

Imagining Possibilities for Fashion Education: A Walking Conversation

Developed by Nina Stevenson and Sarah May

Context

How can fashion education nurture fashion practices that allow for human and planetary flourishing, rather than perpetuating and upholding the exploitative and extractive ways of the prevailing fashion industry?

Can we use walking as a critical practice and qualitative research methodology to explore the connection between bodies, environments and the sensory in a more than human world?

Can we explore the commons as an alternative mindset to extractive and exploitative fashion and education systems? What might a fashion commons for education look like to you?

We would like to hold these questions in mind whilst walking through our local area today.

Suggested materials: phone/camera, pencils, paper, a piece of calico.



Provocations

Education

“The present systems of education are fundamentally flawed and not fit for purpose (...) the dominant global education system was designed to meet the needs of the Industrial Age, the age of mass production, mass consumption and unlimited economic growth, where young people were trained in whatever skills the market required.”

Kumar, S & Howarth, L (2022) Regenerative Learning: Nurturing people and caring for the planet p16, Global resilience publishing

“In the modernist logic of the global west, fashion was constructed as the favourite child of capitalism. Fashion was defined as essentially transient, modern, urban - thus western. Fashion Education has fed a system based upon this narrative. Ever faster. Ever more. One of the fastest growing educational sectors. To contribute to regenerative formation, fashion education has to become unfashionable. It has to disrupt itself, to re-configure itself - to be disruptive.”

Fashioning Education (2022)

Available at <https://design.udk-berlin.de/2021/05/fashioning-education/>

(Accessed on 28.06.24)

“Projects such as Swaraj University in India, Uniterra in Mexico, Red Crow College in Alberta, Canada, the Free Home University and 50 other founding organisations around the world, are conducting important experiments that are composting the hegemonic stance of contemporary higher education. Growing out of social justice and environmental movements, indigenous movements, art movements, and conscious business efforts, these people’s universities seek to disturb the exclusivity of higher education and are reimagining learners as being ‘community ready’ instead of becoming ‘industry ready’.”

Akomolafe, B (2016) Name the Colour, Blind the Eye: Reimagining Education available at <https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/post/name-the-colour-blind-the-eye-reimagining-education>

(Accessed on 28.06.24)



The Commons

“Creativity is never a solo endeavour, it involves the living world, the air we breathe, the earth we tread and our fellow beings.”

Prof Dilys Williams, Director of Centre for Sustainable Fashion

“The commons is;

A social system for the long-term stewardship of resources that preserved shared values and community identity.

A self-organised system by which communities manage resources (both depletable and replenishable) with minimal or no reliance on the Market or State.

The wealth that we inherit or create together and must pass on, undiminished to our children. Our collective wealth includes the gifts of nature, civic infrastructure, cultural works and traditions, and knowledge.

A sector of the economy (and life) that generates value in ways that are often taken for granted- and often jeopardised by the market state.”

Bollier, D (2021) Commoners Catalogue for Changemaking: Tools for the transition ahead, Schumacher Center for a New Economics

<https://www.commonerscatalog.org/>

“Moving towards a society based on Commons sufficiency requires recovering a Commons way of thinking and relinquishing dominance thinking, the dualistic problem-solving approach underpinning non-egalitarian and unsustainable social systems.”

Kenrick, J (2009) “Commons Thinking” in The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy, Green Books (p55)

“Defashion (also) supports the invention of alternative clothing systems. It proposes clothing commons as alternatives for the Fashion system. Commons are strategies of managing resources collectively. If the Fashion system is top-down and designed for the accumulation of monetary wealth for the very few at the expense of the many, commons constitute bottom-up systems of endless diversity, self-organised and maintained by participants (Bollier 2014; Bollier and Helfrich 2019). [...] If the Fashion system reorients other clothing systems for dependence on industry and the accumulation of capital, the commons reverses this process and facilitates the diversity of the clothing pluriverse.”

Niessen, S (2022) Defining Defashion: A manifesto for degrowth International Journal of Fashion Studies, Vol 9, No 2

Walking

“Walking-with can be a significant and important method for working with students in educational contexts if it does not become instrumentalised as an anti-technology and as an uncritical mode of being in place. Walking-with is an ethical and political response-ability that intimately understands that any step towards a different world is always imbricated in a particular conceptualisation of the human and non-human, landscape and Other.”

Springgay, S & Truman, E S (2019) Walking Methodologies in a More-Than-Human-World: Walking Lab. Routledge, London and New York. (pg 128)

“Walking-with is accountable. Walking-with is a form of solidarity, unlearning, and critical engagement with situated knowledges.”

Springgay, S & Truman, E S (2019) Walking Methodologies in a More- Than-Human-World: Walking Lab. Routledge, London and New York (p11)



Activities

Take some time to read and reflect upon one or more of the provocations in this booklet. You may choose to do this individually or with others. Take these thoughts with you as you explore your local area.

