerge "relationally through space–time and place".

7. Standardization on the shop floor

Often we are made to believe that harmonization of standards and the uptake of voluntary codes of practices are primarily about protecting worker welfare – where health and safety is considered unproblematic to implement.[10] Similarly, creating metal free zones appears an easy enough task to make a factory complaint. It is, as Dunn (2003) notes, illustrative of the ways in which standards are synchronized so that a homogenous regulatory environment is created to ensure that competitors follow the same rules of the competitive game. Yet, as she reminds us "regulatory process ... (are) embed(ed) in specific geographies with their own histories, institutional structures and social norms" (Dunn, 2003: 1495; see also Dolan, 2010). A historically contingent parameter in understanding the ways in which the voyage of standardization occurs across global spaces is the uneven development terrain.

Spatial discrepancies then mark the ways in which governance regimes are promoted and received; corporate and multi-stakeholder initiatives to make standards congruent are similarly embedded in the specific geographies of uneven development. The ethnographic illustrations narrated above highlight the need to tease out and pay attention to cultural and socio-economic spaces as ethical trading codes play themselves out. Searching for broken needles can bear upon another code pertaining to overtime and affect workers reaching their production targets; while bans on cutlery affect workers sense of personal hygiene. The implication is not an absence of frameworks comparable to standards in the Global North, where governance regimes are construed (Rajak, 2011; Dunn, 2009); but that there is space for room and manoeuvre to apply the codes in ways which are likely to be contrary to their spirit. Efforts at banning mobile phones as a way of keeping a factory *metal-free* serves to illustrate how personal safety of workers is neglected because of the distinctly resource poor public services, namely public transportation, available to the average Sri Lankan worker. Since the material, cultural, and social space within which codes and standards is begotten is divergent from its place of arrival, it is the new place which will give particular form to universalized notions of ethical codes. Standards, Dunn (2009) notes, "need an *oikodomi*, a material context in which they are transformed into action and effect" (2009: 120). Since the Sri Lankan context is imbued with iniquitous global trade relations, material inequality and socio-cultural specificities, standardization practices can also work against labour.

The tensions and contradictions for management in trying to reconcile consumer safety and worker rights via ethical codes are evident at multiple scales and play out in contradictory ways on the shop-floor. Shipping needle free clothing signals to retailers and consumers that health and safety is taken seriously at production sites, but does so at the cost of workers loosing out on meeting their productivity targets (which bear on their wages) and doing overtime. They can also be used as instruments towards enhancing productivity and disciplining workers when management attempt to prevent workers from bringing in mobiles. While these moments are not devoid of the self-regulating power à la Foucault

---

[10] This is distinct from the observation that the proliferation of multiple codes has lead to another set of problems for management and workers alike (Hale and Shaw, 2002).

which gets instilled through these process (Dolan, 2010; Dunn, 2007), they are also not without disruption and resistance by workers. The ease with which workers use cutlery at the factory premises is illustrative of the former, while the workers' resistance to the attempted prohibition of bringing mobiles to work is more than a symbolic act of resistance. It is also about workers making management aware of their material world and the distinctions that continue to persist between the lived worlds of managers and workers – pointing to the inequalities that persist and shape these divergent worlds.

Universalist models of codification and standardization seem to neglect social complexity and reality on the ground and are a "shifting, ambiguous and dynamic field" (Dolan et al., 2011: 6; Dolan, 2008; Dunn, 2009). It is more than this too; my paper shows how code deployment and auditing trails take a life of their own in the Global South, which does not necessarily portend better work conditions for labour. The social and class hierarchies reinforced through systems of ethical coding are apparent in how shop-floor relationships are structured around the needle room and its centrality in the everyday work place. The power which resides in the needle room and its officer is reinforced not merely through its physical presence and flurry of activity around the archiving and search for broken needles, but also by the fact that it becomes the focus of attention for production managers, line supervisors and workers alike. From the senior purchasing manager of a brand name retailer who emphasizes the central import of the needle room as a sign of an ethically compliant factory, to the senior and middle-level managers at the production facilities who voice their concern or resentment with regards to the stresses created by needle policies, to labourers whose workday can be severely disrupted searching for broken needles signals how the dynamics and auditing trails on the shop-floor holds the sovereignty of the consumer over that of the labourer. Despite the apparent contradictions and tensions in trying to uphold different dimensions to ethical codes, ironically consumer concerns regarding *metal-free* status trumps limits on working overtime or workers inability to meet production targets, which has a bearing on their ability to take home a living wage – where earned. A worker halting their sewing operation to look for a broken and missing needle means an interference with his/her production targets, and in a line-based production processes if a broken needle is not easily found then other workers productivity gets affected too. The disruption caused to a worker or a group of workers by a search for a broken needle is then not simply a source of havoc in their working day but also has bearings on other dimensions to ethical codes, which tends to be neglected or downplayed, as well as on their productivity levels. It is this, irrespective of what the standardization process entails for the everyday life of workers, which gets construed as epitomizing "ethically compliant" factories. My research shows how becoming preoccupied with "specific rights and auditing techniques occludes the role that CSR plays in naturalizing a particular view of global justice" (Blowfield and Dolan, 2008: 15).

