

Regional Sustainable Development and the role of Regional Change Agents – The Example of the Regional CSR Competence Centres in North-Rhine Westphalia (Germany)

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1. Introduction

The integral concept of Sustainable Development (SD) reflects the highly complex challenges of today's and future generations. With the general agreement about the recently published Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs, *UN 2015*) for a global society, it is now up to the supranational and international organizations, the individual nations and finally the local regions and local authorities to implement measures towards sustainability regarding all seventeen areas of the SDGs. There is need for developing an high acceptance of measuring implementations by potentially affected groups: This is because of the complexity of the interrelations between ecological, economic and social spheres, which still is very high even on the regional level, and because the consequences of implemented or non-implemented sustainable measures are more clearly visible and experienceable at that level. Additionally the economic efficiency and effectiveness of measures should be as high as possible. All these pre-determinants and framework conditions ask for a well organised cooperation and collaboration – governance – of the regional institutions involved in those SD strategies. As Sustainable Development requires fundamental changes on many different levels regarding philosophies, strategies, tactical and operative actions, institutions involved in those processes as major initiators are called "Change Agents". Discussing companies as core change agents, which aim at achieving sustainable positive impacts to the society and the ecological environment, those activities are described as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Based on the revised definition of the EU commission, CSR is a concept, which attributes an extensive responsibility of companies for their impacts on the social and the natural environment (*EU-Commission 2011*). To meet those responsibilities requires the implementation of measures into the management and the core business strategy that integrate social, ecological, human rights and issues relevant for consumers in cooperation with stakeholders (*Gogoll, Wenke 2017, pp 188*).

The German federal state of North-Rhine-Westphalia (NRW) was formerly known as a highly industrialized region, and even though the structural change towards ser-



vices during the last decades also took place here, too, industry is still playing an important role. Based on a modernisation strategy for the North-Rhine-Westphalian economy, the Ministry of Economics as another very important change agent initiated a state government's CSR strategy, including the promotion of strategic CSR in NRW-based small and medium-sized companies SMEs. The paper in the first part will give insights about background and aim of the federal state's CSR strategy, the structure of the CSR competence centres, institutions involved, tasks to be implemented and expectations about objectives to be achieved after projects finalisations. In the second part experiences of the EthNa-centre of the Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences, which is involved in the implementation of the Lower Rhine CSR Competence Centre for Textiles and Garments, will be discussed with regard to the following aspects: structural background, project steps and tasks planned and developed, experiences as another change agent among collaborating institutions, challenges and obstacles faced by the transfer from research to practice/business. The paper closes with an evaluation, summary and proposals for further research.

2. Regional aspects of CSR

By definition Corporate Social Responsibility CSR is focussing on positive results of companies' activities on the society, addressing economic, ecological and social aspects based on the framework of sustainability. The figure below systemizes the complex framework of CSR as an intersection of competitive market systems, public sector authorities and the civil society and its institutions, extended by the international dimension of foreign countries.

