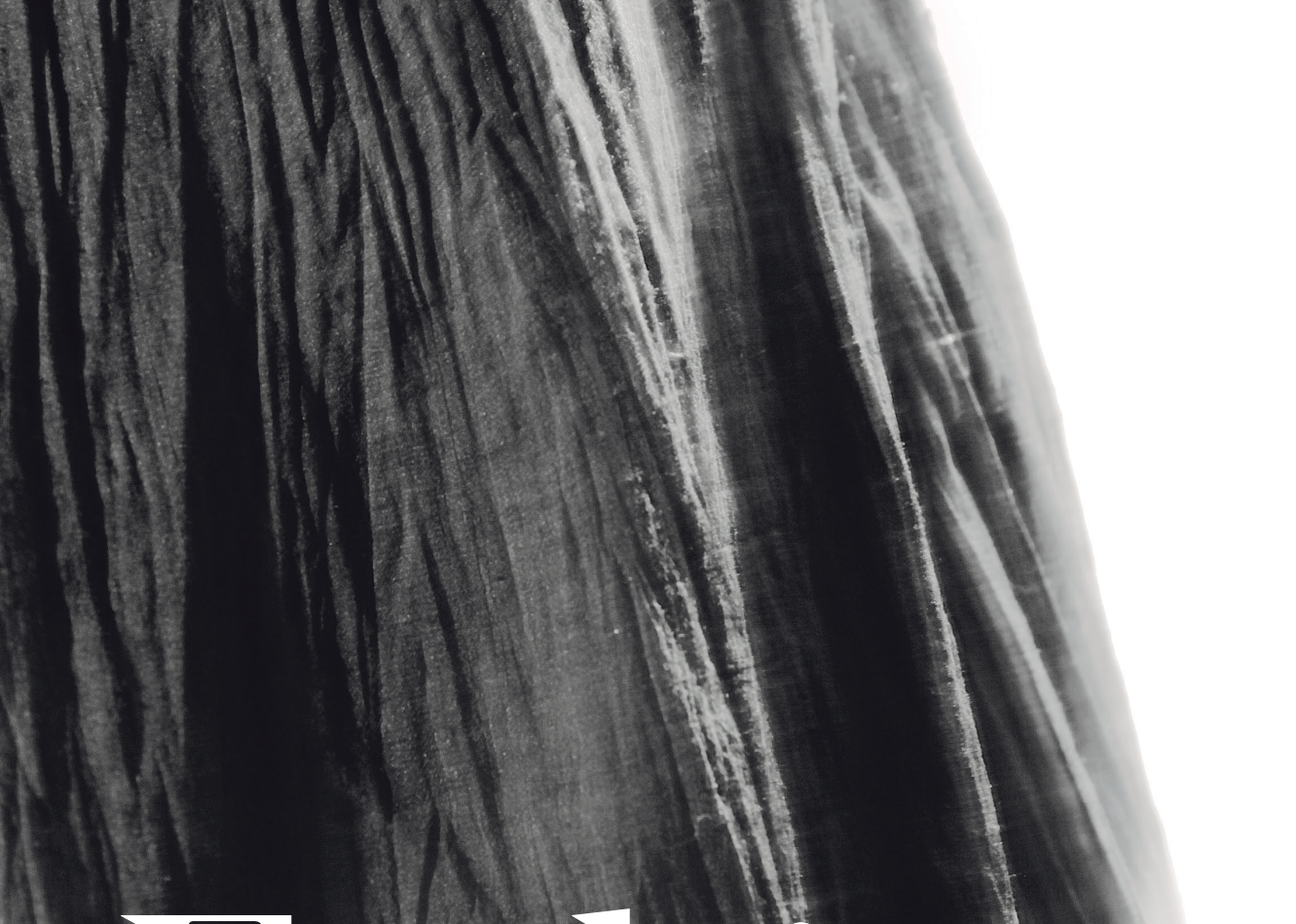

Fashion In-between

ARTISANAL DESIGN AND PRODUCTION OF FASHION

MAARIT AAKKO

Aalto University

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MAARIT AAKKO is a researcher in the field of fashion design. Her work centers on the artisanal approach to fashion within the current cultural and societal environment, with the focus on the relationship between aesthetics and quality.

She holds an MA in Craft Studies, an apparel and textiles design and research program, from the University of Helsinki; she also studied at Parsons School of Design, The New School (New York). Sharing an equal interest in theory and practice of fashion design, she has also worked as a patternmaker. She has divided her time between Helsinki and New York for a number of years, and is currently based at Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture in Helsinki.

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CONTENTS

ABSTRACT

Despite the dominating role of mass-manufacturing of fashion today, some studio-based designers prefer an artisanal approach to fashion: they produce on a small scale, often locally, and utilize expert craftsmanship and traditional techniques as part of their design and production methods. Examining the concept of 'artisanal' in the context of contemporary fashion, this doctoral dissertation aims to decode the essential features of artisanal fashion. It also analyzes the significance of this approach and its relationship to the current cultural and societal environment. The study takes a particular look at the designer's role in artisanal houses, and examines his/her ability to control and influence the process and the outcome. Compared to the mainstream clothing industry, artisanal fashion, with its emphasis on craftsmanship, offers an alternative approach.

As this area of fashion remains largely unexamined in the academia, this dissertation set out to uncover the basic principles of artisanal fashion with an inductive approach. The primary data was gathered through interviewing the designers of eleven small-scale, entrepreneurial fashion labels. Complementary material about these companies and their ways of operating was collected by ethnographic methods, such as atelier and showroom visits. The author also gathered supplementary data through participant observation while working part-time as an assistant and a patternmaker at an artisanal fashion design studio.

As the findings of this study illustrate, essentially, artisanal fashion integrates traditional craftsmanship and contemporary fashion design; craft-based methods are applied in innovative ways with an eye for today's cultural and visual climate. At the core of this approach is the concept of 'skillful materiality,' which relates to the artisanal elements of the design and making processes: the attention given to high-quality materials and expert garment construction. Secondly, it is characterized by the 'designer's integrated role.' Commonly, in artisanal ateliers, the designer is also the owner and the principal of the company. Such a centralized role provides an opportunity for the designer to be strongly involved in the design and production processes, and work closely with her workers, suppliers and often the end customers. Thirdly, the independent position

of these companies provides ‘freedom for creative control’ in decisions regarding design, production and business management, and allows the designer to tailor the work to his/her personal philosophy, referred here as a potential for ‘materializing values.’

From a larger perspective, this dissertation discusses such fashion production that lives at the cutting edge of the conventional fashion industry, and thus offers an alternative viewpoint to the current, resource-depleting fashion system. The study contributes to the search for more considerate ways of garment manufacture that support a slower fashion cycle. It also shows that traditional and craft-based methods of design and production can be relevant in today’s world. The small scale, local focus and independence of artisanal fashion companies provide an opportunity to integrate ethically and environmentally sound principals at the core of their work.

KEYWORDS:
fashion
fashion designer
artisanal production
slow fashion
materiality
skill
craft

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Maarit Aakko
Helsinki, June 2016

LIST OF PUBLICATIONS

The dissertation includes the following original research papers.

#1 Aakko, Maarit, and Eugene Rabkin. 2013. Less But Better: Towards Sustainable Fashion. Helsinki: *Futura* 4/2013.[1]

#2 Aakko, Maarit, and Ritva Koskennurmi-Sivonen. 2013. Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges. *Research Journal of Textile and Apparel 17*(1).[2]

#3 Aakko, Maarit. 2014. Artisanal and Slow: The Case of Anna Ruohonen. In K. Niinimäki (ed.). *Sustainable Fashion: New Approaches* (pp. 56–67). Helsinki: Aalto University.

#4 Niinimäki, Kirsi, and Maarit Aakko. 2014. Creative Control in Sustainable Fashion. Proceedings of *Design Management in an Era of Disruption, The 19th DMI: Academic Design Management Conference*, London, September 2–4, 2014.[3]

#5 Aakko, Maarit. 2015. Crafting Aesthetics: The Meaning of Materiality and The Making Process in Artisanal Fashion. Proceedings of *Momenting the Memento, The 17th IFFTI Conference*, Florence, May 12–15, 2015.

#6 Aakko, Maarit. Unfolding Artisanal Fashion. Unpublished, in review.

1 The article is mostly the work of the first author. The second author gave valuable comments on the study, and edited the final article.

2 The article is largely the work of the first author, including the data gathering, analysis, and the conceptual framework presented in the article. The second author gave valuable feedback during the course of the study. The writing of the article was divided between the two authors.

3 Here, the author contributed as the second writer by gathering and analyzing data, and also by writing the fashion-related literature review of the theoretical foundation. The writing of the article was divided between the two authors.

1
INTRODUCTION

Fashion production is often portrayed through its two extreme modes: mass manufacturing, which relies heavily on machinery, and *couture*, which, quite oppositely, hinges almost entirely on manual craft. There are, however, other forms of fashion production residing in-between these two, which utilize both methods. Some fashion labels, often small-scale, designer-led houses, have chosen – whether through the ethos of sustainability or other personal philosophy – to embrace fine craftsmanship and traditional techniques, not quite as meticulously as in *couture*, but as part of their design and production methods, applying them skillfully and resourcefully. This mode, referred to here as *artisanal fashion*, marries traditional craft with the symbolic and cultural meanings of modern fashion.

The term 'artisanal,'[4] in the context of clothes making, may well evoke on the one hand, an image of traditional, domestic crafts, or *haute couture*, the epitome of handcrafted fashion, on the other. In the strictest sense, the term 'artisanal' does refer to the practice of stitching each piece by hand, likening it to the way garments were produced before industrialization in the mid nineteenth century. A less rigid definition, though, does not point merely to handcrafting but to high-quality products made in small quantities and involving masterful craftsmanship. On that account, artisanal fashion may denote a practice that focuses on the skillful execution of clothing, utilizing craft-based methods, such as hand-stitching, hand-knitting and embroidery, or traditional techniques in fabric dyeing and manipulation as part of the production. However,

4 For a more detailed discussion of the term 'artisanal,' see chapter 2.7.

while the artisanal approach to fashion shares the grounds with craft and non-industrial means of clothing production, the context is not traditional sartorial culture or the custom-made creations of *haute couture*, but, rather, contemporary fashion.

Within the mainstream fashion offerings, particularly in the era of fast fashion that celebrates the abundance of garments, artisanal fashion, with its emphasis on craftsmanship and the skillful execution of clothing, is a radically different approach. Artisanal fashion labels may, in fact, be little known to most, as they often reside at the margins of the conventional fashion system. Nevertheless, that does not mean they are unrecognized, or that their approach is without reference. On the contrary, artisanship is currently being highlighted beyond the territories of devoted fashion enthusiasts in many ways. Besides the established *couture* fashion houses, such as *Chanel*, that make a considerable effort to preserve artisanal skills even today (cf. Mellery-Pratt 2015), fine craftsmanship is used as part of production by certain *prêt-à-porter* fashion houses such as the Belgian *Dries van Noten*,[5] whose garments often include hand-embroidered details. Corresponding to the broader definition of the term 'artisanal,' these ideas are also at the core of the Italian-based *Bruno Cuccinelli*'s establishment, demonstrated particularly through his active support for local production and the maintenance of fine craftsmanship (Mead 2010; Mora &Volonté 2014).

Similarly, artisanship in the field of fashion is discussed in the media. For example, *The Business of Fashion* (2015), one of the leading media sources for the fashion industry, published a special issue devoted to the topic titled: "How can traditional craftsmanship survive in the modern world?"; likewise, several other newspaper/magazine articles have profiled artisanal fashion production (e.g. Bain 2015; Davidson 2012; Mellery-Pratt 2015; Rabkin 2015). The craftsmanship of fashion was in the limelight also in the documentary film *Dior and I* (Tcheng 2014), which let the audience take a glimpse behind the scenes during the making of *Dior*'s haute couture collection. With similar intention, in Spring 2016, *Manus X Machina: Fashion in an Age of Technology*, an exhibition at *The Costume Institute* of the *Metropolitan Museum of Art* in New York, set out to explore the relationship between the methods of the handmade and the machine-made in the creation of *couture* and avant-garde ready-to-wear.

5 Dries van Noten's collections often include garments that are hand-embroidered in India (employing roughly 3000 textile artisans); also some of his fabrics are hand-woven at a small mill (*The Talks* 2015).

Other industries are showing equal interest to the artisanal approach. For instance, the jewelry and watch manufacturer *Cartier* is rediscovering the ancient technique of granulation (applying gold to a metal surface) dating to the Sumerian and Etruscan eras (Brownell Mitic 2015). Many parallel examples, ranging from food to fashion, featuring traditional techniques and promoting the 'hand-made' quality, attest that "craftsmanship is definitely in the ether again" (Frayling 2011, p. 16).

As a matter of fact, the imagery and language of the 'hand-picked,' 'hand-crafted,' and 'artisanal'[6] has become widespread across many fields. These terms draw attention to the provenance of some products as a contrast to the impersonal nature of mass-produced goods, reflecting the products' origin and highlighting their small-batch and craft-based origins. However, it must be noted that such artisanal ethos might serve as mere image-making for marketing. As Gautrand (2014) points out, in the field of fashion, marketing campaigns and visual merchandizing, such as retail window displays, started increasingly showcasing the craft behind fashion around 2012, while not always reflecting the actual production methods of the brand. Thus, in today's marketing logic, artisanal imagery can be used for painting a romantic picture of craftsmanship, and "selling our own nostalgia back to us with a profit" (Frayling 2011, p. 61). Despite these shortcomings, an array of books discussing the philosophy of craft and craftsmanship in general (e.g. Adamson 2007; Adamson 2009; Dormer 1994; Dormer 1997a; Frayling 2011; Sennett 2008) indicate that the artisanal phenomena goes deeper than mere marketing.

The notion of 'artisanal fashion' may be well-known amongst the niche group of artisanal fashion designers and their supporters, including clients, retail stores and the press. Little, however, is written about the artisanal approach to fashion in academia.[7] Ott and Cukier (2013) recognize artisanal fashion design as its own distinct subsection of design that is characterized by the designers' identity, their perceptions of the design process, and the particular relationship to their business. According to them, in artisanal fashion the designers simultaneously play the roles of creator and entrepreneur. In these roles artisanal designers have to

6 While the word 'craft' is commonly used in literature, in marketing, because of its potential connotation to something 'crafty' being resonant of the hobbyist, (Frayling 2011, p. 13), it is often replaced with the word 'artisanal.'

7 A few recent fashion-focused academic conferences, for example the *Global Fashion Conference* in Ghent (2014) and the *IFFTI Conferences* in Florence (2015) and Beijing (2016) have explored the themes of craft and artisanship, although not particularly within the context of contemporary fashion.

balance between creativity and self-expression, and the rational decision-making of business management (Ott & Cukier 2013). Investigating the same area of small, entrepreneurial fashion labels, the London-based Center for Fashion Enterprise identifies a similar business type, an *Artisan* business, in which the designers' main motivation is mostly artistic and highly personal rather than commercial. Because the work of 'Artisan' designers is original, they build a dedicated following and are often respected within the fashion arena by their peers and the press. They are very selective in their business and consumer relationships, and the designer, along with his/her creative work, may also take a lead in managing sales and marketing, human resources, production and other key parts of the business (NESTA 2008). Fletcher and Grose (2012) discuss an entrepreneurial approach to fashion as an alternative mode within the conventional fashion industry, explaining, "these designers work within the limits of slowness and hand-work, natural processing and a small scale, and their markets seek them out for their uniqueness" (p. 176).

These readings of the artisanal approach to fashion underline the designer's operative role and summarize relevantly his/her particular position as designer-entrepreneur. They also situate artisanal fashion as a distinct, rather original approach that serves the designer's individual motives well. Corresponding to these ideas, this doctoral research is particularly interested in the rationale, as well as the potentials of the artisanal mode. Delving deeper into the concept of 'artisanal' in the context of contemporary fashion, in terms of the making processes and beyond, this inductive study aims to unfold the characteristics of artisanal fashion, and examine its significance in the current cultural and societal context. The study looks at small, entrepreneurial fashion labels that, in essence, integrate fashion design and fine craftsmanship in the realm of high-end designer fashion. Specifically, the study takes the fashion designer's perspective; thus, it also analyzes the designer's role in general, and his/her ability to control and influence the process and its outcomes – which is yet another field deserving further research as also noted by Craik (2009), Gwilt (2011) and Kawamura (2005).

While not a strictly unified group of designers in terms of philosophy or aesthetic, certain features, such as particular attention to materiality and the making process as well as the designer's centralized role, can be found in common between them. Additionally, the surveyed labels utilize skillful craft and traditional methods as part of their design and production processes, and share an ambition for a unique aesthetic, which might also be informed by craft. These were also the aspects that initially

attracted me to artisanal fashion. Examining the intricacies of cut and construction, as well as the fabrics, textures and details – the material qualities of artisanal fashion – it was apparent that these designers have a deep interest in the making process, and yet, there was a certain sensibility to their work that appeared as if material poetry. It seemed to me as *other* fashion, a form of fashion that is not based on mere commercial logic, but in Sennett's (2008, p. 9) words, on a "desire to do something well for its own sake".

My intention is not to establish artisanal fashion as one definite category, especially because it is challenging to pin down the exact borders of such a category.[8] If looking at a continuum of production methods – with couture and hand-crafted methods at one end and industrial methods at the other – the study is concerned with a specific area in-between these opposites, a small section within the terrain of high-end designer fashion (bordering the couture end of such a scale). Therefore, the categorization is not exact but has various dimensions: some designers apply more artisanal aspects in their work and others less. Even though the concept of 'artisanal' is somewhat ambiguous, here it is used for depicting aspects that are found in certain fashion designers' work to some extent, both in their methods and approaches.

