

Analysis of argumentative gaps in the controversy over fashion sustainability

In the current urge for sustainable policies, public institutions such as the European Union or NGOs have denounced the lack of sustainability in the fashion industry. Sustainability is then defined both in terms of environmental impact of materials, products and processes, and in terms of violations of human rights in the supply chain.

Critics argue, however, that the arguments for fashion sustainability are not widely accepted, as some unsustainable practices continue “undisturbed” in the fashion industry. In front of such a situation of potential impasse, it is important to ask the question why these appeals for sustainability are not accepted and/or not acted upon.

This paper sets out to make a contribution to this research question, by investigating discourses on fashion sustainability by different involved stakeholders (public institutions, NGOs, companies, private citizens) on different platforms (websites, media, social media). We will identify the main *gaps* in discourses of these different stakeholders, looking in particular at (a) misalignments as to the definition of discussion issues, in particular how the concept of sustainability is defined and what is seen as problematic; (b) conflicting frames concerning agentivity and responsibility for actions that could ensure such sustainability. The goal of this empirical study is to make sense of where the main problems in the controversy on fashion sustainability are to be located, ultimately in order to contribute to suggesting how to redefine the public discussion on this topic in view of avoiding impasse.