

Fashion, the City, and the Spectacle

A complex and dynamic cultural landscape

Some 900 years ago, an extraordinary occurrence is said to have taken place on market day in the English Midlands town of Coventry; a noble lady rode through the town, on horseback, adorned solely by her hair, fashioned to ensure her modesty. The outcome of this spectacle was the rescinding of a repressive tax on the city's citizens, whom Lady Godiva sought to support. Whether this is fact or fable, fashion, as city spectacle has long held cultural and political significance; an emotive force, holding a mirror up to society to reflect on itself, whilst simultaneously shaping it.

My home is London, a megacity and recognized site of fashion creation and public performance, but my intrigue in fashion as a visualization of society dates to my childhood in a small village. My barometer on the world was a provocative, exciting montage that arrived monthly, by post. A bunch of pages, stapled together, in landscape format, entitled iD magazine, it captured images of fashion's shapes, forms and encounters of ideas and times, played out on the streets of the UK's cities. This arresting visual commentary shared people's concerns, allegiances, excitement, and anger. It showed, through what they were wearing, how people perceived the world, their relationship to it and their representation within it. Fashion is a spectacular (literally and metaphorically) means of seeing the world, a bellwether of society, its hopes, cares and fears.

Moving to the 2020s and fashion materially articulates an uncomfortable, and still inconvenient truth that the economic and social systems upon which most of its practices are based are exploitative and extractive. What has changed is the implicit nature of this spectacle, often hidden from wearer and viewer. What would it take to create a Lady Godiva moment to herald fashion as a rescinding of its extractive and exploitative base?

‘Writers, designers and philosophers have long understood the connections to be made between the sense of place, the experience of modernity and the making and wearing of clothing.’ (Beward and Gilbert 2003). Fashion making and city making are both social processes, bound together in conceptual and in mundane ways. It is through the dynamic interplay between the making of meaning (playing out our values and exploring identities) and the making of matter (artifacts of adornment, clothes, jewellery, shoes, scarves etc.) that fashion and settlements contribute to and take from life. Through its impacts and the signals it gives out, as acceptable and aspirational behaviour, fashion demonstrates how we understand ourselves, as a species in a more than human world.

Our ability to respond to anthropocentrism depends on a shift to interdependence as a world view, and aspiration. As a social, economic, and cultural force, fashion involves most world citizens in the selecting, acquiring, wearing, caring for and discarding, or gifting of clothes. This currently involves, at a conservative estimate, 4-8% of greenhouse gases emissions, (WRAP 2022) 60 million workers, 80% of whom are women (Clean Clothes Campaign), 90% of them have no possibility to negotiate

their, often working below minimum national wage levels (IndustriALL 2015). Meanwhile, at the time of writing, the richest man in the world is a fashion CEO, worth nearly \$214 billion (Forbes 2023). The complicity of fashion in climate change and social injustice cannot be considered in a blanket way. Whilst the average Australian emits 503kg of CO₂e per annum, the average Indian citizen emits only 22kg. (Coscieme, Akenji et al. 2022). If we are to keep to the globally agreed commitment of an increase of global temperatures to be contained within 1.5 degrees Celsius, what we need to change depends on where we live and what we earn, based on data that the top 20% of earners in many countries emit 20 times that of the lowest 20% of earners. (Coscieme, Akenji et al. 2022)

A glorious entanglement or an intractable situation?

Social norms of fashion are vividly displayed in cities, where almost 55% of the global population live (United Nations, 2018), urban areas, and more specifically cities, are the home of modern civilization. As people are moving from a predominantly rural-based global residence, to an urban-based global habitat, the speed and volume of urbanization is a shaping dimension of 21st century living, exemplified in the dramatic growth of Seoul, Korea. Across the world, less than 150 years ago, 80% of the population were rural dwellers, by 2050, it is expected that 75-80% of people will be city dwellers. Fashion is closely intertwined to cities and their inhabitants:

London, Paris, New York, Milan and Sao Paulo showcase its artistic and business statements in a context that amplifies fashion and the city's identity and status. The physical elements of cities also influence how people engage in fashion through

emerging social experiences such as in Dhaka, Shanghai, and Mumbai, where fast growing urban locations are the home to manufacturing and retail.

