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Conflicts of Responsibility in the Globalized Textile Supply Chain. Lessons of a Tragedy

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Abstract Eight years before the Rana Plaza collapse (24 April 2013), which killed over 1100 people and received huge international media coverage, a somewhat similar tragedy drew my attention: the collapse of the Spectrum Sweater Industries Ltd. factory (10 April 2005), which was responsible for the death of 64 people and led to some international mobilization. This paper describes and analyses the international career of the mobilization for the victims spurred by the tragedy. How were European consumers and citizens called upon to act? How did the European brands react? In the end, the question is how the appeal to Western firms' "Corporate Social Responsibility" (CSR) can help improve the working conditions prevailing in Southern factories. By applying a generic definition of responsibility (the controlled administration of a sanction) and minutely examining the imputations of responsibility consecutive to the Spectrum tragedy, the paper exposes the work of activists who attempted to establish Western companies' responsibility, and how some of the tagged companies resisted their moral obligation to protect workers beyond an employer–employee relationship *stricto sensu*.

Keywords Factory collapse · Working conditions · Corporate social responsibility · Consumer activism · Qualitative study

Introduction

> "DHAKA: At least three people are killed and many more are missing after an eight-storey garment factory collapses near the Bangladeshi capital following a boiler explosion. (Bangladesh-factory-collapse)." (Agence France Presse, "AFP Asia-Pacific news agenda", 11 April 2005, 4:59).

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The news broke during the night of April 10 to April 11, 2005: A dramatic event had taken place near Dhaka, the capital of Bangladesh. The explosion of a boiler had caused the Spectrum Sweater Ltd. factory to cave in on workers busy producing textile goods. Rescue teams were organized to salvage survivors trapped beneath the remnants of the destroyed factory. It was said that several dozens, perhaps hundreds of people, could be underneath. With bare hands and shovels, then with the help of machines, rescuers dug non-stop for nearly 4 days without giving up. Local and international newspapers describing the screams of workers buried alive in the ruins and the tears of those watching while dead bodies were uncovered allowed readers to picture the horror of the situation. The final toll was 64 dead and several dozen wounded, some severely, some permanently disabled.

The collapse of the Spectrum factory was an accident which, in itself, was not exceptional for Bangladesh. It was of course a tragedy, perceived as such and considered a highly reprehensible error, but was nevertheless representative of the "normal" way the garment industry functions. To take only but a few examples recalled by the French news agency Agence France Presse (AFP): In November 2000, nearly 50 workers died, trapped in a factory fire; in May 2004, 7 people died in a stampede towards the sole emergency exit after a false fire alert; and in January 2005, around 20 workers again perished in flames. But though the Spectrum accident was not exceptional, the affair which followed took on a peculiar form: Although the drama did not make the front page of European TV news channels (whereas the Rana Plaza collapse did), everybody concerned by the problem of labor conditions in developing countries—companies or activists in France, Germany, Spain, or Belgium—heard of Spectrum.

Four years later, the international network "Clean Clothes Campaign" (CCC), which fights to improve working conditions throughout the world, once again mentioned the dramatic event on its website:

> "CCC is very pleased to report that, following years of delay, the Relief Fund that was set up by former buyer Inditex (Zara), cooperating with the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF), has paid a substantial part of the monies due to the injured and has made progress on the payments due to the widows and families of the dead." (CCC press release, "Fourth anniversary of the Spectrum factory collapse in Bangladesh")

It therefore seems that the cause of the Bangladeshi workers had made its way across the years and thousands of miles before finally obtaining a compensation arranged by the Spanish group Inditex. Such a development could hardly be taken for granted; which is what this article intends to account for.

Purpose and Method

In the first place, Western firms were under no legal obligation to indemnify workers who were not under a direct contract with them (Barraud de Lagerie 2013). Also, in today's world, though the notion of "social responsibility" seems largely endorsed across the board when talking about the steps that firms take or should take to underwrite the management of negative externalities that go beyond official regulations (or in other words, "companies integrate social and environmental concerns in their business operations and in their interaction with their stakeholders on a voluntary basis" European Commission 2001, p. 23) and, though the protection of workers' fundamental right counts among the major issues discussed in this respect, to assume that the indemnities awarded the victims of Spectrum by Inditex (or by

Carrefour) are a "natural" consequence of that moral responsibility towards "society" would be putting the cart before the horse and solving the problem before it was even voiced. Aside from the fact that such a view would be contradictory with the length of time elapsing between the dramatic event and the payment, it would imply that the contours of "corporate social responsibility" had stabilized, which was certainly not yet the case. In 2005, Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) had already "won the battle of ideas," to use the expression of an editorialist of *The Economist*, who went on to write: "Big firms nowadays are called upon to be good corporate citizens, and they all want to show that they are" (Crook 2005). But, the institutional force acquired by the concept went along with a very erratic definition that varied depending on the context. That is why, in order to understand what happened in the Spectrum affair, it is best to do away with shortcuts and follow the entire process from beginning to end to see how the actors themselves saw the problem as well as the solution.

Here, I consider the Spectrum affair to be one of the many instances where putting the firms' social responsibility into actual practice (Lund-Thomsen and Lindgreen 2014) was debated in situ. On the sidelines of the controversies that rocked the academic universe (Carroll 2008; Melé 2008), and of the decisions arrived at by the groups in charge of "defining" CSR (Daugareilh 2009; Weissbrodt and Kruger 2003), the Spectrum tragedy led to mentioning and contesting the extra-legal responsibility of the contracting firms with regard to their suppliers' personnel. It appears that, from the time anti-sweatshop activists started to express a "demand for virtue" (Vogel 2005), companies have responded with corporate social policies (Bender and Greenwald 2003; Esbenshade 2004; Ross 1997). But, the article sheds light on the dialectical relationship between CSR and political consumerism, by using the Spectrum tragedy as a telling illustration of how activists can revive criticism against companies that claim to be socially responsible. In line with the purpose of the special issue to study how consumers, civil society, the media, popular culture, government, corporations, and others address the sustainability of textile and clothing production and how actors and institutions contribute different forms of problem-solving solutions, the paper thus analyses the dispute concerning the "social responsibility" of Western firms with regard to the working conditions prevailing at their southern suppliers' factories.