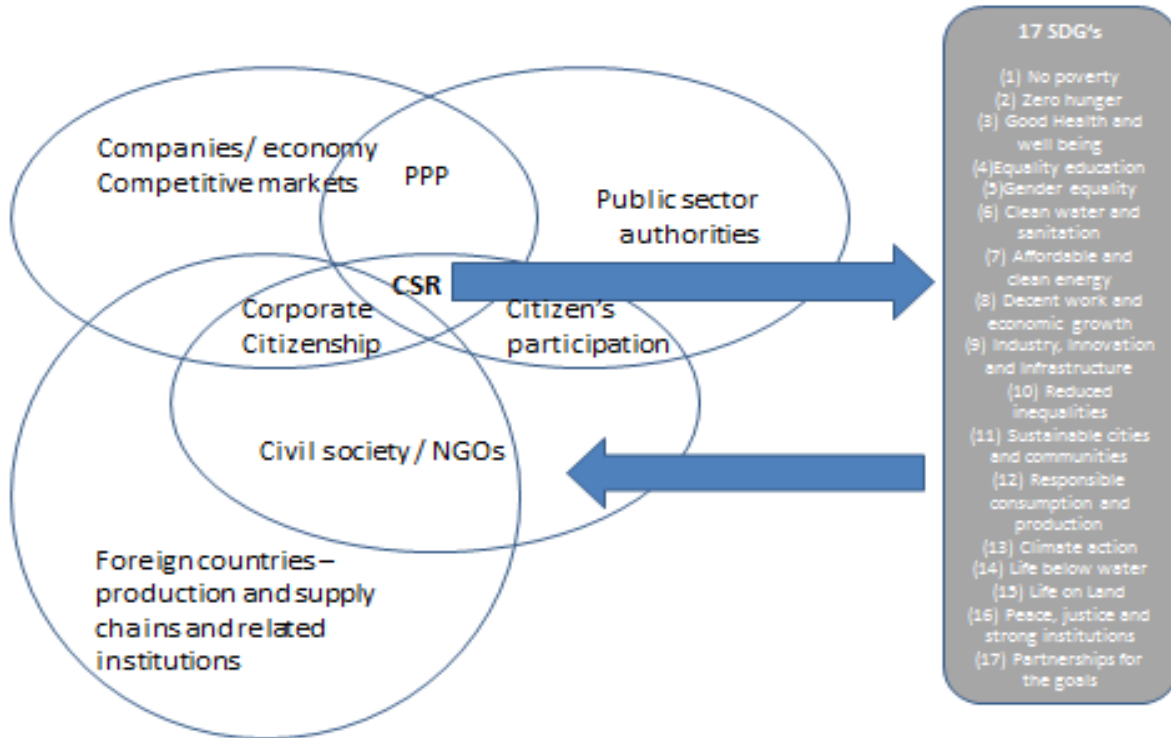


Figure: CSR as intersection of competitive market systems, public sector authorities and the civil society (Kleine-König, Schmidpeter 2012, p. 688, changed by authors)

Companies' CSR actions aimed at supporting sustainable development is described by the seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These cover an extensive range measuring positive developments of civil societies as a whole, including the economy with SDG7: Decent work and economic growth and SDG8: Industry, innovation and infrastructure. Both at least indirectly cover aspects of regional developments, in which SDG11 directly describes "sustainable cities and communities" as cores of a sustainable regional development.

This model represents

- the intersectional cooperation of businesses together with institutions of all other areas (CSR multi-stakeholder-cooperation and dialogue) as well as
- the intersectional aspects of positive feedbacks of well developing SDG's for the institutions in all 3 areas on CSR measures already successfully conducted (win-win-win).



From the regional economics point of view the rebound effects of positively developing SDG indicators can be related to “endogenous development potentials” of regions (*Stimson et al. 2011*). Therefore the regional economic development – besides external determinants – depends on the ability of regional actors, to activate and strengthen the already existing intra-regional potentials. Besides the traditional location factors such as capital, human resources, infrastructure etc., nowadays meanwhile the importance and influence of “social capital” is discussed. This can be described as value added or value synergies for the society, driven by cooperation and collaboration of all civil society institutions, and is more than the sum of single social contributions of the individual actors (*Bandura et al. 2008, p.8*). To increase the potential for such social capital benefits, new steering und organizational models have to be developed. Those models have to integrate the very often totally different backgrounds of actors or – with respect to changing the society to more sustainability – the different change agents (*Hesselbarth, Schaltegger 2014, pp. 26*). In this context governance structures are discussed, which are the sum of parallel existing collective regulations and rules, and there are to some extent combined with each other. These regulations and rules can be institutionalized ones, implemented by legal frameworks, or commonly accepted as informal agreements. The latter are initiated by institutions of civil societies, nationally and internationally (*Mayntz 2004*).

In the following a German federal states CSR strategy is presented as an example of such governance structures with different change agents involved.