How we live in cities is critical to our ability to live well on this planet (Girardet 1999). 'Cities are our glory and our bane' (Rogers 1998), as with fashion, we adapt them and are adapted by them.

The landmark locations of Grand Central Station in New York, El Badi Palace in Marrakech, and Paradise Island in Dubai beam fashion and cultural messages across the world via digital channels. The critical role of fashion and its spectacle in and outside of cities, offers designers exciting and dauntingly expanded roles in taste and space-making. As alchemists taking the ecological, social, political, material, aesthetic, economic and imaginative elements of fashion, there is a necessity for them to employ a transformation lens to mediate the interplay between citizens, society and the biosphere. Guattari describes this interaction as biosphere, societal and spiritual ecologies (Guattari 2014) encouraging us to question the mechanistic, rational approach of western social and economic systems and to imagine ourselves otherwise. Fashion, bound up in current economic models, yet promising to look beyond that which is currently offered, can become a crucible for the fermentation and distillation of values and practices congruent with sustainability in designing ways of being a world citizen in times of climate, environmental and social fragility.

Fashion as self, society, and biosphere.

For the individual citizen, fashion offers the opportunity to be noticed, 'No one's gonna spot you across a crowded room and say "Wow! Nice personality."' Fashion in the shape of possessions acts as part of an 'extended self' (Belk 1988) and it is a vital means for us to facilitate our social animal behavior, as Lipovetsky observes, 'fashion socializes human beings' (in Evans 2007). Whether an explicitly branded handbag or an unmarked pair of trainers, fashion's shapes and forms, their makings and materials vary widely, so we do well to remember that what distinguishes fashion is its ability to engage people in a reciprocal exchange. Fashion, in its making and wearing, is never a solo endeavour, it is a representation of the interdependencies between us, whether recognized and acknowledged or not.

Each day, each of us considers, if fleetingly, the world and our place in it as we reach for something to wear, to represent ourselves in times and locations (Williams 2014). Fashion offers us both highly visible and unseen views on life as public spectacle and private action. In this way, 'the spectacle is the catalyst for culture making, negotiating the threshold between form and event' (Kessler 2015). Rocamora (2009) describes fashion discourse 'as made up of a set of values, assumptions and rules that are dominant at a certain time and at a certain place in the field they are produced and reproduced in' indicating the agency of fashion to influence cultures and norms. Thus, the creation of meaning is an iterative process involving an individual and an audience able to understand the visual cues, a 'knowing community', in fashion, highly visible within an urban context, as well as

through the everyday spectacle of fashion on social media. At a visceral level, fashion and city are overlapping fields, coterminous places of experience and practice (Rocamora 2009).

We are part of the spectacle 'moving elements in a city, and in particular the people and their activities are as important (for the city) as the stationary physical parts.' (Tonkiss 2013). In an open and diversified city, an ethos rises, is made visible (the spectacle) becomes accepted (normalized) and evolves through its inhabitants in a feedback loop (Corby, Williams et al 2016). This process is also described in the resilience loop, where ideas are seeded, explored and expanded, taken on and compromised, leading to an impetus to re-imagine, re-seed and embolden new ideas and perspectives. (Moore, Westley et al. 2012) Bourdieu describes this non static process as *Habitus*, or socialized norms that guide behaviour and thinking, otherwise described as 'the way society becomes deposited in persons in the form of lasting dispositions, or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act in determinant ways, which then guide them' (Wacquant 2005, 316, cited in Navarro 2006, 16). Meaning and matter making overlap, as fields are shaped by wider social forces and relations with other fields (Foucault 2006).

