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Antenarrative and Transnational Labour Rights Activism: Making Sense of Complexity and Ambiguity in the Interaction between Global Social Movements and Global Corporations

Abstract *This paper draws on antenarrative research and writing techniques to analyse the long-running transnational campaign seeking to improve respect for human rights in the supply chains of Nike and other major sportswear companies. The antenarrative approach challenges scholars to look beyond pre-existing expectations, both in terms of which actors and processes are likely to be most influential and in terms of what is motivating participation in those processes which are significant. In this paper we construct antenarrative accounts of two aspects of the Nike campaign and counterpoint each of our antenarratives with an established scholarly account based on more traditional narrative approaches. We conclude antenarrative analysis can provide useful insights into interaction between global activist networks and global corporations, particularly by drawing attention to the generative possibilities of the complex combination of ordered and disordered processes which often characterize that interaction.*Type equation here.

Keywords: corporate regulation, corporate social responsibility, global social movements, human rights, labour rights, sweatshops, transnational advocacy networks

Since at least the early 1990s, global networks of labour activists have not only sought to persuade nation-states to uphold the labour rights set out in International Labour Organisation (ILO) conventions: they have supplemented those efforts with campaigns which directly target global corporations. In this article we use antenarrative research and writing techniques to problematize two ordered scholarly narratives regarding one such campaign: the international anti-sweatshop movement's long-running campaign targeting Nike Incorporated (Nike) and other companies in the sportswear industry. The first narrative we consider holds that during the late 1990s and early 2000s Nike used its considerable marketing resources and expertise to comprehensively outmanoeuvre the challenge to its reputation from less well-resourced anti-sweatshop activists and other critics. The second holds that when corporations such as Nike respond to anti-sweatshop campaigns by appearing to improve compliance with global labour rights norms, in practice this always amounts to little more than exercises in public relations.

We present two antenarrative accounts which unsettle these ordered narratives and which suggest alternative interpretations of the anti-sweatshop movement's achievements and potential. In doing so we further explore the potential and limitations of Boje's (2001b; 2008) concept of antenarrative as a methodology for researching and writing about complex, geographically dispersed and relatively disordered social movements. Whereas traditional narrative approaches tend to focus on particular kinds of actors and bring their actions together into a single, seemingly coherent plot-line, antenarrative emphasizes the discontinuous, uncertain and contested elements of a research subject, and may draw attention to actors, actions and perspectives which traditional narrative approaches would ignore or treat as peripheral (Boje, 2008). Boje has also written about the anti-sweatshop movement's Nike campaign, but our application of his ideas further develops the possibilities of the antenarrative approach. Whereas Boje tends to quote and then analyse multiple lengthy 'antenarratives' produced by actors directly involved in or engaging with social movements, we deliberately construct our own antenarrative accounts. Our first antenarrative indicates the potential of antenarrative methods to draw attention to the generative possibilities of the complex combination of ordered and disordered processes which characterize such networks. Our second demonstrates the value in antenarrative's attention to the way different 'stories' are utilised to motivate and influence a diverse range of actors—both within corporations and outside of them.

Antenarrative as methodology

Antenarrative is an approach to sense-making developed by David Boje (2001b; 2008), a management theorist. His research focuses on the way stories and narratives circulate, change, conflict and coalesce within and through corporations and the ways these stories and narratives influence the beliefs and behaviour of managers, staff, consumers, investors and other organizational stakeholders (Boje, 2008). Boje's typology of the different ways stories and narratives achieve these effects is richly complex (see for example Boje, 2008, pp. 7-25). For the purposes of this article we concentrate on the broad distinction he draws between 'narrative' and 'antenarrative'. By 'narrative' Boje means accounts which sort 'characters, dialog[ue], themes, etc into one plot' (Boje, 2008, p. 7) and hence which have a 'relatively clear, beginning, middle and end' (Jørgensen and Boje, 2009, pp. 32-3). Boje notes that within organizations such narratives are strategically constructed and promoted by senior managers to 'institutionalize and strengthen particular traits in organizations ... [and] construct a sense of self and a sense of what the organization is all about' (Jørgensen and Boje, 2009, pp. 32-3).

Boje (2001b, p. 117) argues such narratives often reflect and draw on established narrative forms or genres. Thus dominant internal narratives regarding the role of a company's founder or CEO—such as Phillip Knight at Nike—are often structured in a manner which parallels stories of romantic heroes in the myths of ancient Greece: 'A heroic CEO battles [operating] environmental threats, overcomes weaknesses of the firm, plays on firm's strengths to exploit [operating] environmental opportunities' (Boje, 2008, p. 142). Boje is concerned about the way these dominant organizational narratives are used to override or exclude alternative perspectives:

Narrative also has a darker side Organizational life is... represented as a linear sequence ... overlooking the different voices and complex interaction inherent in creating this life Narrative thus contains a moral and "agreed" interpretation on something that is in reality fragmented, pluralistic, paradoxical and ambiguous (Jørgensen and Boje, 2009, pp. 32-33).