3. Background and aim of the federal state of NRW’s CSR strategy

The state government of North Rhine-Westphalia launched its CSR policy in 2010 and expanded it 2012 when the respective coalition parties decided to encourage responsible management practices among SMEs. In June 2013 the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Industry, Digitalization and Energy of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia presented the cornerstones of a CSR strategy NRW. The cabinet approved the concept and instructed the Ministry of Economic Affairs to elaborate on the strategy in cooperation with other departments.



The CSR strategy is based on the European Commission's white papers on CSR (*EC 2002; EC 2011*) and the German Federal Government's CSR Action Plan (*Bundesregierung 2010*). All three definitions are based on the notion of responsibility. Society has expectations towards business which include economic, ecological and social concerns. Mere profit-maximisation and shareholder value are rejected in favour of a balance between business and societal interests. Thereby, businesses are encouraged to shift their perspective from their shareholders to their stakeholders. This is not only beneficial to society but also to companies as well: responsible firms can benefit from a better reputation, increase their employer attractiveness and improve their competitiveness.

Against this backdrop, economic performance and CSR go hand in hand. That is why the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia wants to encourage companies to go beyond compliance and assume their corporate responsibility and to engage in environmental protection, provide decent working conditions, ensure fair supply chains and maintain an open dialogue with their stakeholders – both domestically and abroad.

The state government's CSR strategy is designed

- to strengthen the role of responsible businesses as best practice examples,
- to highlight routes to achieving a culture of responsibility,
- to support the implementation of CSR in different industries and regions,
- to drive forward CSR partnerships between businesses and universities and
- to promote CSR in international business relations.

To implement these strategic aims the state government uses different instruments. They range from awareness-raising and highlighting best practice, for example through publications, a dedicated CSR website and public events, to engagement with specific industries and stakeholders like universities. The regional CSR competence centres are the most comprehensive instrument in this portfolio (see next section).

By launching the NRW CSR strategy, the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Energy and Industry of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia is also promoting CSR activities by many other players in business, academia and civil society. NRW is among the fore-



runners regarding CSR public policies across Germany. The initiatives launched so far demonstrate, that competition, innovation and responsibility are by no means conflicting goals: in fact, each complements and drives forward the other.

4. CSR competence centres in NRW

4.1 Aims, institutional set-up and approach

The regional CSR competence centres are a key instrument by which the NRW CSR strategy is implemented. By launching a countrywide tender competition the government asked for project proposals. An independent jury evaluated all proposals and recommended the best ones for funding. Each centre could then apply for 400.000 euros for a total funding period of three years. The funds are provided by the European Regional Development Fund and the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia (matched funding).

The centres aim at making small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) familiar with strategic CSR, at encouraging them taking up and elaborating on CSR practices and at creating regional networks of SMEs interested in and practicing CSR. The CSR competence centres correspond with the observation that SMEs are deeply rooted in their region and that their CSR practice is shaped by their local environment and its stakeholders. Therefore, any instrument aimed at SMEs needs to take into account local conditions which vary widely in a large state like North Rhine-Westphalia.

These varieties are reflected by the institutional set-up of the CSR competence centres. The centres usually consist of several partners. The lead partner is an organisation which is closely linked to the local economy, for example a regional development agency, a chamber of industry and commerce or a trade association. As such organisations alone may lack the necessary CSR expertise as well as a wider stakeholder perspective, all lead partners collaborate with partners from other sectors. These are mostly academic actors, i.e. universities, research institutes and a think tank. Apart from state-of-the-art expertise academic partners provide a wider perspective on CSR, including the views of their students and thus potential future employees who are a particularly relevant stakeholder group to SMEs.



The CSR competence centres employ different approaches to meet their objectives. They provide information on the web and in written form. They offer consulting hours for local SMEs. They also designate “CSR ambassadors”. These are entrepreneurs or SMEs who are more advanced in terms of CSR and are meant to spread the word and convince their business peers to engage in CSR. Moreover, the centres organise different events. They range from “CSR breakfasts” and “networking evenings”, where interested SMEs can easily join and talk with centre representatives and especially other companies, to joint workshops in which basic knowledge about CSR or CSR topics such as reporting or supply chain management is taught and discussed.