The paper is based on a four-part field programme, which has been drawn up using written materials (newspaper articles, press releases, letters…) as well as interviews with various key actors of the affair. First of all, to review the affair, I resorted to both the international and Bangladeshi English language press. I collected 160 dispaches and articles indexed by LexisNexis and used them both as informative sources concerning the collapse (to know what happened when), and as a way to understand how the affair was perceived, in Bangladesh and in Europe (many papers addressed the question "who is responsible?"). Second, to study the action of the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), I collected the documents concerning the communications emanating from their main office (in the Netherlands) and from the Belgian branch (Clean Clothes Campaign/*Vêtements propres*); I also took advantage of fieldwork carried out on the French branch (Clean Clothes Campaign/*De l'éthique sur l'étiquette*) between August and December 2005, to follow up in real time how the campaign was being built up (meetings, internal and external communications) and interview its leaders. Third, to grasp the position of the client firms, I interviewed the persons in charge of "social compliance" at three of the big names implicated in the affair, as well as the woman coordinating the Business Social Compliance Initiative (BSCI). Lastly, in Bangladesh in June 2007, I was able to access the first expert reports and meet with several people: the woman who represented a workers' trade union, the president of the association *Friendship*, the persons in charge of two employers' unions in the textile sector, and the owner of the collapsed factory.

Theoretical Framework and Organization of the Paper

As a theoretical framework, the paper basically follows one main principle: reject any normative approach and describe corporate social responsibility as defined by the actors themselves. In order to embrace the broadest range of facts pertaining to responsibility, the paper relies on Durkheim's definition as reworded by Paul Fauconnet: "responsibility is the characteristic of those who must, […] by virtue of a rule, be chosen as the passive subjects of a sanction" ([1920] 1928, p. 11). From that point of view, all "judgments of responsibility" are identified with the sanction applied, be it legal (administered by the judiciary) or moral (expressed in general terms), positive (celebrating merit) or negative (punishing the lack of merit), retributive (in the form of punishment or price to pay) or restitutive (in the form of reparations), trivial or momentous (from a simple laugh to the death penalty). Besides, any judgment concerning responsibility is the result of applying a "rule of responsibility," whether such a rule explicitly exists black on white or is simply revealed by behavior, justifying the legitimate choice of the person who will endure the sanction—since committing a fault is but "one situation among others generating responsibility."

That said, contrary to the Durkheimian approach and the notion of "collective consciousness," one should consider that disputes may arise over rules of responsibility. Consequently, the paper embraces a more constructivist and interactionist way of seeing judgements of responsibility. In the "labelling theory" (Becker 1963), society is said to consist of a plurality of understandings of what is best; "moral entrepreneurs" are no more than people who draw attention to issues or even "create" them. Moral entrepreneurs create rules and/or apply sanctions to those who do not behave according to the rule. In the following case, I will show that an organization of political consumerism endorsed the role of "moral entrepreneur" by shedding light on the responsibility of client firms towards their supplier employees, and by organizing the mobilization of citizen-consumers to pressurize the firms. In line with the research programme presented by Felstiner et al. (1980), the paper will describe the various transformations that led from a mishap to the demand for reparations. According to the authors, the process is always the same: an "unperceived injurious experience" becomes a "perceived injurious experience" ("*naming*"), the injurious experience is perceived as a "grievance" imputable to somebody or something ("*blaming*"), the grievance then leads to a demand for reparations addressed to the entity designated as responsible ("*claiming*"). After the Spectrum collapse, the "*naming*" phase hardly posed a problem—those who lost a dear one, an arm, the use of their legs, or their employment were not long in discovering their misfortune—so I will concentrate on the double phase of blaming/claiming.

The following paper is organized as follows. The first section shows how, once the dramatic event had occurred, searching for the guilty parties was not restricted to an action decided on by the victims and their trade-union representatives against the bosses and local public officials—as is mostly the case in industrial accidents—but was also supported by activists who, thousands of miles away, decided to denounce the business partners of the destroyed factory[1]. The consumer mobilization was anything but a *sui generi* process. The paper sheds light on the role played by an organization (namely the Clean Clothes Campaign) to structure the consumer protest and define what a corporate policy for social responsibility should be. The second section looks into the conflicts of responsibility generated by the activist accusations. The paper illustrates how the firms rejected any judgment of responsibility and more

[1] A book also tells the story of the Spectrum Sweater Factory Collapse. See: Miller 2012.

generally sought to ward off the creation of a new rule of responsibility. The core of the controversy was the question of social compliance monitoring systems. Thus, it appears that as soon as they have implemented a process of social compliance monitoring, the client firms consider they should not be held responsible in case of unforeseeable tragedy (the fault being rejected on those who made the monitoring check list or those who conducted the audit). Meanwhile, the activists use tragedies such as the Spectrum collapse as proof that social monitoring is not effective. Finally, the paper demonstrates that the decision of Western firms to assist the victims did not lead to a consensus around corporate social responsibility at all. In fact, the money given by the firms turned out to be a kind of "boundary object" (Star and Griesemer 1989): The firms considered it as a gift, an act of pure generosity, while the activists considered it as the settling of a debt that the Western firms supplied by the Bangladeshi factory had contracted out of respect for the victims of the catastrophe.

From Local Scandal to International Affair

Deciding who the guilty party is never goes without saying. Certain accusations naturally appear obvious when backed up by firmly established rules (in particular, but not exclusively, by the letter of the law), but it is nevertheless true that each of those black boxes of the normative order can always be reopened and challenged. Above all, the rules of responsibility are not a closed book. Some fall by the wayside while others, on the contrary, emerge and sometimes become an institution. The evolution of rules is the product of work carried out by actors who, following Howard Becker (1963), can be called "moral entrepreneurs." Western activists became entrepreneurs of collective action in order to pressurize client firms into indemnifying the victims in the name of a new rule of responsibility.

Dealing with the Tragedy on Site: Legal Procedures and Trade Union Negotiations

In the case of a tragedy such as Spectrum, the first reaction generally consists in looking for the material causes in order to uncover the persons responsible. In the first news dispatches, the material course of events having brought about the workers' death was self-evident: The explosion of a boiler had caused the factory to collapse, causing workers to be buried alive and die. The hypothesis of the boiler exploding opened up a series of possibly responsible individuals among all those who had been "in contact" with the failed object (manufacturer, salesman, maintenance, customer, etc.). Yet, that was not the path the inquiry chose to follow, preferring to question the origins of the explosion: Why did the building not hold up?