Girardet (1993) characterizes cities as either biogenic or biocidal. Biogenic cities are balanced urban metabolisms that take and give back, through a reciprocal process based on ecosystems thinking. Biocidal cities are urban mechanisms that use ingenuity and technological innovation to expand beyond nature's boundaries. This Cartesian approach persists as the dominant model of modern Western thinking with economic growth as its primary goal. As fashion designers, exploring how we

perceive ourselves in the world and seeking to improve conditions through the creating, wearing and caring for fashion products and related activities, we can apply this characterization to consider biogenic fashion and its interaction in biogenic cities and how we might re-consider biocidal fashion and cities structures to keep within planetary boundaries, by creating a sufficiency model that is aspiration and lauded. Our planet, our bodies, and our cities and societies depend on a healthy metabolism and an understanding of what this constitutes is vital to how and what we design. It is 'crucial to learn the lessons of history and to make sure that our settlements are socially just, participatory and economically viable, whilst being environmentally sustainable.' (Girardet 1999). Over 20 years later, most city and fashion design is yet to fully connect an understanding of a post-carbon world to a just transition, where benefits are shared and livelihoods ensured. There is a need for designers to commit to an intention of a fashion system that has an ecologically beating heart, a socially conscious mind, a culturally diverse body and economic muscle that enables the system to thrive. We need a fashion system that serves the earth, rather than the earth being at the service of fashion.

Modernity and the Loosening of Ties

'It (fashion) defines the tenor of urban life like no other visual medium' (Breward and Gilbert 2003)

The three-fold crisis of biosphere, societal and personal health didn't happen by accident. There is a long-held assumption that modernity, urbanization and the

growth of fashion going hand in hand (Simmel and Weber) is a means for improving life. This is based on a characterization of modernity as 'a decisive break with the past – from rural tradition and stasis – to urban change fragmentation and mobility' (Wilson 1985) unlocking dynamic, creative possibilities for betterment. Fashion's current model is seen as and promoted as an important means for self-expression. It's also a sector that with a revenue predicted at 1.7 trillion dollars in 2023 (Statista 2022) is based on a deeply entrenched and well financed model and infrastructure that invites low maintenance (cheaper and quicker to chuck than to launder and iron), low risk – or so it appears (buy in haste, no need to repent if it doesn't look right) and unrivalled convenience (swipe, click and answer the door.) (Williams 2022). Modernity relies on extraction-based devices and fossil fuel powered mechanisms, that expect continuity, replication, duplication, standardization and high financial gain.

The loosening of ties to these mechanistic systems, where ideas of time and space have become increasingly abstract and the loosening of traditional anchors is seen as embracing diversity, is dependent on an understanding that an abstraction of place, time and nature is threatening the basis on which all our lives depend. Cities were built on and defined by what was produced in their location, involving the growing of local resources, making distinctive wares to be bought and sold there and distributed into wider environs. What fashion creates, along with its spectacle, is a set of produced objects, with the city as physical context for their consumption (Gilbert 2000). The mechanized, globalized western fashion system, where most making takes place outside of the city, to be transported and consumed within it is no longer

tenable in its current form. The risks of its continuation are clear, with 9 of the top 10 global risks linked to environmental and societal concerns (World Economic Forum 2023). Whilst new models of individualized production, digital transport and AI enhanced interactions are creating unimagined realities, the data on climate change and modern day slavery is stark, technology to date, is enabling and exacerbating an exploitative system, its appeal, as yet unabated. The intention to improve efficiency in production and consumption, has yet to show signs of reducing emissions and exploitation due to the unrelenting intention to increase fashion's consumption as its means for identity and belonging. The spirit of emancipation and liberation that modernity, fashion and urban life purport to offer lack critical understanding of the vital elements of freedom and well-being. Cultures of high fashion consumption are associated with success, through social media influencers and cultural signals, where bagging a bargain trumps the joy of wearing a long-held piece. Changing these cultures requires change in legislation and industry practices, it critically requires changing aspirations, habits and social norms.

The consumerist discourse of choice and individualism is an illusion; 'the more our society talks about the individual and individualism, the more alike we all seem to become' (Wilson 1985). The myth of choice instead creates a position where 'individuals in the current era of mass-individualization have not been empowered' (Wilson 1985). Yet the promise of the new continues to generate increasing sales, from increasingly diminishing resources. The crisis of the 'extended self' results in an 'empty self' continuously needing to be filled through consumption (Cushman 1990). Consequently, the 'I' is never found and is always 'not yet'; the desire of becoming is

endless (Spierings and Van Houtum 2008). There is clear evidence that cultures of consumption are destructive, and that capitalist production veils its origins with cultural producers and consumers seduced even as they understand they are being manipulated (Evans 2007).