In 2001 Boje developed antenarrative in order to facilitate examination of these 'different voices' and their complex interaction within organizations. His use of the prefix *ante* invokes both its meaning as 'preceding' and its use in gambling to refer to a bet, or a 'stake put up by a player...[i.e. "up the ante"] before receiving cards' (*Oxford English Reference Dictionary*,

1996, p. 55). Antenarrative inquiry therefore both (i) explores a narrative moment prior to the closure associated with established narratives, and (ii) remains open to the many stories circulating within and through organizations and to the different stakes various actors have in whether one or other of these accounts gain currency and broad acceptance. Antenarrative inquiry is thus interested in the power relations embedded in the process by which organizational life is 'storied and re-storied' (Jørgensen and Boje, 2009, p. 32), including the way stories are used to promote or resist particular kinds of change (Vaara and Tienari, 2011).

Antenarrative and analysis of social movements and transnational activist networks

Up until at least the 1960s much analysis of social movements was either based on or to some extent derived from structuralist theories of the state and the economy and these theories tended to constrict consideration of which movements were important and what motivated people to participate in them (McCarthy, 2000). More recent scholarship has recognised most social movements are too fluid and internally diverse to fit easily into narrow narrative frames. Thus McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001, p. 15) characterise resource mobilization theory, which emerged in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as an approach which downplayed the 'contingency, emotionality, plasticity, and interactive character of movement politics'. They similarly characterise the agenda of most North American social movement scholars in the 1980s as employing an approach which 'worked best as a story about single unified actors...it worked much less well when it came to complex episodes of contention' (McAdam et al., 2001, p. 18).

McAdam et al. (2001) are among a growing number of social movement researchers who more fully acknowledge the complexity of social movements and the challenges associated with describing and analysing them using traditional narrative forms. Gerlach and Hine (1970) were among the first to identify this complexity, describing social movements as loose and often relatively unstable networks with numerous, often temporary, and frequently competing leaders or centres of influence, held together by multiple linkages—including shared texts, shared ideals and/or shared opponents (see also della Porta & Diani, 1999; Keck and Sikkink, 1998). These insights imply that traditional narrative forms which allocate coherent identities and motivations to complex organisations and then focus on a limited number of key actors will miss significant aspects of the way in which a transnational activist network like the global anti-sweatshop movement interacts with global corporations. In principle most researchers who have written about the anti-sweatshop movement would likely accept this. In practice when they narrate the history of this movement they tend to

focus on the actions and strategies of actors and organisations which are centrally involved in campaign networks and treat the corporations with whom the activists are engaging as if they were singular actors (see for example Ross, 2004; Shaw 1999; Quan 2007).

While such narratives provide important insights, they are usefully supplemented by Boje's (2001a; 2001b; 2008, p. 166-170) antenarrative writing about the Nike campaign. He uses a theatrical analogy to describe the complexity of the interaction between Nike, anti-sweatshop campaigners, journalists and other key actors. He calls it 'Nike Tamara'—Tamara being a popular play with a long-running Los Angeles season, notable for the way it is presented on multiple stages in many rooms with a fragmented and mobile audience which tries to make sense of the simultaneous action. He notes that stories told within and between the organizations and individuals working on the issue of labour standards in Nike's supply chain interact, self-deconstruct and re-emerge, and he argues the campaign inhabits 'a post-modern and chaotic soup of storytelling' which resists simple plot sequences (Boje, 2001a).

Constructing a scholarly antenarrative

In this paper we draw on Boje's concept of antenarrative but further explore its potential by applying it in a somewhat different manner to Boje himself. When Boje presents antenarrative inquiry into the Nike campaign, he includes and then analyses lengthy extracts from texts created by Nike, the company's critics and other commentators (e.g. Boje, 2001a; 2001b, pp. 79-91, 103-6). This writing strategy suits his purpose of providing a detailed analysis of the way in which the stories contained in these texts interact in the battle to influence public perceptions of the company and its labour practices. In the next two sections we instead introduce and summarize two scholarly narrative accounts of the Nike campaign, and counterpoint each narrative with an antenarrative account which we have constructed with the goal of providing a more nuanced understanding of the issues covered in the two narrative accounts. In applying the principles underlying antenarrative inquiry, like Boje we have sought out stories that contradict relatively well-established accounts of the interaction between sportswear companies and their critics. However, rather than quoting and analysing lengthy texts promulgated by participants in this clash of narratives, we instead provide our own direct antenarrative accounts by identifying, researching and narrating events in the international campaign and interpreting their significance in a manner which is guided by antenarrative's interest in disorder and complexity and in actors whose roles would likely be ignored or downplayed by more traditional narrative approaches.