As of April 12, the AFP relayed the information gleaned from the Bangladesh press agency (BSS), indicating that the building had been erected on swamps without official authorization. The owner of the factory, Shahriyar Sayed Hossain (known as Shahriyar), acknowledged the fact that his permit only covered four stories but that three more had been added while awaiting the extra authorization; in fact, the building even had nine levels. The owner was immediately singled out by victims' families, to such a point that, fearing for his life, he holed up in his home for several weeks. His detractors claimed that Shahriyar had violated the law by erecting a building without first having obtained the mandatory permits and by making workers work nights in dangerous conditions. Judging that the collapse was in no way a "simple accident," that on the contrary, it was in reality a "serious crime," the leaders of various organizations for the defense of workers demanded that the tragedy be dealt with, not only by following an

insurance company sort of procedure but in a trial on responsibility. In fact, when, on May 8, 2005, Shahriyar showed up in court, the judge immediately incarcerated him on the grounds that the absence of any trace of blueprints was sufficient proof that "it is more clear that the incident took place not by chance, but for the gross negligence of the accused." Freed a few weeks later, Shahriyar was still awaiting trial when I arrived in Bangladesh in 2007. I lack information on the rest of the legal procedure; but what seems most important is the fact that it was the factory owner who was unanimously held responsible for the Spectrum tragedy and whom they wanted punished.

That part of the story can be termed a "scandal" because it is a situation in which a community displays its unanimity as accuser and in which the accused is never publicly defended by anybody—even he himself hardly daring to do so (de Blic and Lemieux 2005). That was exactly Shahriyar's situation. There were of course people who took his side; one of his clients, who had become a friend, insisted he was no worse than another, that he had not been aware of the risks his factory represented, that he had been unlucky. But aside from the fact that this opinion barely exceeded a one-to-one contact—namely an interview with myself—it meant pointing out attenuating circumstances rather than throwing the accusation back at the accusers. Even those who underlined Shahriyar's honesty had to admit the facts against him were indisputable:

> "The outside appearance of the factory was average. Nothing wonderful but nothing particularly ugly, either, it wasn't bad-awful. It wasn't perfect but it wasn't… There were things that weren't socially conform: some women died at 1:30 a.m., which proves there were social deviations since /…/ Bangladesh law prohibits women from working after 8 p.m. So I'm not saying he's white as snow socially speaking. /…/ But it was no worse than anywhere else…" (Textik's social compliance officer, interviewed 11 January 2007).

The owner himself did not oppose any real resistance to the accusations flung at him. At most, he tried to shift the burden of responsibility, repeating that he was no engineer and that to build the factory he had called upon professionals who had proved incompetent. But, he was seeking more to impose the idea that he should be given attenuating circumstances than to deny a responsibility which he knew was his, at least as the person in charge of the production site.

The owner is the natural person on whom the most direct accusations as well as the demands for reparations fell. But, he was not the only one made to answer. By emphasizing the resemblances with other, similarly dramatic incidents, the workers' spokespersons—trade unions, NGOs—wanted to show that Spectrum was not an isolated case, that it was the symptomatic expression of a recurrent problem and press their suit with the employers' unions (Bangladesh Garment Manufacturers and Exporters Association (BGMEA) and Bangladesh Knitwear Manufacturers and Exporters Associations (BKMEA)) and the public authorities. The employers' unions were taken to task for their supposed responsibility for the good behavior of their members, all the more as they had multiplied initiatives and declarations in favor of better working conditions for several years already. As to the local public authorities, they were taxed with being unable to control the regularity of working conditions and employment in the factories on territories they were supposed to oversee—and suspicions of corruption were conspicuous. In this respect, the Spectrum case was used quite bluntly to attempt to initiate a reform of Bangladeshi institutions.

Client Contractors Accused by Western Activists

Blaming clients was much more unexpected. In point of fact, present-day law does not allow for European contractors to be held officially responsible for Bangladeshi workers who are not legally in their employment (Sobczak 2004). Yet, outside Bangladesh, the accusation was levelled specifically against them.

As of April 12, 2005, a European organization, the CCC, echoed the first news concerning the tragedy. Composed of trade unions, NGOs, and consumer associations, created in 1990 in the Netherlands under the name *Schone Kleren Kampagne*, CCC in 1995 federated several committed national European networks and had imposed itself in Europe as the main actor in the fight to improve working conditions in the (textile) industry worldwide by imposing the notion of clients' responsibility (Micheletti and Stolle 2008). The very next day, therefore, the CCC published a statement claiming it had been informed of the probable business connections between the demolished factory and firms established in Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, and the USA. Three days later, in a new statement online, the CCC gave names: the Spanish Zara (Inditex), French Carrefour, Belgian Textik (pseudo), the German firms Steilmann and Neckermann, and the Dutch Scapino. The CCC did of course mention the responsibility of the factory owner but it was the client firms who were being called upon to act. The CCC's targets were very heterogenous, all the more as the CCC preferred to address the groups rather than the marks. To mention only a few examples, in 2005, Carrefour declared a turnover of 83.7 billion euros; Inditex (and its famous brand Zara) announced 9.4 billion euros; as to Textik, one of the main actors on the promotional clothing market in Europe, its turnover was more modest: *ca*. 75 million euros. All those brands, their famous names or financial power notwithstanding, were henceforth declared responsible because they had ordered their goods from Spectrum.

Denouncing client firms was not meant merely to expiate their wrongdoings; it also had a practical objective. By turning on the firms, the CCC aimed not only to find someone to blame but to obtain something in return. The April 15, 2005 declaration contained three requests. The first was of a cognitive sort: The CCC demanded that an in-depth inquiry be carried out with credible local partners in order to establish the respective responsibilities of government, BGMEA, BKMEA, and client firms in failing to detect and correct the violations of construction site rules and of labor legislation. It especially highlighted the obvious inadequacy of the codes of conduct and audits set up by the European firms. The second request was more of a preventive sort: The CCC wanted the client firms and the local public authorities to launch a program to review the garment production sites in Bangladesh from the point of view of health, safety, and the conditions guaranteeing workers' freedom of expression. But, its most pressing demand was of a curative nature: The CCC asked the brands to contribute financially to first-aid efforts and to make sure the indemnities for the families of victims were sufficient and satisfactory.