Observe and record examples that represent the following terms or ideas: common wealth, reciprocity, sufficiency, nature, community, deep democracy and care.

Choose one, a few, or all of them, it's up to you. Take one hour to walk, talk, play, experiment, listen, touch and feel. Enjoy the process of walking as a critical practice, and as a method to imagine possibilities for the future of fashion education.

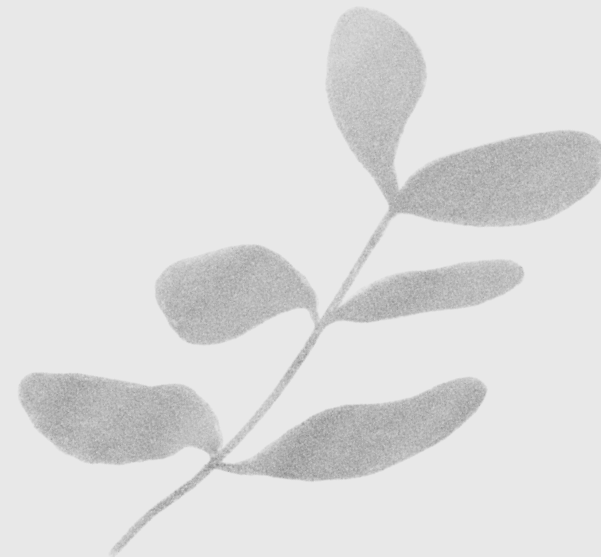
You might want to use your phone, camera or materials suggested on page 2 to gather and record your observations and reflections.

Considerations

Before planning a walking activity, check in with your fellow participants to anticipate accessibility requirements. Adapt your route, location or pace to meet everyone's needs.

Check the weather forecast and make sure participants are dressed accordingly.

Agree with your participants the area that you will cover on your walk and make a plan to regroup. You might want to adapt the tasks to take in local landmarks or features, or seasonal variances.



- Record a sound.
- Observe examples of the commons in action. As you are walking identify shared resources and spaces that anyone can use. Examples could be libraries, repair cafés, places of worship, foodbanks, clothing banks, youth clubs, running groups, playgrounds.
- Locate, sketch, or make a note of signs of nature. Consider rivers, canals, woodlands, community gardens, grass verges, weeds and so on.
- Use your piece of calico to interact with the walking locations. Wrap, tie, dip, scrunch, wipe. You could use it as a small bag to hold your collected natural or manmade finds on the walk. You could wear it, sit on it, scribble on it, stain it.
- Can you find one natural object that can teach you something about fashion education?
- Take your shoes off on the grass. Make a note of how you feel.
- Observe the fashion language of people you encounter during the walk.