Our antenarrative accounts draw on Connor's (2008) doctoral research conducted through the period 1998-2007 and on further research conducted since then, including additional interviews. Research methods included: multiple in-depth interviews with representatives of Nike, Reebok and Adidas, and with labour rights campaigners and trade union leaders in Europe, the US, Thailand, Hong Kong and Indonesia; periodic review of media databases; and reflections on Connor's observations and experiences as a direct participant in the campaign in the role of an 'activist scholar' in the period 1995 through 2010 (for an extended discussion see Connor, 2008, pp. 90-118).

Narrative / antenarrative #1: 'Teflon' Nike or vulnerable giant?

The first pairing of narrative and antenarrative accounts centres on a key period of the campaign targeting Nike, the late 1990s and early 2000s. This period of the campaign was characterized by significant, highly visible activity by both Nike and its critics, and this section begins with a brief summary of a traditional narrative treatment of events of this period and their meaning. A longer antenarrative interpretation follows which we believe provides a richer understanding of the impact which the anti-sweatshop movement had on Nike's reputation during this period and the way in which the movement achieved this effect.

Narrative: 'Teflon' Nike

In a recent article Waller and Conaway (2011, p. 85) argue that by the early 2000s Nike's 'countercampaign' strategies had completely neutralized the anti-sweatshop movement's threat to the company's brand image. As evidence for their assertion, Waller and Conaway (2011, p. 102) point to articles praising Nike's labour and human rights practices in prominent periodicals—*Newsweek*, *The New York Times* and the *Washington Post*—and in scholarly management journals—*Business & Society* and the *Journal of Business Ethics*. They also note that:

Although the company's sales and stock share prices stagnated in the late 1990s at the height of the anti-Nike campaign ... Nike's sales, earnings, and stock price had all regained their former momentum by 2003 (Waller and Conaway 2011, p. 102).

It is true that the most comprehensive analysis of the direct financial impact of anti-sweatshop activism on Nike and other targeted corporations only found compelling evidence of negative impacts on sales and share prices during the periods of the most intense campaign activity, which for Nike was the two-year period from 1997 to 1998 (Bartley and Child, 2011). However, Nike invests very heavily in advertising and other marketing strategies and has a strong history of consistent growth, which arguably makes it difficult to assess whether or not campaign activities in subsequent years have caused the company's sales to grow less quickly than they might otherwise have done. Further, as a later section of this paper demonstrates, a protest movement does not necessarily need to have a measurable impact on a company's sales or share price in order to persuade that company to respond positively to some of the campaign's demands.

In the next section we use the piece in *Newsweek* cited by Waller and Conway as our entry point into an antenarrative account of the same campaign period. Whereas the *Newsweek* article portrays Nike as a 'Teflon' company, adept at preventing allegations of poor practices from sticking to its brand image (Emerson, 2001), our antenarrative suggests a more useful analogy for Nike's interaction with anti-sweatshop activists during this period might be to depict Nike as a vulnerable giant: like Gulliver who woke up to find that the Lilliputians had tied his body and hair to the ground with hundreds of tiny ropes.

Antenarrative: Vulnerable giant

The article in question appeared in *Newsweek* on 12 March 2001. According to Tony Emerson's (2001) story, Nike's CEO Phillip Knight had decided late in 1997 that Nike needed to seize the initiative from its sweatshop critics. In that year Knight employed a public relations expert with a background in politics, Vada Manager, and gave him a considerable budget to employ consultants and executives to tackle challenges to the company's image as they arose. A team of company executives established a 'War Room' from which to direct their work on the issue, and formulated a plan to become the industry leader in sweatshop reform and vigorously promote that role to the press (Emerson, 2001). Knight launched this new approach in a speech to the US National Press Club in May 1998 in which he announced a series of new labour programs, including raising the minimum age in supplier factories and providing after-hours educational opportunities to Nike workers (for a critical assessment of these programs see Connor, 2001).

Almost three years after Knight's speech to the press club, the triumphalist tone of comments by Nike representatives recorded in the *Newsweek* article suggests they believed

Nike had effectively overcome the threat which anti-sweatshop activists had presented to the company's brand image. In interviews with Emerson the Nike executives framed the debate over sweatshop conditions as sport, a competition in which Nike's superior resources and knowledge of public relations would guarantee victory. Manager, who had previously worked in US President Clinton's campaign team, described the strategy he was using with Nike as '...out of the Clinton playbook: leave no charge unanswered, control the agenda' (Emerson, 2001). Emerson's article described how in August 2000 Manager had employed extra security guards and worked closely with the police to counteract a series of student demonstrations at Nike stores across the US. According to Manager:

When the students saw the growing security and police presence, it had a deterrent effect, and I think it went very smoothly. Nike approaches this as it approaches everything, as competition. And we aim to win (cited in Emerson, 2001).