The CCC knew that actions were underway to obtain reparations from local authorities: BGMEA had pledged 79 000 taka for families of the missing who were also supposed to receive 21 000 taka by way of the labor tribunals. For information, at the time, the minimum wage for an employment at the bottom of the scale (the first out of seven grades) was 930 taka (before taxes); a more qualified worker could earn as much as 2300 taka a month. Supporting the efforts of NGOs and local trade unions, the CCC maintained that a total of 100 000 taka (1.250 euros) to indemnify the families of workers who had lost their lives was definitely not good enough and that they should receive at least 200 000 taka, or up to a million taka in

application of the "Fatal accident act" in force in Bangladesh. For the CCC, the companies' duty was to make up for the deficiencies of the local system:

> "CCC recognizes that brands are co-responsible along with owners and public authorities. The lack of appropriate action on the part of owners and public authorities over the past six weeks, as outlined above, can in no circumstances be used as an excuse for the brands not to take humanitarian action and start providing compensation and support." (Letter from the CCC to BSCI, 24 May 2005).

Citizen-Consumers to Administer the Sanction

To back up its action, the CCC called upon "citizen-consumers" to bring pressure to bear on the firms. Whereas locally, the tools used were legal sanctions against the factory owner and trade union rhetoric against the responsible bosses and public authorities; at the international level, the CCC attempted to expose Western companies to the "voice-based power" of consumers and the threat they would "defect" (Hirschman 1970). That way of doing things was typical of the CCC's traditional repertoire: Since its creation in 1995, it has acted as an organization of political consumerism (Micheletti 2003; Micheletti et al. 2003). That is why, after the Spectrum collapse, the CCC launched an urgent appeal, leading to an action of "discursive political consumerism"—that is to say, following Micheletti, neither boycott nor buycott but a message supported by holding corporate brand image hostage.

The CCC's first appeal to consumers took place on the first day of June following the accident. An electronic press release headline read: "Workers increasingly desperate: Companies sourcing at Spectrum-Shahriyar must take action now!" (CCC press release, June 1, 2005). An internet link allowed activists to send e-mails to client firms urging them to participate in various actions related to the inquiry, accident prevention, and compensation. There was no need to write up, print out, lick envelopes, or stick on stamps; it sufficed to fill out five items (name, city, country, object, electronic address) and press the "send your protest letter now!" button for it to be immediately cyber-transmitted to the addressees preselected by the CCC, which numbered five: four firms (Inditex, KarstadtQuelle, Klaus Steilmann, and Carrefour) and one organization (BSCI). Created in 2003 by the Foreign Trade Association to assist companies wanting to enter into responsible supply arrangements, BSCI counted among its members several client firms involved in the Spectrum affair (Inditex and KarstadtQuelle in particular) and was to become the CCC's privileged interlocutor. The CCC carried out several similar massive postal campaigns in order to maintain the pressure on the firms. But, national collectives did not remain idle either: During the summer of 2005, Carrefour and Textik received a torrent of postcards orchestrated by the Belgian *Vêtements propres* campaign. The content of the postcards was not very different from the open letters sent by the international CCC, but the Belgian campaign differed in that its cards were stamped and delivered directly to the firms. There was therefore a material advantage to the message "producing cheap T-shirts for European customers means a high human price for workers," because it was illustrated by a patchwork of photographs—of a woman looking for a loved one under the rubble, of a mutilated worker, and of trade union activists demonstrating in favor of workers' rights—the three images in garish contrast to a touristy sunset and an ironic "Souvenir of Bangladesh." The strategy of the organizations was to shock consumers into sending the cards and to strike the addressees' consciences so they should admit they were partly responsible for the catastrophe.

The strategy seems to have worked. On the firms' side, one person who had received a postcard commented: "It's true, we were a bit shocked the first time we received those postcards. Have you seen them? It's true that the first time, you feel strange." As to involving the public at large, it is difficult to assess the exact quantity of missives—e-mails, letters, postcards—received by the companies, but it is far from negligible. The person in charge of "social compliance" at Textik spoke of 2000 postcards and 4000 to 5000 e-mails, while pointing out that large firms like Zara (Inditex) or Carrefour must have received infinitely more. What stands out very clearly, according to certain witnesses, is that the campaign impacted the firms' "normal" routines, while being a definite source of aggravation for the people concerned: "We tried to answer by making what we do transparent—why, how, and where we're at—and it cost me an arm and a leg because I had to hire somebody to do it. So we had answers printed up, sent out, and put on the Business and Human Rights website."

Though the firms were impressed by the campaign that struck them, they cannot have been totally surprised. Since the 1990s, the "anti-sweatshop" movement initiated in the USA had gained momentum and the CCC's action was but one in a long series of relatively similar ones (Ross 1997; Klein 2000; Mandle 2000; Bender and Greenwald 2003; Micheletti and Stolle 2007). The year 1995–1996 especially, baptized "the year of the sweatshop" (Ross 1997, p. 291), witnessed an avalanche of mobilizations against American companies when it was discovered that their suppliers did not provide their workers with "decent" working conditions. Gap, Kathy Lee plus, Nike, Mattel, Disney were among the brands singled out for their irresponsible practices in southern countries. The committed European organizations—the CCC in particular—had quickly followed suit (Shaw 1997). Therefore, Spectrum's client-firms, even the European ones, could not ignore the surge of the anti-sweatshop movement. In 2005, they had already seen the activists at work, and perhaps read their arguments: The responsibility rule consisting in punishing the client firms for the deplorable working conditions at their supplier's was, though not written into the legal system, familiar to most of the companies—and a fortiori to those who, as we will see, were already giving lip service to their policy of social responsibility. However, to know the rule did not necessarily imply acknowledging it (i.e., consider it well-founded). On the contrary, the firms vigorously rejected the judgments affecting them and the underlying rule. The Spectrum tragedy, having become a local "scandal," was thus on its way to becoming an international "affair."

Conflicts of Responsibility

Using the word "affair" to qualify what followed upon the accusation impacting the client firms might seem somewhat excessive, if one thinks of historical cases such as the Calas or the Dreyfus affairs (Boltanski et al. 2007). The term is nevertheless perfectly heuristic in the present case, when set against the notion of "scandal" (de Blic and Lemieux 2005; Lemieux 2007). An affair is different from a scandal in that it divides opponents into two camps: those who accuse the accused and those who accuse the accusation. In the Spectrum case, the firms were practically alone in denouncing the accusation levelled against them. But they resisted vigorously, obliging the activists to justify their accusations—which would be irrelevant in the case of a scandal.