Fashion media is replete with evidence-based stories of the unsustainability of our current ways of living, whilst perpetuating it. This unsustainability is not a technical problem to be fixed, though technological solutions play their part, it is a cultural problem, of social norms and acceptability of a misrepresentation of us as takers (consumers) without acknowledgement of how each person is also a contributor to life, to society, culture, and economy. We are drawn into the delight of fashion through stimulation of all sorts, whilst simultaneously experiencing increasing anxiety; we have more personal autonomy, and more personal crises. 'Such is the greatness of fashion, which always refers us as individuals, back to ourselves, such is the misery of fashion, which renders us increasingly problematic to ourselves and others' (Lipovetsky 1994). Nearly 30 years later, the viscous circle has yet to be broken.

Declining levels of trust and social well-being are being felt at personal and community levels, as people become increasingly disconnected from their traditional certainties (Joseph Rowntree Foundation 2016). As the impacts of climate change and biodiversity loss become increasingly stark, displacement of people, with loss of livelihoods and land is increasing the power, wealth and emissions imbalance. The intersectional elements of injustice discriminating against those already most vulnerable to climate related storms, floods, and soil degradation. Communities in

place are being weakened by hyper-individualised, delocalized society (Manzini 2015). Whilst new connections and communities are forming, not confined to geographical location, with apparently infinite possibilities for citizens to connect via social media and other platforms and to coalesce around shared interests, there is little evidence that, as a species, we are exploring our exquisite entanglement to collectively discover ways to live well together.

A Time for New Dreams

There is an already recognized role for designers in questioning the status quo, creating new idea formations, energising their mobility and adoption. Designers can get to places and people that the numbers don't reach. They need access to knowledge for informed decision-making, heuristic models of design for sustainability that they can test and iterate, and agency to connect their recognized role as creators of economic wealth, to roles as contributors to a wider sense of prosperity. Based on my own practice and analysis of designers from micro to global team scales and of student designers in a range of locations, I have developed methods that start with intention setting, consider a set of agendas for breaking free from the entrenchment of extractive and exploitative infrastructures and encourage the formation of creative possibilities across scales of transformation (Williams 2019). As alchemists, designers can experiment with formulations of life sustaining ingredients to create new imaginings of what it means to live well in the world. These formulations need to make interdependence more compelling than

individualism. This is a big task, but designers act in the world, drawing on cultural, literary, musical, visual, manual, and other forms of human creativity. Fashion and cities are human constructs, designed using imagination and dreams. There is a need to fill gaps in knowledge and it is time to create new dreams; this is also a time for the crises to fundamentally change fashion and how designers imagine their roles.

Awaken your feet to the wisdom

Of the earth

Open your head to the wisdom

Of the heavens

Of the fragrance

Of the survivors

Ben Okri (from Invocation for the Shrine)

A time for expanding the role of the designer

Fashion artistry, as with other forms of art and design is often problematic in its perpetuating of intersectional elements of power imbalance through 'the means for a non-economic form of domination and hierarchy, as classes distinguish themselves through taste' (Gaventa 2003). This role in 'taste-making' can be a powerful opportunity to evolve the habitus (Wacquant 2005) away from cultures of consumption towards cultures of care, which includes everything we do to maintain, continue and repair our world, so that we can live in it as well as possible. (Puig De

La Bellacasa 2017) The studio or atelier can become a place of inquiry through making, when a sense of mutuality can be formed, respected and applied.

As with the atelier model, many of fashion's micro and small to medium sized businesses that make up most fashion businesses, are, by virtue of their size, places to directly engage a team of people in co-experimentation, exploring curiosity and responding in the world, as part of making a living.

Haute couture continues to be powerful in shaping taste and style, and micro and small to medium sized businesses, often act as tastemakers to the wider sector. It is, however, the long-standing industrial scale of fashion businesses that dominate fashion's discourse. Collectively they produce over 100 billion pieces of fashion a year (Remy, Speelman and Swartz 2016) promoting a volume-based approach to success. Using increasingly intelligent technologies, this model is alert to customer behaviour, trends and influences that can target aspirations and stimulate demand through quick response, producing masses of styles. Ultra-fast fashion typically produces small runs of a vast number of styles, on rapid repeat.