From a larger perspective, this study discusses such fashion production that lives at the edges of the conventional fashion system, or even outside of it, and thus provides an alternative viewpoint to the current, resource-depleting fashion system. Artisanal fashion sits at the intersection of fashion and craft, but as it also touches on *slow fashion;* these contexts are thus discussed as the theoretical backdrop to this study (chapter 2). Utilizing the grounded theory method as the general guiding approach (chapter 3), the study firstly reviews alternative ways of producing fashion and explores various aspects of artisanal fashion through six research papers (chapter 4). Lastly, gleaning ideas from all the papers (chapters 5 and 6), the study outlines the characteristics of artisanal fashion, and discusses its potential to contribute to the current cultural and societal environment.

8 A definite line separating the terms 'artisanal' and 'industrial' is challenging to draw: Artisanal work might include parts made with the help of a machine, and vice versa, industrial work (a practice of making products in factories by machinery; Merriam-Webster dictionary) might involve some handwork or at least a human behind the machine. There are no exact measures to define what exactly could be counted as artisanal; instead, 'artisanal' and 'industrial' could be placed at the opposite ends of a continuum.

2

AT THE INTERSECTION OF ‘FASHION’ AND ‘CRAFT’

This study looks at the concept of ‘artisanal’ in the realm of high-end contemporary fashion. It discusses fashion as a commodity, and focuses particularly on fashion design and the designers themselves. Therefore, its immediate contexts are ‘fashion’ and ‘craft’ (the corresponding conception of the term ‘artisanal’). As examined later in detail, the notion of ‘artisanal fashion,’ also borders on the philosophy of ‘slow fashion’ (Figure 1).

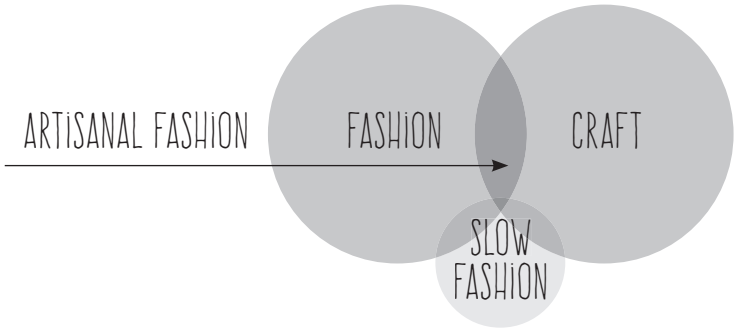

Figure 1. The context of artisanal fashion.

First, this chapter takes a brief look into the history of clothing production and its developments, providing the background to outline the present fashion system as framed by the extreme ends of production – couture and mass manufacture – and thus helps to carve out a position

for the artisanal mode in-between these two. As the artisanal approach to fashion particularly highlights the designer's role, a glance into the origins of the designer's occupation gives a better understanding of the designer's role within the fashion system. The dominant practices of the current fashion industry, including its implications, are introduced briefly followed by a discussion of the main alternative paradigms, sustainable and slow fashion. These elements, together with the concept of 'artisanal' and its counterpart, 'craft,' are discussed here as the core contexts of this study.

2.1 Fashion as a concept

In everyday language *fashion* and *clothing/garments* are used as synonyms, with fashion often considered as an item of clothing or a material product. However, from a sociological point of view these terms denote different meanings. Fashion is concerned with the symbolic and aesthetic value of clothing, and is therefore distinct from ordinary, functional clothing. Fashion could be seen as a concept, in which fashion is "a belief [...] manifested through clothing"; in other words, this idea defines fashion as a symbolic product, not a material one (Kawamura 2005, p. 1). Viewing fashion as a concept allows seeing it as a socially constructed idea of clothing, a system that involves a particular structure of "hierarchy of success, reputation and power" (Kawamura 2004, p. 15). Clothing is the raw material but fashion comprises symbolically what is much more than mere material clothing. As Kawamura (2005) explains in her book *Fashion-ology*:

> Fashion-ology is also connected with the social production process of the belief in fashion which exists in people's minds, and which begins to have a substance and life of its own. Items of clothing must go through the process of transformation to be labeled as fashion. (p. 1)

So, essentially, fashion entails two very different elements: material, involving design and production processes, and conceptual, embracing cultural and social aspects (cf. Breward 2003; Kawamura 2005; Leopold 1992). Similarly, in this study, the ambiguous term *fashion* is both used for signifying the symbolic and conceptual aspects of fashion, and at times is also used for referring to (material) clothing (in the context of fashion).

The concept of fashion can be approached from a number of different perspectives, such as historical (e.g. Breward 2003; de Marly 1980; Steele 1988), cultural (e.g. Evans 2007; Wilson 1985) and sociological (e.g. Crane

2000; Entwistle 2000; Kawamura 2005; Lipovetsky 1987/1994). It can also be discussed from the standpoints of clothing production (e.g. Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998; Leopold 1992), consumption (e.g. Niinimäki 2011) and sustainability (e.g. Fletcher 2008; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Gwilt & Rissanen 2011; Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008), to mention but a few. Such a diversity also speaks of the fact that fashion is related to many different areas of life on both personal and societal levels. Generally speaking, *fashion* as a term refers to any kind of systemic changes in different areas of life, thus there is common consent that change is a core characteristic of fashion as a system of dress (Entwistle 2000; Kawamura 2005). As Wilson (1985) argues: "Fashion is dress in which the key feature is rapid and continual changing of styles. Fashion, in a sense *is* change [...]" (Wilson 1985, p. 3). Although this sometimes leads to fashion being regarded as a frivolous matter, it nonetheless encompasses and fulfills aesthetic, social, cultural and psychological functions in everyday life (e.g. Entwistle 2000; Wilson 1985).

2.2 Roots of the fashion industry

The current fashion industry has its roots in two distinctive modes of production: the meticulous, craft-based techniques of *couture* (e.g. *Haute Couture*[9]) at one extreme and industrial methods of mass-production at the other. From the beginning, these two modes have been somewhat distinct, not only in techniques but also in prices, reputation and objectives (Lipovetsky 1987/1994), and it is still the case. Couture embodies unique creations tailored to the measurements of the individual customer by finest quality hand-sewing and other craft techniques, whereas mass-production aims at delivering ready-made clothing of a limited number of styles in standardized sizes (e.g. Breward 2003). However, according to Zakim (1998, p. 42): "Industrial revolution, thus, when it came, was not about the replacement of individual identities with standardized persons. It marked, rather, the simultaneous birth of both." Thus, designating these two modes is actually used to portray the range of production systems, as there are variable other modes amongst these two extremes (Beazley 1973; Breward 2003; Leopold 1992). Similarly, Breward (2003) notes:

9 The term *couture* refers here to the different systems of producing couture garments. The most famous of them is the French *Haute Couture* (Kawamura 2005). Couture garments are produced also in other countries, for example in Italy (See e.g. Kawamura 2005; Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998; de Marly 1980).

> Rather than attempt to categorize types of garment into two exclusive camps through a simple identification of the method and place of their manufacture, it may be more useful to view the production of fashionable dress in the modern period as a more complex and interlinked chain, its sections informed to a greater or lesser degree by broader and cross-cutting considerations of labour, skill, technology, distribution, and marketing know-how. (p. 53)

While the different branches of the apparel industry have their own patterns of historical development (Leopold 1992) overall, the legacy of the nineteenth-century practices still influences the way fashionable clothing is produced today (Breward 2003).

Prior to the modern fashion system and the real introduction of 'ready-mades,' which can be dated to the mid-nineteenth century, garments were made by tailors and seamstresses (Perrot 1994; Stansell 1983). Initially, clothes-making in Europe, for instance in France and England, was controlled by a rigid guild system[10]: seamstresses, tailors and merchants, selling fabric, trimmings and clothes, belonged to respective guilds that regulated clothing production and sales (Kawamura 2004; Lemire 1994; Perrot 1994). The households which could not afford those services had them made at home, by wives, daughters and servants; the poor bought or received their clothes secondhand (Stansell 1983; Zakim 1998). While homemade garments were easily distinguished from the well-made, tailored clothing, with the introduction of dressmaker patterns for the mass-market in the mid-nineteenth century, even the homemakers were assisted in sewing well-cut garments (Emery 1997).

A short history of couture production

Although fashion systems, shaped by cultural and political histories as well as economic structures, have distinctive characteristics in different countries (Crane & Bovone 2006), the system established in France is the most significant in terms of the founding and sustaining of couture practices (Kawamura 2004). It therefore serves here as a case that outlines the development of couture clothing production.

In the case of France, the couture end of the fashion industry developed directly out of the already established tailoring practices. During

10 For example, in France the tailors' guild was organized in 1402 (Perrot 1994).

the late seventeenth century, Paris started gaining sartorial leadership in Europe through the conscientious efforts of the French court.[11] The tailors and seamstresses of the time were not in the position to initiate fashion trends; instead they remained as garment producers, and merely executed designs demanded by the court and wealthy women. After the revolution and the resultant disbanding of the guild system and its fixed rules,[12] the fashion authority started shifting to tailors and seamstresses; however, the hierarchical organization of the clothing trade remained (Breward 2003; Kawamura 2004; Perrot 1994). During the nineteenth century, Paris developed into a superior position in the production of the most desirable and luxurious fashions, and the most prominent tailors started gaining reputation as "highly sought-after purveyors of typically Parisian elegance" (Breward 2003, p. 27). The key figure in "the emergence of *grande couture*" (p. 28) was the British couturier Charles Frederik Worth.[13] By a distinctive creative vision, successful business strategies and self-promotion, Worth changed the dynamics of fashion production (Breward 2003), raising the status of the couturier to "an arbiter of taste and catalyst of change" (Milbank 1985, p. 24). At a couture house such as Worth's, the garments were made according to the client's measurements, involving several fittings to ensure a perfectly contouring dress. The couture garments were created individually with the finest craft techniques, thus making each dress unique (Breward 2003). While the couturier, with his new, elevated status, designed the garments and was held as the sovereign artist (Lipovetsky 1994, p. 75) and the quixotic dictator of trends (Breward 2003, p. 52), the dresses were crafted by skilled craftsmen, such as tailors, seamstresses, milliners, embroiderers and lace-makers, in the busy workrooms behind the salon (Kawamura 2004; de Marly 1992).

The foundations of the French fashion trade organization, *Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode,* in operation even today, were also laid in that period, in 1868. Originally the organization consisted of Parisian designers and did not clearly define the different modes of production, but in 1911 couture was separated from other forms of clothes making, and established a strict

11 The French court of Louis XIV, known as the Sun King, made a concerted effort to gain leadership in the matters of fashion and taste in Europe (see e.g. Breward 2003, Kawamura 2004; Lipovetsky 1994; Steele 1998).

12 The guild system, together with its tightly fixed rules, dissolved during the French Revolution in 1789 (White and White 1965 cited by Kawamura 2004).

13 For a more detailed discussion regarding the development of the designer's role see chapter 2.4.

category of *Haute Couture*[14] that distinguished it from other custom-made clothing. The primary purpose of the original organization[15] was to ensure good labor conditions for seamstresses and also to regulate industry practices (e.g. establish the dates for collection presentations and maintain relations with press). Many of these rules are still in effect.[16]

The rise of ready-to-wear and development of industrial methods

Originally, the 'ready-to-wear' system developed out of bespoke tailoring: during seasonal periods of slack, dresses and other garments (particularly loose-fitting and simply-cut garments) were made in advance for stock. This early form of ready-to-wear clothing production preceded any technological changes, and therefore, the methods, organization and location of manufacturing remained at first more or less the same as in bespoke clothes-making (Beazley 1973; Lemire 1994; Leopold 1992). According to English guild records, making clothes in advance was already practiced by the end of the seventeenth century (Lemire 1994); however, ready-made clothing became more widespread by the mid-nineteenth century, for example in France and the United States (Breward 2003; Leopold 1992; Zakim 1998).

Up to that point, "[e]ach piece of every garment was cut out separately with tailors' shears; every seam was laboriously sewn by hand" (Beazley 1973, p. 55). The mechanization of the garment-making and the development towards an actual clothing industry started only in the mid-nineteenth century, with the invention of the sewing machine and technical improvements in cutting and pressing; the mechanization in the making of fabric at the turn of the nineteenth century also played an important role in that development. All garments were still hand-finished for several more decades, but by the beginning of the twentieth century these operations also started mechanizing with the inventions of blind-stitching, button-holing and button-stitching machines (Beazley 1973).

14 Haute Couture is a legally protected and controlled label that can only be used by the fashion houses which have been granted the designation by the French Ministry of Industry. Haute Couture members belong to the Federation's division, *Le Chambre Syndicale de la Haute Couture*. (http://modeaparis.com/en; see also Kawamura 2004).

15 The original organization, *La Chambre Syndicale de la Confection et de la Couture pour Dames et Fillettes*, was founded in 1868 by Charles Frederik Worth (Kawamura 2004).

16 See "The Federation's Objectives and Activities" (http://modeaparis.com/en).

Compared to other industries, the apparel industry mechanized slowly. While the sewing machine transformed the manufacturing of clothing, the development of machinery in the clothing industry did not yet lead to the same dynamics of mass production as in other industries. The technological innovations did not replace workers, nor completely deskill them. The mechanization also had very little impact on the spatial organization of labor (Breward 2003; Leopold 1992). Although some of the skilled tasks formerly performed by a single worker were divided into different processes, most of the procedures still needed a skillful person operating the particular machine (Leopold 1992).

By the second half of the nineteenth century, New York City had become the center of the women's garment industry, with many of its work force immigrants from Europe, including highly skilled tailors but also many unskilled workers who would provide the cheap labor of the city (Belfer 1954; Stansell 1983). The mechanization of garment-making occurring in New York, therefore, provides an instructive case study of the production practices of the time; it has also played a role in the development of today's garment industry.

In the early nineteenth century, garments were produced in small, unsanitary shops, 'sweatshops' (Belfer 1954), or through 'outwork,' work mostly carried out by women working in their own households through the 'sweating' system. The outwork system allowed employers to cut costs to the minimum, as the overhead cost was the lowest. (Beazley 1973; Howard 1997; Stansell 1983). The term 'sweating' represented a subcontract system, in which the work was distributed to outworkers to be done in small shops or homes; the subcontractor was called a 'sweater' (Commons 1901 cited by Howard 1997; Zakim 1998). The sweating system, which was at the core of the industrializing process in many big cities, such as New York and London (Stansell 1983), involved a lot of exploitation. Low wages, overwork and the withholding wages were common, combined with physically challenging conditions of work, leaving women, many of them working as outworkers, often in the most precarious situations (Beazley 1973; Stansell 1983). Practically, "[t]he contractor invested no labor of his own but took his earnings from the 'sweat' of others" (Stansell 1983, p. 94).

The early production system was dominated by the so-called 'whole garment system,' essentially based on tailoring, where an individual skilled worker would sew the entire garment. In the beginning of the twentieth century, a new arrangement, the 'section work system,' was introduced as an attempt to develop a more mechanized mode and adaptation of mass production assembly line techniques. Under this

system, the constructing of a garment was subdivided into singular tasks each given to one operator; thus, for example, one person would work exclusively on sleeves and another on collars (Belfer 1954). The section work system facilitated the development of standardized garments and of larger production runs (Leopold 1992).

The section work could be operated by relatively unskilled labor, thus the wages could be lower and the labor cost per garment less; in addition, the workers could be trained quickly for the rather simple tasks. However, the section work system had several disadvantages. In contrast to the tailoring-based whole garment system, the section system required an investment in machines and a larger plant, as well as a greater inventory of goods going through the manufacturing process. Therefore, setting up a section work business initially required a significant capital investment (Belfer 1954). Section work was also inflexible in terms of production pace. Dividing the work into separate tasks handled by individual workers increased the total manufacturing time substantially and created challenges in synchronizing the pace of each operation. It took approximately three weeks for a section shop to deliver an order, whereas in a whole garment shop it would take only three to four days (Belfer 1954; Leopold 1992). Since section work system proved profitable only with the mass production of garments, it was first introduced into the men's clothing industry; as men's clothing was relatively staple in style, it was easily adapted to large-scale manufacturing methods. In comparison, the women's clothing industry was more concerned with seasonally changing styles. Since one manufacturer might produce even hundred or more women's styles in a season (and therefore a fewer number of garments per style), the whole garment system, which enabled rather quick rendering of the latest styles, was still more practical for the women's clothing industry (Belfer 1954). The whole garment system was considered a better option even in the mid-twentieth century, as seen from Belfer's comment:

> Section work may be more productive, but the jobber and manufacturer may want swift and flexible deliveries which can only be achieved by the whole garment system. The small entrepreneur operating on the whole garment system can survive because he provides the flexibility and elasticity which the industry requires. (p. 192)

As the section work system was not directly accepted within the industry, the industry continued to operate mostly through very small clothing firms well into the twentieth century (Belfer 1954; Leopold

1992). During seasons of higher demand, larger factories took advantage of this network, and outsourced some of the work to small workshops and outworkers. This kept these different systems of production side by side (Beazley 1973). Since the late nineteenth century, it was often the 'jobber' (also called the 'stock house'), a retail and distribution agency, which organized this contract-work and arranged jobs for newly arrived immigrants (Commons 1901 cited by Howard 1997; Leopold 1992). By the 1920s, their role as a middleman had attained a more powerful position in the industry. Taking control over production, design and retailing, the jobber decided what was to be produced, how much and when, and, while he supplied raw materials to contractors and sold the final products to retailers, he subcontracted manufacturing to outside firms. In this position, the jobber was freed from technical problems and labor issues, and could focus on sales. It also allowed him to offer an extensive range of stock and adapt to the changes in demand (Howard 1997; Leopold 1992). The consequences of the jobbing system of the time were not favorable to the manufacturers. At the same time, with the advantage of the increasing power of retailers, the shops began delaying the placing of orders until the last possible moment; the advance orders were instrumental for the manufacturers in the planning out of production in the long term. Due to the decreased production runs and increased uncertainty, in order to survive, manufacturers started underbidding each other; in effect, by lowering the quality of work or cutting wages – or both (Leopold 1992).