A judgment of responsibility is a three-step procedure: (1) identifying a critical situation leads to looking for the responsible agent, (2) detecting the "responsibility rule" permits

defining who can be held responsible, and (3) applying the rule by a "judgment of responsibility" permits choosing the one who will endure the punishment. That said, it is possible to pinpoint three ways of contesting the judgment of responsibility, depending on which step in the procedure is being challenged.

When disputing step 3, the person opposing the judgment of responsibility thinks there has been a mistake in the facts reported: This is typical, e.g., of an individual convicted for homicide who feels it is legitimate to convict the person who dealt the fatal blow but who, reminding us he/she had an alibi the day of the murder, claims it is a miscarriage of justice: "You are wrong, I am not who you think I am!" When disputing step 2, what is being challenged is the responsibility rule itself: This is typical of the incriminated employee who recognizes that something dysfunctioned that was detrimental to his/her activity but who, claiming he/she was only carrying out an order, declares "it's not fair, I'm not going to pay for someone else!" Disputing step 1 consists in doubting the validity of even looking for a responsible agent: This is typical of an individual convicted—e.g., for abortion formerly, for euthanasia today—and who says "I don't agree! What you are convicting me for is not a crime!"

In the case of Spectrum, nobody contested the reality of a tragedy that warranted punishment; on the other hand, the client firms made use of the two other defensive strategies, sometimes by challenging the pertinence of a judgment made according to a rule created by the activists in the first place, more generally by denouncing the rule itself as unfounded.

Claiming the Supply Chain had Been Broken

The client firms' first strategy of defense consisted in challenging the status they were given by those who—like the CCC—attacked them. Since the CCC claimed to be denouncing the large European firms who "did business" with the demolished Bangladesh factory, some companies tried to show that this was not true in their case. The argument was threefold: (1) A contract with Spectrum existed (2) at the time of the dramatic accident and (3) it had been concluded directly by the client firm (i.e., in all good conscience and without using a middle-man).

The person responsible for "social compliance" at Textik recognized, for instance, that a contract with the factory owner existed, but for goods manufactured in the adjacent part of the factory that had *not* collapsed:

> "We never placed an order with Spectrum, we never opened a credit account in their name, we never received an invoice, we never paid them, etc. (…) But the owner of the factory, Shahriyar, was doing repairs in his other site and since there is a dividing wall, he stocked some of our merchandise there, packed and ready to be sent. […] So when the factory collapsed, some of our merchandise was found. […] I say 'we don't do business with that factory for all the reasons I gave you before'; but for the same reasons, they are going to say 'yes you do, you *do* do business with them'." (Textik's social compliance officer, interviewed 11 January 2007).

When addressing the French Clean Clothes Campaign (*Collectif De l'éthique sur l'étiquette*), one of the representatives of the Carrefour group did not deny they had commercial relations with Spectrum. However, he stressed the occasional, restricted, and bygone

nature of those relations, since all business contacts with that factory had been broken off in April 2005:

> "Since Carrefour no longer does business regularly with Shahriyar Fabrics Industry Ltd., Shahriyar and his Spectrum factory only provided us with a lot of 130 000 pieces of fabric in November 2004 on a one-off basis. N.B. the volume of Carrefour in Bangladesh in 2004 was 39 million items…" (Letter from the director of "quality, responsibility and risks" at Carrefour to the *Collectif De l'éthique sur l'étiquette*, 28 July 2005).

If the collective is to be believed, the same argument of anachronism was wielded by the firm Scapino: "Scapino unfortunately continues to reject all responsibility, driving home the fact they stopped ordering [from Spectrum] 10 months before the collapse."

Finally, some companies looked for a way to break the connection established by CCC between their activities and the Spectrum tragedy by introducing an intermediary made to play the role of circuit-breaker. *Spiegel Online* thus reports that 8 days after the collapse, KarstadtQuelle had put out the information that it had no contract with Spectrum: whatever orders were received came through their mail order sales branch, Neckermann. As to the firm Steilmann, its line of defense went as follows:

> "There was a business deal with the company Spectrum Sweater Ltd. in the middle of 2003. A one-off order filled in February 2004 was made via an agent. Since then there has been no further cooperation. At no point in time did the company Sharier Fabrics Ltd have any business relationship with Klaus Steilmann GmbH & Co. KG. The present portrayal in the media and in the Clean Clothes Campaign (…) is thus misleading and gives a false picture of the actual situation." (Steilmann press release, 17 May 2005).

In the face of these adamant objections and protests, the CCC reacted in a way that illustrates how the choice of the responsible agent can, in practice, orient the wording of an ad hoc responsibility rule: rather than cross the client firms who were no longer direct clients of Spectrum at the time of the tragedy off their list, the CCC reworded its criteria so as to justify accusing them anyway. It thereby extended the incriminated group to all the companies who had ordered from Spectrum *or from Shahriyar* (the adjacent factory annex), directly *or indirectly*, at the time of the accident *or during the four preceding years*.

Probably invented to make up for a mistake—the list of Spectrum's clients had been erroneously established by simply copying the names on the labels found or seen in the factory—extending the list of responsibility to the clients of the Shahriyar factory was considered legitimate enough for the CCC never to take the trouble to justify it explicitly. All I found was one rapid argument in a letter sent to Textik by the Belgian campaign *Vêtements propres*: in it, saying the client firms of the Shahriyar factory were responsible was backed by the idea that, whatever the administrative status of the two production sites (main factory or annex), the workers shuttled back and forth between them, seeing to the orders received by one or the other indistinctly, a fact that no "important and regular client" could fail to be aware of—or should be allowed to forget.

The CCC thus stipulated that the responsibility rested not only with those who were actually clients at the time of the tragedy but also with all those who had done business with Shahriyar over the past 4 years. Dropping the unity of time was justified by claiming that the

negligence of clients in the past too was connected to the tragedy. The CCC thus rejected Scapino's argument that the fact their contract had expired long since meant it could be exempted from all responsibility, and that "at the time the firm still worked with Spectrum, labor rights violations and lack of safety measures were a fact." The CCC stressed that the collapse of Spectrum, though an accident, was nevertheless predictable given the manifest insecurity and illegal practices of that factory: a worker had died 3 days before the accident, due to liquid escaping from a boiler; a female worker had been nearly electrocuted when her clothes caught on some electric wires; salaries at Spectrum were 700 taka as against the legal minimum wage (930 taka); the legal obligation to give workers 1 day a week's leave was not respected. As the CCC saw it, the fact the Spectrum accident happened after commercial relations had been broken off was only coincidental: Scapino had not terminated its contract for reasons connected to social compliance; their wait-and-see attitude in the past could therefore be held against them and fully justified a demand for reparations.