Although the *Newsweek* article was published in March 2001, the research for it had apparently been completed in August 2000 since the article makes no mention of any campaign events which occurred between that month and the story's publication. Campaign developments during that eight-month period throw into question Emerson's description of Nike as a 'Teflon' company. While Nike was cooperating with police to undermine the US students' protests outside Nike stores, former US soccer professional Jim Keady and fellow activist Leslie Kretzu were spending August 2000 living among Nike workers in West Java and trying to survive on the equivalent of their full-time wage. Keady and Kretzu emailed photographs and daily diary entries to a friend in the US who put them up on a web site established for the purpose. Keady lost 9 kilograms that month and both described overwhelming feelings of hunger. The diary entries have considerable emotional intensity: in the entry for 14 August Kretzu described getting a headache, fever and nausea. She was strongly tempted to break her self-imposed economic discipline by buying medicine, but stops herself by asking what an Indonesian worker she had come to know would do in her situation:

What would Fitri do? Fitri my new best friend? My new soul sister? Fitri who lives in a box in a poor, dirty, overcrowded neighborhood in the Adidas factory 'prison complex'. What would Fitri do? I don't know, but I think she'd actually go to work.

Though if she could take the day off, I suppose she'd be in that one small, smelly, congested room she shares with two other women...lying on a paper-thin reed mat on an uneven cement floor covered in shelf paper, without the money to buy what she really needed. And she wouldn't have a choice. (Educating For Justice, 2002)

Keady and Kretzu's web site attracted more than 200,000 page accesses in its first five months of operation (Jeff Lyons, Educating for Justice, New Jersey, pers. comm.). In September 2000 they flew to Sydney to participate in campaign activities targeting Nike organized by Australian anti-sweatshop groups in the lead-up to the Sydney Olympics.

In the same week, demonstrations outside the World Economic Forum (WEF) meeting in Melbourne confirmed Nike was still a key target of the movement protesting neo-liberal globalization. Inspired by the demonstrations at the WTO meeting in Seattle nine months earlier, thousands of protestors attempted to blockade the WEF meeting. 'Hey, Nike, you so bad. You so bad, you make me mad!' was a popular chant among the demonstrators and on 12 September 5,000 people attended a demonstration outside the main Melbourne Nike store (Gumbel, 2000, p. 1).

These various protest activities targeting Nike in September 2000 in Sydney and Melbourne received extensive coverage in the international press, including articles in *The Globe and Mail*, *The Guardian*, *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Times of India*. The protests also featured in free-to-air television news stories in Australia, the Netherlands, Spain, the UK and the US and on three cable channels with international reach—CNN, ESPN and Euronews. On their arrival in Sydney for the Olympics, Nike-sponsored athletes Michael Johnson and Carl Lewis were confronted by journalists asking what they thought of Nike's labour practices (pers. obs.).¹

The following month the BBC's flagship documentary program *Panorama* aired an episode which gave a scathing assessment of the adequacy of Nike's system for monitoring labour rights in its suppliers' factories in Cambodia (BBC, 2000). Also in October 2000, Dara O'Rourke, then Assistant Professor of Environmental and Labor Policy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, released an equally damning report on the factory monitoring practices of PricewaterhouseCoopers, the company Nike was paying to monitor labour standards in its contract factories. O'Rourke's report was covered in a number of major US newspapers including *The New York Times* (Greenhouse, 2000) and *USA Today* (2000).

The US student group, United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) had been founded only three years earlier and had grown so rapidly that by this stage it had chapters at more than 200 schools (Featherstone, 2000). Using aggressive tactics such as extended occupations of university offices, between 1999 and 2001 the students had managed to persuade more than 100 US universities to adopt a labour code of conduct for the production of clothes bearing university logos and to require independent monitoring of source factories by the Worker Rights Consortium, an organization which the students helped to establish. Emerson's March (2001) *Newsweek* article quoted USAS leaders predicting that the manner in which Nike had undermined their demonstrations in August 2000 would only inspire wider protests. In fact the students had got their chance in January 2001. Workers at the Kuk Dong factory, a Nike and Reebok contractor in southern Mexico, staged a strike and demanded decent wages, the right to be represented by their own union, and improvement in the quality of factory food—which they alleged was at times rancid and filled with worms. USAS organized protests across university and college campuses in the US and were ultimately successful in persuading Nike and Reebok to support a secret ballot election at the factory: the workers were later able to establish their own union and negotiate a collective bargaining agreement (Ross, 2004, pp. 267-74).