Until the Second World War, the fashion industry was still composed of many small private firms and the majority of production was achieved through the whole garment method. After the war, developments in transportation enabled the establishing of larger units in the developing areas outside of the cities. This, however, did not mean the end of small production units. The post-war period also sparked a demand for novel and seasonally changing fashion, to which the larger-scale factories, geared for long runs and bulk production, could not easily respond. Seizing a market opportunity, many small firms started up again (Beazley 1973). Some companies, particularly in the dressmaking section of the industry, even gave up the installed section work system and reverted to the original system (Belfer 1954). Due to the specific path that mechanization took in this industry, production remained fragmented at a time when other industries where already moving towards integration and concentration. Instead, it facilitated a co-existence of variable modes of production (Leopold 1992), discussed further in the following chapters.

While the two extremes, couture and industrial production, developed unintentionally into entirely different systems (Lipovetsky 1994), social, political, economic and cultural factors, together with the technological progress, have shaped both systems and supported their existence (cf. Entwistle 2000). The same factors have given rise also to other, alternative systems.

2.3 The fashion system: modes of production

The term 'fashion system' is defined and discussed in several ways by different scholars (see e.g. Barthes 1983; Crane 2000; Entwistle 2000; Kawamura 2005; Leopold 1992; Wilson 1985). In this study, the term refers to a system that involves the production and consumption of fashion, defining it along the lines of Leopold (1992): "The fashion system is a hybrid subject; it incorporates dual concepts of fashion: as a cultural phenomenon, and as an aspect of manufacturing with the accent on production technology" (p. 101). Based on this logic, the fashion system encompasses the different aspects of design, production, marketing and distribution, and their interconnections (cf. Entwistle 2000; Leopold 1992).

The conditions of fashion are structurally organized to form a globally operating fashion system, or systems, if looking at each key player individually, such as Paris, New York, Milan and Tokyo. The most famous is the French fashion system regulated by the *Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode* (Kawamura 2005). Similar to the original, two-tiered fashion system (Lipovetsky 1987/1994),[17] the fashion industry today includes different types of production between the extremes of *couture* (including *Haute Couture*) and mass-manufactured clothing; in the most common categorization, a third sector, *ready-to-wear* (including *Prêt-à-Porter*),[18] is placed between these two (e.g. Kawamura 2004; Segre Reinach 2005). A wide range of social, political, economic and cultural factors influence the conditions of clothing production (Entwistle 2000), and each sector is organized according to their context and market orientation, as Segre Reinach (2005) explains:

17 For a detailed discussion, see chapter 2.2.

18 The category of *ready-to-wear* could be further divided into *Prêt-à-Porter* (which is the categorization of the institutionalized system of France) and other ready-to-wear (Kawamura 2004).

> The first model, that of couture, hinges on the concept of luxury, seen as a distinction of class. The second model, *Prêt-à-Porter*, focuses on the concept of modernity of 'life-style.' The third model, fast fashion, is centered on versatility, considered as the immediate gratification of new 'temporary' identities. (p. 47)

The types of production are sorted according to the quality of garments, mode of production, market sector and retail outlet. For example, the category of *couture* stands for high quality, made-to-measure garments, which are constructed from luxurious fabrics with fine craftsmanship, and priced highly. Generally the brand itself has a significant symbolic value in couture garments, and a lot of prominence is given to their head designers (also known as creative directors). *Ready-to-wear* garments imply good quality in terms of production and materials, and their price varies from medium to high. In this sector the designer and the brand also play a substantial role in the perceived value of the garments. The *mass produced* garments reside at the lower end of the fashion hierarchy. This sector can be divided into further market levels, e.g. middle-market and down-market, depending on their production cost, quality and price; their price generally varying from low to medium. The brand itself may carry weight but designers are generally not highlighted (Kawamura 2004; Malem et al. 2009).

High-end designer labels

The abovementioned categorization is useful in outlining the different sectors of the fashion industry by taking the mode of production into account. However, as Malem et al. (2009) point out, none of these categories adequately identify with what is often referred to as *high-end designer fashion*: the type of fashion which is more refined than general ready-to-wear but not as luxurious as couture. As itemized in Table 1, high-end designer garments generally feature skillful construction and cut, and embody evidently high quality in details such as seams, garment's interior and the overall finishing. They are typically made out of luxurious and/or innovative fabrics and trims (Malem et al. 2009, p. 15). Given the high quality and attention to detail of this type of fashion, and its position halfway between couture and ready-to-wear, high-end designer fashion corresponds to the types of fashion examined in this thesis and thus provides a fitting context also to the labels of this study.

- Use of expensive, luxury and/or innovative fabrics and trims (these may include fabrics with a high natural fiber content i.e. pure silk, wool etc.)
- Evident high quality of cut (fit of the garment)
- Evident high level of skill involved in the manufacturing processes
- Evident high quality of seams (e.g. French seams instead of over-lock)
- Evident high quality of the interior of the garment (e.g. bound seams and high-quality lining)
- Specialist finishing as appropriate (e.g. hand-work)
- Evident high quality of overall finishing
- High level of quality control

Table 1. The central features of high-end designer garments (Malem et al. 2009, p. 15).

Companies within different market categories can also be classified further according to the scale of operation (including the number of employees, annual turnover, number of collections produced per year and number of stockists), for example, into micro, small, medium, large, 'designer brand' and 'superbrand' (NESTA 2008).[19] With the exception of companies which produce solely made-to-measure garments (e.g. bespoke tailoring or dressmaking), micro- and small-size labels generally produce clothing in small batches – they neither manufacture garments with fully industrial methods nor exclusively with the fine craft-based methods of couture. The micro- and small-size labels within the high-end garment sector may also be referred to as 'designer labels' (Malem et al. 2009, p. 15). They may also casually be called 'independent designers,' indicating the autonomous, entrepreneurial position of the label and its designer, financially and practically unconnected to other brands. Many of the established, contemporary fashion houses started their business in similar ways, such as Alexander McQueen (Frankel 2011) and John Galliano (Sischy 2013), and gradually expanded their enterprise. However, some micro- and small-size firms do not seek growth but, rather, wish to maintain their existent size, audience and clientele (e.g. NESTA 2008).

19 The logic of categorization may be different in each country. The Center for Fashion Enterprise divides companies in the following way: *Micro-size company*: 1 to 2 employees and a turnover of 10,000 to 249,000 pounds. Small-size company: 2 to 7 employees and a turnover of 250,000 to 2 million pounds. *Medium-size company*: 10 to 30 full-time employees and a turnover of 2 to 8 million pounds. *Large-size company*: 30 up to 700 full-time employees and a turnover of 8 to 249 million pounds. *Designer brand*: 600 to 2500 full-time employees and a turnover of 250 million to1 billion pounds (e.g. *Comme des Garçons*). *Superbrand*: 2000 to 5000 full-time employees and a turnover of more than 100 million pounds (e.g. *Giorgio Armani*) (NESTA 2008).

As Malem (2008) points out, in order to succeed as an entrepreneurial fashion label, essentially the designer needs to combine artistic and creative endeavors with an understanding of business strategies and the wider context in which it is operating. Controlling every aspect of the business is one of the keys for this union. On the commercial side, this includes an ability to manage finances; on the creative side, it includes the protection of the individual design philosophy and uniqueness. According to Malem, designers should not compromise their individual design philosophy too much for the business operation; on the contrary, articulating it throughout the business can reinforce the uniqueness (Malem 2008).

2.4 Fashion designers' role in the current fashion industry

The profession of a fashion designer as we know it now, is a rather modern conception: the rise of fashion design as an occupation can be traced back to the mid-nineteenth century (Breward 2003; Kawamura 2004; de Marly 1980), and a preliminary form of that profession to the eighteenth century (de Marly 1980; Milbank 1985; Parmal 1997). A range of factors, such as developments in the manufacturing processes, technologies and business strategies (including distribution, retailing and marketing methods) and changes in the cultural and societal environments, have influenced the emergence of fashion design as a profession (Breward 2003) and its rise to eminent status (Kawamura 2005).

Previous to these developments, no particular person was assigned to design garments; instead, for example in Europe, the courts and aristocracy generally set the tone of the latest fashion (Breward 2003; Kawamura 2004), with some of the styles created by artists (de Marly 1980). Nevertheless, the styles of dress moved on very slowly (Parmal 1997). In the case of France,[20] clothes making was carried out by dressmakers and tailors, but within the prevailing guild system, with their responsibility lying merely in the cutting-out and construction of the garment. They did not have great influence over the direction of fashion, but, rather, realized ideas and the requests of their clients (Breward 2003; de Marly 1980).

20 The origins of fashion can be traced back to Italy in the mid-fourteenth century and was associated with the development of urban life and the rising middle class, whereas modern fashion originated in Paris (Kawamura 2004; Steele 1988). France is used here as the case because of its significant influence over the emergence of modern fashion and the development of the fashion designer's role.

Tailors and dressmakers also remained relatively anonymous, owing to the fact that their names as the makers were rarely mentioned before the eighteenth century (Perrot 1994).

The first professionals to be recognized as fashion specialists were the *marchandes des modes*, merchants, who supplied bonnets, scarfs and an assortment of other trims (e.g. feathers, flowers, lace, ribbons) (Breward 2003; Parmal 1997).[21] However, even though a *marchande des modes* might have had some influence over the direction of fashion, by no means did she create designs single-handedly, and thus, could not be regarded a fashion designer (Breward 2003), who would launch "new lines at her own establishment, regardless of the opinions of her customers" (de Marly 1980, p. 11).

In the mid-nineteenth century, Charles Frederick Worth, initially a salesman for textile merchants, started changing the nature and status of dressmaking and was later credited as the "first modern couturier" (Milbank 1985, p. 24) and the "father of couture" (Breward 2003, p. 28). Working in the field of textiles for a number of years, Worth gradually developed expertise in dressmaking; by 1858 he established his own dressmaking business. There were respected dressmakers even before and at the time of Worth, who were also creating their own designs and assembling them as collections; yet, he gained an advantage with clever business strategies. Through his earlier profession Worth had connections with the French textile industry, which enabled him to have access to a great variety of fabrics and even have some fabrics made exclusively for him. Therefore, unlike other couturiers, Worth showed his creations in a range of fabrics, offering more choices to his clients. After the early success as a dressmaker and growing social connections, Worth attained a chance to dress the empress – which was the definitive step toward his fame as an arbiter of taste in dress (Breward 2003; de Marly 1980; Perrot 1994).

While his commercial success was established in skillful retail and marketing practices, dependable supply chains and significant social networks, his fame was also supported by self-promotion and careful maintenance of a reputation. Worth considered himself not a mere dressmaker but more of an artist, a singular author, whose creations reflected his unique aesthetic and taste. To ensure the realization of his vision, he controlled the creation process from the design to the

21 The most famous *marchande de mode* was Mlle Rose Bertin, who dressed Queen Marie-Antoinette. Bertin was famous enough to be regarded as "the minister of fashion" (de Marly 1980, p. 11).

final product, and even advised which hat or shawl should accompany a particular dress. In contrast to the anonymity of the past, his products would also carry his name in their tags (Breward 2003; de Marly 1980).

The scale of business Worth had created (by 1871 he had a staff of 1200) and the status he had attained, transformed the methods of dressmaking and the role of dress designers. In his system, Worth had taken control over design, production and distribution processes (de Marly 1980). In addition, his couture house was the first to expand its business towards international markets by creating a system that allowed the designs to be reproduced in other countries under Worth's name (Font 2012). Namely by Worth's effort, clothing started to be designed by professionals according to their own vision instead of their customers' wishes. As Lipovetsky has discussed, the new system initiated the shifting of power and design decisions from the clients to the tailor, elevating them from craftsmen into designers of their own taste:

> This shift marks the unmistakable historical novelty of haute couture... [This] gave way to an era in which articles of clothing were invented, created from start to finish, by professionals according to their own 'inspiration' and taste. The woman became a consumer, albeit at the level of luxury, while the couturier was transformed from artisan into sovereign artist. (Lipovetsky 1994, p. 75)

Couturiers of the time were in charge of designing the dresses, and the staff in the workrooms, including patternmakers, cutters, seamstresses and embroiderers, would first make the dress as a toile for the first fitting, and then construct it into the final creation (Breward 2003; de Marly 1980). While Worth himself was a master of materials and approached designing through examining the character of the fabric (de Marly 1980), having an understanding of craft was not a necessity for becoming a designer-couturier. Famous couturiers of later years entered fashion from diverse backgrounds and with varying skills; some couturiers could make fine clothes but could not draw, or vice versa. For instance, Madeleine Vionnet was a trained dressmaker before she became a *couturiére*, and used her particular method of draping toiles on an artist's wooden mannequin (de Marly 1980). Cristobal Balenciaga mastered both cut and construction of garments; he designed through the cloth itself, never through sketching. As evidence of his technical prowess and dedication to his craft, he would even make one dress each season entirely by himself (Sorkin 2009). In contrast, Christian Dior did not know much about constructing garments

before he started (de Marly 1980). In fact, it was the beginning of a system where the designer would be the key figure in the production of fashion regardless of the amount he/she participated in the actual designing and manufacturing processes (Kawamura 2005).

The same applies today, with fashion designers working in significantly different ways from one another and their involvement in the design process varying greatly. Of the contemporary fashion designers, for example, Karl Lagerfeld, the creative director of *Chanel*, relies on sketching (Ellison 2015), whereas Rick Owens, the designer behind his eponymous label, does not sketch at all; instead he drapes fabric on a mannequin or manipulates the toiles of his past designs (*Hypebeast* 2015). Rei Kawakubo, the designer and creative mind behind *Comme des Garçons*, who never had a formal training in fashion, creates her collections on a rather conceptual level. Kawakubo communicates either through sketches or only verbally, and ultimately the design team materializes her ideas, as she explains:

> I begin with a much more abstract drawing and the pattern-makers need to be able to interpret what I'm trying to do. They help me to design [...] There is no standard pattern which the patterners work with and adapt each time. They are expected to innovate. (Rei Kawakubo, cited by Sudjic 1990, p. 31)

Generally speaking, ideation, the initial creation of an idea in design, can take the form of conceptual, practical and materially embodied activities (Laamanen & Seitamaa-Hakkarainen 2014); it commonly progresses through sketching, draping or patternmaking – or through all of them (e.g. Rissanen 2013; Sinha 2002). Besides these traditional hands-on methods, the design process can include various computer assisted design (CAD) technologies (Bye & Sohn 2010). In general, the design process implies concept development, the creation of the shape and overall aesthetic of the garment and the selecting of fabrics, trimmings and color palette. The realization of the (sample) garment can also be considered as a phase of design; the design process may therefore entail patternmaking, construction, finishing and, potentially, fabric manipulation such as dyeing and other treatments (Craik 2009; Jenkyn Jones 2002; Sinha 2000).

A fashion designer's role and responsibilities depend on the market position and the scale of business. Some designers act as creative directors, usually translating their ideas through sketches to a team of assistants and supervising that work, or they may distribute part of the design-related work, like pattern and sample making, to assistants. Designers may also be actively involved in the different design phases and might execute

parts of those phases themselves (Kawamura 2005; Renfrew & Renfrew 2009; Sinha 2002), for example merging the skills of fashion design and pattern cutting (cf. Rissanen 2013). Besides the fashion design process itself, designers may be engaged in other activities, such as gathering and analyzing information about their target customer and current trends. They might also participate in phases related to manufacturing, quality control and distribution (Sinha 2002). The designer can have multiple working relations with the team members and other fashion business professionals such as fabric suppliers, retailers, accountants and PR agents. Therefore, besides being creative, the ability to communicate is crucial (Renfrew & Renfrew 2009).

According to Sinha's (2000; 2002) study of the designer's role and responsibilities in the fashion design process, the company's size influences the designer's involvement in the manual phases of design, such as the sample-making process. For example, in the bigger companies sketching was the main tool for designing, whereas in the smaller companies draping was more evident. The designer/owner of the smallest company (with a staff of three people) examined in the study, was the most engaged in the manual phases of design, such as sample making, and in addition to experimenting with dyeing processes and fabric manipulation, he also dyed fabrics at his studio. Likewise, designers' actual influence on design decisions – regarding color, fabric, style, concept and manufacturing – varied greatly in different companies. The designer of the smallest company ranked highest in his ability to influence design decisions. Therefore, as Sinha points out, the utilizing of 'design thinking' – the creative logic particular to designers – also within the business operations could be a potential method for building an innovative business (Sinha 2000).

According to Ruppert-Stroescu and Hawley (2014), creativity in fashion design can take any form from 'leadership creativity,' virtuosity in divergent, experimental and insight-based thinking, to 'adaptive creativity', which focuses more on convergent thinking and implies more awareness of analytical methods, operations, management and technology. Therefore, some fashion designers are more associated with the role of a radical innovator, while others may act more as barometers of current trends (cf. Steele 1988).

Kawamura (2005, p. 64) argues that the star quality of a designer has also become important, in some cases even more significant than the actual skills of the designer, "[i]n today's fashion, the focus is less on the actual clothing or its manufacturing process, but rather, on the

designer who can produce and reproduce a glamorous, attractive image to the consumers." Led by the example of Charles Frederick Worth, today some fashion designers may in fact have celebrity status. Often designers and their clothes portray a certain lifestyle and a worldview that their customers might identify with, and thus, having such an identifiable author, the star designers also elevate the symbolic worth of the products they create. In such a system it is irrelevant how much the designer is involved in the garment production (cf. Kawamura 2005). The product does not need the touch of the designer to create a personal feel as it comes from 'knowing' the designer through his public image.

