

## Explorations title: Fairer fashion by design: Visioning sustainability with Lego® Serious Play®

**Keywords:** Workshop, design, Lego® Serious Play®, sustainable fashion

### Organiser information

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### Proposal content

#### *Research outline*

Against a landscape of increased visibility of sustainable fashion as an issue, consumer desire for better products and practices, yet stagnation in system change, this 90-minute workshop, led by two Lego® Serious Play® (LSP) for sustainability certified educators, seeks to unpack and reimagine fashion using thinking-through-making (Gauntlett, 2018).

The fashion industry stands at a critical point. The industry's negative social and environmental impacts have been well documented and in the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic it appeared that the case for sustainable fashion had been accepted. Both industry big players and small-scale independent fashion designers embraced the UN SDGs and committed to Science Based Targets (Doyle, 2025; Radclyffe-Thomas, 2024). Yet, it now appears that despite trailblazing efforts from a few designers embracing sustainability, circularity and regenerative fashion, much of the industry has failed to change in any significant way. The green bubble has popped and what looked like system change was mostly PR with little real impact on the fashion system itself.

To a lesser extent, the pandemic experience which amplified digital technologies such as AR and 3-D prototyping, and accelerated consumer take-up of online fashion through virtual runways, try-ons and retail, has provided another challenge for the fashion industry – where and how shoppers experience and purchase fashion (Alexander, 2024). Many fashion



consumers remain dissatisfied with their experiences of fashion and want products and services to be better – for themselves, for the people who make and circulate their garments, and for the planet. And at this point, it is fair to say that despite higher visibility for the topic of sustainable fashion, fundamentally nothing much has changed and homeostasis rules (Fenech, Walton and Majury, 2024).

Yet, notable individuals and organisations continue to question the premises this global industry is built on and attempt to prefigure more sustainable fashion futures through design – design of fashion products, processes and experiences. The *Ellen MacArthur Foundation* has been at the forefront of Circular Design for Fashion, a way of working which incorporates circular economy principles into systems change (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2021). *Fashion Revolution* encourages fashion consumers worldwide to ask fashion brands “Who made my clothes?”

By surfacing the personal and professional sustainability-related experiences and competences (Goldberg, 2009) of participants we hope to collectively envision alternative scenarios in which fashion is sustainable and fairer for all. LSP is a well-established facilitation technique that encourages contributions from all participants, fosters reflective thinking, allows for individual and collective concept development, and has been successfully applied in co-design scenarios (Garde and van der Voort, 2016, Roos, 2018). The success of any LSP session is in the formation of the questions. We believe that it is only by asking the right – and difficult - questions that the norms of the industry can be disrupted and can be envisioned at a personal, professional and collective level.

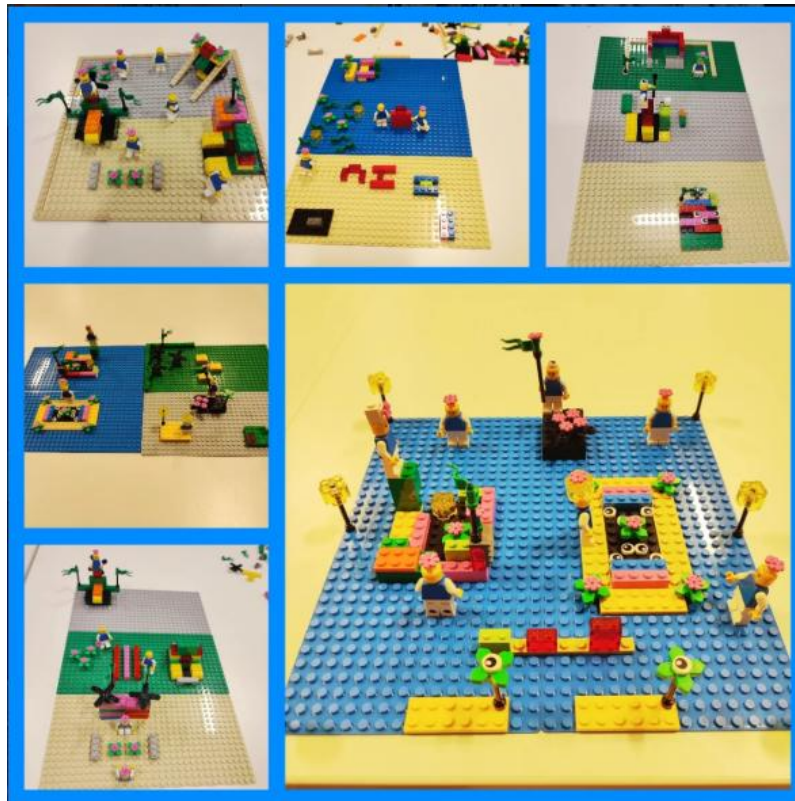
Hence, the workshop aims to:

- Expand participants’ understanding of Lego® Serious Play® and metaphor as a systems design-based approach
- Explore participants’ personal relationship with fashion products and fashion retail experiences
- Foster co-design for sustainable fashion through interactive play facilitated through Lego® Serious Play®
- Encourage participants to reflect on a range of sustainable fashion prefigurations and scenarios

### **Workshop Structure**

The Workshop is delivered by two experienced fashion educators, both certified Lego® Serious Play® facilitators specialising in sustainability. An overview of the LSP method and use of metaphor will be given before grounding the session in the latest research and practice on sustainable fashion (social, economic and financial) through a short presentation. This will be followed by an LSP immersion via a series of short individual activities (builds) – each prompted by a current design-related question, followed by pair, small group and plenary discussion on the issues and solutions raised by participants, both on the method itself and

the topic of the workshop. This will be followed by small group builds during which participants have the opportunity to work on a question or issue in fashion that aligns with their professional discipline, experience and context. It is envisioned that the workshop will be fast-paced, immersive and experiential whilst also allowing for individual and collective reflection and ultimately culminating in collective design-based solutions.



### Approximate timings

5 minutes: Introductions to the workshop facilitators

10 minutes

- Introduction to Lego® Serious Play® and the concept of thinking through making.

10 minutes

- Creative facilitation of individual builds followed by pair and share.

10 minutes

- Sustainable fashion context – facts, figures and feelings.

10 minutes

- Creative facilitation of individual builds followed by pair and share.

30 minutes

- Creative facilitation of group builds followed by group sharing.

15 minutes

- Wrap-up and reflections

Appropriate ethical and health and safety procedures will be followed throughout the workshop. The session is designed to ensure methodological integrity, using LEGO® Serious Play®, an internationally recognised and accredited facilitation method. The aims of the workshop will be communicated transparently, and all participants will be treated with dignity and respect. Activities will be conducted fairly and will promote a safe, positive, and inclusive environment.

## Materials

Lego bricks, (pens and paper, if required) will be provided by the organisers.

## Researcher experience

*Explorations* organisers:

Organiser 1 (lead) **Professor Natascha Radclyffe-Thomas** EdD FRSA is an award-winning researcher and National Teaching Fellow named in The SustainabilityX® Magazine's Global 50 Women In Sustainability Awards™. Professor of Marketing and Sustainable Fashion at Ravensbourne University London, she co-leads the Regenerative Fashion Lab and researches sustainable fashion, craft and cultural heritage, social enterprise and education for sustainable development collaborating with organisations including Charity Super.Mkt, Crafts Council, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and the British Beauty Council. Natascha has extensive experience of designing and facilitating interactive workshops and is a certified facilitator of Lego® Serious Play® specializing in using the method in the context of sustainability. Natascha is an international keynote, her research is widely published and she is a frequent contributor to media pieces featuring in the New York Times, the Independent, Vogue Business, BBC, CBC and NPR. Natascha is Editor-in-Chief of *Bloomsbury Fashion Business Cases* and co-Principal Editor of the *International Journal of Sustainable Fashion and Textiles*.

Organiser 2 **Dr Bethan Alexander** is a Reader in Fashion Retail and Marketing and Research Lead at Fashion Business School, London College of Fashion, University of the Arts, London. Bethan's scholarly research interests span Customer Experiences Online and Offline, Innovative Retail Formats, Retail technologies, Future and Responsible Retailing. Results of this research have been published in various academic journals and books in the fashion, retail, marketing and business disciplines. She is an inaugural member of the Designing Retail and Services Futures Special Interest Group, Design Research Society, Regional Editor for Bloomsbury Fashion Business Cases, Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. She champions research informed teaching and leverages her networks in collaborating with industry and academics internationally. She has experience of designing and facilitating interactive workshops on case study writing and is a certified facilitator of Lego® Serious Play® specializing in using the method on the context of sustainability.

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