



Innovation Drivers Webinar – Meeting Summary

Date: 24th November, 2020

Time: 2:00 – 3:30pm (Bangkok time)

Recording: [Zoom](#)

Speakers: Ms Katarina Veem and Ms Karina Kallio – PhD candidates at the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney

Meeting Summary

1. **Welcome and overview of the Decent Work in Garment Supply Chains Asia project: Dr Cristina Martinez**, Senior Specialist on Environment and Decent Work – ILO

Today's webinar is part of the Decent Work in Garment Supply Chains Asia project, a three year project that aims to bring together knowledge and insight from across the garment sector in Asia, and enhance regional action and industry coordination to drive decent work and sustainability goals. With a core focus on four key areas - social dialogue, gender equality, productivity and environmental sustainability - the project will shine a light on the approaches that drive effective change. The project is implemented by ILO with financial support from the Government of Sweden (Sida).

Outcome 4 of the project focuses on enhancing environmental sustainability by strengthening (a) policy and regulatory guidance, and (b) tools and knowledge to support eco-innovation and the Just Transition. We have 4 themes contributing to a toolbox for the Just Transition of the sector. The webinar today contributes to themes 0.2, 0.3, 0.4 and particularly to the conceptualization of 'Just Transition'.

Enhancing environmental sustainability can be a significant driver of innovation and the ILO has joined efforts with the Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney to define and highlight key environmental and innovation drivers for a Just Transition of the garment sector in Asia.

While industry-university collaboration at this high level of research application is not new, it is still under-utilized by industry, policy and international organizations. The industry-university partnership between Sida-ILO-UTS in this regard is a process innovation itself, and one that can deliver strong foundations to new concepts such as the Just Transition in the garment industry.

2. **Introduction to PhD Program: Dr Samantha Sharpe**, Research Director – Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney

Today's webinar is a presentation based on the early stages of research that two PhD students have been working on related to innovation drivers for environmental sustainability in the garment sector under this project. Environmental sustainability represents a new area of focus for the ILO in their pursuit of decent work, but although it is relatively new, it is a natural fit for ILO objectives in advancing social justice and promoting decent work. For ILO there was a recognised need to build an evidence base for how we align and implement social and environmental sustainability across the



sector – and implement is a key verb here, because although there has been ambition and in many case significant ambition for achieving sustainability in the sector, it has to date alluded us. And to this I would add a third requirement – need to do it quickly. The timelines for change are short – need to build pathways to net zero emission by 2050, and SDGs have a time horizon of 2030.

As highlighted in the introduction there are activities we are doing immediately to support knowledge sharing and build capacity for transitioning to an ecologically sustainable garment sector, and in a way that is 'just' and equitable to the many participants in the sector across Asia. But in answering the challenge for system-level change, we cannot rely on incremental improvement to what is already happening – we will need to access radical innovation across the global supply chain and the complex mix of institutions and practices that operate in the supply chain. Into this environment is where we the PhD program can contribute new thinking and insights to help us address these challenges.

The ISF PhD program is transdisciplinary –this means is that is we are engaged in scientific inquiry that cuts across disciplines, integrating and synthesizing content, theory and methodology from any discipline area which will shed light on specific real-world complex questions and challenges. In practice this means we take a holistic view that looks not just to technological solutions, but also the political, socio-cultural, organisational and individual factors that contribute to real change.

Their research underscores the importance of industry-science collaboration to contribute rigorous research standards and methods and to build an evidence base of what works, with a goal towards implementation.

3. **Presentation and Q&A: Ms Katarina Veem**, PhD Candidate – Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney

Ms Veem's research will examine how multi-stakeholder platforms in the garment sector can contribute concretely towards eco innovation throughout the sector.

There is a need to maintain a proper and respectful relationship between humanity and nature. The COVID19 pandemic recovery plans could create a window for a better normal to emerge.

Historically speaking, the most polluted place in Sweden is where the textile industry formerly existed. Climate change is now disrupting sediments and pollutants that were formally buried in Sweden, releasing harmful materials back into the environment. Remediating these pollutants has significant financial costs and governments cannot afford the cost of pollution that is being created by the garment sector. Workers, governments and employers need to work together to develop solutions.

Successful transformation requires: Initiation, Mapping of key issues and actors, Dialogue, Realization, and Follow-up.

During the Questions and Answer period, Ms Veem shared key lessons learned from democratic consultations have taken place in Sweden that could be applied to garment industry in Asia. She highlighted that while sustainability directors would often like to do more, corporate structures and budgets for sustainability do not allow for these types of interventions. Brands are not often willing to pay, but they are willing to engage in dialogue around these challenges. In these conversations



the dialogue is generally positive, however, when considering financial costs and revenue, it becomes more difficult. Governments need to support and invest in these areas, because dialogue alone cannot do the job. Another key challenge for the garment sector in Asia is the large size of the population.

4. Presentation and Q&A: Ms Karina Kallio, PhD Candidate – Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney

Ms Kallio's research will focus on the topic of weaving narratives of transformation from the fashion and textile industry to regenerative futures. She will explore how are fashion and textile enterprises and supply chains are cultivating regenerative cultures.

The garment sector is the 3rd largest industry in the world, and has huge environmental and social effects.

Ms Kallio will incorporate the Three Horizons Framework, Appreciative Inquiry and Living Systems Theory in her research to bring in a holistic, organismic and ecological worldview and to bring a new perspective on thinking and values. Her research will consider cultural, social, material and experiential capital. Of the three spheres of transformation, she will focus on the personal (over political and practical).

During the Questions and Answer period, Ms Kallio explained that her research would look at personal levers of transformation because this area of focus can help explain the mindsets behind decision makers. She is focusing her research on Cambodia and Vietnam because there are a few brands already working there. She explained that 'greening' may be considered a paradigm of the past, as though green focuses on minimizing ecological footprints, which is important, it does not redesign the broken system. She also highlighted that regenerative fashion cannot be achieved at the current level of global production/consumption.

5. General Discussion: Dr Samantha Sharpe, Research Director – Institute for Sustainable Futures, University of Technology Sydney

- **Where do you see leverage points from your work?**
 - i. Ms Veem: In Sweden this can be done through government and regulation, however implementing regulation can be a challenge in Asia.
 - ii. Ms Kallio: Economic rules of the system need to be changed. There needs to be a shift away from growth paradigm to something that is life giving.
- **What is the role for the ILO?**
 - i. Ms Veem: The shift to green industry will change the sector. Whether employment can be absorbed and create better decent green jobs is uncertain. But multilateral organizations have a crucial role to convene and facilitate this Just Transition. Multi-stakeholders are important in engaging at the grass-roots level.
 - ii. Ms Kallio: Participation needs to be available to everybody, including small enterprises.



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6. Closing Thoughts: Mr David Williams, Project Manager – ILO

In Ms Kallio's work regarding regenerative cultures, more could be explored regarding the implications in a commercial context. For instance, can we overlay elements of regenerative cultures over the existing model in order to replace it over a longer term? Where do the incentives and the power lie?

The current sustainability narrative is crowded (especially by brands), but how can we weave the regenerative narrative into a cohesive manifesto for the industry? Factories are rule-takers – if the rules change they will take them, however, oftentimes in today's sustainability context we are looking at them to drive the change. Furthermore, while there are some incentives to change rules at the brand level, overall it is not sufficient.

In Ms Veem's multi-stakeholders focus, emphasis could be given to building dialogue at the enterprise level, which is essential to facilitate industry-wide buy-in. MSIs have an important presence at the industry level in Asia, therefore they will be key to driving change.