4.2 Current status and expectations

There are currently five regional CSR competence centres in North Rhine-Westphalia. They became operational in early 2016 and are funded for three years. These centres are (https://csr.nrw.de/no_cache/en/home/):

- Lower Rhine CSR Competence Centre for Textiles and Garments in Mönchengladbach,
- CSR Hub NRW in Wuppertal,
- Rhine-Neuss CSR Competence Centre in Neuss,
- The Rhineland Competence Centre in Bonn, and
- Ostwestfalen-Lippe (OWL) CSR Competence Centre in Detmold.

In September 2017 two additional centres are scheduled to start their operation. The CSR Competence Centre Ruhr covers the Ruhr Valley and will be located in Dortmund, whereas the CSR Competence Centre Münsterland will be based in Münster. The regional CSR competence centres are currently unique in Germany. They are the most comprehensive approach to foster CSR at the local level. It is too early to measure their impact on the uptake on CSR or even regional development. Some centres use surveys to collect data about CSR knowledge and business attitudes towards CSR in their region. Moreover, the centres will be evaluated when the projects are concluded after three years.



5. Lower Rhine CSR Competence Centre for Textiles and Garments

One of the recently 7 regional competence centres in NRW is the Lower Rhine CSR Competence Centre for Textiles and Garments. This is the only centre with a sectoral focus, and that sectoral focus implemented specific opportunities, but also specific challenges.

5.1 Sectoral Background

During the last decades the German and hence the North Rhine-Westphalian textile and garments industry has developed towards an important und sustainable industrial sector (*Eigenstetter et al. 2017, pp. 99*). Already during the 1960s it has been one of the forerunner industries of internationalization, and one of the first sectors differentiating the international supply chains via outsourcing and offshoring, connected with related transport and logistic challenges. The same observation holds for the strategy of “vertical integration”, where especially the garments industry together with retailers invented own distribution strategies (Point of Sales, POS) directly focusing on the consumer, covering the whole supply chain with own and self-developed product lines. In North Rhine-Westphalia the textile and garments industry can be differentiated among the following subsectors

- textiles,
- garments,
- retail of textiles and garments,
- home textiles incl. retail.

All sectors show a high degree of heterogeneity with regards to products, technologies and supply chains.

As a result of internationalization and later of globalization, the textile and garments industries in NRW show one of the earliest (since the 1960s) and most serious structural changes during more than 4 decades, which resulted in significant losses of production, companies and work places. Especially for the Lower-Rhine region (Krefeld/Mönchengladbach, western part of NRW), the decline of those formerly very important sectors (Mönchengladbach as “Manchester of Lower Rhine”) besides others



initiated the well-known “old-industrialized-industry-areas” problems (*Benneworth et al. 2010*). After many decades of decline starting with 2012 it seems that this sector began to stabilize and a slight production and employment growth has been identified since then (*BTE Handelsverband Textil 2015, p. 57*). The most important cause of this to some extent surprising “re-industrialization” is seen in the concentration of businesses on technical textiles and innovative production processes. Meanwhile the textile and garment industry in NRW is “high-tech”, because about half of turnover is based on technical textiles or innovative textiles and as intermediate input supplied to the automotive sector (interior fittings, seatbelts), aviation, wind power industries, building construction, civil engineering, protective wear and medical engineering (e.g. “intelligent garments” with integrated sensors). Traditionally textile machinery conductors are well established in NRW, e.g. a spinning machine producer as a world market leader, and other well-known global players are located in Mönchengladbach. Although the textile and garments industry – as mentioned above – is based on international/global supply chains, there is still a relative high production share of technical textiles left in NRW. Compared to that, the production of garments and the textile retail trade is pretty much globalized with very small shares of local production based in NRW (as well as in the rest of Germany).

Historically textile and garments production industries are concentrated in the following areas of NRW: Münsterland (Münster), Eastern Westphalia (Bielefeld), Lower Rhine and Wuppertal/Bergisches Land, where we have about 260 companies with altogether 24.500 employees, turnover of 5 Bill. € (75% textiles, 25% clothing) and an export share of about 40% (figures of 2015, *Landesregierung NRW 2016, pp. 124*). It’s worth mentioning that the majority of companies are SME’s, with the average of less than 100 employees.

