

SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY WITH BUSINESS THROUGH CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT: A MISSED OPPORTUNITY

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Role of business organization has been challenged owing to its adverse social impact and Civil Society (CS) has been considered as possible contender to bring business outcomes through participatory means towards social acceptance enabling social sustainability. However, CS does not demonstrate an active interest to carry out its role, that raises a question 'How does the civil society's engagement with business take place'. Theoretical lens the study primarily employs, the Deliberative Democracy Theory (DDT) by Habermas (1996), underscores role of CS to identify social issues, takes into deliberation, reaching moral agreement and social order. However, DDT has not been able to explain the failure of CS to engage in finding solutions despite having social issues by business. Exploring in the condition study employed qualitative research design with Multiple Embedded Case Study method, supported by experiences in Sri Lanka. Data mainly collected through in-depth interviews, documents were analysed through Thematic Analysis method. It was found CS comprehends business conduct through a transactional relationship in private sphere and translate into a social issue when attached with sentiments and emotions prompting engagement in public sphere. Business in general sees society as a transactional partner undermining human esteem, fails in enabling social sustainability through democratic means of engagement. Study makes theoretical contribution towards DDT explaining why CS does not engage with business. Management theories are shaped by explaining the behaviour patterns of Sri Lankan CS and business organizations, towards each other and ensuing implications towards mutual progress.

Keywords: *Business; Civil society; Engagement; Social sustainability*