Also in January 2001 a communications student at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology who had not previously been active in the anti-sweatshop movement, Jonah Peretti, initiated what was to become one of the most effective activist responses to Nike's attempts to protect its image. Nike was at the time offering consumers the opportunity to have a personalized message stitched into their Nike shoes. Peretti wrote to the company requesting a pair of shoes bearing the word *Sweatshop*. Nike refused and Peretti subsequently engaged in a polite but comic email correspondence with the company. When Peretti forwarded that email exchange to some of his friends for their amusement, it spread like an email wildfire. As a journalist wrote in the *Australian Financial Review*, Peretti's email set off 'a chain reaction that would reach millions of 'friends' across every continent and create a template for the marketer's nightmare of the 21st century' (Macken, 2001, p. 1). Peretti's email also became very popular with the mainstream press: the story was covered by more than 60 newspapers and magazines internationally including *The New York Times* and *The Wall Street Journal*. Peretti debated Nike's Vada Manager on television on the *NBC Today* show and was interviewed on radio stations across the US, the UK and Australia (Macken, 2001).

Finally, in March 2001, just as the *Newsweek* article hit the news-stands, 85 representatives of organizations involved in the anti-sweatshop movement from 35 countries in Europe, Asia, the Americas, Africa and Australia gathered in Barcelona for the Clean

Clothes Campaign's (CCC) five-yearly conference to evaluate progress and set future strategy.² Founded in 1991, the CCC had by this stage built an extensive network within Europe of ten national-level coalitions of unions and civil society groups campaigning to improve conditions in the international clothing and sporting goods industry, with Nike and Adidas among the major targets. Important decisions were made at the conference about future directions for anti-sweatshop campaigns, including a commitment to continue making sportswear brands a key target of the international movement.

Our first antenarrative account ends here. For want of space we have neglected other significant anti-sweatshop campaign activities undertaken between August 2000 and March 2001, including those by trade unions and NGOs involved in the Clean Clothes Campaign Network in Europe and by trade unions and NGOs in Asia and Latin America. Even so, this antenarrative account of the eight-month slice of the contest between Nike and the global anti-sweatshop movement demonstrates why, by March 2001, when Emerson's *Newsweek* (2001) article was published, the reported confidence of Nike's 'War Room Team' appeared incongruous to those who had been following the issue closely. Rather than wilting in the face of Nike's highly professional and well-resourced public relations campaign, the anti-sweatshop movement continued to attract high levels of media coverage and to demonstrate considerable diversity and energy. It is beyond the scope of this article to analyse how this globally dispersed and relatively poorly resourced movement sustains itself and achieves these effects (for such an analysis see Connor 2008: 119-166). But our antenarrative account demonstrates that a multinational company's superior resources and centralized and ordered planning processes do not necessarily guarantee a public relations victory over widely dispersed and loosely organized activist networks. Of course as we write this, in 2012, the global anti-sweatshop movement's energy has dissipated somewhat from its highs in the period between the mid-1990s and the mid-2000s. Nonetheless, as our next antenarrative indicates, organizations involved in the movement continue to have some influence over the behaviour of targeted companies.

Narrative / antenarrative #2: Spin or substance?

In this second pairing of an ordered narrative with an antenarrative, we wind our focus forward to contemporary campaign events. Our specific interest is in a set of negotiations which have been taking place in Indonesia since 2010, involving representatives of various sportswear brands and their Indonesian suppliers; local Indonesian trade unions; and international organizations in the global anti-sweatshop movement. We present an

antenarrative account of these negotiations as a counterpoint to a popular general narrative about corporate responses to transnational labour activism.

Narrative: Obvious spin

Nike Tamara is not about implementing reforms, one only has to tell a convincing story of a reform, make it believable to the stakeholders (Boje, 2001a).

While this conclusion to one of Boje's conference papers is not necessarily indicative of his other writing about the Nike campaign, it does reflect a common narrative among activists and scholars about corporate responses to anti-sweatshop campaigns. From this perspective, all of the various labour rights initiatives announced by Nike and other major companies in response to anti-sweatshop activism have at worst been nothing but "spin", and at best they have been insignificant reforms which the companies have made in order to deflect criticism (e.g. AMRC, 2004; Lipschutz, 2004; Reich, 2007: 186; Ballinger, 2010). Scholars who take this view tend to treat corporations as singular entities whose focus on profit maximisation means they will always do everything in their power to minimise production costs. Such scholars frequently contrast corporate self-monitoring of codes of conduct, which they describe as weak and ineffective, with reforms which would allow workers more freedom to organize themselves into trade unions and hence the opportunity to exercise collective power within their workplaces. These scholars see little or no possibility that anti-sweatshop activism will result in major corporations cooperating in non-binding initiatives to expand workers' freedom to form trade unions, and they instead advocate stronger intervention by governments to achieve this goal (e.g. Ballinger, 2010).

There is no shortage of evidence to support this perspective. Most scholarly research into the effectiveness of corporate monitoring of suppliers' compliance with labour codes of conduct has either only found evidence of primarily minor improvements in relation to standards other than trade union rights (e.g. Barrientos and Smith, 2007: 720-1), or else has questioned whether codes have brought any benefits to workers at all (e.g. Esbenshade, 2004; Bulut and Lane, 2011). While this narrative clearly has considerable explanatory power, recent developments in Indonesia at least suggest caution in applying it too prescriptively.