8. Conclusion

Carswell and De Neve (2013) note that there is sometimes an implicit and perhaps even naive interpretation that voluntary and private governance regimes are a lever for engendering positive work conditions without taking into account labours' voice. Supporting their concerns, my fieldwork shows that the very mechanisms, techniques and instruments set in place can become a barrier to putting labours' interest to the fore.[11] What is evident throughout the case studies discussed here is that these standards and codes are not value neutral and in fact possess an implicit hier-

archy of their own. Because they do not get implemented in a social and material vacuum, the importance of paying attention to the dynamics of place and space gets emphasized through my findings. The asymmetrical power relationship which pervades ethical codes suggests that they are not merely implemented but are constantly negotiated, contested and re-interpreted in novel ways as they transmit across actors placed at distinct scales on the global production system: Western buyers, Sri Lankan management and labour. Thus, as these codes travel across uneven global spaces, they take a life course structured by power dynamics resulting in scenarios on the ground which may not necessarily protect and promote the interests of those, the labourers, who they claim to shield.

The subtleties of the ways in which ethical codes play out hence need much closer scrutiny and examination. The tensions and contradictions within the same codes as well as between codes has hitherto received little attention, but given the episodes discussed, is one which needs further scrutiny (see also Dunn, 2009; Gibbon and Ponte, 2008; Lampland, 2009; Peck and Theodore, 2012). Sri Lanka's apparel production sites have largely evaded the negative publicity associated with the trade. This is partially due to its social and human development achievements, labour market regulation and the role of the state in shaping the industry (Ruwanpura and Wrigley, 2011). These are key vectors that have fed into the ability for Sri Lanka's apparel producers' forum to position itself as possessing an "ethical" ethos. The leading lights of the country's industry have, to their credit, taken many steps to ensure that it has not merely joined the ethical bandwagon but are in the vanguard (Ruwanpura and Wrigley, 2011). However, as these case studies emphasise it is worth reminding ourselves that despite these promising moves, when ethical codes journey across uneven development spaces and do so under competitive pressures of capitalism, their implementation is not without contradictions, and tensions for labour.

References

Blowfield, Michael, Dolan, Catherine, 2008. Stewards of virtue? The ethical dilemma of CSR in African agriculture. Development and Change 39 (1), 1–23.

Carswell, Grace, De Neve, Geert, 2013. Labouring for global markets: conceptualizing labour agency in global production networks. Geoforum 44 (January 2013), 62–70.

De Grammont, Hubert Carton, Flores, Sara Maria Lara, Flores, Sara Maria Lara, 2010. Productive restructuring and 'Standardization' in Mexican horticulture: consequences for labour. Journal for Agrarian Change 10 (2), 228–250.

De Neve, Geert, 2001. Towards an ethnography of the workplace: hierarchy, authority and sociability on the south Indian textile shop-floor. South Asia Research 21 (2), 133–160.

De Neve, Geert, 2009. Power, inequality and corporate social responsibility: the politics of ethical compliance in the South Indian garment industry. Economic and Political Weekly XLIV (22), 63–71.

Dolan, Catherine S., 2008. In the mists of development: Fairtrade in Kenyan tea fields. Globalizations 5 (2), 305–318.

Dolan, Catherine S., 2010. Virtual moralities: the mainstreaming of Fairtrade in Kenyan tea fields. Geoforum 41 (2010), 33–43.

Dolan, Catherine S., Garsten, Christina, Rajak, Dinah, 2011. Introduction: ethnographies of corporate ethicizing. Focaal 60 (2011), 3–8.

