

== Chapter 1 ==

Citizens, Markets, and Transnational Labor Activism

The press release called it the dawn of a new era: after years of difficult negotiations, multinational corporations, labor activists, and human rights groups had agreed “to work together as equal partners to make significant improvements in labor conditions in garment factories” around the world (U.S. Department of Labor 1998). With footwear and garment factories moving beyond the reach of American law, corporate codes of conduct and independent monitoring offered an alternative strategy that might help workers from New York to Central America, Los Angeles to Southeast Asia.

Despite the internal tensions that plagued it, the Apparel Industry Partnership (AIP) embodied a new approach to global labor rights. In the rapidly integrating economy of the 1990s, policymakers, activists, and scholars hoped that pressure from transnational networks and “global civil society” could create a floor under a competitive “race to the bottom,” stopping unscrupulous employers from taking advantage of workers in the world’s poorest countries. As sweatshops proliferated in hidden corners of global cities and export-processing zones, could global standards backed by ethical consumers protect workers across borders?

Through transnational campaigns, proponents hoped that “stateless regulation” would improve working conditions in factories everywhere by focusing global pressure on points of corporate vulnerability. Threatened with consumer boycotts, brand-name companies would adopt voluntary codes of conduct and accede to monitoring by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which would, in turn, threaten to “name and shame” companies that mistreated employees. Successful campaigns since the 1970s had used new information technologies to appeal for boycotts, and proponents suggested that these ad hoc campaigns could be regularized into new forms of global governance. While companies cared more than ever about their image, advocates pointed out that national states—previously the only building block in mechanisms of global governance—were ever weaker. “Global civil

society” offered a new arena for organizing, with transnational campaigns providing building blocks for a new, worldwide strategy.

But what does this brave new world really look like? Most discussions of transnational activism focus on efforts to mobilize consumers, examining how boycott threats can force companies to acknowledge their social responsibilities. Far less attention has been paid to efforts to institute systems of monitoring and certification, especially in the developing world. What happens when companies accede to pressure, adopt codes of conduct, and allow external monitors to examine their facilities? What difference do these transnational campaigns and monitoring systems make to workers’ daily experience?

This book represents an effort to explore independent monitoring on the ground as it has played out in some widely cited schemes. Examining three important examples of independent certification—the Sullivan Code in South Africa, the “Rugmark” social labeling scheme in India’s handwoven carpet industry, and independent monitoring in Guatemala’s apparel industry—I explore how transnational campaigns alter the dynamics of struggles at work. Under what circumstances do companies admit nongovernmental monitors into their factories? How has “naming and shaming” worked to change corporate culture and behavior? How do monitoring schemes support workers’ struggles across the globe?

This new approach marks a shift away from the way labor rights have been protected in the past. Historically, labor rights were defined through local struggles, as social movements called on states to protect citizens at work. While labor campaigns have generally emphasized the creation of channels for voice and bargaining power in specific settings so that workers and their unions can represent their own concerns, they have also tried to protect workers who are unable to challenge employers directly by strengthening state enforcement of national labor laws. By contrast, the “stateless” vision of the early twenty-first century draws on experiences from the international human rights movements, appealing to global audiences and universal standards. What does this shift mean for both the practice and content of transnational labor campaigns?

Independent Monitoring as a Strategic Tool

Why does independent monitoring matter? Embedded in most discussions of how transnational campaigns could improve working conditions lies some vision of external monitoring designed to ensure that companies live up to their promises of decent treatment. External monitors, usually local nongovernmental organizations committed to certifying companies’ compliance with a voluntary code, would alert

transnational networks to violations; those networks would then mobilize consumer pressure against the corporate violator.

The logic is persuasive: private voluntary groups monitoring factories around the world could assure ethical consumers that the goods they purchase were produced under broadly acceptable conditions, guaranteed by external certification. Jill Esbenshade (2003, 9), a sociologist who played an active role in debates about the AIP, summarizes the strategy:

Codes of conduct created . . . by companies are a public statement of intent. Workers and their advocates can use these as a tool to hold companies accountable. What is needed is a more credible form of certification. . . . Independent monitoring . . . offers a necessary check on a system that is otherwise controlled by the companies themselves.

While some companies would willingly comply, companies that failed to meet the new standards could be publicly “named and shamed” based on independent monitors’ reports. If global commodity chains link workers in developing countries to consumers around the world, Jane Collins (2003, 190) suggests, “new international communities of accountability, focused on particular firms and their brands, can support workers in their attempts to negotiate improved conditions.”