High tech industries regularly need a backup of related R&D offered by research institutions and high skilled labor force, supplied by educational institutions like schools and HEIs in the region. Accordingly, in North Rhine-Westphalia with the locations Mönchengladbach and Aachen there are such institutions with international importance and reputation, offering related services for the textile and clothing industry



(Eigenstätter et al. 2017, p. 101): The Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences in Krefeld/Mönchengladbach is hosting the biggest Faculty of Textiles and Garments in Germany, covering technology, management and design of textiles and clothing. Additionally there is the Research Institute of Textile and Garments as well as – starting in 2018 – the Textile Academy. The latter institution is the result of a corporate initiative of the Textile Business Associations in Wuppertal and Münster, establishing a private run vocational school and a training academy for textile professions. The RWTH University of Aachen hosts an international leading research institute ITA (Institute for Textile Applications) at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering. Furthermore the RWTH organizes the education of vocational school lecturers for textile and garment professions. Finally, also the other textile and garment “hot spots” in NRW are backed by universities and research institutes, e.g. the General and Textile Industry research Institute of the University of Münster as one of the partners of the Lower Rhine CSR Competence Centre (see below).

All in all and even though the importance of the textile and garments industry in NRW hasn't the same importance for production and employment as it had four decades ago, it is still one industrial pillar in particular of the Lower-Rhine economy and represents successful survival strategies in a highly competitive, globalized world.

After the Ali Enterprises (2012, Karachi, Pakistan) and Rana Plaza (2013, Dhaka, Bangladesh) disasters especially the textile and garments international supply chain moved into the international public focus. Serious complaints about inadequately taken responsibility of western textile and garment sourcing companies for the social and ecological conditions of their developing countries based suppliers created a lot of pressure towards radical changes. This also holds for the German and North Rhine-Westphalian textile and garments producers, too. Whereas bigger textile and garment companies have already started to implement CSR management structures, e.g. according to the ISO 26000 CSR management guideline (*ISO 2010*), especially SMEs are still more reluctant about establishing well organized measures and instruments to integrate corporate responsibility into management and core business.



That was the starting point of the Lower Rhine CSR Competence Centre for Textiles and Garments.

5.2 Organization, project steps and tasks planned and developed

The competence centre consists on the following collaborating institutions:

- EthNa Competence Centre for Ethics and Sustainability at the Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences (faculties of Textile and Clothing Technologies, Business Engineering and Business Administration and Economics),
- General and Textile Industry Research Institute, University Münster (FATM),
- ZiTex Business Association of Textile and Fashion in NRW,
- WFMG Economic Development Agency of the city of Mönchengladbach.

Strategic objectives

The following strategic objectives are planned:

- Development of a CSR-network for textile and garment SMEs in NRW, to discuss different challenges of dealing with CSR relevant requests, e.g. based on the ISO 26000 CSR guideline's core aspects (human rights, labour practices, environmental protection, fair operation practices, consumer issues, community involvement and development). Especially the garment SMEs need a more powerful platform to give them a voice about their needs in light of the sourcing power of big retail chains.
- Increasing the business awareness regarding the hidden opportunities of CSR measures such as future related sustainable investments in economic, ecological and social innovations.
- Introduction of recently developed instruments and guidelines to support CSR activities, e.g. CSR reporting standards (*GRI 2015*), "materiality analysis", CSR Business Cases (Capitao et al 2017), sustainable sourcing, etc.
- Development of a broader communication and cooperation platform, combining businesses and different stakeholder groups, including NGOs, different regional bodies, consultants, research and educational institutions.



Operating objectives

During the project period of 3 years, different tasks have to be organized:

- Workshops about detailed CSR aspects (see above);
- Empirical studies about the CSR implementation status of textile and garment SMEs in NRW;
- Development of guidelines to support the implementation of selected CSR measures and tasks;
- Market places and other cooperation platforms bringing together different actors (sourcing companies, suppliers, regulating institutions, representatives of stakeholder groups like consumers, NGOs).