Antennarrative: Possibility for substance

Today a historic agreement has been signed regarding trade union rights in factories in Indonesia. The pact was signed by Indonesian textile, clothing and footwear unions, major supplier factories and the major sportswear brands, including Adidas, Nike and Puma... 'Our members have been waiting for this agreement to be concluded. It will help us in our bargaining efforts' [said] Emelia Yanti, General Secretary of GSBI. (ITGLWF/CCC, 2011)

This extract is from a media statement jointly released by the International Textile, Garment and Leather Workers' Federation (ITGLWF) and the Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC) in Jakarta on 7 June 2011. ITGLWF and CCC are involved in Play Fair, an ongoing global campaign alliance targeting the labour practices of sportswear brands. This trade union rights agreement—known as the 'Freedom of Association Protocol' (the Protocol)—represents one of the results of this campaign. In addition to Adidas, Nike and Puma, three other global sportswear companies—ASICS, New Balance and Pentland—have also signed, as have five trade unions and four major Indonesian manufacturers (Play Fair 2011a). If properly implemented, the agreement will significantly increase the scope for Indonesian trade unions to organize and represent sportswear workers. Among other things, it requires that a certain number of union officials be freed from their normal work duties on a full-time ongoing basis so they can undertake union tasks; that trade unions will be able to use notice boards within the factories to communicate with current and potential members; and that unions and suppliers will collaborate to facilitate automatic deduction of members' union fees from their salaries (Play Fair, 2011a).

It took eighteen months (from November 2009 to June 2011) for the parties to reach agreement the standards in the Protocol. By all accounts it was a difficult negotiating process and, predictably, the reasons for these difficulties are contested. At one stage, in June 2010, some of the trade union leaders became so frustrated with lack of progress they organized a demonstration in Jakarta, involving workers from at least five sportswear factories. Lilis Mahmudah from the SPN union describes the impact of the demonstration in a documentary about the negotiation process:

After the demonstration, the Adidas headquarters representative, Bill Anderson [Head of Social and Environmental Affairs (SEA), Asia Pacific] came to Jakarta Bill Anderson agreed to numerous matters, including five items that were crucial to the agreement, which were in our draft, and then the negotiations were once again able to continue We [also] wrote to friends from Oxfam, CCC and also ITG[LWF] so that they could also apply pressure. So at that time Harry [Nurmansyah, Asia Region Manager of Social & Environmental Affairs] from Adidas told me that he was called by Ashling [Seely, Policy Assistant to the General Secretary] from ITG, was criticized by CCC and also by Oxfam So we've used these networks to keep the pressure up. (Play Fair, 2011b)

For his part Bill Anderson (Adidas, Singapore, pers. comm.) claims Adidas found the protests 'quite baffling because the negotiations were moving forward at the time' and he maintains it was the request from Seely, rather than the union demonstrations, which prompted him to travel to Jakarta to help progress the negotiations. Anderson (pers. comm.) also argues the negotiation process was challenging because 'not all of the five unions were of a like mind on the demands/scope of the Protocol', but he notes that 'the meetings with the unions to re-invigorate the process were very cordial and ultimately successful'.

In early December 2011, Connor met with three of the five trade union representatives involved in the unions' core negotiating team in Jakarta, two of them as they participated in a 'road-show' to explain the agreement to workers in a number of different factories. The union leaders expressed concern that some factory managers were trying to use ambiguity in some parts of the Protocol as an excuse to avoid fully implementing it. Even so, at that stage all the trade union and NGO representatives Connor spoke to were more optimistic than not that the protocol would bring improvements in respect for freedom of association in the factories covered by it. However, this optimism was constrained by uncertainty as to how broadly the agreement will be implemented. The four Indonesian manufacturers who have signed the agreement are substantial businesses: PT Nikomas Gemilang employs upwards of 40,000 workers, PT Panarub more than 10,000 and PT Tuntex Garment and PT Adis Dimension are also significant employers. However, between them Adidas, ASICS, New Balance, Nike, Pentland and Puma have direct ordering relationships with at least 81 other factory suppliers in Indonesia. The unions who have signed the agreement expect these companies to persuade all of these suppliers to implement it. In May 2012 organisations involved in the Play Fair campaign initiated a web-page with a table which will provide ongoing assessments of the companies' performance in this regard. At the time of writing

(March 2013) this table indicated Adidas was doing more to support the establishment of local factory committees to implement the Protocol than ASICS, New Balance, Nike, Pentland and Puma, but of the six companies only New Balance was at that stage requiring implementation of the Protocol as part of contracts with suppliers (Play Fair, 2013).

