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Counter-narratives Towards Sustainability in Fashion. Scoping an Academic Discourse on Fashion Activism through a Case Study on the Centre for Sustainable Fashion

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Abstract: To counter the mainstream fashion system, which is proving unsustainable in terms of autonomous livelihoods, cultural heritage, social equality, and environmental stewardship, some designers are playing an activist role, challenging the *status quo* and activating positive change. With this in mind, we have embarked on an on-going research project aimed at exploring ways in which design activism can create counter-narratives towards sustainability in fashion. This paper explores these ideas through a case study focused on the Centre for Sustainable Fashion (CSF). Through semi-structured interviews and a co-creation workshop, we mapped out examples of work undertaken by CSF members, and elicited their contribution to building a transformed fashion system. Hence, in this paper we articulate the diversity of roles, values, skills, and methods that fashion activists can adopt, as well as some of the challenges and opportunities for designers and researchers in transforming the fashion system towards sustainability.

Keywords: Design activism, Fashion design, Sustainability, Social innovation

1. Introduction

The mainstream fashion industry is currently dominated by over-production of fast-changing, low-quality and cheap garments (Fletcher and Grose, 2012), which are consumed and disposed of at high pace due to planned obsolescence (Burns, 2010). As a reaction to the paradigm of mass production and economic growth, which has not led to socio-economic equity, Schumacher (1975) proposed the optimistic vision of 'economics as if people mattered', grounded in the concept of 'small is beautiful', outlining the benefits of flows of people, resources, and money retained in circulation in a local economy. The global economic crisis in 2008 revived the discourse on transitional exchange economies (Hirscher et al., 2019), alternative to traditional or neo-liberal global economies, and putting people at the centre of new modes of exchange of value. Within this context, design activism, social innovation and design for circularity are being explored as cross-referencing approaches towards sustainability in social, cultural, economic and environmental terms. For instance, the circularity model (RSA, 2013) is sparking innovation in extending value in resources through design for longevity, service, re-use in manufacture, and material recovery. Although an increasing number

of multinational fashion companies are exploring ways to adopt circularity as business practices based on sophisticated management models and technological innovations, these technical fixes within the existing unsustainable fashion system do not radically address underlying socio-economic issues supporting an unsustainable *status quo* (Toth-Fejel & Snare, 2018). The Pulse Report published by the Global Fashion Agenda and the Boston Consulting Group (2017) proposes efficiency-based prescriptions that perpetuate the business-as-usual without proposing a paradigm shift through a new set of values and actions which could redistribute power and benefits (Fletcher, 2017). Instead, if we are to live within biophysical limits and to reduce the wealth-poverty gap, there is a need to deeply change our own behavior and enable greater equity in our communities and societies and to re-align ourselves in a more balanced interaction with nature, the life system in which we are a part. This includes actions that extend the value of resources.

1.1. Fashion Activism as an Approach Towards Sustainability

To create counter-narratives to the dominant, unsustainable fashion system, designers are becoming 'agents of appropriate change' or 'catalysts for systematic transformation' (Banerjee, 2008). This entails going beyond the well-recognised role of the designer as a 'facilitator' (supporting on-going initiatives) towards that of an 'activist' (making things happen) (Meroni & Sangiorgi, 2011). Design activism is not a new approach for designers but is gaining momentum within the contemporary design discourse as a crucial contributor towards social innovation and sustainability. Design activism has been defined as "design thinking, imagination and practice applied knowingly or unknowingly to create a counter-narrative aimed at generating and balancing positive social, institutional, environmental and/or economic change" (Fuad-Luke, 2009, p. 27).