Gwilt (2009; 2011) outlines a model depicting how the designer's centralized role in the design and production processes could foster sustainability in fashion. She suggests that in taking a centralized role in the company, a designer can develop a holistic approach to the life-cycle of garments, and apply different strategies in the phases of design and production:

> The designer works in a complex relational system that provides the opportunity to engage with a wide variety of skilled practitioners and companies in the creation of fashion clothing. From the centralized position the designer can influence and impart new (sustainable) information that aids in the design and production of 'better' garments. (Gwilt 2011, p. 67)

2.5 Implications of the current fashion system

Today, the fashion industry is increasingly driven by 'fast fashion' – fashionable, inexpensive garments unbound to the traditional fashion calendar (i.e. spring/summer and fall/winter) (e.g. Christopher et al. 2004; Gabrielli et al. 2013; Joy et al. 2012). As one of the leading systems of fashion production of the present day, fast fashion has become common vocabulary in the media, but has gained growing attention also in academia since the early 2000s (e.g. Anguelov 2016; Barnes & Lea-Greenwood 2006; Bhardwaj & Fairhurst 2010; Crofton & Dopico 2007; Gabrielli et al. 2013; McCarthy 2011; Mihm 2010; Tokatli 2008).

The fast fashion model centers on the ability to identify and respond to current trends and demand as accurately as possible (Barnes & Lea-Greenwood 2006). To accomplish that, the business strategy of fast fashion "aims to reduce the processes involved in the buying cycle and lead times for getting new fashion products into stores" at the right time

(Barnes & Lea-Greenwood 2006, p. 259). An efficient supply chain is the key to achieving that goal (Mihm 2010).[22]

In terms of achieving the lowest cost, off-shore sourcing is a common method: outsourcing manufacturing to low-cost factories in countries such as China, Bangladesh and India particularly decreases labor expenses (Allwood et al. 2006). However, the distances entailed in global sourcing, including the internal processes at both ends, may lead to significantly complex supply chains and long lead-times (Christopher et al. 2004).[23] Since lifespans of particular fashions are often short and volatile, long lead-times delay the distribution of garments and might result in revenue losses in the final market. As Christopher et al. (2004) point out: "In these short life-cycle markets, being able to spot trends quickly and to translate them into products in the shop in the shortest possible time has become a pre-requisite for success" (p. 368).

Therefore, as Christopher et al. (2004) explain, for keeping a competitive edge – which practically entails delivering an accurate amount of up-to-date merchandise onto the market – many companies have shifted their focus from price towards a faster response. This has been accomplished with the help of demand-driven and information-based agile supply chains and a strategy called 'quick response.' In essence, retailers use point-of-sale data to analyze trends to determine further orders, and therefore, prefer small but frequent in-season orders. For maintaining this flexibility in orders, the companies have a wide network of suppliers, which they utilize according to the situation; domestic suppliers are often used to compress time. Close linkages and information sharing across the whole supply system is crucial for a successful operation of the quick response strategy (Christopher et al. 2004).

The case of Zara

Some of these production and sourcing methods common to the current fashion industry – therefore even the phenomena of fast fashion – have been traced back to the methods developed by the Spanish company *Inditex* (Crofton & Dopico 2007; McCarthy 2011). Although one of the largest fashion retailers in the world, the company is probably better known

22 Supply chain refers to "the flow of goods from the very first process encountered in the production of a product right through to the final sale to the end consumer" (Bruce et al. 2004, p. 152).

23 Lead-time is the time it takes to design, make and ship the product (Christopher et al. 2004).

by consumers through the brand *Zara*, which belongs to Inditex group, amongst seven other brands (Inditex 2015).[24]

From the very beginning, Inditex founder Amancio Ortega Gaona was attentive to market demand; acquiring customers' feedback through talking to his store managers on a daily basis, he created products to match customers' preferences. Similarly, a few other principles have remained since the beginning, such as the holding of only a minimal inventory, an attempt to 'democratize' fashion by offering fashionable clothing for reasonable prices, and showing disinterest towards advertising (Crofton & Dopico 2007; Abnett & Amed 2015).[25]

The practice of tracking and responding rapidly to market demand was one of his founding ideas, and it still lies at the core of Zara's success. Spotting trends and browsing other designers' collections, Inditex designers continuously seek information about current looks and customers' likings. The most important sources of information are the detailed daily sales reports of each store, which in turn enable a more precise response to the demand (Crofton & Dopico 2007). That is how Inditex plans only about fifteen percent of its production in advance – the rest is made in response to customer feedback in season (Abnett & Amed 2015). The new items (either updated versions of the older ones or completely new styles) are delivered in small batches to the stores twice a week (Crofton & Dopico 2007; Inditex 2015).

Rapid production and its adaptation to the current demand are facilitated by a system similar to vertical integration: its suppliers are subsidiaries that are tightly connected to and controlled by the headquarters in Spain, and most of them are also located close to its distribution center (Crofton & Dopico 2007; Abnett & Amed 2015). To a large extent, Inditex's success can be attributed to its methods of just-in-time production and enabling the reduction of the design-to-retail cycle down to as little as three to six weeks.[26] The speed and flexibility of the cycle is valued more than cost-effectiveness; therefore Inditex is generally willing

24 The first Zara store was opened in 1975. Inditex was founded in 1979, as a holding company for the expansive network of subsidiaries (Crofton & Dopico 2007; Abnett & Amed 2015; Inditex 2015).

25 While fast fashion generally aims to 'push' products at customers through extensive marketing, Inditex spends only 0.3 percent of revenues on advertising; in comparison, H&M spends 3.5 percent (Crofton & Dopico 2007).

26 Some of these ideas are adopted from the concept 'lean manufacturing' (Abnett & Amed 2015), borrowed from the automaker Toyota. Lean manufacturing focuses on eliminating waste, including time, money and resources (Bruce et al. 2004).

to spend more on local suppliers and expensive airfreight than it would for a low-cost manufacturing site further away. Postponing production closer to actual demand allows for keeping up with and responding to current trends, and cuts costs by avoiding producing anything already passé (Crofton & Dopico 2007; McCarthy 2011; Tokatli 2008). Inditex's apparently successful business formula has inspired many other companies to adopt its practices (Crofton & Dopico 2007; McCarthy 2011).

Implications of fast fashion

Fast fashion does not strive merely for successful supply chain strategies, but also for the quick translation of fashion presented at the *Prêt-à-Porter* fashion shows (cf. Barnes & Lea-Greenwood 2006; von Busch 2008, p. 79; Joy et al. 2012; Kawamura 2005; Segre Reinach 2005; Tokatli 2008). With the help of such strategies, companies are able to offer these styles for very affordable prices, and yet they may well result in a compromised quality. Coupling style and affordable prices, as Gabrielli et al. (2013, p. 207) argue, the "fast fashion model can satisfy the post-modern individual's need to build an eclectic personal identity by combining many different elements that are temporary and unstable." As a side effect of the accelerated fashion production, it also supports consumerism and the high turnover of garments, which in turn generate more impact on the environment (cf. Fletcher 2010; Niinimäki 2011). In addition, planned obsolescence, concerning the short life of style, function or material quality as a means to encourage the purchasing of new objects, plays one part in the current consumption habits (Chapman 2014).

Time – more precisely, speed – as one of the crucial elements of the fast fashion system, has provided the competitive advantage to fast fashion companies. While efficiency and speed associated with large-scale production are not exactly the causes of environmental and ethical problems, the pressure of rapid production, often coupled with the keeping of manufacturing costs to the minimum, heightens the risk of ignoring environmentally and ethically correct practices (cf. Barnes & Lea-Greenwood 2006). The problem with large-scale manufacturing is that any harmful action has the potential for a vastly negative impact on people or the planet (cf. Abnett & Amed 2015). While the fashion industry as a whole has developed immensely, some things have changed so little that some of what Friedrich Engels observed in his *The Conditions of the Working-Class in England in 1844*, still rings true: "It is a curious fact that the production of precisely those articles which serve the personal adornment

of the ladies of the bourgeoisie involves the saddest consequences for the health of the workers" (Engels 1844, cited by Wilson 1985).

Generally speaking, the fashion industry is conspicuous in its contribution to environmental problems, such as the use of toxic chemicals, energy and water consumption, and the generation of high volumes of waste. The environmental concerns of the textile and clothing industry begin even before the garment-manufacture stage, in fiber and textile production, and thus encompass the entire production phase. Various chemicals used in the different stages of fiber production, in dyeing and other finishing processes, pose risks to both human health and the environment, especially soil and water. Moreover, transportation, with garments increasingly traveling across the globe from the manufacturer to the consumer, contributes to atmosphere pollution. The use-phase of garments, mainly washing, drying and ironing, adds another significant layer of environmental impact in terms of energy consumption (see e.g. Allwood et al. 2006; Fletcher 2008; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Gardetti & Torres 2013; Rissanen 2013), and, because consumers are getting used to fast and cheap fashion, the disposing of barely used garments is common. For example, in the US, 15.13 million tons of textile waste was generated in 2013, out of which only 2.30 million tons was recovered. The rest, 12.83 million tons, was finally discarded (EPA 2015). Recycling facilities, such as UFF, report receiving garments that have never been used, still in packages or with sales tags attached (Jompero & Pajari 2013).

The clothing and textile industry is still entangled in various ethical issues, such as unfair labor practices, including unsafe working conditions, child labor, forced labor, unreasonable overtime, low wages, health and safety hazards, as well as psychological and physical abuse (see e.g. Allwood et al. 2006; Dickson et al. 2009; Fletcher 2010; Gardetti & Torres 2013). Safety in factory buildings in the third world is of general concern, with routinely hidden violations and faked factory inspections (Clifford & Greenhouse 2013). While the worst-ever accident in the textile sector happened in Bangladesh in 2013 when a factory building called Rana Plaza collapsed, killing 1,129 people and leaving approximately 2,500 people injured (e.g. Burke & Hammadi 2012), smaller accidents, such as factory fires in Pakistan in 2012 killing over 300 people (e.g. Boone 2012), are not uncommon. Although inappropriate working conditions and sweatshops[27] are often associated with Asian countries (e.g. McIntyre & Ramstad 2011),

27 Today, a sweatshop refers to crowded, dangerous and low-paying workshops (Ross 2004).

similar settings, with mostly immigrant labor, have also been found in the United States and Europe. For instance, still in the late 1990s Los Angeles's garment industry was described as "a powerhouse combining twentieth-century technology and glamour with nineteenth-century sweatshops" (Nutter 1997, p. 199), and unjust working condition and wages are still reported (Garment Worker Center 2015). Likewise, poor working conditions and very long working hours (even up to a hundred hours a week) are detected amongst migrant workers in factories (often Chinese-owned) in Italy (Wu & Sheehan 2011; see also Deserti 2014).[28]

2.6 Alternative paradigms: sustainable and slow fashion

One of the significant alternatives to the prevailing fashion system that has emerged in recent years is the *sustainable fashion* paradigm, thus deserving closer examination. This could be seen as a response to the increasingly common view that garment production has a harmful impact on natural resources and is responsible for unfair working conditions in various phases of the production chain (e.g. Fletcher 2008; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Gardetti & Torres 2013; Gwilt & Rissanen 2011). 'Sustainable fashion'[29] is a term formed in the spirit of sustainable development (Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008), a concept already known from the often-cited report, *Our Common Future* from 1987.[30] This document defined sustainable development through a statement: "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987). The groundwork of the sustainability paradigm was laid already earlier, for instance in the study published in 1972 as the *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al. 1972), which called for new sustainable and social policies (Margolin 2007).

The concept of 'sustainable fashion' has not been explicitly defined; instead it serves as an over-arching term for ideas, efforts and actions

28 More detailed summaries of the current environmental and social concerns of the fashion industry are included in the articles *Less But Better: Towards Sustainable Fashion* (Aakko & Rabkin 2013) and *Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges* (Aakko & Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2013).

29 The term 'sustainable fashion' was coined in the early 2000s. It added a new word to the existing lexicon for environmentally friendly fashion; labels such as 'green fashion' and 'eco-fashion' were already used in the 1990s (Thomas 2008).

30 The Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development *Our Common Future* is also known as the *Brundtland Report*.

aimed at minimizing the environmental impact of clothing production and consumption, as well as addressing ethical issues, covering topics related to workers, consumers, animals and society (cf. Thomas 2008).[31] While these terms 'environmental,' 'ethical,' and 'societal' can be kept conceptually apart, practically they often interconnect. Generally speaking, sustainability in fashion aims to direct clothing production and consumption towards minimizing pollution and waste as well as eradicating unfair industry practices, including the exploitation of people but also animals (Fletcher 2008; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Sorenson 2011). An ideal interpretation of the term suggests that clothing production and consumption should not cause any harm at all to people or the planet; on the contrary it could be directed to "enhance the well-being of the people who interact with it and the environment it is developed and used within" (Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008, p. xvii).

When fashion, which is essentially rooted in change (Kawamura 2005), is paired with sustainability, denoting preservation and continuity, the term 'sustainable fashion' might appear an oxymoron (cf. Clark 2008). Nevertheless, it serves as a base for important discussions related to environmental and social issues of textile and clothing production, similar to other areas of sustainable development (see e.g. Allwood et al. 2006; Dickson et al. 2009; Fletcher 2008; Fletcher & Grose 2012; Fletcher & Tham 2015; Gardetti & Torres 2013; Gwilt & Rissanen 2011; Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008; Niinimäki 2014).

Social implications of the fashion industry, such as unfair working conditions, and health and safety hazards, are often addressed through voluntary corporate social responsibility initiatives, which aim to decrease the environmental impact of their operations and to improve labor standards. These include both their own internal processes and their interaction with other parties (Dickson et al. 2009). Many clothing companies are reportedly incorporating social responsibility into their agendas; by now, many fast fashion chains report largely about their ethical and ecological commitments on their websites.[32]

At times, these actions are also addressed under the term 'slow fashion.' The use of these terms, 'sustainable fashion' and 'slow fashion', is convenient for indicating sustainable practices behind the product; however, it is difficult to categorize fashion brands under these labels,

31 We summarized some of these approaches in the article "Less But Better: Towards Sustainable Fashion" (Aakko & Rabkin 2013).

32 See e.g. H&M (http://about.hm.com/AboutSection/en/About/Sustainability.html) and Uniqlo (http://www.uniqlo.com/us/social-responsibility)

since there is no standard to define them exactly. As demonstrated through the visual model depicting the concept of sustainable fashion (Figure 2; a detailed discussion in article # 2), it encompasses an array of different aspects to consider. Some might entitle themselves 'sustainable fashion,' some 'slow fashion,' yet there are also brands that do not flaunt their sustainable credentials while still adhering to environmental and ethical principles.

Slow fashion as an alternative system

Many approaches towards sustainability in fashion are focused on specific, practical solutions that address environmental concerns and are easily scalable. Even some of the fast fashion giants are making such efforts towards more sustainable practices.[33] This is a significant move on their part, since their large-scale operations also have substantial environmental and societal impact. Undeniably, however, fast fashion conflicts on a fundamental level with the goals of sustainability: according to the great speed of change and disposability at the core of the philosophy of fast fashion, sustainability is hard to achieve.

A real challenge in achieving sustainability in fashion is to aim for change on the system level and in the long term (Fletcher 2009). The holistic and reflective approach of 'systems thinking,' is one of the models espoused to foster the profound change needed for the fashion industry to integrate sustainability at the core level. According to Meadows (1999), systems thinking is a method for envisioning and redesigning even large systems,[34] and key to intervening in the structure of any system is to find leverage points. By acting on such points, even small changes in influential places in the system could lead to large shifts. One of the most powerful leverage points (while also one of the most resistant) is the level of paradigms – the sources of systems. When aiming to transform a system, it is important to learn about the prevailing system, and analyze its

33 For example, H&M is the second biggest user of certified organic cotton in the world (Textile Exchange 2014) and is supporting transparency by publishing their supplier factory information (http://about.hm.com/en/About/sustainability.html). They have also launched a garment-recycling scheme in order to reduce the amount of textile waste ending up in landfill (http://about.hm.com/en/About/sustainability/commitments/reduce-waste/garment-collecting.html).

34 A 'system' refers to any set of elements that are interconnected and coherently organized serving a certain purpose; these functions may be intentional or unintentional (Meadows 1999).

weaknesses and strengths, and then keep persistently speaking and acting from the perspective of the new one (Meadows 1999). The dominant system of fashion, culminating in the 'fast fashion' model, reflects a boundless, globalized pursuit of growth, and has resulted in environmentally detrimental and ethically questionable practices on a large scale. Therefore, the shift to sustainability has to equally occur on the systems level by all possible means. However, while that remains the challenge, the countless actors, such as environmentalists, researchers, educators, designers, consumers, activists and volunteers, are envisioning better methods, reshaping the system and addressing the complex (including the socio-economical and ecological) issues of sustainability. Moreover, according to Margolin (2007), designers in particular are among those whose contributions, through both their discursive and practical power, are crucial "to the building of a more humane world" (p. 4).

'Slow fashion,' based on the philosophy of slow culture, is proposed as one system-level approach for sustainability (Fletcher 2010). At the core of slow fashion is the search for balancing the fashion system together with economic, social, and ecological systems (Clark 2008; Fletcher 2010). Conceptually slow fashion derives from *slow culture*, which is described as "a process whereby everyday life… is approached with care and attention… an attempt to live in the present in a meaningful, sustainable, thoughtful *and pleasurable* way" (Parkins & Craig 2006, p. ix). In practice, the slow approach to fashion is comparable with the *Slow Food* movement, in which the core idea is to link the pleasure of good food with a commitment to community and the environment. The taste, quality, and rich variety of food is cultivated through local cuisines and old-fashioned food traditions (Parkins & Craig 2006).[35] Embracing a similar philosophy, slow fashion favors small-scale production and local resources, which support distributed economies (Clark 2008). In the slow approach to fashion the "care and attention" (cf. Parkins & Craig 2006, p. ix) is directed towards the design and production process and its impact on society and the environment. Instead of mass manufacturing, slow fashion promotes small-scale production and traditional craft techniques; instead of quantity, it emphasizes quality (Clark 2008; Fletcher 2010).