Without external certification of compliance, voluntary codes are unreliable. In her detailed study of corporate codes of conduct, Ivanka Mamic (2004) finds that managers comply with voluntary guidelines when executives at headquarters are committed to compliance, when they provide resources for implementation, and when they punish subcontractors that violate their codes. Without that central commitment, codes are less effective; cost-cutting pressures may tempt even well-intentioned employers to “play for the gray,” reinterpreting or ignoring voluntary standards (Braithwaite and Drahos 2002, 19). Internal company monitoring processes, using internal monitors or accountants, are unreliable—most companies employ accountants rather than trained labor inspectors, and most companies are reluctant to publicize their reports (O’Rourke 2000).

Instead of asking weak national states to enforce national laws, then, proponents of stateless regulation envision pressure from an energetic civil society as a mechanism for enforcement. Independent monitors would alert consumers, and companies threatened by transnational boycotts that might forever tarnish their corporate image would then police their own factories.

Evidence suggests that some consumers are ready to play their part. In telephone surveys, American consumers claim that they would pay a bit more for goods produced under safe, healthy conditions (Univer-

sity of Maryland 2000), and “fair trade” sales have increased rapidly in Europe and North America (Raworth 2004).

In 2002 an ingenious experiment in a Michigan department store offered some empirical evidence for both the promise—and the dangers—of consumer concern. In that experiment, a slight majority of shoppers preferred socks with fair trade labels over slightly cheaper socks without them (Prasad et al. 2004). But that experiment—which involved entirely fictitious labels and completely unsubstantiated claims about working conditions—illustrates a widely acknowledged conundrum. Although consumers may be willing to pay for decent labor standards, they do not always take the time to ascertain what lies behind the label. By themselves, labels are hardly reliable indicators of working conditions (Blowfield 1999; Oxfam 2004, 89). Without external monitoring, claims of corporate social responsibility may simply be a new marketing ploy. In order for consumers to be able to “hold companies accountable,” they need accurate information provided by monitors who are not simply working on behalf of the companies themselves (Shamir 2004).

But under what circumstances do companies accede to external monitoring? How are these schemes organized, and what kinds of monitoring is involved? If global governance is to rest on transnational movements of ethical consumers, surely we should look more closely at actual instances in which independent monitoring is said to have worked and examine how that happened.

Logic of Inquiry

What does independent monitoring really entail? Business ethicist Prakash Sethi (2000, 119) notes that although “code development is a growth industry,” there are remarkably few studies of how codes have worked in the past, especially in cases frequently cited as successes. Scholars who write about transnational campaigns write about the novelty of long-distance altruism and the importance of business ethics to potential sales, but they have made little effort to examine the kinds of issues that mobilize—or fail to mobilize—broad consumer support, the pressures that have prompted companies to accede to monitoring, or the different approaches embodied in existing monitoring arrangements. Thus, for example, the “Sullivan Principles” governing American companies in South Africa under apartheid are likely to be mentioned in the same breath as the global boycott against Nestlé over its baby formula advertisements or a more recent campaign linking Nike’s athletic footwear to sweatshops and labor violations. Similarly, discussions of transnational activism often assume that “fair trade” coffee programs are similar to campaigns to reward good employers, when in

fact, most fair trade coffee schemes have focused on the price-per-pound paid to small growers, and do not attempt to monitor working conditions on coffee plantations (Levy and Linton 2003; Talbot 2004, 208-9).

Just as advocates' enthusiasm tends to elide distinctions between stateless schemes, they often overlook the problems raised by the handful of empirical studies that do exist. Recent studies suggest that voluntary, privatized monitoring has had relatively little impact on working conditions in factories, in industrialized countries, or in developing societies (Esbenshade 2004; Mamic 2004). In agriculture there is ample evidence suggesting that NGO monitoring has done more to ensure the quality of fruits and vegetables destined for wealthy-country consumers than to improve the lives of farmworkers (Bain 2006; Guthman 2004; Mutersbaugh 2002; Talbot 2004). Nevertheless, proponents persist in their view, painting voluntary regulatory schemes as the best available option in a world where multinationals seem more vulnerable to wealthy consumers than to weak legal sanctions.