The scope of design activism relates to change across diverse scales, from personal practice to wider infrastructural change, as illustrated by a number of scholars. Thorpe (2008) uses sociology as a conceptual framework for activism as citizen agency. Fuad-Luke (2009) highlights the disruption of existing paradigms in relation to the Five Capitals Framework of natural, human, social, manufactured, and financial capitals. DiSalvo (2010) focuses on a more overtly political side of activism, grounded in contest and dissent. Julier (2011) explores design activism as a means to shape a new design culture through a behavioural or attitudinal transformative process. Markussen (2011) proposes the disruptive aesthetic of design activism, defined as a 'designerly way of intervening into people's lives' in order to create 'spaces of contest', which challenge existing configurations and conditions of society. Manzini (2014) describes the design activists' potential to launch and catalyse social innovations. Design activism has also been framed as community-focused action of experimentation to address social, political and environmental issues, moving away from the traditional, vocational role of designers as providers of a professional service to clients (Cassim & M'Rithaa, 2015). Moreover, 'slow activism' (Pink, 2015) has been tied up with co-design grounded in community values (Turnstall, 2018) to enable resilient futures. Thus, through the lens of activism, the role of the designer, within and beyond professional practice, and the act of designing can be described as relational interactions based on identified intentions relating to values of equity.

Bringing intentions into actions and using professional tools to enable people to make things happen are recognised as two crucial activities for design activists (Fry, 2011). Depending on the context, they can consider a range of approaches to turn acts of resistance in response to concerns about fashion to create agency and activate social innovations. In the process of change, the designer becomes an 'agent of alternatives' (Fuad-Luke et al., 2015), not inventing new solutions, but re-designing our realities in open, participatory and imaginative ways. Fashion activism expands the focus of design from problem-solving to problem re-framing and 'possibilities creation' (Williams,

2018), offering new ways of looking at complex problems, "to generate answers that change the questions themselves" (Manzini, 2015, p. 14). Such a 'generative' approach aims at bringing about positive and compelling disruptions of the *status quo* (Thorpe, 2014) that are diverse in approach but connected in purpose towards sustainability. Furthermore, Fletcher (2018) proposes shifting the focus of design for sustainability from envisioning future scenarios towards re-acquiring a sense of being here and now. Building on Camus's (1956) suggestion that rebellion starts with a negative action whilst being supported by an affirmative one, the activist can adopt a two-way approach: rejecting dysfunctional parts of the system and rebalancing it by exalting those that enable a wider thriving. Being an activist also implies a mindset shift from 'having' to 'being', as advocated by Fromm (1976), who argued for an activity-centred orientation instead of a possession-centred life. This disrupts the blind faith in technological progress that the current economic and environmental crises have proven wrong and may lead us to nurture values of solidarity and altruism and to live more meaningful lives.

In line with Tan's (2012) argument that the literature is strong at theoretically outlining how designers are increasingly playing an activist role, we acknowledge a shortage of evidence of fashion activist practice that is needed to better understand this emerging role, in terms of values, skills, methods, outcomes, as well as challenges and opportunities for social innovation and sustainability. Building on Cross's (2006) emphasis on the 'designerly ways of knowing', it is possible to draw a parallel between the recent emergence of 'fashion thinking' (Pietersen et al., 2016) and that of fashion activism as approaches that are opening up new ways of understanding social and cultural practices and related material objects. We therefore argue for the need to further investigate the 'designerly' ways of knowing, thinking and acting of fashion activists aimed at challenging the socio-economic *status quo* and activating change in the fashion system.

2. Methodology

Through a literature review, we explored existing theories and approaches to design activism and fashion design for sustainability and identified gaps in knowledge relating to roles, values, skills, and design methods that fashion activists can adopt. The scoping study presented in this paper focuses on fashion activism projects developed at the Centre for Sustainable Fashion (CSF), a University of the Arts London (UAL) research centre based at London College of Fashion (LCF). For the purpose of this case study, we explored a contemporary real-life phenomenon in its actual setting through gathering socially and culturally rich data (Yin, 2004). The Centre is a relevant case to investigate issues around fashion activism due to its ten years of experience in exploring ways towards 'building a transformed fashion system' (Fitzpatrick & Williams, 2018). As the unit of analysis, we chose examples of past and current fashion activism practices undertaken by CSF members working in research, education and knowledge exchange with industry. In this regard, we acknowledge that the projects reviewed in this study, while contributing to engaging with and forming new 'social circles', do not explicitly aim at 'closing the loop' of resources, but they evidence fashion activist practice that is rather positioned within the field of design for social innovation.