As to the role of intermediaries between client firm and supplier, the CCC refused to take that parameter into account, considering that the existence of extra links in the supply chain in no way minimized the responsibility of the last buyer with respect to the primary producer.

Claiming an Incapacity to Exercise Control

The second defense strategy chosen by the marks consisted in opposing the idea that different behavior on their part might have averted the tragedy. Besides, if they were expected to play a part in combatting the bad working conditions prevalent in southern countries, they demanded in exchange a precise and reasonable definition of what exactly their responsibility might consist in. What in reality was being called into question in these debates was the social compliance monitoring process.

Social audits started in the 1990s when the first firms targeted by anti-sweatshop campaigns sought to prove they were truly preoccupied with the working conditions prevailing in their suppliers' workplaces (Elliott and Freeman 2003; Locke 2013; Vogel 2005). After signing codes of conduct—to make their commitment formal—and after having included a certain number of social duties in their contracts (to guarantee that the supplier live up to their expectations), those firms accepted to set up social audits on the production sites (to demonstrate the sincerity, or even the efficiency of their control mechanisms). And though some firms developed their own standards for "social compliance," more and more of them got together to apply a common methodology that should prevail on all the sites. Among Spectrum's buyers, Carrefour was a member of the *Initiative clause sociale* (ICS) launched in 1998 by the French Trade and Retail Federation, through which a dozen big brands promised to perform social audits by applying the same standard. Inditex, KarstadtQuelle, Neckermann, Scapino, and Textik shared the system of social auditing setup by BSCI.

It did not take long for CCC to get its hands on the list of offenses observed in the Spectrum factory and denounce the incapacity of the client firms who—though quick to communicate on their policies to implement a responsible management of suppliers—were slow to take note of and much less solve very serious problems. Pointing out that "Carrefour claims to have regularly audited this factory, and found everything to be in good order" was enough to discredit the audits. As to the members of BSCI, the CCC noted that they had all promised to perform social audits but that none of them disposed of any worthwhile information concerning working conditions at Spectrum. For their part, the client firms did not respond

to the critique of their failure to detect a certain number of problems in the factory, but they did emphasise that social audits would not have allowed them to anticipate and avoid the Spectrum tragedy anyway. Referring to the audits was thus a ploy of Carrefour's, not only to demonstrate it had acted in good faith but also to break the chain of responsibility that the CCC was attempting to establish between its behavior and workers' death. In its letter answering the missives received from the *Collectif De l'Éthique sur l'étiquette* support groups during the summer of 2005, Carrefour's "quality, responsibility, and risks" director reminded them that social audits do not include verifying the buildings. Therefore, how could Carrefour be blamed for not having taken the necessary steps to avert a danger it did not even know existed? At most, the pertinence of the standards applied by the audit could be called into question. Not only was this a criticism that Carrefour accepted, it declared it was ready to participate in a think tank to revise the criteria for the audits—it even suggested to its 13 partners in the ICS that they should include construction parameters in the evaluation of their suppliers' establishments.

Finally, while refusing to be held responsible for an event they had been unable to anticipate, the firms also wanted to restrict the obligations that might be incumbent on them in the future. Drawing attention to the incapacity of client firms to carry out a technical control of the buildings, the person in charge of the matter for one of the brand names thus called for an equitable sharing out of responsibilities:

> "There's not a single client or company capable of doing a technical audit of the construction and the foundations of a building. That's why in our social audit we included a clause demanding that at the very least all the building permits be produced. Even so, it's useless; when you know that in countries like this they can be bought, it's useless. So legally we're covered […], but it's meaningless. So I think we need to have a norm that spells out the limits of our responsibility. *You can't just be held responsible for everything because the local government doesn't do its share.*" (Sustainable development officer at one of the targeted marks, interviewed 17 February 2006).

Textik's counterpart, by pushing the committed groups' arguments to the extreme, thus challenging their validity, arrived at the same conclusion:

> "Earthquakes are very frequent in Bangladesh. When you want to do an audit on the solidity of a construction, they'll tell you 'in normal conditions, the building is sturdy enough for what it's meant for'. That's all well and good. But if there's an earthquake like the one in Pakistan two years ago, all of Bangladesh was completely razed to the ground. (…) And the day that happens, they'll come to you and say 'see what you have done?'. *No, there are limits*, *it's obvious there's a point beyond which it becomes ridiculous to want to implicate us and our responsibility, let's be clear about that.*" (Textik's social compliance officer, interviewed 11 January 2007).

And if the company's idea to call upon *Ingénieurs sans frontières* (to control the constructions and avoid other tragedies) was mentioned, he pointed out: "That's Textik's personal initiative, but we won't talk about it, we don't use it for publicity because it concerns us alone." There is little doubt that, beyond this show of—real or feigned—modesty, discretion allowed the firm to avoid committing itself and thus being held accountable.

In view of the arguments on both sides, what is at stake in defining a firm's social responsibility stands out quite clearly. On the activists' side, any company that, because it failed to act, has let (deliberately or not) the workers who manufacture the goods pay the price, can be held responsible. On the companies' side, such "oversight responsibility" (Thompson 2008) is not admissible: it was *not* legitimate to hold them responsible for facts they were unable to *anticipate* (on the grounds that they should have been/should be able to do so), or that were beyond their *control* (on the grounds that they should have been/should be able to control them).

A Cautious Way Out of the Crisis

The companies forcefully rejected the judgment of responsibility that the activists inflicted upon them and spread among consumers. Yet, as pointed out in the introduction, the Spectrum affair ended with Western companies paying compensation to the victims of the tragedy. Does that mean that what they rejected in words they accepted by their deeds? Such a deduction would mean ignoring the social earmarking of money (Zelizer 1994). If everyone agrees a bribe is not a donation, a salary not a benefit, an honorarium not a tip, it is because different social networks and distinctive systems of meaning leave their imprint on money. Within the framework of the Spectrum affair, whereas activists thought of the money disbursed as a sanction (compensation) for the "irresponsible" behavior of the firms, the latter attempted to transform it into an act of charity, by choosing a certain way of handing over the money and giving it publicity. Susan Leigh Star and James Griesemer coined the term "boundary objects" to name "objects which are both plastic enough to adapt to local needs and constraints of the several parties employing them, yet robust enough to maintain a common identity across sites" (1989, p. 393). Here, having become a boundary object to which each camp gave a different meaning, the money transferred did not end the fight between the firms and the activists. On the contrary, the battle continued in a symbolic struggle to decide how the amounts involved would be earmarked.