35 The Slow Food movement began in the 1980s as a reaction to fast food (Parkins & Craig 2006). The Slow Food Manifesto from 1989 declares: "In the name of productivity, the 'fast life' has changed our lifestyle and now threatens our environment and our land (and city) scapes." (www.slowfood.com/filemanager/Convivium%20Leader%20Area/Manifesto_ENG.pdf)

Since fashion connotes change, fast/slow fashion could be read as clothing that is consumed fast/slow. Even so, as Fletcher (2010) explains, the terms signify more than just the tempo of production and consumption. Therefore, fast does not only involve speed, but also producing and selling garments in large quantities; the focus of fast fashion companies is on achieving continual economic growth, with the help of low-cost materials and labor, short lead times and large volume production. In contrast to that model, slow fashion represents a different worldview in terms of economic logic, values and goals – it is a symbol for a worldview that emphasizes small-scale production, local resources and traditional craftsmanship (Fletcher 2010). It underlines quality, moves at a slower pace and disregards trends. The slow approach to fashion also stresses the importance of emotions attached to the clothes we own, which can strongly support a garment's life span much beyond the fashion season (Clark 2008; cf. Niinimäki 2010). Different tempos, fast and slow, can be used in a balanced way in the fashion system and enhance quality not only in terms of the product but also in business practices and working conditions (Fletcher 2008; 2010).

2.7 'Artisanal' and craft

The adjective *artisanal* comes from the word *artisan*, which refers to "a person who is skilled at making things by hand." It stems directly from its Italian origin, *artigiano,* which in turn derives from the Latin word *ars* (*art*), and means *skill*. As a synonym, an *artisan* can also be titled a *craftsman* (or a *craftsperson*), which is defined similarly as "a person who is very skilled at doing something" and also as "a person who makes beautiful objects by hand." Additionally, an *artisan* is defined as someone who "produces something in limited quantities often using traditional methods" (Merriam-Webster dictionary; Oxford Dictionaries). Therefore, an artisanal product does not need to be *entirely* hand-made, but artisanal methods can be used as a part of its production. As Campbell (2005, p. 28) clarifies: "the contrast is not really between hand production and machine production, but rather between a production system in which the worker is in control of the machine and one in which the machine is in control of the worker."

While *artisanal* pertains to the *work of artisans,* in other words, things made by hand by a skilled person, the type of craft is not confined to anything specific. Artisanship is easily associated with traditional craft-based professions, such as that of blacksmiths and carpenters, but especially today the attribute *artisanal* is also tagged to other forms of

work, ranging from coffee roasting to fashion design. Bettiol and Micelli's case study illustrates the mastery of an artisan:

> Sacchi was not a blue-collar worker but an artisan who was able to transform the ideas of designers into three-dimension prototypes with his hands. In doing so, he put all his mastery and his knowledge of materials and industrial processes into work, developing and refining models for the designers not just as a simple executor... [Instead he] had the capabilities of understanding the essence of a creative project and using all his practical experience to improve it. (Bettiol & Micelli 2013, p. 8)

While the word 'artisanal' has a different origin to 'craft,' they have a compatible definition: deriving from the old English word *craeft* (meaning strength or skill), craft is commonly defined as "an activity which involves skill in making things by hand" (Frayling 2011, p. 9). This definition looks at craft as a process and a way of doing things (Adamson 2007). The concept and definition of craft has been discussed extensively, and since nothing as comprehensive has been written about the concept of artisanal, it is sensible to look into it through the various ideas about craft.

The word 'craft' has represented different ideas at different times but is now being used to describe various concepts that were historically not grouped together (Frayling 2011; Greenhalgh 1997). Today, the concept of craft (as a process) neither predominantly embodies the similar political undertones of the past (Greenhalgh 1997) nor notions of power and secret knowledge (Dormer 1997a). Nor is craft used as a system for set agendas – 'the politics of craft' – as during the *Arts and Crafts* movement or the *Bauhaus* (e.g. Frayling 2011; Greenhalgh 1997). Today, craft centers mainly on 'making things' (Dormer 1997b) in a more neutral tone. Another perspective to craft – craft as a product – regards it being designed and produced by the same person. Therefore, it follows that "one may say that the craft producer is one who invest[s] his or her personality or self into the object produced" (Campbell 2005, p. 27).

Skill is another central element of craft, and is, yet again, a word complex to define. It is commonly conceived as "knowing how to make something," indicating the combination of knowledge and dexterity (Adamson 2007; Frayling 2011). These ideas are evident in Becker's description of the virtuoso skill of *artist-craftsmen*:

> The specific object of virtuosity varies from field to field, but always involves an extraordinary control of material and

> techniques. Sometimes virtuosity also includes mastering a wide variety of techniques, being able not only to do things better than most others but also to do more things. (Becker 1982, p. 275)

Summing up the different views on skill, it comes down to the question: "Does it refer to manual dexterity, craft experience, conceptual activity, general know-how, or a shifting combination of these four?" (Frayling 2001, p. 74). There is a notable consensus that retaining control over every element of the work is a crucial aspect of skill (e.g. Adamson 2007; Campbell 2005; Frayling 2011).

Expanding skill beyond mere skilled manual labor, in his book *The Craftsman*, Sennett (2008, p. 9) regards craftsmanship as a "desire to do something well for its own sake." This quality does not concern only craftsmen of the likes of carpenters, instead Sennett's philosophy that deals with being *engaged* with the task in question, pertains to any domain of work. This idea of craftsmanship centers on skill developed to a high degree. Skill itself is founded on the unity of hand and head, a dialogue between concrete, bodily practices and thinking (Sennett 2008); a notion derived from the core idea of behind the Arts and Crafts movement, the head, hand and heart going together (Frayling 2011, p. 143). Sennett discusses skill in the context of a "philosophical workshop," where craft stands for the value of experience, arguing, "the craft of making physical things provides insights into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others" (Sennett 2008, p. 289).

As craft separated from design and fine art in the late twentieth century, it also followed that "'having ideas'...can be divorced from a knowledge of how to make things" (Dormer 1997, p. 18). Although craft has evolved into a separate art form, 'the crafts' often remain in a supplemental role, in which they provide something necessary to another entity, for example to an artwork (Adamson 2007). In this supplemental role, craft is "a transparent set of procedures," and thus "it is always essential to the end in view, but in the process of achieving that end, it disappears" (Adamson 2007, p. 13).

One of the lines in the history of craft emphasized it as vernacular tradition, relating to pre-industrial, rural communities and handmade aspects of craft, and representing 'authentic' culture: "the unselfconscious and collective products of a social group, unpolluted by outside influence" (Greenhalgh 1997, p. 31). These romantic ideas are not uncommon today either; the pastoral qualities of craft are often highlighted, and craft is valued "as a symbolic gesture about the value of lifestyle, integrity, and so

forth" (Adamson 2007, p. 104). While this view presents craft mostly in a very positive light, i.e., as a symbolic ideal (Adamson 2007), because some of it is "nostalgia masquerading as history" (Frayling 2011, p. 66), it cannot be taken as a narrative of factual history.

Such meanings of craft are also associated with semi-professional and amateur pursuits. Crafts may serve as hobbies, thus supporting self-gratification, and exist apart from critique, especially from the self-critical nature of the avant-garde (Adamson 2007). The amateur level of craft is also known as the *Do It Yourself* (*DIY*) movement (Atkinson 2006),[36] and more recently the *Maker* movement (Campbell 2005); also the concept of 'hacktivism,' referring to "engaged fashion design" that "creates new forms of hybrids," is an extension of DIY (von Busch 2008, p. 217). As the founder of *Make:* magazine and the *Maker Faire* event, Dale Dougherty notes: "While people today may not treasure this ability out of the same sense of necessity as they once did, they are finding their lives enriched by creating something new and learning new skills" (Dougherty 2012, p. 11). For many, DIY or 'making' is still thriving as a method of making clothes for oneself as a hobby, but for some makers 'making' has become a production method with commercial ambitions – a mode that combines a hobby of making things and producing them for sale. The large online sales platform *Etsy*,[37] with over 1.5 million active sellers, is an example of this type of practice (e.g. Marantz 2015). Crafts have again gained popularity, and the Internet has played a significant role in binding these makers together as a movement (Dougherty 2012).

In terms of the field of clothing, the work of artisans can refer to two very different contexts, folkloric (e.g. Fletcher & Grose 2012; Littrell & Frater 2013) and contemporary (e.g. Farnault 2014; Mora & Volonté 2014). In this study the focus is on the latter. In the strictest sense of the word, 'artisanal' refers to manual work, which was the mode of clothing production before industrialization, as mentioned by Perrot (1994): "The crafts involved in producing ready-to-wear remained artisanal insofar as they were manual" (p. 53). Although little has been written about the concept of 'artisanal' particularly in the context of contemporary fashion,[38] these aspects are commonly discussed through its equivalent, craft, and are of special concern to the field of couture. Despite these quotidian or

36 The DIY movement is defined as a "more democratic design process of self-driven, self-directed amateur design and production activity carried out more closely to the end user of the goods created" (Atkinson 2006).

37 https://www.etsy.com/

38 See a summary of these works in chapter 1.

even disdained undertones regarding craft (e.g. Dormer 1994; Dormer 1997b), it is a crucial element in the production of high-end fashion, namely couture (e.g. Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998; de Marly, 1980; Shaeffer 1993/2007).

In the production of garments, craft has generally a supplemental role, and is a means to achieving a certain aesthetic. A seamstress's work is considered best when it is not directly noticeable. As Koskennurmi-Sivonen (1998, p. 52) notes: "On the outside of the dress this trace realizes the ideal of *emergence*: a [couture] dress should look as if it had been born as such and not reveal any particular trace of the human hand." There is, however, an antithesis to that traditional use of craft in fashion.

Deconstruction in fashion, which started as a critique of the underpinning structures of fashion (emerging first in the eighties) (Gill 1998; Martin & Koda 1993; Lynge-Jorlén 2011), may also be credited for its contribution to shaping the use of craftsmanship in fashion. The vestimentary translation of the philosophy of deconstruction became also a tangible analysis of a garment's construction bringing craftsmanship to the surface: the construction, such as seams, darts, tucks and other finishing details were turned inside out (Gill 1998; Martin & Koda 1993; Lynge-Jorlén 2011). Particularly in the case of Martin Margiela, the embodiment of deconstructed fashion, the artisanal methods and the fine craftsmanship of production did not only supplement the making of high-quality garments, but utilized it as *the* aesthetic. Exposing the construction did not allow artisanship to stay hidden anymore, as the "labor stitched inside as the secrets of a finished garment" (Gill 1998, p. 27), but made it obvious and loudly visible, thus inevitably drawing attention to the making process and the craftsmanship behind the garment.

'Craft' and 'traditional methods' are often mentioned in the context of contemporary fashion but in broad terms, as in this example referring to ideas behind slow fashion: "The slow culture vocabulary of small-scale production, traditional craft techniques, local materials and markets…" (Fletcher 2010, p. 264). By and large such notions remain indefinite, providing merely loose indications about its meaning and scope. As one of its goals, this study aims to unpack the contents and significance of 'artisanal' in the territory of fashion.

3
RESEARCH DESIGN

The grounded theory method has been the general guiding approach throughout this doctoral study. However, as a whole the dissertation consists of smaller studies, which have been composed according to specific methods and logic, and reported as separate papers along the way (the articles from #1 to #5). The final paper (#6) is a conclusion of the entire thesis, and outlines the characteristics of the subject under study, artisanal fashion, making use of all the data collected thus far, and also drawing together ideas from all the preceding papers.

While various methods have been used throughout the study, the grounded theory approach has been utilized as the foundation of this research process. The following section thus describes in detail how the principles of grounded theory have been applied in this study and also illuminates the reasoning of each article individually.

3.1 The grounded theory process

The grounded theory method aims at generating a theory, in other words, identifying conceptual patterns in a particular area; here, a theory refers to substantive theory, which is closely based on the empirical data. The research process entails collecting, coding, and analyzing data simultaneously. It is an inductive research method, thus, the initial decisions for collecting data are based only on a general understanding of the subject, not on preconceived theories. This method of data sampling, known as *theoretical sampling*, is further guided by the emerging patterns of the theory (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 45). In fact, "[t]he analyst who uses theoretical sampling cannot know in advance precisely what to sample for

and where it will lead him" (Glaser 1978, p. 37). Thus, the data collection is not rigidly planned, but, rather, is guided by the emerging concepts – they point to the next step. The collection, as well as the analysis, of data is associated with the generation of theory, and therefore the cases are selected by their theoretical *purpose* and *relevance* in terms of the emerging categories.

Theoretical sampling allows a variety of data to be used – there are no strict limits to the type of data, its collection or use. Thus, it can consist of any materials that are relevant to the studied area, for example, fieldwork (i.e. interviews and observation) and documentary materials (i.e. newspaper articles, biographies, speeches and photographs) (see Glaser & Strauss 1967). Because the main purpose is to generate a new theory, not to verify an existing theory, the criteria of sampling are continually tailored to support the theoretical development. The data can include any groups – both similar and different – that help to further the development of emerging categories. An apparent 'non-comparability' is irrelevant, if the case has value for the analysis (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978). As the comparisons are conceptual, "[t]hese differences do not disqualify a comparison, they enrich it" (Glaser 1978, p. 42).

Grounded theory is induced from the data with a general method of comparative analysis. The crucial relationship between data and theory is a conceptual code, which condenses and conceptualizes the fundamental patterns of a set of elements within the data. (These conceptual codes are often referred to as *categories* and their *properties*; a category refers to a conceptual element of the theory, and a property is a conceptual aspect of a category.) Coding starts immediately after the initial collection of data, guided by the questions: "What is this data a study of?" and "What category does this incident indicate?" (Glaser 1978, p. 57). This process, *open coding*, means comparing incidents to other incidents, grouping them into categories, and naming similar incidents with tentative labels; when these codes stabilize, they become concepts. The analysis then continues by comparing incidents with concepts, and concepts with other concepts. Accurate description and verification are not crucial in grounded theory; more important is the concept that it represents; that is, a relevant theoretical abstraction about the studied subject (Glaser & Strauss 1967; Glaser 1978).

Coding is essentially accompanied with memo-writing – a continuous process of recording abstracted ideas about the concepts and the relationships between them. The memos, which explicate the hypothetical relationships between concepts, are the fundamental blocks in generating

a theory (Glaser 1978). As the process of analysis is led by theoretical sampling (which implies a joint collection, coding and analysis), much of the "complex analysis is done *while* collecting data, not only after the data is finally collected," and it therefore requires "going back and forth between data and concept as one generates theory" (Glaser 1978, p. 36–37). The theory occurs around a core category, which "relates to most other categories and their properties, since through these relations the core category accounts for most of the ongoing behavior in the substantive area being researched" (Glaser 1998, p. 135). The core category has the most explanatory power; it integrates the theory and grounds its focus (Glaser 1978). When new concepts cease to emerge from the data, the study has reached the point of *theoretical saturation*, suggesting the completion of analysis. The empirical limits of the data, the integration and density of the theory, and the researcher's theoretical sensitivity will guide the process of determining saturation (Glaser & Strauss 1967).

3.2 The phases of research

Although the study was not divided into separate phases of data collection, coding, analysis and synthesis, the research process involved three distinct stages, which I labeled here as *Initiation, Formation* and *Conclusion.* The phases illustrating the evolution of the study are described in detail below.[39]

The *Initiation* phase[40] marks the early stages of my study. It involved investigating the area in general and searching for an interesting research topic. Following the logic of grounded theory research at the outset, I did not have an over-arching research question for the thesis; instead, I had a broad interest in sustainability-related questions in fashion and in small, independent labels. I had recently finished my master's thesis (Aakko 2011), in which I investigated the concept of 'sustainable fashion' with the aim of finding out by what principles and practices the concept is formed. The data of that study consisted mainly of literature sources, such as academic publications, carefully selected websites and journalistic articles, and was complemented with two expert interviews. By applying the general principles of the grounded theory method, I analyzed this data set through open coding and by grouping the salient themes together (Cf. Glaser & Strauss 1967; Strauss & Corbin 1990). The process generated

39 The phases of research, including the data sets collected and all the outcomes, are summarized in Appendix 2.

40 2012 – mid 2013.

eight categories representing the main elements of what is referred to as 'sustainable fashion' (based on the literature and knowledge up to that point); I named them either after their conceptual properties or by using "in-vivo" codes (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 105–108). As the outcome of the study, I sketched out a visual model that depicted the many concepts and methods that aim to integrate sustainability in fashion. Following directly on that work, including its data, methods and the resulting model, I refined these ideas further in my (chronologically) first paper [# 2] "Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges" (Aakko & Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2013).

During this early phase of my research, I was also involved in another project (Baltic Fashion),[41] in which I surveyed the contemporary fashion field in Finland, looking particularly at independent, small-scale labels. In order to gain a better understanding of their realities, I examined four labels in more detail and interviewed the designers/other representatives of these companies (three of them focused specifically on environmental and/or ethical matters in fashion). These semi-structured interviews focused mainly on aspects related to the design process, business models and sustainability. All the labels were micro-sized, entrepreneurial companies in which, besides the design phases, the designer also managed most of the other aspects of the entire business. Although that study did not become actual data for this doctoral thesis (because it did not embody all the ideas of what became my final research topic), the general scouting of the field and these preliminary interviews sparked my initial interest in the designer's multifaceted role in micro/small-scale fashion labels.

By studying the general elements of 'sustainable fashion,' and later surveying small-scale labels, I discovered the area that attracted me the most, namely, the philosophy of 'slow fashion.' Therefore, my next paper [# 1] "Less But Better: Towards Sustainable Fashion" (Aakko & Rabkin 2013) was an overview of slow fashion within the context of sustainability. It was mainly an integrated literary review, supplemented by interviews with two fashion designers who apply many of the principles of slow and/or sustainable fashion.