We collected qualitative data through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews (Kvale, 1996) with CSF team members, selected for their experience in relation to design activism within the field of sustainable fashion (Table 1). The interviewees were asked to what extent they define themselves as fashion activists, what roles, skills and methods they enact in their practice, what challenges they have encountered and what opportunities for change they have experienced in themselves and within the fashion system.

Table 1. Expertise of the interviewees.

Interviewees	Expertise
1	Professor of Fashion Sustainability, Design and Fashion, working as design activist and author of pioneering publications on fashion and sustainability, with a focus on localism.
2	Professor of Art in the Environment, with expertise in socially engaged art practice.
3	Education for Sustainability Projects Manager, co-founder of CSF and leading on embedding sustainability in educational programmes across LCF as a key contributor to change.
4	Professor of Fashion and Science, social designer pioneer in developing cross art and science collaborations, building sustainable livelihoods in a refugee camp.
5	Professor of Fashion Design for Sustainability, founder and director of CSF, researcher in fashion design for sustainability through participatory practices.

The data collected was thematically analysed adopting a manual approach and following the process described by Miles and Huberman (1994) encompassing data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. In order to review and enrich the initial findings from the interviews, a co-creation workshop titled 'What's Going on, in Fashion Activism?' was conducted with five members of CSF (Table 2).

Table 2. Participants at the co-creation workshop.

Workshop Participants	Expertise
1	Lecturer in Fashion and Sustainability, enabling a process of embedding sustainability within educational programmes.
2	Projects Co-ordinator, with a background in politics, history and culture of fashion, playing an activist role.
3	Director's Administrator, fashion designer and animal welfare activist.
4	Education for Sustainability Administrator and Projects Co-ordinator, with experience as designer, researcher and lecturer in fashion design for sustainability.
5	Communications Administrator, committed to giving CSF members a voice for change.

The workshop facilitated by the first author of this paper, framing the scope of the study, and sharing initial findings from the analysis of the interviews, in order to trigger reflection and discussion amongst the workshop participants. They were asked to build on their own experiences or knowledge in relation to fashion activism through a series of hands-on, participatory activities aimed at mapping out who fashion activists are or might be, how fashion activism is/might be practised, and when fashion activism might or might not be effective. The co-creation workshop was facilitated as an act of collective creativity (Sanders & Stappers, 2008; Stickdorn & Schneider, 2011), supported by tools designed to address the objectives of this study (Figure 1).
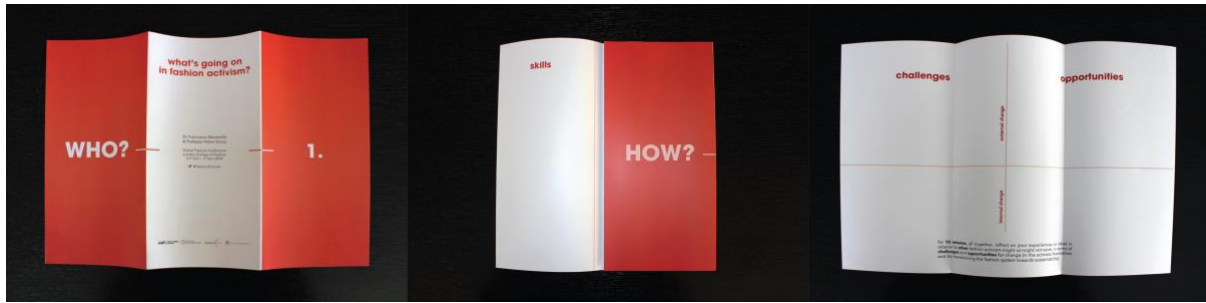
Figure 1.   Tools used to aid the co-creation workshop.