The starting point of discussions with cooperating business inside the NRW Textile and Garment Competence Centre was the already mentioned empirical fact (see 4.1), that the NRW textile and garment companies could finally survive the steadily increasing globalization pressure because of concentrating on product and process innovations. Of course, the core strategy of those innovations was pretty much based on offshoring of the production lines especially due to cost reduction objectives. As told before, the latter objective then finally implemented the needs for a holistic interpretation of corporate responsibility also for the globalized textile and garment supply chains. The competence centre members' general philosophy is to show and explain the similarities between product and process innovations and CSR related innovations. Besides the positive impacts of CSR relevant technology (product safety, environmental friendliness of products and processes, intelligent textiles and garments), the positive contributions to the society with regard to human rights, consumer issues and development and involvement of society should also be strengthened.

5.3 Project steps carried out

Several workshops and so called "CSR-business breakfasts" have been organized. Participants were representatives of SMEs and the Ministry of Economic Affairs, NGOs, consultants and scientists of the collaborating institutions. The following topics and CSR related aspects have been covered:



- Introduction of the project steps and inventory of businesses information requests and interests about CSR practices;
- Basics of CSR management systems based on the ISO 26000 framework;
- Dimensions, contents, standards and internal organization procedures of CSR reporting;
- CSR communication, relevance of information, PR versus transparent information;

Already planned additional activities in 2017 are

- another workshop about materiality analysis;
- market place “sustainable public procurement”, organized together with the business initiative MaxTex, which is dealing with sustainable sourcing of home textiles and headed by the SME Dibella in the western Münsterland area.
- discussion workshop with representatives of the federal “Partnership for Sustainable Textiles”, which is a multi-stakeholder initiative with the objective of achieving social, environmental and economic improvements along the textile supply chain, headed by the Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development.

Contemporaneously the conception of Business Cases for CSR has been investigated and developed further, to have applicable concepts available for businesses calculating costs and benefits of CSR measures (*Capitao et al. 2017*). Additionally representative surveys on the current implementation status of CSR activities by SMEs have been organized and the first results have been discussed within the project group. Finally, initiated by competence centre’s activities mentioned before and following the ideas of *Bodorkos/Pataki (2009)*, first few collaboration activities between university MA-program teaching and SME’s requests have been established, e.g. connected to the MA course “Value Management, Business Ethics and CSR” companies have been supported with

- checking the current status of CSR relevant activities, systemizing them and preparing for a first draft of a CSR report and
- preparatory support developing a CSR communication concept.



5.4 Experiences, challenges and obstacles of the transfer from research to practice/business

As the project discussed in this paper is the second of EthNa Competence Centre of the Niederrhein University of Applied Sciences with regard to the textile and garment industry, at the very beginning there were realistic expectations of a more reluctant readiness of textile and garment SMEs to participate in the activities mentioned above. In addition to a certain scepticism among SMEs towards “abstract and complicated” CSR management tasks, textile and especially garment SMEs are feeling to some extent are caught in the middle: On the one hand the big retail chains forcing their SME suppliers to sign “Code of Conducts (CoC)” about meeting defined commitments with respect to regulations and CSR rules along their supply chains to meet the requirements of CSR-reporting duties of big companies out into operation 2017. On the other hand the retailers are not very eager to support green or sustainable product lines of their SME suppliers, because final consumers – until now and contrary to reported high consciousness – are not very much interested in purchasing such “green” or “sustainably produced” textiles and clothing or at least the group of such sustainable consumers is relative small.

After half time of the project, additionally to the specific market position of textile and garment SMEs discussed before, the following challenges and obstacles are to be mentioned, which are limiting the impact range of the CSR Competence Centre of Textile and Garments:

- Some of the planned tasks might be too ambitious, e.g. discussing so called CSR Business Cases, which seems to be too more theoretical than practice oriented. As one solution the competence centre has to develop business cases that show cost-benefit ranges of different CSR variants.
- High and still increasing competition pressure, combined with costly requests introduced by digitalization, such as online and multi-channel distribution of textiles and garments are limiting additional resources to utilize for CSR related activities. Here the competence centre should show practical advantages of integrating digital solutions into CSR activities for utilizing related synergies.