The *Formation* phase[42] represents the chapter in which I further refined my research interest and established my research questions.

41 *Baltic Fashion* was a collaborative, EU-funded research project between several countries in the Baltic region, which aimed at reviving and developing connections between the different professionals working in the fields of fashion and textiles http://www.balticfashion.eu/.

42 Mid 2013 – 2014.

During my regular personal visits to Paris fashion weeks, I came across independent labels that did not refer to the terms 'sustainable' or 'slow' fashion, even though they integrated some of those practices in their work. They did not identify their label with these terms, and, moreover, even though they talked about somewhat similar issues, such as quality, small-batch production and locality, the center of their focus was still other than sustainable or slow fashion. For example, this group of designers commonly highlighted the garments' intricate cuts, finest fabrics and laborious hand-crafted details, thus paying a lot of attention to aesthetics. In addition, they operated in the context of contemporary, high-end fashion, showing their collections during main fashion weeks (e.g. Paris, New York) – and not in the context of ethical/ecological/sustainable fashion. I was curious to uncover that intersection, and thus started to study the practices and philosophies of these labels.

In essence, during this phase, I redirected my focus towards the artisanal approach to fashion design and production, and chose high-end fashion as the context. I discovered potential cases through referrals from associations and through journalistic articles, and, based on my early observations, invited designers who seemed to share certain core elements relative to this study. In grounded theory terms, I collected the data according to its prospective relevance for the study and the emerging theory (cf. Glaser & Strauss 1967).

The main outcomes of the formation phase were papers [#3] "Artisanal and Slow: A Case of Anna Ruohonen" (Aakko 2014) and [#4] "Creative Control in Sustainable Fashion" (Niinimäki & Aakko 2014).[43] Paper #3 is a case study of one designer compiled from interviews with the designer and a member of staff, visits to the atelier in Paris, the showroom in Helsinki, a fashion show, newspaper articles and the company's website. As a singular case, that study was an initial exploration of the concept of artisanal fashion, and aimed to outline some of its central (although still preliminary) elements following inductive reasoning. Paper #4 was inspired by the results of the previous paper (#3), namely by the aspects of control in a small entrepreneurial company. The paper introduced case studies of three entrepreneurial fashion companies and examined their ability to control the core functions of their work: design, production, business management/marketing and sales. The data was gathered mainly by interviews with the designer-entrepreneurs; additional information

43 In paper #4 I contributed as the second author and was chiefly responsible for gathering data. See also footnote 3 under the List of publications.

was also obtained with a questionnaire[44] sent via email and from the companies' websites. I created the questionnaire based on my observations and analysis of the data gathered up to that point. It therefore it focused on control-related issues that had arisen in the conversations with my other interviewees.

The *Conclusion* phase[45] indicates the finalizing of the dissertation and the conclusions drawn from the entire study. It consisted of writing the final two papers (# 5 and # 6) and compiling the dissertation manuscript. The paper [# 5] "Crafting Aesthetics: The Meaning of Materiality and the Making Process in Artisanal Fashion" (Aakko 2015) focuses on six of the designers I had interviewed, and utilizes material and visual data from their collections. The analysis was guided by the method of thematic coding (cf. Flick 2009) and illustrated with quotes from the designers. The paper [# 6] "Unfolding Artisanal Fashion" (Aakko; in review) is the concluding article of the entire dissertation, founding the main concepts emerging from the study. It is thus based on all the data collected during the study, analyzed according to the grounded theory method explained in detail in the previous chapter.

As advised in the grounded theory approach, I started reading intentionally about artisanship only after gaining a sufficient amount of insight inductively, based on my empirical findings. In doing so, I aimed to ensure that the concepts originate mainly from the inductive analysis, not from preconceived theories (cf. Glaser & Strauss 1967). However, since the phenomenon has already been named 'artisanal fashion' by the media and members of fashion forums, I have utilized dictionary definitions (cf. Timmermans & Tavory 2012) in decoding the term 'artisanal' and its existing meanings. The main literature review (Chapter 2) was undertaken at the end of the analysis phase. In this final phase of the research, I reflected the findings upon the concept of 'artisanal' together with cultural and societal perspectives.

3.3 The data of the study

The data consists of eleven cases, which were the most relevant considering the study as a whole.[46] This data was gathered through interviewing the head designers of the selected labels; in all cases, the designers were

44 See Figure 1 in paper # 4.

45 From 2015 to mid 2016.

46 Including the preliminary interviews, a total of 13 cases were interviewed.

also central figures behind the companies. What is common to the cases included in this study is that they are small, independent fashion labels employing two to ten people (including the designer and the manager, and potentially pattern cutters, seamstresses/tailors and assistants; often also interns). They produce garments in small quantities (e.g. one to thirty pieces of each garment), and apply artisanal methods as a part of their production. However, the amount or type of craft is not measured, rather, some of them use more artisanal methods and some less. While some of the cases represent artisanal fashion more distinctly than others, all cases were equally important for understanding its various aspects (cf. Glaser 1978).

For forming the core ideas of artisanal fashion, the most informative were the cases of Geoffrey B. Small (2014), Marc Le Bihan (2014) and Anna Ruohonen (2013; 2015). Their companies produce the majority of products in-house, and as designers, they essentially embody the description of an artisanal designer (discussed in chapter 5). Their approach forms a coherent system, and includes the same core elements. The other cases examined in this study, Daniel Andresen (2014), Lumen et Umbra (Fujita 2015), Jan-Jan Van Essche (2014), Titania Inglis (2013), Isaac Reina (2014), Inaisce (Sees 2015), Tara St. James (2013) and Nurmi (2012; 2014) were equally important for either identifying the various aspects of artisanal fashion and its dimensions and/or examining the designer's position in a small company and his/her ability to control its operations (see chapters 5.3 and 5.4). Although some of these cases have their production mainly outsourced, they still used a significant amount of artisanal methods (such as hand-work, fine craftsmanship and small-batch production) in their design and production processes.

The chosen cases focus on either men's or women's clothing, but some of them also design and produce accessories, such as shoes, bags and wallets; one of the cases makes only accessories.[47] All the companies have been operating for at least five years, some for even over thirty years. As the study centers on finding similarities in the working methods and philosophies of these companies regardless of their location, it includes cases from several places: Paris (France), Veneto (Italy), Rome (Italy), New York (USA) and Antwerp (Belgium).

47 Although that one case produced only accessories, in terms of the analysis and the emerging concepts, the case was relevant for this study. As mentioned by Glaser (1978) even apparently different cases can enrich the analysis.

All the interviews were semi-structured, and therefore often evolved as open conversations. The interview schedule[48] included questions about the company (e.g. company size, types of products), its operational structure (the division of work in design, sample-making and production), the design and making processes (e.g. craft, materials and designer's role), philosophy (e.g. ideas behind the label) and product aesthetics. Although the interviews did not comprise of exactly the same set of questions, the abovementioned main themes were discussed with each interviewee. The first interviews focused on more general aspects while, according to the logic of theoretical sampling, the later interviews delved deeper into themes that were emerging from the early interviews and the secondary data.

All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Although this is not the preferred method in the grounded theory process (Glaser 1998),[49] recording was chosen because it allowed for the repeated browsing of data, thus enabling several cycles of analysis. Having the interviews on record was also helpful as the same data was used for several articles during the entire study. Along with other data, the interviews were analyzed with the constant comparative method: by identifying essential concepts, and grouping them into categories (such as 'small batch'), and documenting emerging ideas as memos. These concepts represent the essential features of the phenomena under study, and thus attempt to answer the research questions "*What are the essential features of 'artisanal fashion'?*" and "*What is the significance of the artisanal approach to fashion in the current cultural and societal environment*?" The memos were later utilized when writing up the analysis. Excerpts from the data have been used to describe and illustrate the concepts. Here, again unlike in the typical grounded theory process, the citations include the designers' real names. This was preferred by the designers themselves, but is also makes the account more realistic, and thus more captivating.

48 The interview schedule and examples of the interview questions are presented in Appendix 1.

49 According to the classic grounded theory method, recording the interviews is not advised, because it is time-consuming, and therefore postpones theoretical sampling and analysis. Instead, the researcher is encouraged to start conceptualizing the data already while interviewing, and only write notes during and after the interview. It is also noted that taping the interview might stimulate 'properline data,' an edited truth, in fear of the interview being 'on the record' (Glaser 1998). However, these designers were accustomed to being interviewed, thus recording was thought appropriate during the formal interviews.

To get a thorough understanding of artisanal fashion design, I have used various "slices of data,"[50] and also several methods collecting it; different kind of data provides a broader perspective to the situation under study (Glaser & Strauss 1967). While this study focuses on a limited number of cases, selected on rather strict criteria, the multiple layers of data help to gain a more complete picture of the topic. This complementary material about the companies and their ways of operating was collected from journalistic articles and companies' websites, and by ethnographic methods, such as visiting their ateliers, seeing their collections during showroom sales, presentations and/or fashion shows. In addition, object analysis was partly used to gather data, i.e. looking at the garments, examining and touching them, and at times, even trying them on (cf. Prown 1982; Steele 1998). This helped in forming a more holistic understanding of the artisanal approach to fashion, as materiality is an essential part of it.

I collected other types of supplementary data through participant observation while working (part-time) as a fashion design assistant at a local fashion design studio in New York: a men's wear fashion label sharing some of the same principles of artisanal fashion production as other labels of this study.[51] This experience offered significant insight for forming an understanding of the artisanal approach to fashion. Engaging in the tasks of a design studio (including patternmaking, grading and fabric cutting) allowed me to gather data through observing and making field notes about the work at the studio, including the designer's role and communication with the staff. It was also a chance to observe the flow of the whole supply chain, including the design process, material sourcing, production, marketing, sales, and delivery to the customer. Thus, my own practice-based experience, which allowed direct observation and participation in the daily routines of a design studio, has contributed to my understanding of artisanal fashion design.

'Anecdotal comparisons,' in other words, personal experiences, general knowledge and reading, and casual discussions with others (Glaser & Strauss 1967), are also used as supplementary data in this study. This includes information about other labels, beyond the cases of this study, gathered via their web pages, journalistic articles and carefully selected

50 In general, qualitative research, using multiple sources of data, is commonly referred to as triangulation of data (Flick 2009).

51 The part-time work at *Zam Barrett Dialogue* (Brooklyn, USA) consisted of 100 hours of work between February 20 and May 10, 2015.

web sources,[52] and other journalistic articles that discuss artisanship in the context of fashion. In addition, personal visits to Paris fashion weeks biannually between 2010–2015[53] (either during men's or women's fashion week), enabled me to find cases for the study, establish connections with them, and have many casual conversations with the designers. It also significantly contributed to forming an overview of artisanal fashion by providing an opportunity to observe the phenomenon in general.

3.4 Assessing the quality of the study

This study is an interpretation of the phenomenon of 'artisanal' in the context of high-end fashion. It is a particular feature of the grounded theory approach (the guidelines of which are generally followed in this study) that the results depend on the skills and sensitivities of the analyst (Glaser & Strauss 1967). Another researcher working even with the same data set might treat the concept differently and arrive at somewhat different conclusions (cf. Becker 1998; Glaser & Strauss 1967). Therefore, assessing the quality of research is mostly concerned with evaluating the research process as a whole and "the empirical grounding of the research findings" (Flick 2009, p. 394).

On a general level, assessing the quality of qualitative research pertains to the *trustworthiness* of the study and its procedures. In terms of the *reliability* of the study, the dependability of data and procedures are central; this relates to the quality of recording and explicating data, and the documenting of the research process (Flick 2009). As the primary data, particular attention was given to documenting the interviews, which were all recorded and transcribed verbatim. Also, exact quotations from the interviews are included in the articles to illuminate the interpretations made as part of the study (except paper # 2, which did not include interview sources). Since the study includes different types of sources, all the data was summarized in detail in a separate table to give an overview of it as a whole (see Appendix 2). The interpretation of data is subjective (cf. Glaser & Strauss 1967), but emerging results were regularly presented in seminars and international conferences via presentations and seminar/

52 Each case is cited in the text showing which information is based on interviews and personally conducted case studies, and which is based on 'second-hand' material.

53 Visiting Paris fashion weeks biannually between 2010–2015 (either during men's or women's fashion week): June 2010; January 2011; June 2011; January 2012; June 2012; March 2013; June 2013; January 2014; June 2014; March 2015.

conference papers, which offered an opportunity for reflexive exchange (cf. Flick 2009) with colleagues and feedback from leading professionals. Documentation of the secondary data, such as the studio and showroom visits, and collection presentations (e.g. pictures or videos of the garments or presentations) were not considered relevant in this research set-up. The phase of participant observation was also regarded as secondary data, the role of which was to supplement the data gathered through interviews. Observations from this fieldwork were documented in short field notes; yet, in contrast to the quotations, the field notes were not directly used in the text.

The *validity* of the study relates to the production of data, the presentation of the phenomenon and the conclusions drawn from it. Assessing validity means considering the actual connection "between the relations that are studied and the version of them provided by the researcher" (p. 387). In terms of the communicative validation (Flick 2009), attention was given to building rapport with the interviewees by meeting with them several times, mostly at their showrooms. Primarily, the showroom visits were a way to get to know the designer and his/her work, but they were also a chance to build a trustworthy bond, which was helpful in arranging the interview in the first place. Mostly the designers included in this study were interviewed formally once; two of them were interviewed twice. However, the validity of interviews was enhanced by giving the interviewees an opportunity to revise their quotations before the relevant article was published. A second round of interviews could have increased the validity by potentially providing more insight to the study. However, because the designers were located in different countries, a second studio visit was often difficult to manage, and during showroom sales (in Paris) their schedules were too busy for these types of interviews. Instead, triangulation of data and methods was used to strengthen validity. For example, whenever possible, the interviews were conducted at the designer's studio in order to get a general understanding of their workspaces at the same time. Also, the showroom visits and collection presentations provided the opportunity to observe the outcomes of the artisanal approach, the garments, and a chance to interact with the designers casually without the pressure of a 'formal' interview. All these other forms of data were integral in terms of understanding the context; similarly, the phase of participant observation served as a supplementary method for gaining first-hand accounts of the work at an artisanal studio.

Serving the transparency of the study (cf. Flick 2009), the research process was described in detail; also, the application of the research

method and the rationale of the process were explained by reflecting on the scope of the research. Quotations from the interviews were used for demonstrating how the emergent concepts are grounded in the empirical material, i.e. exposing the process of translating the data into the concepts (cf. Flick 2009). These quotations are *selected* excerpts, and are used for supporting and illustrating the integration of the concepts – the substantive theory – and showing the proximity between the concepts and the data (cf. Flick 2009; Glaser & Strauss 1967). "[The quotations] support the concept, they are not the story itself" (Glaser 1978, p. 134), and they obviously do not uncover all the data. After all, "[t]he theory is an integrated set of hypothesis, not of findings" (p. 134).

In contrast, when assessing the quality of research through the specific requirements of the grounded theory approach, the emphasis is on *fit*, *relevance* and *workability*. Fit means that the concepts match the actual patterns in the data. Relevance implies that the concepts are about issues that are important to the participants themselves. Workability indicates that the concepts adequately explain the phenomenon under study (Glaser 1978; Glaser & Strauss 1967). As the concepts that emerged in this study have been abstracted directly from data, not from pre-conceived theories, and various "slices of data" have been used (Glaser & Strauss 1967, p. 65), the concepts embody and fit the phenomenon itself.

4
SUMMARY OF PAPERS

The dissertation as a whole consists of six papers (three journal articles, two conference papers and one book chapter). These papers are all part of the exploration of the research interest, yet each of them illustrates a different aspect of the study.[54] The first two papers of this study, [# 1] "Less But Better: Towards Sustainable Fashion" and [# 2] "Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges," focus on sustainability in fashion, painting an overall picture of the topic, both concentrating on the designer's point of view. These two papers are more theoretical in their scope, and therefore parts of them have been integrated in the sections *2.5 Implications of the current fashion system* and *2.6 Alternative paradigms: sustainable and slow fashion*. The last four papers [# 3] "Artisanal and Slow: A Case of Anna Ruohonen," [# 4] "Creative Control in Sustainable Fashion," [# 5] "Crafting Aesthetics: The Meaning of Materiality and the Making Process in Artisanal Fashion" and [# 6] "Unfolding Artisanal Fashion," form the primary part of this doctoral research establishing the concept of 'artisanal fashion' and its potential. Their cross-cutting contributions are discussed in detail in chapter 5.

The paper [# 1] "Less But Better: Towards Sustainable Fashion" (Aakko & Rabkin 2013) summarizes some of the major environmental (such as energy and water consumption, use of toxic chemicals and generation of high volumes of waste), and social implications (such as unfair labor practices, including unsafe working conditions, child labor and unfair

54 Also, different methods have been utilized in composing the articles. The chapter 3.2 and Appendix #3 describe the articles and rationales behind them in more detail.

wages) in the fashion industry, which are generally discussed under the label of sustainable fashion. Surveying academic literature and carefully selected journalistic sources, the article also sketches an overview of sustainable practices in fashion that address these challenges. The ideas of 'slow fashion' are also discussed as one alternative to the practices of the current fashion system. The theoretical perspectives are complemented with case studies, based on interviews with designers, which provide different examples of how these practices are applied. These case studies are not strictly categorized into sustainable or slow fashion; instead they all represent valuable examples of how designers integrate sustainable elements in their design and production processes or in their business models according to their motivation, capabilities and resources.
Even experimental approaches can be useful while searching for new, sustainable practices or developing existing ones. The essay-like article is grounded on the idea that investing in quality, seasonless aesthetic, durable and well-made clothing is one of the ways to support sustainability and ethical production; it concludes with a suggestion, "buy considerately, buy just what you need."