The data was captured in the form of notes posted onto given templates, as well as photos and audio recordings, which were then transcribed and thematically analysed using *a priori* codes deduced from the interview questions and workshop templates (Table 3). Across the range of voices heard throughout the scoping study, we were able to present a multifaceted picture of CSF and draw conclusions into CSF's experience in activating counter-narratives towards sustainability in fashion, beyond the dominant system of over-production and over-consumption.

Table 3. Coding system used for thematically analysing the data collected.

Theme	Description
Roles	Current job or potential role of the study participants in relation to fashion activism.
Values	Principles driving participant's activist interventions.
Skills	Participants' abilities or expertise enacted in their activist practice.
Methods	Tools and approaches adopted by participants in their activist practice.
Outcomes	Ways in which activist interventions manifest.
Challenges	Factors hindering the activation of processes of positive change.
Opportunities	Factors enabling change in the activists themselves or in the fashion system.

3. Results

This study allowed mapping of the diversity of roles, values, skills and methods that CSF members enact in their fashion activist practices, discussion of the outcomes of their interventions and articulation of some of the challenges faced and opportunities created to shape the emerging field of fashion activism.

3.1. The Activist Role of the Fashion Designer

Building on Fuad-Luke's (2009) definition of design activism (Section 1.1), we outlined the activist role of the fashion designer in creating counter-narratives to the – currently unbalanced – fashion system. This means fostering thinking and acting beyond the dominant neo-liberal context in which many designers work, activating an on-going process of change along a spectrum of possibilities. In this regard, one study participant stressed that:

> Overt political activism plays a vital role for people who are outside of the system, to question and challenge it, but we need to recognise, and value also stealth moves aimed at changing the system from within. Both approaches contribute to fashion design for sustainability.

Some of the study participants did not define themselves as activists, but they all acknowledged that their work, in line with CSF's ethos and intention, is to challenge the *status quo*; furthermore, they expressed an ambition to play a more activist role. In order to outline the spectrum of possibilities around design activism, we analysed several projects from CSF (Figure 2). Findings showed that in some cases (e.g. the 'Antarctica' project, which activates a community of people with shared values towards issues of mass migration due to climate disasters) designers set their own briefs in response to contextual issues. In other projects (e.g. 'I Stood Up' which uses fashion design as a means to build 'communities-in-place'), the designer plays the role of a 'host', creating the conditions for co-creation processes to take place. In another case – i.e. 'Dress for Our Time' aimed at empowering refugees to earn a living and become independent from non-governmental organisations (NGOs) – displaced communities without access to a means for livelihoods and financial security become activist by necessity as their lives call for continuous change. The young girls involved in another iteration of this project challenge cultural norms of what Syrian women have historically been allowed to engage in. They also participate in team-based learning, increasing their personal sense of agency, meaning and connection, and overcoming locally widespread risks relating to their schooling.

Figure 2. (From left to right): 'Antarctica' project by Prof Lucy Orta; 'I Stood Up' project by Prof. Dilys Williams; 'Dress for Our Time' project by Prof. Helen Storey.

3.2. The Values Underpinning the Fashion Activist's Visions

The values underpinning activist interventions emerged as a critical issue for all the study participants. "To live by our values" (one of CSF's strategic objectives) was acknowledged as a moral commitment to "live sustainably in interdependence with other human beings and within the natural world", as highlighted by one interviewee. In this regard, positive values towards human and social equity were discussed, alongside an anger towards the unjust fashion system. Furthermore, it emerged that the status of being an activist is shaped by both intrinsic values (e.g. lightness, mindfulness, solidarity towards society and the environment), and external issues (in terms of materiality, society, culture, politics) relating to the context of intervention.

3.3. The Skills Making up the Multifaceted Nature of Fashion Activists

For the scope and purpose of this research, we referenced the multifaceted nature of activism identified in the literature review through the diverse roles, skills and methods of the small sample size of our scoping study. This cannot be generalised into a fixed recipe to be replicated across contexts. Instead, our study showed that the mastery of the fashion activist lies in the skill of tailoring his/her approach to specific socio-political contexts using diverse approaches. With this in mind, our study participants evidenced a range of fashion activist practices that can be plotted on a spectrum from more or less overtly radical approaches, according to the scope to implement change, which is highly dependent on the context within which the designer operates.