Thus fashion design cannot be understood by a singular definition or generalized idea about focusing on changes to the materiality of a product. This is hardly surprising as it is fashion products that are measured – in terms of carbon, water, labour, profit, chemical pollution etc. This focus on changing the product without changing how designers design, who they design with and what their design does beyond the product itself, does not recognize the potential of design to change cultures, and dissolve symptoms of rampant consumerism through a response to

problems at their root cause level. Through recognizing an expansion in how designers are working, I began to describe archetypes that are congruent with sustainability in myriad ways, first published as unfixed and incomplete (Williams 2015) then further tested and iterated. They offer a means of recognizing what different designers, in different contexts, are well placed to be doing. They can change how fashion design is described and encourage a diversifying of what it means to be a fashion designer. The archetypes are based on my own practice and that seen through my research. The limitations of the knowledges involved are recognized and it is hoped that the ideas can be evolved through interactions in a diversity of perspectives and places.

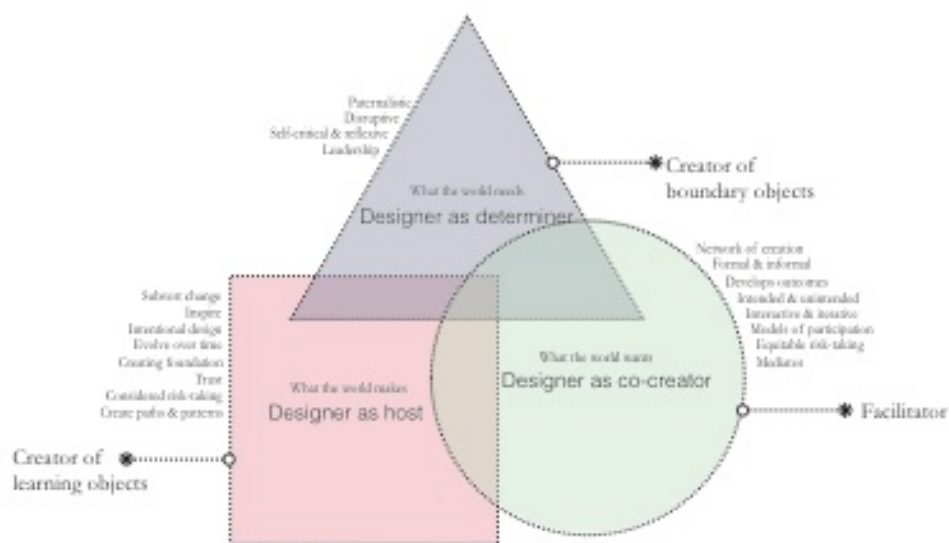


Figure 21.1 Roles of a designer (adapted from Williams 2015a)

Designer as Determiner: Creator of Boundary Objects of Interaction

‘With public sentiment, nothing can fail, without it nothing can succeed. He who moulds public sentiment does more than he who enacts statute.’ – Abraham Lincoln

The most widely recognized of design roles in the fashion sector is one in which the designer works within a deeply entrenched infrastructure in terms of societal, production and consumption and frameworks. In this case, power dynamics and protocols follow industry accepted practices and legal requirements. Systems of sourcing, transporting, making, buying, and selling are well established and consistency is foregrounded in terms of quality, form and fabrication. Collections are developed and presented to identified audiences for broadly specified wear and care, and business is ongoing. The conditions of this system are bound by economic imperatives, perceived risks are seen in relation to supplier resilience and efficiency, replicability and market stability. The designer’s role in this context resonates with Schon’s notion of designers as creators of boundary objects (Schon 1994). The designer’s approach is systematic, whilst the form of their work changes in response to a range of factors including what is happening in the world, what customers are interested in, and changes in supply chain and resource costs. In this context, designing for sustainability involves making informed choices in materials and manufacturing terms, relating to quantifiable impacts in environmental, social, and economic terms. Choice editing makes it possible to eliminate high impact or hazardous materials and processes that do not meet agreed standards and to enhance creativity and reputation by containing the parameters of design. Public

announcements made by designers and citizens to eliminate fur or feathers from collections are nothing new, with protests against the use of feathers dating back to the early 1920's and high-profile anti-fur campaigns in mid 1980's. Too often these announcements lack consistency or uphold commitment to preferred materials and production techniques.