Given the enthusiasm surrounding independent monitoring, it seems worth pursuing the characteristics of successful cases more systematically. The rest of this book examines the actual workings of independent monitoring, trying to tease out common empirical patterns across different schemes and contexts.

In chapter 2, I examine the assumptions underlying visions of stateless regulation. In their efforts to appeal beyond borders, transnational campaigns tend to be most concerned with bearing witness to and seeking protection for vulnerable victims. Does this shift prompt activists to subtly reorient their appeal and redefine their targets in ways that change the character of their goals? What is entailed in the shift from labor rights to human rights, and from national states to the international arena? How does the shift to global audiences shape the appeals, issues, and mobilizing strategies of transnational labor campaigns, and what does it mean for how local workers' concerns are interpreted and redefined?

In chapter 3, I describe what may be the first—and perhaps the most frequently cited—scheme in which multinationals submitted to external monitoring. The Sullivan Principles in South Africa represent an important historical antecedent to corporate codes of conduct; by most accounts, this code altered corporate culture in important ways, changing discussions around corporate responsibility. Like most people who were active in the American anti-apartheid movement, I was deeply critical of the Rev. Leon Sullivan's efforts in the 1970s and 1980s to persuade companies to become "good corporate citizens" in South Africa, yet in discussions of codes of conduct today, Sullivan's approach is described as a key early model. The history of Sullivan's program high-

lights some important aspects of monitoring schemes—from the characteristics of consumer mobilization to the impact of codes on local managers' behavior to the ways in which local monitors' choices may define corporate social responsibility.

In chapter 4, I look at the use of "social labels" in the Indian handwoven carpet industry, focusing on "Rugmark," a widely cited program that labels carpets as free of child labor. I explore the decision by local activists to focus on a specific issue and industry and the impact of consumer pressure on corporate and local government responses. This case study underscores the persistent tensions between transnational and local activists. However well intentioned, corporate codes of conduct—especially those located primarily within the export sector—can sometimes come into conflict with local efforts to change government policy and may weaken broader national campaigns by focusing only on export-oriented production.

Chapter 5 examines monitoring in the Central American apparel industry through the prism of the work done by the Commission for the Verification of Codes of Conduct (COVERCO), an independent Guatemalan monitoring group that is often cited as a model. COVERCO's success has much to do with the integrity and commitment of its staff and leadership; it also reflects specific characteristics of its local context, especially the failure on the part of Guatemalan state officials to protect citizens. COVERCO's efforts grow out of a long-standing effort by Guatemala's human rights activists to build a "culture of compliance" in a context where impunity has reigned. Rather than seeking to replace state regulatory frameworks with a market-driven logic, COVERCO aims to strengthen and reorient state institutions in order to build a more inclusive democracy.

In chapter 6, I conclude by teasing out points of similarity and difference across these widely varied examples. There are, of course, important differences in the local contexts, in the way monitoring works, in the funding for monitoring schemes, in the density of contacts within transnational activist networks, and, above all, in the relationships between monitors and local states. Nevertheless, the comparison between very different cases reveals some dynamics that are surprisingly similar, even across those very different cases. Tables 1.1 and 1.2 offer a preview of the dimensions that emerge as important through the comparison, including several issues that are rarely mentioned in discussions of transnational activism.

- Transnational campaigns tend to redefine labor issues as human rights issues, generally seeking to mobilize support through broad transnational campaigns around issues of political and social inclusion. Successful international mobilization tends to stress political and human

rights, not workplace-based concerns; in the process, local activists' concerns may be subsumed to match those of transnational networks.

- Consumer pressure has been most successful when it is mobilized through institutions, not by appeals to individual consumers making decisions in supermarket aisles. Rather than relying on individual consumers to make ethical choices, campaigns that have forced corporations to accede to independent monitoring have invariably worked through more organized consumer pressure—through church groups, universities, and major stockholders.
- States have played a much greater role in these “successful” campaigns than is generally acknowledged. In each of these schemes, transnational campaigns sought help from politicians and policymakers in importing states, using threats of legal market closure to prompt exporting corporations to let in outside monitors to their factories.

