

The state, fashion companies, and International Non- Governmental Organization (INGO) relations: Encountering the problem of hazardous waste

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The state, fashion companies, and International Non-Governmental Organization (INGO) relations: Encountering the problem of hazardous waste

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Abstract. This research aims to expose the relationship between the state, fashion companies, and international non-governmental organization (INGO) in dealing with hazardous waste problem. To achieve this objective, this research exemplifies Greenpeace as leading INGO, and its relationships with Chinese government, fashion companies/brands, and global community in encountering the problem of hazardous waste polluting water environment in China, caused by massive textile industrial activities. The results expose that to deal with the problem, Chinese government has not performed enough to solve hazardous waste problem, hampered by its goal prioritizing economic development rather than water-environmental security. Meanwhile, as INGO, Greenpeace has instigated Detox campaign on fashion in 2011 as its strategy to change Chinese government, fashion companies, and global community perceptions, policies, and behaviours to be the proponent of hazardous waste reduction and elimination. In the process of implementing these strategies, Greenpeace found major obstacle to do so toward Chinese government due to its authoritarian nature of political system. Despite such impediment, it continues its advocacy upon the problem by shifting its focus to press and influence fashion companies and global community for hazardous waste reduction and elimination in China. Responding to such Greenpeace campaign, many fashion companies/brands and global community greatly welcome, participate, and take action to achieve the goals set in the campaign. Their positive response has direct impacts to drive change upon corporate policies and behaviour of textile suppliers in China in order to consecutively use and dispose more environmentally friendly materials and waste. It is expected that the continuation of fashion companies and global community's positive response will improve water condition in China.

1. Introduction

Water pollution is one of the most pressing issues faced by the world today. This is particularly caused by rapid increase in industrialization producing hazardous waste, thus posing severe harms to the water environment and the people using it. In this respect, China is one of the upmost countries immensely impacted by water pollution due to a rapid and massive industrialization activities. Major industry contributing on it is textile industry [1]. Its industrial process produces waste water containing a large number and types of hazardous chemicals, that are used by fashion for dyeing, finishing, & other processes, which eventually thrown into waterways. These include acetic acid, hydrochloric



acid, hydrogen peroxide, sulfuric acid, sulfur dyes and more, which are difficult to decompose and can threaten human health and the environment [2]. By far, waste water in China, accounts for more than 2.5 billion tons of waste water every year, heavily polluting 70% of natural water sources in China, including lakes, rivers and water storage. To date, half of the water in China is not safe for human use [3, 4]. All these conditions, for sure, are very detrimental to human's health who use the water for daily needs.

By far, Chinese government still has no prohibition on the use of hazardous chemicals contributing on water pollution. It just has a Catalog of Hazardous Chemicals issued in 2002 and has issued Priority Hazardous Chemicals for Environmental Management in 2014, which are still experimental [5]. Still, most of the hazardous chemicals reported by Greenpeace research are not mentioned in the two lists above and indicates that their use has not been stopped. Furthermore, the Chinese government endeavor to design a Water Pollution Prevention and Control Plan in 2015, aiming to enforce stricter standards, improve water monitoring efforts, strengthen environmental law enforcement, punish polluters and especially target highly polluting industries, has not shown significant results to stop the use of hazardous chemicals in the industrial process [6].

Recognizing the problems of hazardous waste polluting water in China and inadequate response from Chinese government to address it, the involvement of INGO and fashion companies/brands are considered crucial to tackle the problem. One of the INGO that highly concerns with and leading in hazardous waste elimination in China is Greenpeace. Addressing such problem, Greenpeace, in 2011, released a detox campaign known as the Detox Campaign on Fashion, a campaign advocating the reduction and elimination of hazardous chemical waste disposed by textile factories into Chinese waters. This campaign targets the government, fashion companies and global community. To this regard, it basically wants to change government policies, abolish the use and disposal of hazardous chemicals in the textile industrial activities, and wants to build global public awareness to make water pollution produced by hazardous industrial waste in China as a collective problem [4, 7]. Having such endeavor, this research then sets the interrelationship of Greenpeace's Detox Campaign on Fashion with Chinese government as well as fashion companies/brands in encountering hazardous waste problem in China as the epicenter of analysis. Therefore, this research focuses on answering two questions, covering (1) what are Chinese government responses in coping with hazardous waste problem in China, and (2) what are the responses of INGO, particularly Greenpeace, in realizing hazardous waste reduction and elimination in China.