Financial Aid for Victims

BSCI rapidly took stock of how serious the situation was and of the threat looming over its activities and over its members. Ten days after the collapse, on April 21 2005, it organized an emergency meeting. Shortly after, in June 2005, BSCI officers, accompanied by representatives of KarstadtQuelle, Inditex, Textik, and by the secretary general of the International Textile, Garment, and Leather Workers Federation (ITGLWF) went to Dhaka. Inditex decided to allocate 35 000 euros for urgent medical care, thus taking the lead in humanitarian aid for the victims of the catastrophe and winning applause from even of some of the less reactive firms:

> "[Inditex] right from the start gave an amount in cash for first aid, because before the factory owner began to pay out his indemnities nothing had been done, some people started having gangrene, it was terrible and something had to be done really fast. It's true that [Inditex] did it—hats off to them—they reacted and made the cash available very fast." (Textik's social compliance officer, interviewed 11 January 2007).

More collectively, the three BSCI firms and BGMEA announced that, over and above the 100 000 taka already attributed to some, a trust fund would be set up to indemnify survivers and victims' families. The trust fund was to be supervised by a committee composed of local employers' and workers' trade union delegates, and the money would be managed by the international cabinet KPMG. At the end of lengthy deliberations, the brands calculated that the total contribution of the trust fund would amount to 533 323.39 euros.

The CCC strongly supported the trust fund initiative and insisted the firms participate; it vehemently disapproved those—KarstadtQuelle, Textik, and Scapino—who at the end of 2005, decided to drop the project, considered too drawn-out, and adopted fast-track actions. Textik and KarstadtQuelle turned to a local NGO with which Carrefour had already worked, which to their way of thinking had the advantage of being "less ponderous" and "closer to real life":

> "Creating that trust fund took so long that we decided to work with *Friendship*, a local NGO. […] We decided to inject 45 000 dollars, along with other brands, so we managed to collect much larger amounts. *Friendship* was then supposed to distribute the money to the people, not as an income but so they should invest, in land, cows, shops, rickshaws, and so on, and thereby generate a form of revenue […]. Not that we don't want to participate in the trust fund, […] but if I have 5 000 euros, I prefer giving it to *Friendship*, which is smaller, much closer to the people, who'll educate forty kids." (Textik's social compliance officer, interviewed 11 January 2007).

The amounts given to *Friendship* were left up to the firms—and it was not easy to decide:

> "It was very touch-and-go, we just didn't know, we said 'let's give so much, if everyone gives the same we'll get so and so much—there were 64 dead, with regard to the cost of living—is that good for starters?' […] We didn't really know where we were going, we said 'O.K., 10 000 euros seem a little puny, 100 000 seems a bit risky, a bit too much, O.K. let's settle on 35 000'." (Textik's social compliance officer, interviewed 11 January 2007).

In reality, the pressure exercised by the CCC and Inditex on the other firms seems to have produced much hostility among those who initially had accepted to participate in the trust fund and who, aside from the fact they were little inclined to disburse amounts considered excessive, did not really appreciate what they felt was a sort of racket. The social compliance officer at Textik explained that he had finally quit the project because, when he had suggested to his Inditex alter ego to contribute 45 000 dollars, the latter had insulted him by shouting "you have to donate at least 100 000 dollars"; to which he had replied "O.K., if you talk to me like that, forget it, I'm finished" (the difference in perception of the right amount to donate should not allow one to forget that Inditex's turnover was then 120 times bigger than Textik's).

The question of how much to donate was absolutely crucial in the exchanges between the firms and the CCC. During the postal campaign in the month of August, after donating 15 500 euros to *Friendship*, Carrefour received missives that said that their help, though "appreciated," was nevertheless "quite insufficient." That very diplomatic expression is far from rendering the severity of the judgment levelled

by CCC teams, when, after having evaluated victims' needs, they set Carrefour's gesture against its estimated resources:

> "They gave 15 000 euros, but let's not go overboard! […]. It's always Daniel Bernard's millions,[2] at any given time there's always that reference that makes their 15 000 euros look like peanuts!" (Coordinator of *Le Collectif De l'éthique sur l'étiquette* during the General Assembly on 29 September 2005).

However, though the CCC did not look kindly on the partnerships embarked upon with *Friendship*, it was not, or not only, because of the smallness of the amounts involved, all the more as the problem came up in the same way in the case of the trust fund: CCC supporters sent mail to the Dutch brand Scapino, which had donated 5000 euros to the compensation fund, asking the firm to reconsider its contribution so that the amount collected should permit covering the victims' needs completely. But aside from the question of amount, what the CCC reproached to the firms working with *Friendship* concerned procedure and symbols. First of all, nobody could deny that the NGO acted very rapidly, but it seemed to do so at the cost of transparency concerning the ways funds were collected and allocated. Also, when speaking of *Friendship*, those in charge of the French and Belgian networks agreed that what it did was "humanitarian," but they disapproved the fact that choices were made without consulting anyone; according to them, the local partner acted "very paternalistically" without being in the least specialized in industrial risk insurance (being more used to helping victims of catastrophes, natural catastrophes in particular). The firms concerned did not deny this, but they pointed out that the important thing was for their action to bear fruit in a reasonably short lapse of time. When back in Bangladesh in June 2007, the social compliance officers at Textik and KarstadtQuelle could actually see (and show me) the results of their gifts to the local populations. They did not hide their satisfaction to have opted for an action that, precisely thanks to its artisanal dimension, had been able to avoid the bureaucratic trap of a trust fund which—so they thought—would never see the light of day. Of course, that meant they ignored the fact the trust fund had already started giving families money—on April 1, 2007, 3000 dollars had been shared out among 22 families—but they had not overestimated the sluggishness of a procedure that still several years later remained unfinished.

Responsibility or Solidarity? The Two Sides of the Coin

Most of the companies finally accepted to give money to help the victims, either through the trust fund or by way of *Friendship*. Could that be considered a victory for CCC? Not really. CCC's objective has always been to change the attitudes and behaviour of client firms towards their supplier's employees durably. For the coordinator of the *Collectif De l'éthique sur l'étiquette*, that objective was not met, because though the firms had consented to feel concerned by the condition of their supplier's

[2] Daniel Bernard was the President and Director of the Carrefour group. Removed from office in February 2005, he negotiated indemnities of several million euros for himself but after the ensuing scandal, those indemnities were finally cancelled.

unfortunate employees, they had formally refused to be held responsible—a fortiori when they collaborated with the humanitarian organization *Friendship*.

