



5 Years After Rana Plaza: Consequences for Labor Standards Improvements in Garment Supply Chains

Research Workshop Call for Papers

April 27-28, 2018, Freie Universität Berlin

The **Garment Supply Chain Governance Project** and **King's College London** invite you to attend a workshop held at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, on the 27th and 28th of April 2018 to remember the 5th year anniversary of the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory building in Bangladesh and reflect on its consequences. The two day workshop intends to bring researchers engaged in assessing the consequences of this disaster for labor standards governance in garment supply chains as well as selected practitioners together to discuss our work and learn from each other. This should help us open up possibilities for collaboration and think about ways to improve our impact.

In April 2018 it will be five years since the Rana Plaza factory building collapsed, taking the lives of 1136 workers and injuring more than 2500 people. Whereas before this event the name Rana Plaza was unknown to the world, since 24th April 2013 it recalls the deadliest accident in the history of the global garment industry and has “become synonymous with the problems of labour rights in global supply chains” (Donaghey & Reinecke, 2017: 2).

In the aftermath of this event a number of important institutional innovations have been implemented, “leading to the most profound transformation of labour governance institutions ever seen in that sector.” (Zajak, 2017: 2) Instances of these transformations can be witnessed on the transnational, national, and firm-level. On the transnational level, the Accord on Building and Fire Safety in Bangladesh is one of the most notable responses to the Rana Plaza factory collapse. The Accord “represents a new paradigm in the enforcement of global labor and human rights,” including binding commitments of lead firms (Anner et al., 2013: 2). While innovative in many ways, the effectiveness of the Accord has been questioned (e.g. Baumann-Pauly et al., 2015) and deserves continued critical scrutiny (e.g. Baumann-Pauly et al., 2017). On the national level, initiatives such as the Modern Slavery Act in the UK or the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles in Germany (Jastram & Schneider, 2015) have been implemented. On the firm level, garment retailers are beginning to ‘upgrade’ their CSR-departments or to change their procurement-practices (Schüßler & Lohmeyer, 2017).

The abovementioned responses to the Rana Plaza factory collapse have set in motion a range of new developments. These include, among others, the creation of new relationships between actors, for instance with new actor constellations among lead firms as well as between lead firms and global union federations (Alexander et al., 2017) or between unions



and (consumption-oriented) social movements (Reinecke & Donaghey, 2015). Also, the ways in which responsibilities in global supply chains are defined have undergone significant changes. Unilateral governance approaches are being reconsidered, with more attention being paid to multi-stakeholder or union-inclusive approaches that are more binding.

Important developments are also happening “on the ground” in Bangladesh, among factory managers (e.g. Fontana & Egels-Zandén, 2017; Frenkel et al., 2017), labor representatives (Zajac et al., 2017), social dialogue (Menzur et al., 2017) or gender relations (Kabeer, 2017). New labor inspection practices have raised not only practical, but also legal questions (Bair, 2017).

All these developments have spurred important research projects around the world. With this workshop we aim to offer a concentrated forum for dialogue on all issues related to labor standards governance in post-Rana Plaza Bangladesh. You are invited to participate in this workshop because we know you conduct research in this area. We particularly invite you to submit and present *empirical research findings* from your ongoing research projects.

Submissions:

Those interested in participating in the workshop are asked to submit an extended abstract of 2000 words by 1st of December 2017 to nora.lohmeyer@fu-berlin.de (subject heading **Submission 5 Years Rana Plaza**). Acceptance notifications will be sent by 1 January 2018. Only accepted papers can be presented at the workshop and special preference will be given to submissions presenting fresh empirical insights.

We are currently exploring options for a Special Issue related to this workshop.

Practicalities:

The workshop will be held at the Management Department at Freie Universität Berlin, Germany. We will have half a workshop day on Friday—starting after lunch (at around 2pm), so that at least people from Europe will be able to schedule their travel on Friday morning—and a full day on Saturday, finishing in the evening. There will be no workshop participation fee. Accommodation and travel expenses have to be borne by the participants. Coffee breaks and beverages for both workshop days as well as a small lunch on Saturday will be available. A joint dinner at a restaurant on Friday evening will be at your own expense.

In case you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact: Nora Lohmeyer at Freie Universität Berlin (004930-83860975, nora.lohmeyer@fu-berlin.de)



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