2. Methods

2.1. Type of research

The type of research used in this research is descriptive qualitative. This method explains the interrelationship of Greenpeace's Detox Campaign on Fashion with Chinese government and fashion companies/brands in reducing and eliminating hazardous waste in China.

2.2. Data collection technique

The data collection technique used by the authors to acquire the necessary data for this research is literature review. The method of collecting data is undertaken through the examination of various literatures related to the problems studied, covering from books, journals, documents, papers, reports, magazines, newspapers, and articles related to research problems.

2.3. Data analysis technique

The data analysis technique used the by authors is qualitative analysis techniques to analyse the data obtained during the research process. In the qualitative analysis techniques, problem is described and explained based on the data and relevant facts related with the main phenomena that are examined in research, research participants, and research locations, and further describe those empirical facts accompanied by supporting arguments. Then the results of the description and explanation are

followed with analysis to draw analytic conclusions. In addition, the quantitative data gathered will be used to strengthen the qualitative analysis in the research.

2.4. Writing methodology

The writing method used by the authors is a deductive writing method, by describing the problem in general first, then narrowing its scope of discussion specifically, and drawing specific conclusions in analysing the data afterwards.

3. Results and discussion

3.1. Chinese government responses in dealing with hazardous waste problem in China

Facing water pollution problem, caused by hazardous waste resulting from textile industrial activities, Chinese government has extended efforts to encounter the problem by issuing Catalog of Hazardous Chemicals in 2002 and has issued Priority Hazardous Chemicals for Environmental Management in 2014 to raise awareness of fashion companies and its textile suppliers to reduce the disposal of hazardous waste in their fashion production. In addition, Chinese government also invests its GDP every year to deal with it. However, these endeavors have not been enough to resolve it following declining commitment of Chinese government toward the problem. According to an annual report by the National Bureau of Statistics of China, investment in handling environmental, including water, pollution from China's GDP in 2012 to 2016 has declined. In 2012, the percentage of inventory of GDP reached 1.53%, 1.52% in 2013, 1.49% in 2014, 1.28% in 2015, and only 1.24% in 2016 [8]. According to Wang Canfa, the chairman of Environmental and Natural Resources Law Research Institute, the Chinese government's investment in dealing with water-environmental pollution is not comparable to China's economic development. He also mentioned that the government should allocate at least 2.5% or 3% of GDP for better resolution towards such problem [9]. From this fact, it is clear that the reduction and elimination of hazardous waste should be reckoned seriously by Chinese government, facing the fact that the problem of economic losses caused by water pollution reach around 240 billion yuan per year, but the amount of investment provided for handling water pollution only reaches 15 billion yuan and decreases annually [5].

Besides the aforementioned efforts, Chinese government, in April 2015, also designed a Water Pollution Prevention and Control Plan, orienting to apply tighter standards, improve water monitoring activities, strengthen environmental law enforcement, target and punish polluters and especially highly polluting industries. Specific performance indicators are also established, with definite goals and schedules. For example, this plan states that by 2020, 70% of water in large watersheds and 93% of drinking water sources in large cities must meet a safety standard for use. However, government efforts to control Chinese waters from waste still face obstacles. Fact shows that there were more than 85% of surface water in Shanghai considered unsafe to drink, while in Tianjin - a port town housing 15 million people - that number reached 95%. During that period, almost half of the mainland Chinese province - 14 of 31 - failed to meet their water quality targets even though improvements had been made in 2011 and 2012. The problem is that there are many cases of provinces in China that fail to comply with regulations. After analyzing 145 water quality data sets from 31 provinces, it was found that almost half of the country lost its target in tackling hazardous waste and water pollution in 2011-2015 period. Overall, despite its efforts, Chinese government is still seemingly half-hearted to find solution toward these problems [10, 11].