Through this study, we explored traits relating to fashion activists. Some recurring traits identified include taking pleasure in making things, the ability to make connections across elements within a system, a sense of curiosity, the patience to deal with uncertainty and failure, a capability to delay gratification, an openness to embrace new ideas and experiences, and an extroversion to collaborate with others. The study also highlighted a challenge to traditional notions of 'otherness'; in fact, instead of designing solutions 'for' others, design activists seek to establish interdependent relationships 'with' communities. This involves challenging the designer's 'ego', suspending the designer's professional and tacit knowledge and letting it be 'invisible' whilst listening to people's needs so that the most effective design action can emerge. For instance, one study participant working in the distinctive environment of a refugee camp stated:

> The first person you meet when you work at the heart of the activity for change is you, and it fast becomes apparent that the scale of the unrecognisable will surely change you; this is an advantage, if you can let it. The change within oneself at first is in the understandable urge to bring your skills, your experience, your knowledge into some kind of solution. Empathy powers you towards this, but the environment and the plight of the people require you to dump it all and, instead, to listen to what is said and not said. Over time, often this vast new energy leads to a form of active, but intelligent kindness, a slow process of human agreement that we will create something that's needed, together.

With the idea of disrupting the common focus of designers on immediate symptoms and potential fixes and switching to a deeper understanding of the root causes of problems, the study highlighted the theme of shifting from problem-solving to problem-framing as one of the activist's skills. The activist then employs intuition and a range of methods to identify tensions for change and to create conditions and/or co-design in collaboration with those directly and indirectly affected by the situation.

3.4. The Diverse Methods in the Fashion Activist's Palette

Through this study, in the fashion activist's method palette we found not only traditional design techniques used for making garments, but also less recognised participatory research methods used for mobilising people and bringing intentions into actions (Figure 3). For instance, in the 'I Stood Up' project, professional designers and researchers engage in an immersive approach to observing, walking, noticing, and gathering, using a range of creative techniques such as illustration, photography, audio recording and free writing. This is followed by a process of reflexivity before engaging in participatory design methods, creating the conditions for a series of garment making and wearing to take place over time with diverse participants. In the 'Local Wisdom' project, people were photographed whilst wearing their garments 'crafted' over years of wear, and interviews were conducted to capture narratives of 'usership' and longevity. Cumulatively, the project also challenged the traditional discourse on fashion as constant shopping for new things and encouraged a transformation in our consideration of the socio-material dimension of fashion by showing and validating a widespread possibility of doing things differently.

Figure 3. Installation in Chrisp Street Market as part of the 'I Stood Up' project (left); Prof. Kate Fletcher interviewing a participant in the 'Local Wisdom' project (right).

3.5. The Outcomes of Fashion Activist Interventions

The projects analysed emphasise making, in a diversity of forms as a means for fashion activism to manifest itself (Figure 4). From object making (garments) to social making (relationships, actions and interactions mediated by materials and 3D forms), this involves engaging people in thinking and acting towards sustainability. For example, the 'Processions' project manifests, in banner format, a female-led collaboration between prisoners, researchers and students, connected to champion women's equality in celebration of the Suffragette movement centenary. Through an iteration of the 'I Stood Up' project, first time voters were engaged in discussions together with members of the UK Parliament and peers in the House of Lords. These conversations were enabled through the making of visual representations of concern, made public in the House of Lords.