Between December 2011 and June 2012 three of the trade unions involved—GARTEKS, KASBI and SPN—also sent reports on the agreement's implementation to international groups involved in the Play Fair campaign. The news from supplier factories was mixed. GARTEKS reported positive cooperation from Nike in working with management of PT Amara Footwear to implement the agreement in that factory, which employs more than 5,000 workers making Converse shoes. However GARTEKS claimed there was resistance from Adidas and its supplier PT Golden Continental in addressing labour issues in that factory (E. R. Silaban, GARTEKS, Jakarta, pers. comm.). KASBI reported that PT Kahatex, which supplies Nike and Adidas, had initiated disciplinary action against two union leaders who were calling for the Protocol to be implemented at PT Kahatex, and that the leaders of a new union branch at PT Shyang Yao Fung, which supplies Adidas, had also been discriminated against (Parto, KASBI, Jakarta, pers. comm.).³ SPN reported progress in implementing the agreement in PT. Pancaprima Ekabrothers' factory, which supplies Nike and Adidas, and PT. Panbrothers' factory, which supplies Adidas. But SPN expressed concern about alleged freedom of association violations by PT Sinar Timur Indistrindo, which supplies Adidas, New Balance and Pentland, and by PT Panarub Industry, which supplies Adidas (L. Mahmudah, SPN, Jakarta, pers. comm.). Of the suppliers noted above, only the latter is a signatory to the agreement. Clearly then the agreement is being taken seriously by more than just the four supplier signatories, but unions allege that some manufacturers are resisting it and it remains unclear how many of the more than 80 Indonesian manufacturers supplying Nike and the other signatory sporting goods companies will ultimately comply.

Thus at the time of writing (March 2013) multiple interpretations of the process are still viable. The sportswear companies may well have no intention of ensuring the protocol is implemented over the long term, and may instead wish only to use it as public relations cover. But this is not our expectation. Of the major sportswear companies involved, Adidas has put by far the most effort into negotiating the Protocol and without the active engagement of Bill Anderson and his SEA Asia Pacific team it is unlikely the process would have progressed as far as it has. In a 2008 interview with another researcher (Garwood 2011), Anderson said that whereas many companies situated their labour rights compliance teams within their public relations departments, Adidas' SEA team was in separate department within the company and he claimed the SEA team had significant clout within Adidas. In the same interview Anderson told Garwood (2011) he and his colleagues shared

some of the goals of anti-sweatshop activists but that activists often overestimated the ability of retailers like Adidas to persuade their suppliers to improve labour conditions. He also told Garwood (2011, p. 49):

If we are protecting the rights of workers, then ultimately we are managing the brand reputation. If we are failing to protect the rights of workers, then the brand reputation won't stand for much.

In a research interview with Connor on 4 July 2011 Anderson noted that, in accordance with Germany's *Co-Determination Act* (1976), one third of the members of Adidas' supervisory board are representatives of Adidas' employees in Germany—including trade union officials and elected Works Council members—and that at least one of those worker-representative board members takes a very active interest in Adidas' labour rights compliance initiatives in Asia. In a more recent communication Anderson (pers. comm.) explained Adidas' motivation for participating in the Protocol negotiations as follows:

The main driver for our supporting the FOA protocol and encouraging the participation of the suppliers in this process was the belief and understanding that such a protocol would reduce worker-management conflicts and broadly improve industrial relations... So it is less to do with reputation and very little to do with future profits, but much more an operational consideration in the day-to-day work with the factories.

Taken at face value, this last statement could be interpreted as another example of a company seeking to minimise costs, albeit via the unusual route of promoting respect for trade union rights. If this interpretation is correct, the future of the Protocol will depend on whether or not it does reduce worker-management conflict. Another possibility is that Anderson and his SEA team are genuinely interested in advancing respect for labour rights within Adidas' supply chain but that they need to win support for that approach within their company and among the company's suppliers. In a company like Adidas where the governing board has significant worker-representation it may well be easier to win internal support for responding to reputational threats from the anti-sweatshop movement with

substance rather than spin. Even so, Anderson likely still needs to persuade managers within Adidas that the reputational benefits associated with participation in the Protocol will not be outweighed by significant disruptions to production and/or increases in costs (see Connor, 2008, pp. 204-220). From this perspective, Anderson's framing of Adidas' participation in the protocol as something driven by 'operational' rather than strategic considerations may be intended for an internal audience within Adidas and for Adidas' suppliers—to downplay any disruptive potential associated with the Protocol. On this interpretation, the future of the Protocol will depend on a broader range of factors, including the extent to which the anti-sweatshop movement continues to pose a credible reputational threat to sportswear brands; the extent to which active promotion of compliance with the Protocol assists sportswear brands in countering that threat; the extent to which the Protocol increases or decreases industrial unrest and production costs; and the strategic political skills of supporters of the Protocol both within and outside the companies involved. Certainly other research we have conducted indicates that looking beyond the company as a unitary whole and instead examining internal strategic conflicts among different units and individuals within the company can provide more nuanced and satisfying explanations of corporate responses to reputational threats (Connor, 2008; Connor & Haines 2013; see also Garwood 2011, pp. 202-203).