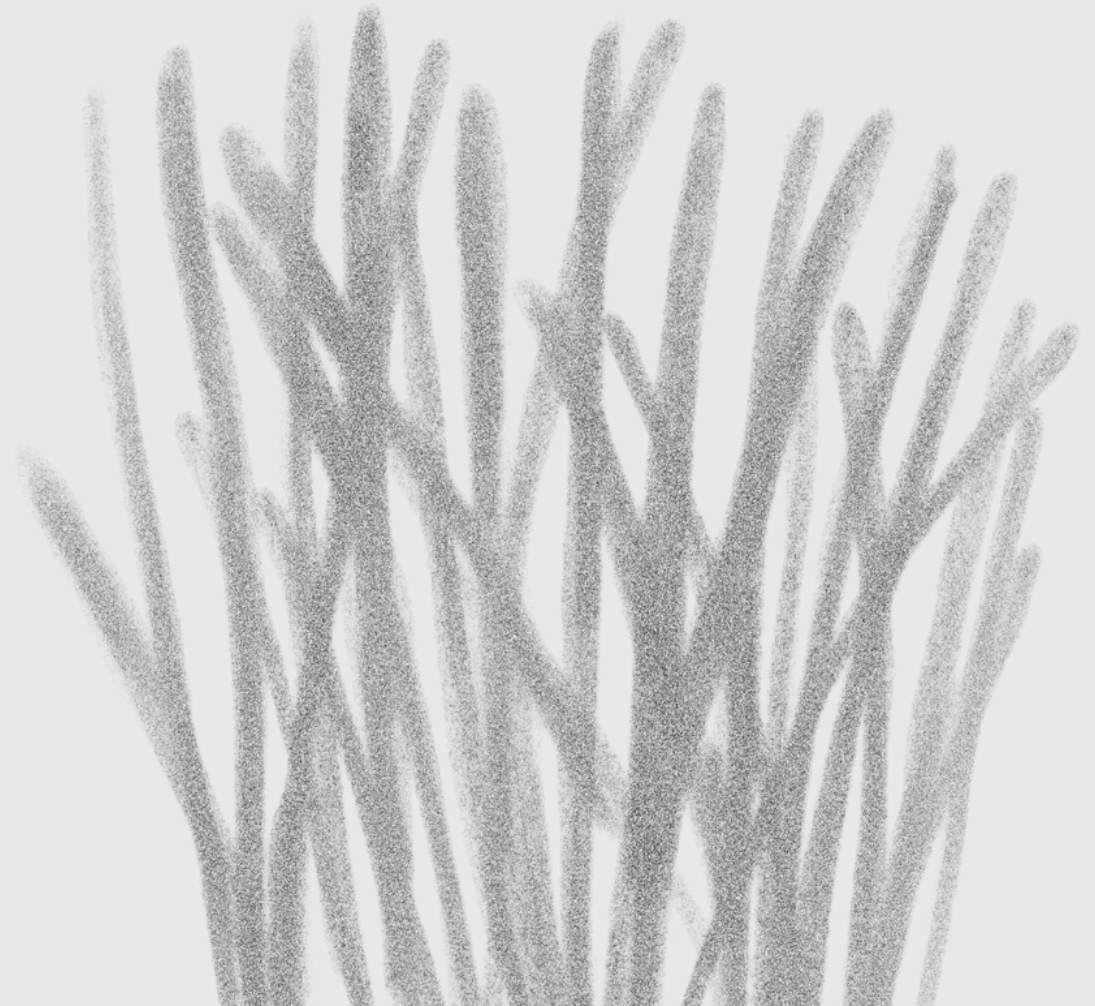
Reflections

At the end of your walking activity, take some time to reflect either on your own or with your fellow participants. Group activities to bring your conversation together could involve:

- Creating a shared collage or table display of the items gathered or recorded.
- Uploading notes and observations to a shared digital space such as Padlet.
- Retracing steps to return gathered items to their original location whilst sharing with another person.

Discussion prompts

- What might a fashion commons for education look like?
- What would you like to learn or unlearn in fashion education?
- What would you like to keep and what would you like to reject about the current fashion education system?
- What are we doing well at?
- What are the barriers to change?



Notes

Sketches

Reading list

Akomolafe, B “These Wilds beyond our fences” (2017) North Atlantic Books, USA.

Akomolafe, B “Name the colour, blind the eye, reimagining education” (2016) Article on <https://www.bayoakomolafe.net/post/name-the-colour-blind-the-eye-reimagining-education>.

Bollier, D “The Commoners Catalog for Changemaking. Tools for the Transitions Ahead” (2021) Published by Schumacher Centre for a New Economics, USA.

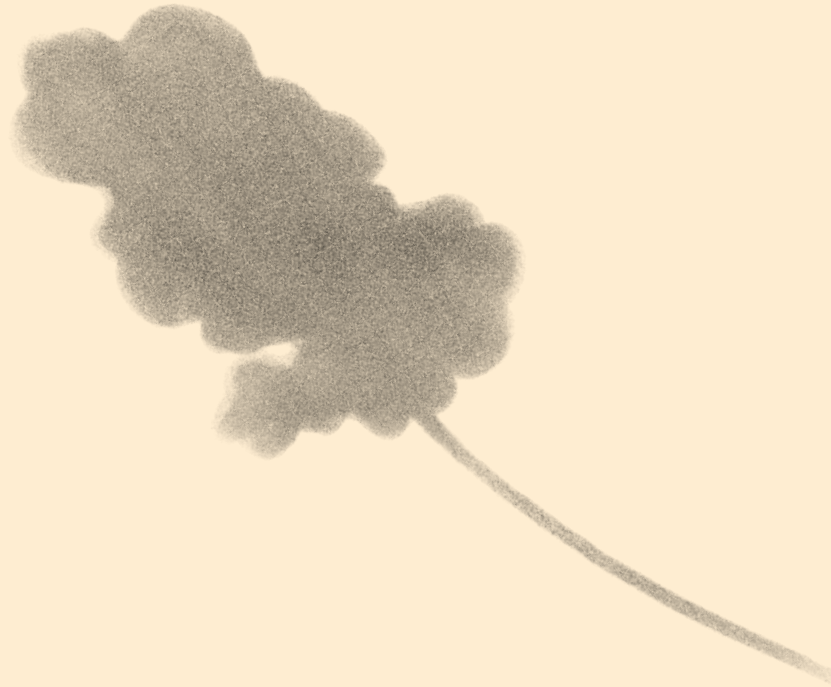
Kumar, S & Howarth, L “Regenerative Learning, Nurturing People and Caring for the Planet” (2022) Global Resilience Publishing.

Niessen, S “Defining Defashion: A manifesto for degrowth”(2022). International Journal of Fashion Studies, Volume 9, Number 2.

Springgay, S & Truman, S,E “Walking Methodologies in a More- Than-Human-World: WalkingLab” (2019) Routledge, London and New York.

Stibbe, A (ed) 2009 “The Handbook of Sustainability Literacy: Skills for a Changing World” Green Books, Totnes 2009 Map.





Workshop developed by Nina Stevenson & Sarah May Design by Venus in Leopard Print.

www.sustainable-fashion.com