Since activists engage with the 'social' as a matter of design, the intangible outputs of such projects require a deeper 'looking into' as they are less explicit than the tangible outcomes. Nevertheless, the value of the tangible and intangible must be recognised in tandem. For instance, the 'Dress For Our Time' as an artefact is a dress made of a repurposed refugee tent donated by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees; its intangible value (i.e. a message about the precarious nature of human existence) has been amplified through the diverse forms and locations in which the dress has been exhibited. At a local scale, the 'Fashion Ecologies' project's map of the English town of Macclesfield encourages people to engage with fashion through identifying alternative ways than through the high street, for example pointing out to a repair kit installed in a local laundrette. We can define such outputs as micro-sites of activism, yet the projects in their wholeness contribute to fostering macro-changes in the perception of the fashion system, as articulated by one study participant.

> At the moment, the narrative around the fashion system is a bit like an old wagon wheel, which is not round and doing its job, but is very distorted around purchasing and lots of other stuff. So, the work that effectively I am trying to do is to balance things out and create a more balanced wheel by offering an alternative narrative around other ways in which fashion can exist within a space of lightness, optimism, engagement, satisfaction.

Figure 4. Diverse outcomes of fashion activism. From left to right: banners produced for the 'Processions' project; refugee tent repurposed into a 'Dress for Our Time'; repair kit installed in a local laundrette as part of the 'Fashion Ecologies' project.

3.6. The Numerous Challenges Faced by Fashion Activists

The study highlighted that being an activist also involves designers facing many challenges. It requires self-awareness "to find personal values driving activist interventions, but also pragmatism to negotiate a vision shared with others, and the ability of turning values into actions", as emphasised by one interviewee. Working in challenging circumstances with vulnerable participants requires the ability to build trusting relationships and exposes the design researcher to a range of risks in community and personal terms. These include the challenge of accounting for cultural and gender diversities, dealing with ethical issues of not breaking confidentiality rights from participants. Since activist interventions often take place in resource-scarce contexts and manifest themselves in non-conventional outcomes, technical barriers for making them also emerge, therefore openness to acknowledge and value new standards and different aesthetics is necessary. Another theme that emerged from the study is the timescale of change. As stressed by one study participant, "whilst a first level of change is frequently possible in the short-term, implementing systemic transformations requires extended timescales with change at different levels". The activist needs to be patient and enjoy living a slow process of change, as well as be able to acknowledge issues that are out of his/her control. Even when some results are achieved, most of the time they are small in scale. For these to be scaled out and contribute to disruptive change requires a timeline often beyond that of conventional projects. Keeping the momentum going and sustaining projects over time is a significant challenge faced by design activists, whose interventions require alternative funding dynamics and are at odds with commercial mechanisms. Furthermore, given the ever-changing and often intangible nature of the outcomes of activist interventions, all the study participants acknowledged the difficulty in assessing the impacts of their projects. From this perspective, traditional markers of success need to be challenged, as most recognised metrics do not capture the deeper and systemic transformations triggered by design activists.

3.7. Opportunities Towards Sustainability Opened up by Fashion Activism

The projects analysed in this study show diverse ways in which activism can create counter-narratives towards sustainability in fashion. For instance, the 'Dress for Our Time' uses fashion and fluid concepts of beauty in a reciprocal process of learning and co-designing to better life and feed hope as a vital ingredient in realising sustainability. The 'Fashion Ecologies' project approaches sustainability through the lens of localism, as a powerful way of engaging people with fashion differently, giving them responsibility and power towards the things that affect their lives. The 'Local

Wisdom' project broadens the spectrum of what fashion can be in a post-growth scenario, shifting the dominant system geared around consumerism towards a narrative of 'usership'.

The above-discussed projects also identify mindsets, processes and outcomes that can contribute to scoping an academic discourse on fashion activism and triggering systemic and institutional change. For instance, one study participant highlighted that, through its 5-year plan, CSF is engaged in an on-going process of embedding sustainability within fashion education across LCF. However, it is important to acknowledge that the challenge of being activists whilst supported within a UK-based academic system places designers and researchers in a position of privilege.

> Having an understanding of the system and a constant engagement with it, but also working at the fringes of the mainstream, the Centre has catalysed positive change. However, enabling students to question and challenge the system around them is an area that should be explored further. As educators, we have a role to play in enabling a multiplicity of students – as well as tutors and researchers – to have their voices heard and adopt an activist mindset.