- Companies are not yet identifying or interpreting CSR activities as (further) investments into innovations in a broader sense, which will also increase the economic sustainability of their businesses. With respect to this the competence centre should show comprehensibly expectable positive return on investment potentials of CSR activities.
- Because of the more sector orientation of the competence centre, no inter-sectoral CSR experiences-based “information-motivation-spill-overs” can be initiated. As this is a “structural challenge”, it cannot be solved by the members of the project group.
- The former aspect also introduced the challenge that potential competitors should cooperate to some extent, which introduces the necessities of “cooperative competition” (*Weichhart 2000*). To convince competitors agreeing about such a “co-competition” is not the easiest task.

6. Regional Impacts

First of all, the introduction of the CSR Competence Centre conception by the NRW federal government from the regional economics point of view seems to be an excellent example of the establishment of a sustainability oriented governance structure. It finally initiated seven institutionalized cooperation networks all over NRW, which themselves are collaborating and exchanging experiences each quarter during a meeting and additionally supporting each other by different measures. Additionally the institutionalized centre members themselves are collaborating from time to time and often informally with a multitude of actors of the civil society, which supports the penetration of ideas and CSR-related information throughout the federal state of NRW and beyond. As at least two meetings with representatives from regions of foreign countries (Sweden and Austria) are scheduled for the end of 2017, the regional governance ideas are already spreading beyond borders.

Coming back to the intersection model of chapter 2 (Figure), the existing mixture of content related competence centres (e.g. start up and social entrepreneurship, CSR and employer branding, CSR reporting, sustainable cost accounting) on the one



hand and a sector specific orientation (textile and garments) on the other hand are strengthening the potential positive impacts on the civil society via selected SDGs. All activities are focussing on already existing potentials and have so far been improving the endogenous development speed towards sustainability of the NRW regions. With regard to the CSR Competence Centre of textile and garments, the potential sustainable regional impacts initially are lower. This is because the sector itself is relatively small and the most important CSR-relevant challenges of textile and garment businesses are supply chain related. As discussed in section 5.1 those supply-chains are highly globalized, so the most impacts are potentially affecting those international production host countries. Nonetheless it was important to have chosen one of the traditional old industries as an example to show opportunities of interpreting innovations not only as product and process related technical improvements, but also as positive impacts to the society. As the textile and garment industry SMEs could survive “stormy” globalization trends, it will also survive, by early adaption, forthcoming and increasing requests of the public and consumers for social responsibility, for the regional as well as for the international civil society.

7. Conclusion and remarks regarding further research

Obviously it’s much too early to carry out a preliminary evaluation of the already established impacts of the NRW CSR competence centres. Summing up the business and other institutions contacts, discussions or common projects started, a successful process seems to have started. From the competence centres’ point of view, especially the cooperation between the centres could be strengthened, to “produce” more synergies and impacts on sustainability as institutionalized regional change agents. As CSR has to be established and developed in a fast changing economic and social environment, the competence centres also have to adopt to new developments. One of such a development is the digitalization transformation, which is heavily also influencing the topics of CSR and sustainability. As an example recently the so called “blockchain” technology has been identified to revolutionize the fashion supply chain regarding its almost full transparency. Motivated by the slogan “who made my clothes” blockchains, based on RFID-technologies and internet entry, are “empower-



ing fashion brands to take a lead towards greater transparency. By educating consumers via the product journey, it is going to redefine the meaning of fashion by including elements like honesty and real transparency" (Koelblin 2017). This might close the gap between producers' readiness for CSR and sustainable supply chains and consumers related purchasing decisions and so motivate much more retailers and so SME textile and garment producers for significant CSR measure implementation and related regional positive societal impacts.

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