3.2. The INGO "Greenpeace" responses in encountering hazardous waste problem in China

Explained earlier that Chinese government cannot fully realize success to tackle hazardous waste problem, the involvement of INGO, concerning with it, is thus inevitable. As a leading INGO engaging with the problem, Greenpeace undertakes the role of mobilizing global movement to pressure policy change upon the related stakeholders. The fundamental strategy taken by Greenpeace then is about the instigation of Detox Campaign on Fashion in 2011. Mentioned earlier in introduction,

it has crafted strategies that target changes in policies, behavior, and awareness of Chinese government, fashion companies, and global community toward the problem of hazardous waste in China [1, 7]. To further elaborate, this research will firstly explain how Greenpeace through Detox Campaign on Fashion deals with Chinese government, and afterwards explain how it deals with fashion companies and global community in reducing and eliminating hazardous waste in China.

3.2.1. The INGO "Greenpeace" Vs. Chinese government relations: Encountering hazardous waste problem in China. In encountering hazardous waste problems, Greenpeace has actively lobbied and pressured Chinese government to adopt a commitment to eliminate all hazardous chemicals used in the textile industry in China, by extending policy and regulation recommendations on chemical management demanding (1) short or medium term targets that prohibit the production and use of hazardous chemicals, (2) a dynamic list of hazardous materials that require immediate action, so that hazardous chemicals are replaced progressively with safer alternatives, and (3) list of releases, emissions, and losses of hazardous substances that are publicly accessible, such as the Pollutant Release and Transfer Register. Nevertheless, despite these efforts, Greenpeace has not yet reached its goals towards Chinese government. Its demands to Chinese government to eliminate the use of hazardous chemicals and to use alternative environmentally friendly materials in its textile industries have not been fully realized. Apart from due to Chinese government prioritizes economic development rather than protects its environment, its political system influence exposes difficulties to Greenpeace to reach its demands [12].

The authoritarian nature of China's political system is a major obstacle for independent INGOs where the government tends to replace them with government organizations whose activities are supervised by the state. In China, there is a regulation in which INGOs conducting activities in it are obliged to register with and/or sponsored by the government and other departments or organs which are still under the auspices of the government, in order to oversee their registration, control their activities, and limit their development [5]. The Chinese government basically fears that the increasing influence of social groups can catalyze political instability in the society. Greenpeace per se had tried to find government sponsors for two years so that they can be legally registered. Nevertheless, it received opposition from local environmental protection authorities [12]. Such difficulties then caused it to eventually register as a corporation (environmental consulting company), so that it can continue its environmental advocacies. Nonetheless, such status requires them to pay higher taxes and limits their capacity to build public trust, social acceptance, fundraising and personnel recruitment, policy advocacy and campaigns [13]. Besides that, it must also communicate regularly to the Chinese government, by providing transparency upon its environmental advocacies, aiming to build trust and conformity, so that they can be sustained. These dynamics pose a huge hardship for Greenpeace to achieve its Detox campaign objectives to change government policies pertaining the use of hazardous chemical in its industry that contributes to the hazardous waste and water pollution in China [4].

3.2.2. The INGO "Greenpeace" Vs. Fashion companies/brands: Encountering hazardous waste problem in China. Encountering the aforementioned hardships to deal with Chinese government over the issues of hazardous waste, Greenpeace has concurrently maneuvered to extend its Detox campaign towards fashion companies and global community. Fashion companies are seen as having a strategic role since they have intense relationships and influences towards textile industries in China. To this regard, Greenpeace's strategy is to persuade and negotiate with fashion companies/brands to be more environmentally friendly in their whole production process, including in getting material supplied from textile industries in China. In its strategy, Greenpeace asks their commitment to participate in its Detox campaigns. It also collects written documents containing the willingness of businesses to eliminate hazardous chemicals from their production. The written commitment is then widely publicized to the public, making it as evidence of policy making related to water pollution advocacy in China [4].