The designer is a 'determiner' of product shape, style and technical functionality.

This hierarchical position offers the opportunity for highly visible innovative disruption, and changes to what is accepted as fashion design practice. It includes the potential for design tactics (Rigby 2013) that influence pro-environmental or pro-social behaviour, through 'provotypes' (Fuad-Luke 2009) that provoke new thinking and behaviour within a system towards ultimately influencing its change. Making change from within the system engages an understanding of the system to identify levers for its change.

Thus viewed, design has the potential means to shape energy, material, and social flows through carefully meshing business purposes with larger patterns in nature and between people (Capra and Luisi 2014). This potential may not be discussed in design rooms, but questions of design and business purpose are increasingly being connected at mass market and luxury fashion levels. Through working with design teams in large scale fashion businesses around the world, I am witness to an increasing recognition of the role of the designer in sustainability terms, in a sector that has previously limited its environmental and social considerations to improving efficiency in operational business functions and compliance to industry standards. Designers who are creators of boundary objects can build relationships of mutual

understanding with textile and garment manufacturers, product developers, agents, and distribution networks. They can influence and encourage innovations at points along the process of materials selection, prototype creation, sample sealing, presentation and showcasing, marketing, retail experience, care and product servicing. By plotting interventions across this process, the scale of impact of even small changes at certain points can be significant. Thus, this leadership role can make an expanding role of the designer highly visible, facilitate team cohesion, and encourage active citizenship, exemplified by Stella McCartney's connecting of planetary, animal, and human health, diversity, and equity to the aesthetics and enjoyment of fashion. Maria Chiuri's choice of a new set of values, rather than a new look silhouette for her first collection as head of design at Dior, spoke to the world about equity in terms that could not be ignored. This role comes with a cautionary note; it is recognized that the required systems change needed to foreground earth economics is at odds with the logic of market-led business. Designers working in this role risk losing their jobs if they fail to hit growth targets. Finding the sweet spot that intersects what you are well placed to do, with what the business and the earth and the most vulnerable within it need, involves defining what is acceptable to you as a designer, what risks you are able to take on and on developing knowledge and insights that help you to consider the risks of your decision-making on others.

Designer as Co-creator: Facilitator of interaction

Fashion is intrinsically a co-creation process. It inevitably involves interaction, the nature of which is dependent on the agency of each participant. Co-creation has an extended history inside and outside fashion, often taking place informally and without defined recognition. When a designer is working in an open and flexible context, which can often be the case in micro, small and medium sized businesses, there may be direct ways of establishing practices of co-creating ideas, products and protocols and their governance. This active mode of learning with participants, is well established and congruent with sustainability in design practice, as it is in design research, through action learning, co-inquiry and auto-ethnography techniques. Thus, design and production teams, customers, suppliers, local communities, inter-generational and interdisciplinary knowledge and more than human perspectives can contribute to design intentions, methods and material elements of fashion.

The visualization of the contribution of each participant in a co-creation process can demonstrate the value of a range of skills and perspectives and the artefacts become demonstrators of living systems. This might involve protagonists across a product related network in mutually beneficial practices or a system for communicating between maker and wearer. When co-creation is understood as a process of interaction between human and more than human life, principles of permaculture, learning from indigenous knowledges, belief systems, rituals and their meaning can expand the practices of design-with as an expansion beyond self and a relational understanding of self in a more than human world.

Co-creation as a methodology of fashion design expands beyond a predominantly commercial context. Francesco Mazarella's *Decolonising Fashion and Textiles* involves co-creation practices and situated learning in communities. Participatory action research engages refugees based in East London in developing a framework for decolonised design practice by advancing a cultural sustainability agenda within a fashion and textile industry context. Here, fashion artefacts and fashion making act as a mediator of stories of resilience and vulnerability, working with community groups to learn with those who have personal experiences of social and climate injustice, to understand ways for designers to contribute to a just transition to a de-carbonised, de-colonised fashion system.