4. Conclusions

Echoing Simon's (1996, p. 67) definition of design as a process of devising "courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones", fashion activism is always concerned with systemic change-making and is therefore never static. Throughout the CSF's on-going journey towards transforming the fashion system, we have witnessed that some of the radical ideas put forward by design activists have been co-opted by organisations and absorbed into mainstream discourses, potentially losing their intention and meaning. Some fashion companies are adopting activist terminology in their brand statements, without ambition towards systemic change. We have also reflected on the challenges to the discourse on fashion activism posed by the commoditisation of the roles and methods of design activists 'hired' for commercial purposes to develop technical fixes to the symptoms of sustainability without the ability to explore the root causes of a problem. Referencing the above-discussed themes and nurturing sustainability thinking through adopting an activist mindset are important considerations for designers. Hence, we argue for the need to embed diverse activist perspectives as part of a critical reflective process in fashion educational programmes across levels, as well as into design practice.

Ways to activate systemic change through interventions at different levels involve making change within elements of the existing system and creating alternative systems that supersede the current one. The tension that exists between processes of change that take place within or outside the system are part of the lived experience of fashion activists. In this regard, this study shows the need for fashion activists to be sensitive to the context of their interventions and craft their approaches according to the different contexts of specific projects, when activating change. This study also contributes to positioning fashion activism on a spectrum of possibilities, from traditional design-driven projects (top-down) to interventions activated by communities (bottom-up), alongside the role of the 'designer as host' working in-between aid organisations and in-need groups to create conditions for change (middle-up-down approach). Critically, alongside enabling change in others, the people and projects presented in this paper shine a light on the importance of changes that take place within the activists themselves and describe fashion activism as a process of transformation at personal, social and political level.

4.1. Limitations and Next Steps

The scoping study presented in this paper contributes to articulating the diversity of roles, values, skills, methods, outcomes, challenges and opportunities for fashion activists. This builds towards a framework, but further research is needed in order to fully develop it. We acknowledge that the results of this scoping study are derived from a small sample size; however, this is in line with the qualitative nature of this research, which does not aim at generalising conclusions into a recipe for activism transferable across contexts, but rather at provoking thinking, informing the practice of others and acting as basis for further research. Further case studies across the international design community are needed to review and enrich these findings, mapping out fashion activism across a wide spectrum of roles and approaches and their evolution over time. We intend to visualise the spectrum of possibilities for fashion activists in order to create a framework, as the research is further progressed. We also acknowledge that the focus of this study, conducted within an academic context, does not reference the hugely important and long-standing activist work undertaken by a range of people and organisations in formalised campaigning, nor the mammoth work of unions and of those acting in an informal capacity, as individuals and collectives. To explore the contribution of these communities to the discourse on fashion activism is beyond the scope of this research; however, we wish to point out that this study and the work here referenced would not be possible without the vital role that these people and organisations play in systemic change-making.

At a time in which the role of academia is under particular scrutiny, this research seeks to amplify and encourage a foregrounding of the social value of design and to highlight the contribution of fashion activism to the field of design for social innovation and sustainability. Findings from this scoping study will inform research at CSF and will specifically inform participatory action research undertaken by the first author of this paper and other members of LCF in partnership with Waltham Forest Council for London Borough of Culture 2019. The "Making for Change: Waltham Forest" project will entail a programme of community engagement, research and educational activities around local making. The aim of this will be to explore ways in which fashion can be used to listen and respond to locally experienced issues (such as deprived youth, skills shortage, fashion manufacturing decline, and unemployment) and to enable change through public and institutional – with CSF as part of a large university – participation. It is anticipated that this work will contribute to the development of a framework that can inform research, education and practice in the emergent field of fashion activism and to further knowledge of fashion design for sustainability. We hope that this paper has triggered the reader, beyond engaging with the work here presented, to reflect on his/her potential to activate counter-narratives towards sustainability in and through fashion and participate in a continuous process of change, which is, indeed, the only constant.

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