In terms of the actual monitoring process, key similarities emerge from the comparison in terms of funding, tensions between local and transnational goals, and—perhaps above all—in the proliferation of alternative codes that undermine more effective monitoring as companies seek out monitors that will provide a level of oversight that suits their needs. As table 1.2 suggests:

- Monitors have often been heavily dependent on outside funding, usually from the corporations seeking to show their customers that they have responded to pressures. This pattern also creates concerns about the ability of monitoring groups to retain their independence and still gain corporate permission to enter workplaces.
- In each case, relations between monitors and local activists were marked by visible and profound tensions—generally over who made strategic decisions and who represented workers to international activists—reflecting the kind of questions about accountability, representation, and access to global resources that arise in civil society everywhere.
- In each case, alternative codes or interpretations of codes have proliferated, complicating the choices facing even the most alert consumers. In each case, activists and companies alike recognized that this proliferation was driven by corporate efforts to find more lenient monitoring schemes—a dynamic that effectively undermines the long-term reliability of any independent monitoring process.

In my conclusion, I tease out the implications of the similarities and differences between these cases of “successful” independent monitoring, showing how some of the patterns observed in the comparative

Table 1.1 Comparing Transnational Processes

	Specific Aim	Larger Campaign	Organized Consumer Pressure	Role of Exporting State	Role of Importing State
Sullivan, 1977 to 1994	Workplace integration and affirmative action	Anti-apartheid, anti-racism	U.S. churches, students, and pension funds	South African state (during apartheid) viewed as enforcing discrimination	Explicit threat of increased sanctions against South Africa
Rugmark, 1992-94 to the present	To monitor looms, rescue children from carpet industry	Anti-child labor	German churches, UNICEF, and other child groups; U.S. churches and politicians	Indian state viewed by activists as complicit in permitting child labor	Explicit threat of market closure against carpets made with child labor
COVERCO, 1996 to the present	To improve working conditions across Guatemala, including maquilas	Central American human rights concerns <i>and</i> globalization of U.S. apparel industry	U.S. student groups and universities	Guatemalan state viewed as non-enforcing, possibly complicit in permitting labor law violations	Explicit threat of market closure if labor law reform not enacted

Source: Author's compilation.

Table 1.2 Comparing Monitoring Schemes

	Monitoring Agency	Funding Source	Local Relations	Alternative Codes
Sullivan, 1977 to 1994	Arthur D. Little, accounting firm	Corporations seeking monitoring of subsidiaries and affiliates	Tensions with unions and anti-apartheid activists	Not for American firms
Rugmark, 1992-94 to the present	Independent NGO	Exporters paying for monitoring subcontractors	Tensions with unions and child labor activists	Several, both private and state-run
COVERCO, 1996 to the present	Independent NGO	Brands paying for monitoring subcontractors; U.S. government programs and labor rights groups	Some tensions with unions; close working relations with human rights groups; now working with Ministry of Labor	Several, both private and through industry coordinating council

Source: Author's compilation.

empirical material seem to reflect not simply local concerns but also characteristics inherent to the approach. Through a comparative lens, I explore the promise and limitations of these efforts to create independent monitoring schemes and suggest that strategies aimed at strengthening democratic state institutions might provide a more powerful mechanism for protecting citizens at work.

Case Selection, Methods, and Comparative Design

Discussions of international monitoring often rest on a flimsy understanding of past cases. In comparing three very different cases—acknowledging their differences in approach, context, and goals—I examine common patterns in order to understand better the kinds of campaigns, networks, and labor activism that have prompted companies to accede to external monitoring; the characteristics of “successful” external monitoring programs; and the questions or issues that confront those schemes over time.

The design of this study follows a common approach for comparative-historical social science: many, if not most, comparative studies select on the dependent variable in the hope of identifying the conditions necessary to produce successful outcomes. Douglas Dion (1998) suggests that, following the tradition of John Stuart Mill’s “logic of agreement,” this approach might help to identify the conditions necessary to attain that common outcome (while leaving open the question of which conditions might be considered sufficient) and also provide a way to explore the dynamics through which those outcomes might be reached.

But defining “success” proved difficult. I sought broad programs in which transnational campaigns had managed to insist that companies accede to nonstate regulatory monitoring schemes, where transnational activists had effectively mobilized threats of consumer boycotts to persuade employers to accept some form of independent workplace monitoring. I hoped to find common characteristics—of mobilization, appeals, commodities, or monitoring schemes—that had produced widely acclaimed models of global workplace regulation.

As I examined these “exemplary” cases, however, I began to recognize that even this limited understanding of success might be problematic. Comparisons between the campaigns revealed common dynamics not only in the transnational campaigns that produced independent monitoring schemes but also in the difficulties and constraints facing those who tried to make these schemes work. The closer I looked at cases I had initially viewed as success stories, the more I was forced to confront their limitations.