The paper [# 2] "Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges" (Aakko & Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2013) tackles the question of which concepts and methods are commonly considered as 'sustainable fashion design.' The study surveys and draws together various principles and practices that aim for sustainability in fashion mainly from academic literature, complementing it with carefully selected websites and journalistic articles. The concepts were grouped into eight main categories and composed into a theoretical model that unites different ideas about sustainable fashion (Figure 2).

The model is founded on the convergence of the concepts of fashion and sustainability, and therefore, the categories, *Sourcing Materials*, *Fabric Treatment* and *Production Methods* are more closely connected with fashion; while the categories, *Saving Resources*, *Societal Implications*, and *Information Transparency* are more associated with sustainable development. The core category of the model, *Considered Take and Return*, consists of various design philosophies and strategies, which discuss sustainable design and which could be applied in fashion design per se, and is thus suggested as the basis of sustainable fashion design practice. The core category symbolizes a conscientious attitude towards all the actions, spreading to all the surrounding categories. The name reflects the fact that all action is interconnected, and emphasizes considered practices in all elements of the model. The category of *Attachment and Appreciation*, which frames the

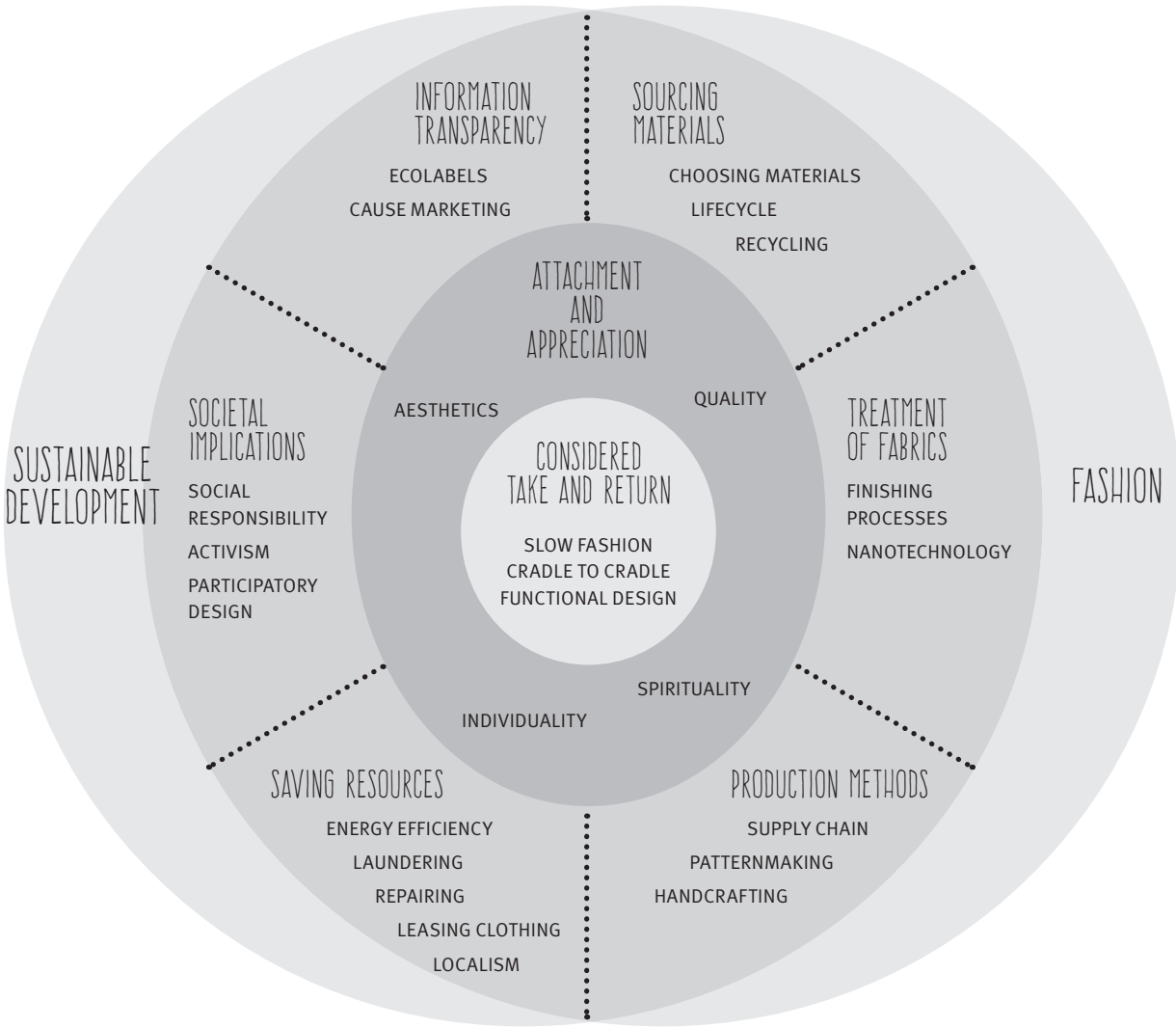

Figure 2. A theoretical framework for ethical and environmental fashion design practices. (Originally published in the article [# 2] "Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges"; Aakko and Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2013).

core, signifies the importance of sentiment in design practice, for example the importance of aesthetics, embodying aspects that are meaningful in building appreciation toward garments, and thus decreasing the pace of consumption. The aim of the model is to provide a toolkit that would help in confronting the complexity of the issues that surround sustainability, predominantly ecological and ethical aspects; it helps to see simultaneously a number of viewpoints that affect fashion production. In each category, the designer can decide which aspects she could apply and enhance in her own work towards sustainability in fashion design. While the model depicts separate categories, they are rough segments that unquestionably overlap and co-exist in close interaction. Although the model focuses particularly on the small-scale fashion production and the designer's perspective, these different points of view and diverse examples might lead to new discoveries and ideas that could potentially be applied on a larger scale. Likewise, whether one applies these practices under the labels of sustainability or slow fashion, or neither one, is not the point. The goal is to find alternative methods of operation that minimize, or, ideally, eliminate the damage fashion production and consumption inflicts on our planet. The framework is not definite but transitional: as the knowledge of sustainable fashion grows, the model can be further developed.

As the title suggests, the paper [#3] "Artisanal and Slow: A Case of Anna Ruohonen" (Aakko 2014) examines the slow and artisanal approaches to fashion through a case study of a fashion designer who embodies both of these approaches to fashion. Looking at the design philosophy and strategies behind the eponymous label Anna Ruohonen, first the study discusses and illustrates the philosophy of slow fashion. Secondly, since the concept of 'artisanal fashion' does not have a precise definition, the study explores the artisanal approach to fashion, aiming to outline some of its central elements; yet, since the analysis is based only on one case, the framework of artisanal fashion sketched in this article can only be suggestive. Acknowledging that the concept of artisanal fashion is close to that of slow fashion, the study aims to trace the features that particularly depict the artisanal mode, such as the highlighting of craftsmanship, small batch production, traditional and handcraft methods, and the integral role of fashion designer. The article also discusses the gains of in-house production: in-house control over the processes and the product frees up the possibility to make a difference to what kinds of garments are offered and how they are produced. With the concepts of slow and artisanal fashion, the article also aims to contribute to the discussion of more considerate ways to produce and consume garments, and thus examine

Anna Ruohonen's clothing line is produced made-to-measure: the customer gets to choose the style and the fabric amongst available choices, and the order is produced according to his/her measurements taken at the showroom. (Courtesy of Anna Ruohonen.)

their potential to advance more environmental and ethical practices in the field of fashion.

The paper [#4] "Creative Control in Sustainable Fashion" (Niinimäki & Aakko 2014) examines how sustainable thinking could be integrated in the system level of fashion businesses. It presents a case study related to design and strategic thinking in small, entrepreneurial fashion companies, those oriented towards sustainability, in which designers often play a significant role in decision making. The study focuses on examining how design thinking applied together with control can benefit design, manufacturing and business practices, and how it can empower the transition towards sustainable practices in fashion. The studied cases represent examples of 'practice-based' strategy formulation; the strategies of the profiled cases are founded on experienced understanding of the fashion industry, and utilize both creative and fashion-related business thinking. This study discusses how controlling different aspects of the processes through creative solutions, related to both design and business decisions, provides an opportunity to steer these practices toward increased sustainability. Through the presented case examples, the article shows how such an approach can be realized in a profitable way and without compromising the quality of design.

The paper [#5] "Crafting Aesthetics: The Meaning of Materiality and the Making Process in Artisanal Fashion" (Aakko 2015) aims to trace the process of shaping aesthetics in fashion design, with a focus on artisanal fashion. Based on interviews with six fashion designers as well as on material and visual data from their collections, the study combines a qualitative analysis and a conversation about aesthetics in artisanal fashion. This study explores primarily how the central aspects of the artisanal approach to fashion – particularly the integrated role of designer, craftsmanship, skill, and quality – play a role in the design process and the creation of an aesthetic. The paper pays specific attention to the materiality of garments and to the creative process. The study is not concerned with establishing what the artisanal mode could be in the aesthetic sense; rather, it offers designers' perspectives to the artisanal design approach and its significance for the aesthetic of a garment. Also, the study does not attempt to deconstruct that process in detail, but to provide examples and anecdotes about the various, commonly invisible processes that lead to a finished garment or collection.

As proposed in the title [#6] "Unfolding Artisanal Fashion" (Aakko; in review), this paper describes and dissects some of the fundamental elements of artisanal fashion, centering especially on the designer's

perspective. It is the concluding article of the study, thus compiling ideas from all the preceding articles. The study examines small, contemporary fashion labels that merge fashion and artisanship; employing traditional and handcraft methods, yet in innovative ways and with a view to the present cultural and visual climate. Showcasing several entrepreneurial fashion brands, the data is gathered mainly by interviewing the head designers of these labels and atelier visits, amongst other fieldwork. Here, the term *artisanal* is defined as the integration of skillful design and craftsmanship, and it refers to elements such as materiality and the making process. Artisanal fashion houses are often entrepreneurial labels where the head designer is also the principal of the company, and has a central role not only in design but also in business decisions. The independent position of these artisanal fashion companies enables freedom, and thus a possibility to control the design, production and business management according to one's own philosophy. The article also discusses why the context of fashion is fundamental to the phenomenon under study. Furthermore, it contemplates the potential meanings of artisanal fashion in the current cultural and societal environment.

5
CENTRAL THEMES OF THE STUDY

This chapter summarizes the main findings in relation to the core questions of this study: (1) the distinctive features of artisanal fashion and the designer's role in it, and (2) the significance of the artisanal approach to fashion in the current cultural and societal context. The key characteristics of artisanal fashion found in this study are conceptualized into three central ideas, *skillful materiality, designer's integrated role* and *freedom for creative control*. Furthermore, the implications and potentials of the artisanal approach to fashion are discussed under the concept of *materializing values*.

The word *fashion* paired with the word *artisanal* functions firstly as a synonym for clothing and garments, but secondly as a signifier for fashion in the symbolic sense (Kawamura 2005). *Artisanal* itself connotes handcrafted objects but when used in conjunction with *fashion*, it emphasizes the context – fashion – shifting the concept from a mere handcrafted garment to the category of fashion, which is symbolically different. As Kawamura (2005, p. 4) puts it: "Fashion is not visual clothing but is the invisible elements included in clothing." If one adopts the above definitions, artisanal fashion thus embodies a design practice that integrates skillful design and craftsmanship in the context of fashion, and artisanal fashion could be situated as a section of high-end designer fashion (see chapter 2.3).

At the core of the artisanal approach to fashion is *skillful materiality*, which relates to the artisanal elements of the design and making processes. Secondly, it is characterized by the *designer's integrated role*, which can be seen in his or her multilayered skills and a centralized position. The type of set-up of these artisanal companies, together with the designer's operative

role, enable *freedom for creative control* in decisions regarding both design and business management. Finally, these foundations allow for the designer to be more *engaged* (cf. Sennett 2008) with his or her field of work, thus in a sense, *materializing values* through the work itself, not in any prescribed way, but as a reflection of one's personal philosophy and ideas.

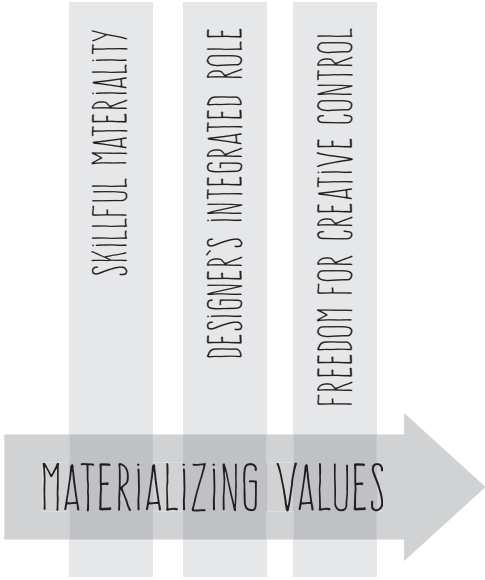

Figure 3. Potentials of artisanal fashion

5.1 Skillful materiality

Emerging from this study, at the core, artisanal fashion is based on the idea of *skillful materiality*, a concept that represents the central characteristics of this approach. Essentially, as explained in this chapter, this highlights the significance of the making process itself, drawing attention to *skill*, *craft* and *materiality* as the foundations. Other elements composing the idea of *skillful materiality* are the notions of *small batch* production, *provenance*, *high quality, dedication of time*, *sharing skills* and the focus on *aesthetics*.

Craft and the making process

The word *artisanal* points to something crafted by hand, and thus craft is evidently an essential aspect of the artisanal approach to fashion.

In Geoffrey B. Small's collection all the buttonholes of the garments are hand stitched; each one requires eight to ten minutes to cut and sew. (Courtesy of Geoffrey B. Small.)

From the collection of Marc Le Bihan. (Photo by Cécile Guyenne, courtesy of Marc Le Bihan.)

Artisanal methods refer here to craft techniques, such as knitting and embroidery, but basically all the material-related phases in fashion design, such as spinning, weaving, fabric dyeing and manipulation, patternmaking, garment construction and finishing, could be done manually, and therefore be regarded as artisanal methods. Some of these methods are used the traditional way; some are being tweaked, developed and used in unusual ways, creating new variations of the old techniques.

As an example, one of the cases of this study, the eponymous label of designer *Geoffrey B. Small* (2014), based in the Veneto region of Italy, integrates a high amount of handwork in the design and production phases, including, for example, paper pattern drafting, hand-stitching (e.g. buttonholes, hems, seam finishing and pad-stitching coat fronts and collars), hand-dyeing and other extensive hand treatments on fabrics. The label has also produced garments sewn entirely by hand,[55] and uses hand-loomed fabrics as part of the collection.

As defined in this study, the artisanal mode of production is not a rigid system of couture, but it entails using craft in different ways and varying amounts. In the case of garment production, handwork does not imply producing everything entirely by hand, even though, as seen above, such examples also exist. Whereas Geoffrey B. Small uses a high percentage of handwork in the production, others within the same frame of reference might apply artisanal methods such as hand-stitching, hand-knitting or traditional methods in fabric dyeing and manipulation as part of the production. For instance, another case of this study, Paris-based fashion designer *Marc Le Bihan* (2014) explains that in his work, the making of a garment often starts with raw fabric, which is processed with a series of treatments, such as boiling and dyeing, and possibly finished with embroidery and hand-stitching.

Skill

Skill is another core feature of the word *artisan* (see chapter 2.7). In the creation of fashion, the essential skills are related to the design process itself, such as sketching or draping the form of the garment, choosing fabric, and creating its character, as well as the ability to execute the garment successfully with the skills of patternmaking, garment construction and finishing (see chapter 2.4). Therefore, besides handwork,

55 According to Small (2014), sewing a jacket by hand takes approximately 22 hours, involving 9900 hand-stiches.

skill – a mastery over certain craft – is another central aspect of artisanal production.

Skill is evident in the material quality of the finished product, and it is also essential in achieving a certain aesthetic, for example in terms of the cut, construction and finishing of the garment. Some designers are proficient in all the aspects related to the design and production processes – i.e. design, pattern making, sewing, dyeing and finishing – and at times perform any of these tasks. For example, Marc Le Bihan (2014), drafts all the intricate patterns himself by hand, but he says: "In fact, if I need to, I can make the whole collection by myself. I can do everything [related to that]." For him, patternmaking and garment construction are the fundamental skills of the design process. As Le Bihan (2014) says: "It is like the grammar." Additionally, skill is manifest in the integrated role and multilayered expertise of the artisanal designer, and through that integrated role, on one hand, skills can be shared, and on the other, skillfulness can be extended even beyond the phases of design, as discussed further.

Materiality

Artisanal fashion is essentially based on *materiality*. Here, the concept of materiality covers different aspects related to the material side of fashion, to textiles and garments themselves, as well as the tactile design and making processes as described in the previous sections.

Most obviously, materiality refers to the materials used in the collections; materials play a significant role in the overall aesthetics created by the designers examined in this study. All are adamant about using exclusively high-quality fabrics and trimmings. Similarly, these designers also share a preference for distinctive textures as determined by specific weaves and weight of the fabric, yarn quality and fiber combinations. Generally speaking, they all favor natural fibers such as silk, linen and wool for their visual and tactile characteristics (e.g. texture, feel, weight and warmth). Whenever possible the designers also develop their own fabrics in collaboration with mills, which ensures exclusive fabrics that may become a part of the designer's signature (see paper # 5).

Small batch production

Compared to the industrial production of clothing, the scale and methods of artisanal production can be identified as two of the fundamental

The signature fabric of Lumen et Umbra, a two-layer wool and linen blend obtained through a specific needle technique. (Photo by Susanna Ferrante, courtesy of Lumen et Umbra.)