Discussion and Conclusion

Clearly, we are not advocating a wholesale rejection of ordered scholarly narratives and their replacement with antenarrative methodologies. We recognise both narrative (e.g. Waller and Conaway, 2011) and antenarrative (e.g. Boje 2001a) approaches necessarily require researchers to make value-judgements about where to focus their attention and what to ignore or discount. For traditional narrative accounts the pre-existing expectations guiding the way these decisions are made will often reflect wisdom gained from considerable previous research and theorising. But with narrative accounts there is also a danger the researcher may, perhaps unconsciously, attempt to impose certainty and narrative consistency on a research subject which is in reality uncertain, disordered and not easily amenable to a traditional narrative structure. Antenarrative techniques can supplement narrative approaches and help overcome these limitations by drawing on alternative-to-dominant stories to provide insights to which traditional narrative approaches are blind (Boje 2008).

Certainly in the two narrative/antenarrative pairings presented in this paper the antenarratives highlighted creative possibilities which were not within the framing of the

narrative accounts (e.g. Waller and Conaway, 2011, Ballinger, 2010, Lipshutz, 2004). For the first such pairing—which focuses on the anti-sweatshop movement's Nike campaign during the late 1990s and early 2000s—one of the key insights emerging from the antenarrative account is the generative potential of disordered and spontaneous campaign processes. The anti-sweatshop movement is not devoid of order, some of the organisations involved in the movement are hierarchically organised and strictly disciplined, and there is considerable coordination among many participants in the movement via email lists, conferences and other modes of communication. These ordering processes are important means by which sub-networks within the movement, such as those involved in the Play Fair campaign, can agree on campaign demands and exert pressure on companies to comply (Connor, 2008, p. 142-146). However, in an overall sense the movement is widely dispersed and loosely organised, with many of the participating organisations and individuals pursuing disparate and potentially conflicting objectives. Traditional, ordered narratives would tend to either disregard this aspect of social movements or else treat them as a hindrance to achieving the movement's objectives (e.g. Knight & Greenberg 2002). In contrast, antenarrative methodology facilitates attention to the way in which relatively disordered processes—including spontaneous actions by actors on the peripheries of campaign networks, such as Jonah Peretti's viral email—can contribute as much to achieving the movement's goals as can globally coordinated and highly disciplined campaign activities.

Our second narrative/antenarrative pairing focuses on the process in Indonesia whereby local workers' representatives, international anti-sweatshop movement organizations and sportswear retailers and manufacturers have agreed on and begun to implement a protocol on trade union rights. A more traditional narrative approach might lead the researcher to reduce the corporations involved in this process to singular actors with predictable motivations enacting a predictable plot (e.g. Lipshutz, 2004). Such an approach could lead the researcher to discount this process as nothing but a public relations exercise on the part of the sportswear companies. It may be that such a narrative account will ultimately be vindicated by the way this process unfolds. However our second antenarrative demonstrates the value of remaining attentive to the diverse motivations and stories circulating within and between a wider range of actors and institutions as events take place. Staff in Adidas' SEA team responsible for labour rights compliance may not be the most powerful actors within Adidas, but they have made, and are continuing to make, a sustained effort to lead other sportswear brands in negotiating and implementing an agreement on trade union rights in Indonesia with a local trade union movement which currently lacks the organisational strength to compel the sportswear companies to cooperate in that negotiation process. This sits uncomfortably with the narrative expectation that global corporations can

be treated as unitary organisations which will always and only respond to anti-sweatshop activism with responses which amount to nothing more than cynical exercises in public relations. Antenarrative thus makes plain the importance of 'live' storytelling: its role in the shaping the course of events as they continue to play out. For activists as well as scholars it has the potential to help move analysis beyond pre-established narrative expectations and to provide a more nuanced understanding of the complex interaction between global social movements and global corporations.

Notes

1. One of the authors (Connor) took six months leave from doctoral research to organise the campaign activities in Sydney in the lead up to the 2000 Olympic Games.
2. One of the authors (Connor) participated in this meeting as a representative of Oxfam Community Aid Abroad.
3. In June 2012 we raised KASBI's allegations in relation to PT Kahatex and PT Shyang Yao Fung with Adidas. Harry Nurmansyah replied that Adidas had only recently become aware of the concerns at Kahatex, and that his team was planning to investigate. With regard to PT Shyang Yao Fung he indicated Adidas had recently 'intervened...to improve the FOA [Freedom of Association] and we see some improvement in their commitment. Nonetheless we will check again...' (H. Nurmansyah, Adidas, Jakarta, pers. comm.).

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