Nevertheless, I chose to persevere, largely because I wanted to

counter a trend that has characterized discussions of transnational activism: seeking new promise in “global social movements,” accounts of global activism tend to focus only on successful mobilization. As Heather Williams (2003, 528) notes, “Many scholars have resolutely avoided the unpleasant task of examining failed campaigns or spent networks.” Whenever journalists or researchers have criticized a specific case of monitoring, scholars, activists, and policymakers tend to drop it from their repertoire, continuing to list only those cases in which they can still claim that a transnational campaign has worked.

Perhaps making a virtue of necessity, I became convinced that instead of looking for new, less problematic cases, it made sense to consider the problems that complicate even successful monitoring efforts. Perhaps a comparison of characteristic tensions would reveal common features. Instead of dropping cases in which success seemed overstated, therefore, I have tried to analyze the positive impact of each effort, while still reflecting honestly on the difficulties faced by well-intentioned activists and policymakers. In exploring a complicated, often messy reality, I hope to offer insights into the constraints as well as the promise of transnational labor monitoring.

Descriptions of the three schemes are based on archival and interview material, as well as on visits to each site and interviews conducted there. Between 2003 and 2006, I traveled repeatedly to South Africa, India, and Guatemala to interview participants directly involved; these individuals ranged from monitors involved in daily factory visits to corporate spokespeople involved in debates about monitoring to Ministry of Labor officials to unionists and nongovernmental activists to factory workers employed in the factories being monitored. In addition, I reviewed as much published and archival material as I could find for each case; most transnational activists and corporate spokespeople are both articulate and self-reflective, and they frequently offer more eloquent and reliable pictures of their strategies and concerns in their own publications and documents than they are likely to sketch in interviews. Finally, I made concerted attempts in each country to interview activists, government officials, and unionists who were aware of monitoring efforts but were peripheral to them, out of a concern that a simple focus on those directly involved in monitoring might present a distorted sense of the schemes.

Although this is a comparative study, each case deals with a specific local context and history and is thus unique. In the empirical chapters, I have sought to develop an historical account that remains conscious of local dynamics, recognizing that “successful” independent monitoring emerged in very different contexts, shaped by local concerns. Each project is unique, having been constructed by real people in very different, but always difficult, circumstances. Thus, in each description I have

tried to develop separately a thorough picture of local dynamics, even while also seeking to construct a comparison that not only emphasizes the unique character of each campaign and its result but also draws out those issues that may be common across all three programs.

Lived Experiences

Many discussions of transnational labor campaigns start with accounts of real workers' experiences of being exploited by ruthless employers or challenging authoritarian labor relations; indeed, I suggest in the next chapter that this mode of storytelling may itself be a tactic required by the decision to appeal for international support. This study is somewhat different: like many comparative-historical studies, my cases explore broad social processes, and I leave readers to imagine for themselves what those processes mean for the lived experiences of individual workers.

But if the effort to develop a broad comparative framework requires stepping back from the details of workers' daily lives, it should not be forgotten that discussions of global regulation stem from the poverty and working conditions of real people in real situations. Before turning to abstract questions about global governance, then, I want to offer two anecdotes from my field notes. These accounts may offer some sense of the problems and promises that international labor campaigns embody for workers in situations that can seem hopeless.

In January 2003, Padma Priyadarshini, a graduate student in sociology who made my research in India possible, took me to visit a successful carpet-exporting business in Agra. The two cousins who ran the business offered to show us their entire operation, from the sales office not far from the gleaming spires of the Taj Mahal to the dark sheds in distant villages where carpets destined for sale in New York or Berlin were woven.

One weaving-shed stands out in my memory. We drove down dusty dirt roads that were little more than footpaths, parked in an open space, and walked over to a windowless mud hut where a beautiful young woman worked alone. Like most looms in India's carpet belt, this one was owned by a "master" weaver; the exporters provided the weaver with designs and materials and planned to pick up the finished product after several months. Like most master weavers, this man employed others to tie the hundreds of thousands of knots that make up a hand-knotted carpet.

Sitting on the dirt floor was a young woman, perhaps seventeen years old and dressed in a brilliant red sari, who tied knots so fast that her hands moved in a blur across the loom's vertical strings, the sharp knife she used to cut the threads flashing as she worked. Taken by her

smile, I asked her permission to take photographs as she worked—of the loom, of the pile of dried dung used for fuel, of the young woman herself. While I was snapping photos, Padma stood outside with the loom-owner and the exporter, who was telling the weaver to fire the young woman because her knots were not tied tightly enough.

