

Chapter 7

Proactive Governance: Prospects for Regulating Social Sustainability in Textile Industry

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ABSTRACT

The transition to achieving more sustainable business and sustainable development requires radical changes not only as far as government policies are concerned, but also to the systems of governance. What are the different levels of governance and their possibilities to steer the present developments? What are the schemes that public and private governance can use as tools for steering the development? This chapter describes how the different levels interact and what proactive governance means from the social sustainability perspective. In the global context, new mechanisms are available of proactive governance with the aim of promoting and achieving social sustainability. Textile industry being an energy and carbon intensive sector of industry and currently the subject of numerous environmental policy measures, and therefore, on the agenda of a number of actors both public and private serves as the context in this chapter.

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INTRODUCTION

Textile industry is an energy- and carbon-intensive sector of industry also known to involve a number of human rights-related negligence incidents. Consequently, it has also been the subject of numerous environmental policy measures and currently the social sustainability issues are on the agenda of a number of actors both public and private. Therefore, we have chosen this line of industry as a case in point to assess the interaction between public and private actors and propose improvements and new prospects.

We have previously observed that the transition to achieving more sustainable business and sustainable development requires radical changes not only as far as government policies are concerned, but also to the systems of governance (Sorsa & Salmi-Tolonen, 2020).

In this chapter, we study the extent to which the private and public sectors interact and cooperate in their efforts to promote and advance the three dimensions of sustainability (environmental, economic and social) and social sustainability in particular. In the transition to this end, we focus especially on the role of private regulation as an agent for social (and environmental) change. As a case in point, we discuss the regulating of the textile industries in India and Finland.

In terms of intensity, the textile and clothing trade is the world's second biggest economic activity and accounts for seven percent of world exports (Bravo-Laguna & Levi-Faur, 2024). Today the bulk of textiles and clothing are manufactured in Asia, particularly in China and India. The textile sector is also an important part of the European manufacturing industry. (Sorsa & Salmi-Tolonen, 2020, 16).

The chapter unfolds as follows. After this introductory section, we introduce the main purpose of our study.

Next, we explain the conceptual background and frame the concept of proactive governance and the many intakes of social sustainability.

In the following section, we review the past and current public and private actors in this field in the Finland and India contexts.

Subsequently, we consider the different levels of governance and their possibilities to steer the present developments. Then we review schemes that public and private governance can use as tools for steering.

Finally, we consider two sets of approaches to proactive governance and their impacts on social sustainability. The closing section discusses future trends and prospects. We propose that these new mechanisms represent proactive governance with the aim of promoting and achieving social sustainability, in the global context.

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