The formation of the Zero Discharge of Hazardous Chemicals (ZDHC) group in 2011 was a form of collective fashion industry response to the Detox Greenpeace campaign [7]. Through a negotiation process between fashion companies and Greenpeace, it was finally agreed that members of the ZDHC group would ban the use of 11 hazardous chemicals known as Manufacturing Restricted Substances (MRSLS) in their industrial activities [14, 15]. Eleven chemicals listed in MRSLS are: Alkylphenols (APEOs), Phthalates, Brominated and chlorinated flame retardants (BFRs, CFRs), Azo dyes, Organotin compounds, per- and poly-fluorinated chemicals (PFCs), Chlorobenzenes, Chlorinated solvents, Chlorophenols, Short chlorinated paraffins, and heavy metals such as cadmium, lead, mercury and chromium [7]. At these junctures, the suppliers to the fashion companies committing to the Detox campaign will stop to use hazardous chemicals in accordance with Greenpeace demands. This of course will minimize the hazardous chemical waste produced by the textile industry which can pollute and damage waters in China. The initial progress of detox campaign towards fashion companies/brands can be seen from 2012-2013, where Greenpeace successfully collected their commitment to not to use hazardous chemicals and support for water pollution advocacy. These brands included Marks and Spencer, Zara, Esprit, Mango, Levi's, Uniqlo, Benetton, Victoria's Secret, G-Star, Coop and Migros, and Canepa [4].

In addition, Greenpeace's move to engage the global communities in this campaign also has a good influence. This is crucial since it also has relationships with fashion companies that take raw materials from textile suppliers in China. They are nothing but consumers of the products produced by these fashion brands. Accordingly, Greenpeace brings local Chinese issues of hazardous waste and water pollution and makes them as global issues, which need involvement from the global community. In this way, it also invites the public to continue to disseminate awareness toward these problems through the Detox campaign with the hashtag of #PeoplePower [4]. Public can also send petitions to the fashion brands in the Detox campaign. One example of the petition that was sent was the petition to the CEOs of Nike and Adidas. They then responded the petition well and as a result, the two fashion brands have participated in the campaign. Through it, Greenpeace has also disseminated in various medias about how dirty the waste produced by textile-clothing companies, and made people aware of their ability to choose clothes that are more environmentally friendly (clothing produced without using dangerous chemicals listed by Greenpeace) [1].

The Greenpeace method focusing on fashion companies is certainly a good strategy in dealing with hazardous waste dumped in Chinese waters. It has extended a parallel and simultaneous engagement with stakeholders, manifested through its influence on the global community which concurrently moves them to demand fashion companies to take part in the detox commitments. Through the campaign, it also directly presses fashion companies to stop using dangerous chemicals in their clothing production. A shift in corporate policies and behaviors of fashion companies for sure will then have a good influence to the textile suppliers in China to commit to detox campaign agenda as well, since they will just produce waste that is more environmentally friendly. Such pressures to fashion companies indirectly affect the reduction of chemical waste volume dumped in Chinese waters. This is, certainly, a good achievement, where Greenpeace as INGO has succeeded in spreading awareness to the textile companies, as suppliers of well-known fashion brands, that the problem of water pollution due to hazardous waste is a shared responsibility [1, 4, 7].

4. Conclusion

As a conclusion, the INGO such Greenpeace, has shown its endeavors through Detox Campaign on Fashion program to encounter the problem of hazardous waste in China. In it, multiple, purposive, and simultaneous engagement with related stakeholders has been undergone, aiming to press government to change its governmental policies and fashion companies and their suppliers to change their corporate-industrial policies and behaviors in order to stop the use of dangerous chemicals in the clothing production, as it produces hazardous waste polluting water in China. It also involves global community as a counterpart demanding change over their policies and behaviors.

Realizing the inadequate Chinese government resolution towards hazardous waste problem, and concurrently confronting difficulties in the campaign process to change its policies, they did not break the spirit of Greenpeace to resolve the problem. These have even become its stepping stones to enhance its strategies to overcome hazardous waste problems. The form of strategy enhancement then is by fostering focus to simultaneously and concurrently change the corporate policies and behavior of fashion brands and their suppliers and change the perceptions and attitudes of global community towards fashion industries. Specifically, the steps taken are (1) it firstly directly demands fashion companies to take part and commit in the Detox campaign on fashion, then (2) it raises the awareness of global community to demand fashion companies to do so. The further impact over these courses of actions is that the textile industries also change their industrial behavior to produce and dispose more environmentally friendly waste, thus affecting the reduction of hazardous waste volume dumped in China's water environment. With all these courses of actions, they are expected to bring pressure and influence to Chinese government policies in order to be more proactive in resolving hazardous waste problem, since Greenpeace itself cannot individually and directly confront in the narrow political space of Chinese government.

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