> "We're in a grey area here; they're not saying 'it's not our business'. […] The firm can no longer say 'we have nothing to do with all that'. They gave money to *Friendship*, their lawyers told them 'be careful, above all don't accept you have any sort of responsibility', so they claim what they do is humanitarian, because for legal reasons they don't want to etablish a precedent. That's the grey area in which we find ourselves: we're not in the field of responsibility, but we're not in the field of irresponsibility either." (Intervention by the coordinator of *Le Collectif De l'éthique sur l'étiquette* during the General Assembly on 29 September 2005).

If we go by Textik's social compliance officer, the coordinator of *De l'éthique sur l'étiquette* was reading the firms' position correctly:

> "The fact the building caved in is not our responsibility. […] We didn't want there to be responsibility, we didn't want there to be… It's first aid, it's support, but we don't want the fact we donated money to be interpreted as acknowledging any sort of responsibility. […] On the other hand, 85% of our turnover is in Bangladesh, so when something dramatic occurs and we'd done business with the owner of that factory, we felt concerned and we decided to participate." (Textik's social compliance officer, interviewed 11 January 2007).

The two excerpts above make a distinction between two sorts of responsibility: on one side, "to be liable"; on the other, "to be responsive." Is considered "liable" the person who can legitimately be sanctioned for a given deed in the name of a legal or (by extension) moral rule; on the other hand, is considered "responsive" the person who reacts in response to a situation (Pellizzoni 2004)? Thus, what the activists were presenting as a "due" to repair a prejudice, the firms were presenting as a "donation" freely consented to help the unfortunate.[3] The international client firms, whom their critics condemned as "persecutors," tried to pass themselves off, even modestly, as "benefactors" willing to share and wishing to alleviate the suffering of the hapless.

The companies' posture transpires in their communications. In its "sustainable development" report submitted in 2005, Carrefour used Spectrum to illustrate the way it "also knows how to show solidarity even beyond our strictly legal responsibility," since in a "spontaneous show of solidarity, all the Carrefour teams working in Bangladesh decided to act immediately." On its website, Textik spouted the same language: "Active in Bangladesh for many years, Textik wants to express its solidarity with the country and its suppliers, we therefore carried out concrete actions after the collapse of the Spectrum factory." As to Inditex, it had been very active in support of the victims, by taking the lead in organizing the trust fund; it also devoted two full pages to Spectrum in its "sustainable development" report of 2006. But, these pages appeared in a section on "emergency programs," defined as support actions for communities

[3] The tension between those two earmarkings of the money spent—either as a due or as a donation—echoes Viviana Zelizer's narrative of the conflict surrounding "Christmas bonuses" in the America of the early 20th century (Zelizer 1994): When the firm stopped giving gifts in kind and began systematically attributing amounts in cash, union representatives fought to turn them into part of the salary, rather than a liberality decided by the bosses. When at last, in 1950, they succeeded, they made sure those bonuses would be kept up.

hit by a catastrophe in zones where Inditex does business. The 160 000 euros donated for the Spectrum victims were therefore placed in the same category as the money spent by Inditex to help the victims of the tsunami in Sri Lanka and to those of the pollution following the shipwreck of the *Prestige* off the coast of Galicia.

That rhetoric could only irritate the CCC, which repeated over and over that "[its] tactic did not consist in asking [the firms] to be generous but in driving home their social responsibility as firms being supplied by Spectrum, and more generally in Bangladesh," and the ITGLWF, which asserted loudly that "providing humanitarian aid […] to show "*solidarity*" [was] simply not enough." It is in that grey, indeterminate area that the Spectrum affair came to a close: True, the activists obtained that the firms give the victims money, but they did not completely achieve their determination to "earmark" those donations with the stamp of reparations.

Concluding Section

The Spectrum case proves exemplary when broaching the contemporary movement aiming to build up corporate "social" responsibility, understood as one that goes "beyond" the single framework of legal obligations. For it casts light on the various dimensions of a new way of resolving the defective protection of workers in the South: The problem is taken over by Western activist organizations (the "accuser"), the citizen-consumer (the "judge" administering the "sanctions") is appealed to exert pressure on the client firms (the "accused"), in the name of the obligation to take the working conditions prevailing at their suppliers' into account (the "rule"). It becomes clear that the firms, though at last disposed to perceive the working conditions prevailing at their suppliers', nonetheless prefer to limit the extent of their responsibility by insisting on their charitable bent and intent. The case raises two questions: How can citizen-consumer organizations push CSR to go further than philanthropy? How to deal with the tensions between CSR interventions from overseas clients and domestic regulatory frameworks in developing countries? And, the two issues are closely related.

As concerns southern countries, solving the issue of poor working conditions by denouncing Western client firms appears problematic and generates certain mistrust on behalf of local trade unions. After the Spectrum collapse, the trade union officials I met did appreciate the intervention of European activists in favor of better compensation for Spectrum victims through the trust fund. However, beyond its usefulness in this singular situation, they were worried about the adverse effects that the introduction of a private regulation of working conditions might have on their intention of defending the rights of all Bangladeshi workers. What about workers producing for small stores or, worse still, for the domestic market? Bangladeshi unionists feared that shedding light on the responsibiliy of international brands might lead local actors (factory owners, government, etc.) to shirk their own responsibilities. Over the past years, Bangladeshi workers have violently protested to try and obtain better working conditions and the revaluation of the minimum wage. This confirms that workers are still far away from placing the defence of their rights solely in the hands of citizen-consumers and Western clients.

As concerns Western countries, activist organizations such as the Clean Clothes Campaign are well aware of the limits of their actions. They know that firms implement social compliance monitoring, but this appears to be ineffective. Moreover, firms do agree to help families of victims, but only in a humanitarian way. This is why activist organizations are currently fighting to translate corporate social responsibility to hard law. The French *Collectif De*

l'Ethique sur l'Etiquette is one of the lobbyists who support a bill on the duty of care of parent companies towards those affected by their overseas subsidiaries and suppliers. The French National Assembly adopted the text on March 30, 2015; however, the bill still has a long way to go before coming into force.

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