The young woman was not legally underage, but her poverty and vulnerability left her completely helpless—and our visit, innocent as it was, may have made her situation even worse by bringing her work to the attention of the exporter several weeks early, perhaps before she had had a chance to learn thoroughly the skills of knotting threads.

Some six months later I found myself in a situation that seemed painfully similar, reminding me of the powerlessness and poverty that confront so many workers around the world. In a small house in an industrial area outside Guatemala City, a group of women talked about their poverty, their vulnerability, their fear that they would be fired from jobs that paid barely enough to scrape by on. Abby Nájera, an energetic Guatemalan activist, had taken the sociologist Landy Sanchez and me to meet a group of women workers who had organized a union in a foreign-owned apparel factory in one of Guatemala's export-processing zones. The independent monitoring group COVERCO had been monitoring this factory, which produced clothing under contract for various corporations, including Liz Claiborne, and Abby had been involved in helping the group.

These women were clearly desperate and quite despondent. They had struggled for several years to build a union, facing repeated threats and assaults from their employer; one union organizer suspected that an assault on her daughter had been instigated by the company, apparently in an effort to intimidate the unionists. In 2003 the factory was threatening to close, and even the women's coworkers were arguing that the union should keep quiet to save their jobs. Under Guatemalan law, the union's existence depended on the company's survival: if the factory closed, the union would be disbanded, even if the company opened under a different name the following day. It looked as if the only union then registered in any of Guatemala's export-processing zones was about to be closed down and that the union activists were all going to lose their jobs.

In contrast to the Indian weaver, however, these workers' situation was not hopeless. Through Abby Nájera, the Guatemalan workers had access to a transnational network of people who were already aware of the struggles at this particular factory and already concerned about the situation of apparel workers in Guatemala. Within days of our visit, Abby helped the women write letters describing their situation and then sent the letters to a range of activist groups in a network that she and other labor activists in Guatemala had developed over the previ-

ous three or four years. Central American solidarity groups in the American Midwest, a group of labor activists in Washington, D.C., and an international union body in Geneva, Switzerland, offered different kinds of help: one individual sent money for a cell phone, while another contacted other organizations around the world—much as one would expect transnational labor networks to behave.

A call from the Geneva-based international clothing workers union federation to unions in Guatemala and its Ministry of Labor eventually provoked the most effective intervention of all. Six weeks after that despairing conversation, the Guatemalan Ministry of Exports threatened to cut off the company's export licenses, and the company responded. Two years later the factory was still operating under its old name, and the union was still stumbling along—still facing endless difficulties, still fearing intimidation and unemployment—but still in place.

If the tale of the Indian worker underscores the vulnerability and voicelessness of many workers in export-oriented industries around the world, the Guatemalan saga gives a sense of how transnational campaigns can help—while still revealing some of the limits to such campaigns. Almost certainly, the young Indian weaver with the winning smile had few choices when she was told to leave the loom; her employer held all the cards. The Guatemalan workers were vulnerable to employer whims, even employer assault. Their links to outside networks were fragile, almost serendipitous, leaving them dependent on the kindness of strangers. Nevertheless, those outside ties—mediated, as is so often the case, by a handful of energetic local activists like Abby and her colleagues, working for NGOs like COVERCO, which serve as key nodes in transnational network activities—helped them reconfigure relations of power within their factory. By bringing outside pressure to bear, both on the Guatemalan state and on the employer, they saved their union, at least for the moment. It is sometimes possible to deploy transnational campaigns, however slowly and in however piecemeal a manner, to create new possibilities and construct channels through which workers can begin to speak for themselves.

Independent monitoring is often cited as the best way to strengthen those possibilities as companies adopt voluntary codes of conduct and monitors ensure that they fulfill those codes. The rest of this book explores what that approach means in practice: under what circumstances, and through what kinds of strategies, have consumer-based campaigns around independent monitoring helped improve workers' ability to organize, to represent themselves, and to improve their conditions at work? Before turning to empirical cases, however, I want to shift gears slightly. A look at the theoretical underpinnings of these debates will suggest some of the issues that are raised as labor struggles move from a national to a transnational arena, and labor rights are redefined as human rights.