Fashion as acts of reciprocity through making together, connect it back to its root etymology in making, exemplified by millions of people involved in craft. 200 million artisans is an organization whose name explicitly references the 200 million people in India alone, who depend on craft for a livelihood. The practices of design in education and in industry seldom involve the development and refining of skills that enable reciprocity but often perpetuate power imbalances, extractive practices and colonially based inequalities. Many fashion researchers and educators are re-framing studio practice and nurturing skills relating to interdependence. *Do-It-Together* (Von Busch, 2013), seeks to make connections within communities through new frameworks for co-operation as sustainability in action. *Strategic Repair* (Von Busch and Williams 2011) encourages student designers to act as magpies, seeking out pieces of clothing that hold their attention, but are visibly in need of care. Taking these pieces to a person or place that might actively contribute to extending its

value, the student designer looks for ways to exchange skills, ideas, or time, to the benefit of all involved. This process is far from novel; cities were built as places of exchange and still manifest many active exchange opportunities, inside and outside of the commercial realm. The Brighton Repair café is a wonderful case in point, just one of many ways in which fashion convenes a reciprocal process of care and repair at personal, community and biosphere levels. Employing the design construct for sustainability that I developed over time, the practices of a range of micro and small businesses were plotted against their social, cultural, environmental and economic contribution. *Fostering Sustainable Practices* offers an evidence base of fashion designing that is otherwise to the dominant model. (Williams, Burcikova and Buchanan 2020). Fashion design students grounding their learning in place and need is increasingly supported through pedagogy, but the skills of mutual learning, reciprocity and resilience still rarely appear on curriculum outlines. Public display of such activities, in places where those involved are invited to participate, can contribute to social interaction and form new types of city spectacle that expands the canon of fashion and how we define ourselves within it.

Designer as Host: The Creator of Learning Devices

A third archetype of designer that I have identified and developed through my own practice in founding and guiding practice at Centre for Sustainable Fashion, resonates with what Schon describes as creating 'learning devices.' (Schon 1994).

The 'designer as host' involves an inversion of the usual model of design as responsible for the leadership in the making of products and services, to foreground the creating of conditions for the agency of citizen and other designers. Holding the space for unknowable interactions, involves a letting go of control of the outcome of an event or series of autonomous, authentic progressions of ideas, by a variety of actors, often over time (Williams 2014). The designer as host may carefully prepare for seen and unforeseen conditions, but through an open structure, the participants can feel respected, considered, safe, to make decisions and undertake actions that represent their concerns, interests and skills. The host designer acts as encouragement in recognizing design as a fundamental part of human capability (Cross 2006). The host is a catalyst for a series of actions and encounters to take place, which may involve specific pieces or shapes and may include the transformation of pieces and of ideas, of the world, of self and each other. The host creates conditions, relating to their abilities that might include objects in a setting that set a series of actions in motion. These actions might coalesce around a constant shape, giving it greater resonance and value, or may include the evolution or transformation of pieces through their lived experiences over time. The adaptation and interaction in 'malleable' situations, shapes, and forms relates to being a 'creator of learning devices' (Schon 1994). This takes learning beyond the

expert/ learner power dynamic and changes the ontological and epistemological framing of fashion, so that ideas that emerge are an intertwining of knowledges and experiences that are beyond the imagination of the host and any one participant. This is a radical departure for fashion design, moving its framework and hierarchical structure into a networked heterarchy (Williams and Fletcher 2010). This mode of design offers the potential for 'mass innovation, not mass production' (Leadbetter and 257 others 2008), challenging existing ways of 'doing design', and challenging the usually recognized role and status of the designer. A designer who hosts and creates a place for the spectacle of, yet undetermined outcomes must become vulnerable themselves, to relinquish the privilege that often comes with their position.