Dunn, Elizabeth, 2003. Trojan pig: paradoxes of food safety regulation. Environment and Planning A 35, 1493–1511.

Dunn, Elizabeth, 2007. *Escherichia Coli*, corporate discipline and the failure of the sewer state. Space and Polity 11 (1), 35–53.

---

[11] See De Grammont and Flores (2010) for a similar observation regarding standardization and its implications for labour in the agro-food industry in Mexico.

Dunn, Elizabeth, 2009. Standards without infrastructure. In: Lampland, M., Leigh, S. (Eds.), Star Standards and their Stories: How Quantifying, Classifying and Formalizing Practices Shape Everyday Life. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Gibbon, Peter., Ponte, Stefano., 2008. Global value chains: from governance to governmentality. Economy and Society 37 (3), 365–392.

Goger, Annelies, 2013. Ethical branding in Sri Lanka: a case study of garments without guilt. In: Miller, D., Bair, J. (Eds.), Workers Rights and Labour Compliance in Global Supply Chains. Routledge, NY & London.

Gunawardana, Samanthi, 2007. Perseverance, struggle and organization in Sri Lanka's export processing zones: 1978–2003. In: Bronfenbrenner, K. (Ed.), Global Unions: Challenging Transnational Capital through Cross-Border Campaigns. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Hale, Angela, Shaw, Linda, 2002. Women workers and the promise of ethical trade in the globalized garment industry: a serious beginning? Antipode 33 (3), 51–530.

Hale, Angela, Jane Wills, 2007. Threads of Labour: Garment Industry Supply Chains from the Workers' Perspective Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Hewamanne, Sandya, 2008. Stitching Identities in a Free Trade Zone: Gender and Politics in Sri Lanka Philadelphia. University of Pennsylvania Press.

Hughes, Alex, 2004. Accounting for ethical trade: global commodity networks, virtualism and the audit economy. In: Hughes, A., Reimer, S. (Eds.), Geographies of Commodity Chains. Routledge, London & New York, pp. 215–232.

Jayawardena, Kumari, 1972. The Rise of the Labour Movement in Ceylon. Duke University Press, North Carolina.

Karp, Jonathan, 1999. Sri Lanka keeps Victoria's secret: Island workers produce panties in cool comfort. Wall Street Journal 13 (July), B1, B4.

Knutsen, H.M., 2004. Industrial development in buyer-driven networks: the garment industry in Vietnam and Sri Lanka. Journal of Economic Geography 4 (5), 545–564.

Lampland, Martha, 2009. Classifying labourers: instinct, property, and the psychology of productivity in Hungary (1920–1956). In: Lampland, M., Leigh, S. (Eds.), Star Standards and their Stories: How Quantifying, Classifying and Formalizing Practices Shape Everyday Life. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Lynch, Caitlin, 2007. Juki Girls, Good Girls: Gender and Cultural Politics in Sri Lanka's Global Garment Industry. Cornell University Press, Ithaca.

Miller, Doug, 2012. Last Nightshift in Savar: The Story of the Spectrum Sweater Factory Collapse. McNidder & Grace, London.

Peck, Jamie, Theodore, Nik, 2012. Follow the policy: a distended case approach. Environment and Planning A 44, 21–30.

Powers, Michael, 1997. The Audit Society: Rituals of Verification. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

Rajak, Dinah, 2011. Theatres of virtue: collaboration, consensus and the social life of CSR. Focaal 60 (2011), 9–20.

Ruwanpura, Kanchana, 2011. Women workers in the apparel sector: a three decade (r)-evolution of feminist contributions? Women workers in the apparel sector: a three decade (r)-evolution of feminist contributions? Progress in Development Studies 11 (3), 197–209.

Ruwanpura, Kanchana N., Wrigley, Neil, 2011. The costs of compliance? Views of Sri Lankan apparel manufacturers in times of global economic crisis. Journal of Economic Geography 11 (6), 1–19.

Ruwanpura, Kanchana N., (2013). Scripted Performances? Local Readings of "Global" Health and Safety Standards the Apparel Sector in Sri Lanka Global Labour Journal 4(2):88-108.

Star, Susan Leigh, Lampland, Martha, 2009. Reckoning with standards. In: Lampland, M., Leigh, S. (Eds.), Star Standards and their Stories: How Quantifying, Classifying and Formalizing Practices Shape Everyday Life. Cornell University Press, Ithaca, pp. 2–25.