For our attire to act as signifiers of ourselves in our biosphere context, then what we stand up *in* should represent what we stand up *for*. To explore this, I developed a host design technique to encourage a voicing and a wearing of concerns (positive and negative) as part of the Habit(AT) project. Through creating the conditions for citizen designers to manipulate the shape, and surface design of fashion objects, participants record their concerns through the making of fashion spectacles. The methodology introduces designers to ethnographic methods of research and ways to integrate these approaches within their practice with publics to identify and analyze a design concern at hand and co-design responses with those most affected (Corby et al 2016, Williams 2015b). This creation of a social form, facilitated through a fashion object and a pop-up event encourages individual and collective expression. It is in the intertwined relationship between form and event, each propelling the other

towards the creation of a spectacle in the city, which informs urban life (Kessler 2015). In this case, verbal exchange and photography offer a spectacle that demonstrates culture-making as a live social exchange. These interactions have produced data about concerns, art works for public exhibition, and feedback regarding participatory experience on the part of the citizen designers. This research does not claim to have made any lasting impact on citizen participants; however, it starts to reveal the possibilities afforded by a role for the designer as host. These interventions do not compel but encourage action, making it safe to speak out, thus re-distributing the power in the city's spectacle (Lynch 1984).

Working in conditions of continuous change, partial control, pluralism, and participation, maintaining their creative and aesthetic abilities, and using them in open and participatory ways can be challenging for designers. In this case, designers are mediators between the agency of the expert and that of the amateur, between the intentional and the improvised, the permanent and the temporary. Success is as much about steering patterns of social behavior as it is about composing physical forms (Lynch 1984).

This less well recognised design role is one in which the designer finds ways to instigate interaction as well as action, through consideration of place and objects in aesthetic and other terms. Design as host can be a means to demonstrate commitment to the service of others. This 'letting go' of control is not always easy for a designer, I for one know that my commitment to designing a collection for others to wear involves meticulous consideration of every technical, material, colour, ergonomic, shape and other aesthetic dimensions of a piece. A letting go of control in practical terms is, I have found, a useful metaphor for the letting go of

existing systems of fashion production and consumption.

The outmoded systems are crumbling, and the mechanistic, hierarchical approach to fashion business and fashion education is being increasingly questioned in environmental and social justice terms. This dimension of criticality requires amplification. There is a long way to go in human understanding of our ecological selves, which is often hampered by apparent distance, whether geographic, cultural, or temporal (Hoffman 2015). There is also a grasping on to the infrastructures that are deeply embedded in global economic systems, transport systems, and cultural systems. An unravelling of western centric, rationalist, consumer capitalist ideologies is needed and designers with expansive roles are needed and by seeing fashion and the world as never static, fashion can become ‘vibrant matter’ (Bennett, 2010) to compliment nature’s consummate design skills and its ability to host us hospitably, if only we know how to act as its systems contributors.

In the words of my colleague and fellow designer and educator, we must “act, like we have just enough time, live like it runs out today” (Storey 2015). Helen’s work recognizes the power of the fashion spectacle and its broad resonance, (D4OT). It aims to change the actions of many, contributing to the creation of a larger ecological consciousness, an Ecozoic Age (Swimme and Berry 1992).

This chapter purposefully draws on references that span a century to demonstrate that fashion, as a city spectacle, has a long-held place in the discourse of sustainability. The narrative of fashion as a demonstration of our human and more

than human world dates to the beginnings of our intentions in adornment. As 'year by year, our world becomes more complex, we must re-mold our old cities and build new communities better suited to our needs' (Mumford 1970) Fashion alone cannot address the existential crisis that the Anthropocene articulates, but as it is a vital part of how we explore our sense of selves, it can facilitate reflection and experimentation to re-imagine practices, industrial and personal, in relation to environmental and social degradation. Debate inside and outside of the fashion and sustainability discourse reflects a range of ideologies. Change is needed across the political and societal spectrum. Cities (and fashion) have the capability of providing something for everybody, only because, and only when, they are created by everybody (Jacobs 1961). Fashion's politic (individual empowerment), its polis (community), and its political (higher authority) intertwine through its design and creative practice and its place in all lives. Fashion can be spontaneous and reflective; it can offer awe and wonder and it can demonstrate our ability to live well together. It can create a rescinding of extractivism and exploitation when it is created in multiple ways with a collective intention that recognises our interdependencies and our distinctions.

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