The knitwear of the Belgium-based label Daniel Andresen is produced in-house often by the designer himself. As the garments are handmade by using simple machinery, each piece is unique. (Photo by Julien Boudet, courtesy of Daniel Andresen.)

differences. Industrial manufacture aims for a thorough mechanization of work, in which the making process is essentially 'section work' – divided into many small, separate tasks – and, whenever possible, operated by machinery. The assembly line of industrial manufacturing serves the making of large production runs of standardized items. The factories generally employ large personnel, in which each worker is primarily specialized in their individual task. This system also enables lower production costs, as the singular tasks can often be performed by semi-skilled labor (see chapter 2.2; e.g. Beazley 1973; Belfer 1954; Breward 2003; Zakim 1998). In contrast to industrial manufacture, small-scale fashion production does not have the equivalent capacities in terms of machinery and the number of employees, and relies on – or prefers – more craft-based procedures. Practically, for example, patterns may be hand-drafted and garment pieces may be cut individually by hand or only a few pieces at a time. Small-scale production does not, however, imply that the procedures would be carried out without any use of machinery, as it actually was before the technological developments (cf. Beazley 1973, p. 55). Small-scale workshops certainly use different types machinery, for example sewing, over-locking and button-holing machines. The work might even be divided into separate tasks but not as extensively as the industrial-scale section work; depending on the scale of the studio, some might also operate closer to the early 'whole garment method,' in which one skilled worker would sew the entire garment (cf. Belfer 1954).

Artisanal production does not only refer to handcrafted practice but also to producing in small batches, and all the cases of this study have that in common. In practical terms, garments are made in small editions, for example, only five to twenty pieces of a certain style, and some items may be created as one-of-a-kinds or even according to individual measurements. As seen in many designer's work in this study, hand-crafted details, such as individually laid patchwork (e.g. Geoffrey B. Small), hand-embroidered details (e.g. Marc Le Bihan), hand-stitched seams (e.g. Geoffrey B. Small; Lumen et Umbra) and exclusively crafted silver buttons (e.g. Inaisce), also suggest a small batch origin. Such a scale of production also offers a chance to create limited edition runs or entirely unique garments.

Artisanal production, as understood in this study, is achieved in this type of small-scale setting. Nevertheless, a clear-cut categorization based only on the production methods remains problematic, since a small-scale workshop and a large-scale manufacturing plant may use similar methods. Parallel to Breward's (2003, p. 53) reasoning: "[the modes of garment production are] informed to a greater or lesser degree by broader and

From the collection of Inaisce. (Courtesy of Jona Sees.)

cross-cutting considerations of labour, skill, technology, distribution, and marketing know-how." This study also regards the concept of 'artisanal fashion' more than a mere production method. It is induced by the same factors Breward mentions, and others, such as the designer's centralized role, as discussed in further chapters.

Dedication of time

Another distinction between the artisanal and industrial manufacturing of clothing is the time spent on the production. The design and production processes described above are often laborious, and thus, this dedication of time is one of the factors that particularly distinguish artisanal and industrial modes of production.

The mechanized, industrial production, which started replacing handwork in the late nineteenth century, accelerated the making of goods significantly (Breward 2003). By now, a major part of the fashion industry is focusing on producing clothing with supply chain strategies recapped as 'fast fashion' – in other words, trying to respond to customer demand and prevailing trends as rapidly as possible (e.g. Barnes & Lea-Greenwood 2006; Christopher et al. 2004; Crofton & Dopico 2007; Tokatli 2008). According to the findings of this study, artisanal production of fashion stands in opposition to that dominant 'fast fashion' production model. Achieving the quickest design and production cycle is not the primary goal of the artisanal approach. The many artisanal methods, such as drafting patterns by hand and handcrafting details of the garment, used in the design and production processes are time-consuming. Moreover, most of the cases in this study devote time for drafting very intricate and original patterns, which are equally laborious to cut out of fabric and produce into garments.

Provenance

At the same time, the scale and methods of production highlight the *provenance* of the product; here provenance relates to the material origin of the product but also to the maker, as well as to the story behind it.

The obscured routes of industrial-scale garment manufacturing, and especially the many tragedies in the garment industry of the recent past (see chapter 2.5), have shifted attention toward the origin of the garment. As a result, transparency of the supply chain and the provenance of the product have gained importance. The artisanal approach indicates a more centralized way of production, either in-house or local (or near-by), in

comparison to a fragmented supply network of industrial manufacturing, where the production is often outsourced to different countries for gaining certain benefits, such as lower costs. As Deserti (2014) explains, while a specific geographical area, such as parts of Italy, might offer valuable resources in terms of production, the location can also offer intangible benefits; it can add brand value. Similarly, in artisanal production, the "Made in…" location is generally highlighted in all accounts, for instance in the garment tags, the companies' websites or in any feature articles of a brand. Some labels even designate the origin of their fabrics and trims in detail, such as Italian-based designer Geoffrey B. Small (illustrated particularly in paper # 6).

Here, provenance does not only denote the material origin of the product but it also relates to the maker, insofar as the product might even be identified with the designer. Often, provenance, together with descriptions of the methods and perhaps the design philosophy, is mentioned as part of the story behind the garment. These aspects are elaborated further in the discussion about the designer's integrated role (chapter 5.2), and reiterated in relation to the cultural contribution of artisanal fashion (chapter 5.4).

Sharing skills

Historically artisanal skills have been transmitted through master-apprenticeships in which a novice learnt the craft from an expert through the work itself. The same is common practice also in the artisanal production of fashion. Fortunately, many designers with artisanal skills enjoy sharing their knowledge either by having interns in the company[56] or by teaching at a fashion school. In addition, combining skills and knowledge by collaborating with the best professionals – sharing skills with and learning from them – can enrich the work and its quality. For instance, *Jona Sees*, designer behind the New York -based fashion label *Inaisce* has collaborated with artisans in different projects, such as shoes, eyewear and ceramics. As Sees (2015) explains, "I prefer when it is a meeting of two visions […] then we produce something that is completely different than either of use would have produced."

After all, designing and producing fashion requires teamwork that connects the designer's creativity and the artisans' expertise. As Geoffrey B. Small explains:

56 It must be noted that interns may also serve as free or inexpensive workforce.

From the collection of Geoffrey B. Small. (Courtesy of Geoffrey B. Small.)

From the collection of Anna Ruohonen.
(Photo by Victor Matussiere, courtesy of Anna Ruohonen.)

> I am not a lone genius, and I don't think there is such a thing in most cases. The geniuses are ones that accumulate the information better than others – make use of it better. So, we have to know a lot. You want input from people that know. Therefore, I want to work with the best guy who is still weaving fabrics: I want to know what he knows when it comes to weaving fabric. I want to work with the best living tailors still on the planet because I want their knowledge combined with mine. (Small 2014)

Quality

In terms of products, artisanal fashion centers on the creation of *high quality* clothing; it is also related to the skillful execution of work. One apparent distinction between the mainstream industrial and artisanal fashion companies is that they are not just "hammering out [...] the idea, the lifestyle, the attitude" (Klein 2000, p. 195), but also the actual product. There is less time and money spent on the brand creation and the image making through marketing, and more on materiality and manufacturing, the production of well-designed and well-made garments.

Artisanal methods or handcrafting do not create a quality product intrinsically, but, if the product is made skillfully from superior materials, it is fair to expect it to be of high quality. Thus, quality is embodied in skillful construction and finishing but also in materials, as seen for example in the meticulously sourced fabrics in Geoffrey B. Small's collection (see paper #6); here, the quality of fabrics refers to specific weave and weight of the fabric, fiber combinations, yarn quality and fineness, as well as to durability in general. Sharing a similar interest in artisanal methods, by and large the designers of this study give significance to quality.

Aesthetics

Lastly, the artisanal approach to fashion emphasizes the role of *aesthetics*. As this study shows, artisanal fashion designers have an affinity for an aesthetic that relies heavily on materiality and matures during the making process (discussed particularly in paper #5). For many, the aesthetic is often rooted in the tactile process of making: draping, patternmaking and constructing the garment. Since artisanship pertains to skill and the process of making, likewise, these elements are central when it

From the collection of Inaisce. (Courtesy of Jona Sees.)

comes to aesthetics. The manual skills required, such as patternmaking and garment construction, are important also in the creation of the overall aesthetic of a garment. Mastering these technical aspects enriches one's sensibility as a designer, and this understanding helps to discover alternative ways to carry out these tasks. For example, for many, patternmaking equals designing, as the design evolves in that process, guiding the aesthetic of a garment. As one of the cases of this study, Paris-based designer Anna Ruohonen (2015) explains: "For me designing is very much a hands-on, material-based process. The ideas often originate and develop through the process itself."

Artisanal methods do not lead to just one, unified aesthetic; instead, these methods can be used for creating diverse outcomes. Since the chosen context here is fashion, the aesthetic is bound to time and place, and will most likely change with time; thus, describing and establishing an "artisanal aesthetic" would be arbitrary. However, as a less temporal common thread of this type of fashion is the attention to materiality, referring here to high-quality materials and trimmings, and to meticulously crafted details such as cut, seam technique, fabric manipulation and finishing. This thoroughness is often displayed even in the uniquely designed garment tags. Skillful craftsmanship, as the foundation of this type of fashion, is sometimes made apparent in the garment itself, through a certain rawness, small imperfections or minor irregularities stemming from the inaccuracy of handcraft, for example in hand-stitched details or in the uneven color in hand-dyed garments. Therefore, highlighting the artisanal elements by displaying the handwork behind the garment is also an aesthetic choice. At the same time, since the aesthetic is often embedded in materiality, it is not easily replicable with other methods.

The concept of skillful materiality also symbolizes endurance not only of material quality but also in terms of an aesthetic; in this sense, artisanal fashion draws parallels with the slow fashion ideology. As observed in this study, the aesthetic direction does not change drastically between seasons; instead it is often, deliberately, a slow development from one collection to another. Yet, the collections are not static but balance between new and iconic pieces. For example, Marc Le Bihan describes his collections as work-in-progress, in which some pieces stay for a very long time, even for 15 years. In his seasonally presented collections some pieces are taken out, some are added, and older ones might be modified, but a big part of the collection stays the same. As Le Bihan (2014) thinks: "If a piece is good, it can stay as it is."

Ultimately, the charm of hand-made things is not necessarily even directly visible, but embedded in their materiality, which induces an aesthetic experience (cf. Welsch 1996) difficult to translate into words. According to designer *Jan-Jan Van Essche*, a hand-made garment often draws attention and respect:

> My hand-spun, hand-made sweater was the magnet of the showroom. People were just standing there for half an hour with the sleeve in their hands talking [about something else] … You feel that there is humanity in it. It is acoustic; it resonates. (Van Essche 2014)

5.2 Designer's integrated role

The artisanal approach to fashion is also characterized by the *designer's integrated role*. In essence, this can be seen in his or her multilayered skills and a centralized position. In general, fashion designers can work in significantly different ways from one another (see chapter 2.4). It is possible, and also common today, to design by visualizing and sketching garments, and not partake in the manual phases of design, such as pattern and sample making; these phases can be distributed to a team of assistants. In this way, patternmaking and garment construction can be separated from the design process, and considered the craft of fashion.

A fashion designer may, however, master both skills – those of the creator of form and those of the skillful maker – integrating them in his or her work. One particular feature of the artisanal designers within this study is that they are generally actively involved in the design phases, and might even execute those phases or parts of them themselves. Besides an aesthetic vision, the latter approach requires an extensive set of artisanal skills in the areas of patternmaking, construction and textile manipulation. In the artisanal approach to fashion, the designer has many artisanal skills and uses them in the design process to various degrees. As Marc Le Bihan thinks:

> It is very important to know how to make things, if you want to create. The technical skills can help you design: you know the limits, but you also [know alternative ways of making]. The point is not just using fabrics, but to know how to use them, and how to change things. (Le Bihan 2014)

Often the production is carried out by the in-house team or by local artisans, but even then, the designer plays an integrated role, working

From the collection of Lumen et Umbra. (Photo by Susanna Ferrante, courtesy of Lumen et Umbra.)

closely with them controlling and supervising all the phases of design, development and production.

The small fashion houses profiled in this study are entrepreneurial fashion houses, where the designer is the owner and the principal of the company. All the designers have a long history with garments and textiles, and therefore proficient technical skills of fashion design. Since the design studios are set up as artisanal ateliers – referring to an atelier with a very hands-on approach to design, and where some or all the phases of production are done in-house (as in many of the cases in this study) – the designer's skills extend much beyond mere design. An atelier, especially with in-house production, is an opportunity for the designer to take an integrated role in the company, to be strongly involved in all the phases of design and production, and to work closely with the employees and suppliers. This setting enables the work to be organized independently, and thus allows the designer to be in charge of most of the aspects related to design, production and business management. It is the base for creative control, as discussed in the next chapter.

In such a set-up, the designer is also an entrepreneur, and thus responsible not only for directing design, but also for overseeing the production and the business itself. As uncovered in this study, that part of the job involves a lot of coordinating and managing; such as organizing work, production, sales, photo shoots, collection presentations, showroom set-ups, employment, wages, finance, and perhaps even the running of a web store. Also, the time intended to be dedicated to creative work, i.e. design and experiments, often includes micromanagement, such as instructing other workers, from a runner to a tailor, in a variety of tasks. The designer has to truly balance between design and management. In an ideal situation there is another person managing the company and its PR, but in small business, hiring a manager might be financially too burdensome.

Commonly, in these types of small, artisanal ateliers, work and life become very much intertwined: the studio might be at home, in the same building or very near by, and a partner or other family members might work at the studio or be involved in the company otherwise. Being the manager of one's own work and company, the boundaries between work and life often blur, and the work becomes more like a lifestyle.

Similarly, in many cases the designer's identity is also intertwined with the brand identity and aesthetic. These artisanal designers often embody their preferred aesthetic quite thoroughly in their life, in a way personifying the clothing they design. For example, all the designers

From the collection of Inaisce. (Courtesy of Jona Sees.)

interviewed in this study wear primarily their own design, which, at the same time, is actually an indirect but potent marketing method. Moreover, it speaks of the fact that the clothing serves their own aesthetic and functional preferences, not just their customers': the design is not tuned according to trends set by forecasting companies but echoes personal aesthetic of the designer. Relating to the notion of provenance, and also to the concept of 'materializing values' (see chapter 5.4), their philosophy or values are often, in one way or the other, incorporated into the design and the brand's identity.

5.3 Freedom for creative control

Analyzing the cases of this study indicate that the independent position of small-scale, entrepreneurial fashion companies together with the designer's centralized role enables freedom to conduct the business in one's own way. Freedom, in turn, enables the designer to have control over aspects related to design, production and business management (including marketing and sales such as pricing, packaging, branding, presentation and distribution), to decide *how* these different segments are organized, and apply creative solutions within them. These involve, for example, different ways of organizing local and in-house production, collaborations with other businesses, customized production and unique business models (discussed in more detail in papers #3, #5 and #6). Many designers also mentioned the importance of being able to control the distribution by selecting their retail partners as well as setting up the showroom themselves and being able to communicate with their clients directly.

This potential is called here *freedom for creative control*. Its importance for the designer is captured in Geoffrey B. Small's (2014) comment: "Freedom has become very valuable to me. With this way, I can create my own position, and just focus on that, and make it as great as it can be with the people around."

The cases of this study are all small entrepreneurial fashion labels, in which the designer is mostly the main (or the only) owner, and therefore in charge of both designing and decision-making. In that framework, one way to exercise independent control over design, production and business decisions is to keep most operations in-house and local. For instance, Anna Ruohonen's fashion house, which has most of the production in-house, is a prime example of this case (discussed in detail in papers #3 and #4). In Ruohonen's words, that set-up allows her to be

Anna Ruohonen's *Petite Maison de Couture* in Paris is a boutique and an atelier: the ground floor and the basement operate as the showroom, and the designer and the production team work just upstairs from the store. Big windows facing the street display tailors at their work. (Courtesy of Anna Ruohonen.)

strongly involved in the whole production process, to inspect quality, and easily revise the process if anything needs to be changed. The in-house production also enables working closely with her team and having frequent communication between the members. As Ruohonen (2013) says: "Having control over [how everything is done] is the greatest benefit of in-house production. [...] We communicate all the time; everyday, we discuss the garment finishing, fabric choices, improvements, problems and potential changes. And all that supports quality." In the same way, according to Ruohonen (2015), having an in-house team also facilitates the fine-tuning of a garment: "Since we have sample making in-house, we never have to be satisfied with a product that is almost-good. We can keep on tweaking it until the aesthetic is exactly what we want."

Besides design and production, the independent position allows Ruohonen and her team to be in charge of almost everything regarding her line, including marketing, sales, business management and the monitoring of working conditions. This has empowered Ruohonen to create her own retail system that produces garments only on-demand and according to customer's individual measurements, selling directly to the customers without the middlemen of retail stores. Additionally, Ruohonen exercises control over collection cycles, and has found success showing collections at her own schedule outside the fashion week frame, with customers as her main audience.

Similarly, Marc Le Bihan, whose fashion house also produces mostly in-house, considers internal control an effective way to ensure fair labor practices in terms of working hours, conditions and wages, as he explains:

> [We want] to check everything, to know who produces, and the condition of production. I refuse to send things far away because I want to know how it is made. I don't want to have things made by children, women, and low price... We organize everything here, because [otherwise] it is difficult to check how things are made. Even some factory guarantees the work is done in good conditions – you never know what actually happens. (Le Bihan 2014)

According to these cases (also discussed in papers #3, #4 and #6), in the context of small-scale labels, in-house production can provide many benefits. The aspects relatively easy to control include phases of design (e.g. sketches, patterns and prototypes), fabrication, production, business model and strategy. For some designers the ideal situation would be to have an even higher level of control, as Geoffrey B. Small (2014) notes: "We

From the collection of Marc Le Bihan. (Photo by Cécile Guyenne, courtesy of Marc Le Bihan.)

want to control every aspect from the creation to the delivery of the work to customer. All these control aspects are really created to achieve [our] goals." In fact, the more control the company has, the more radical approach it can implement in the business. While it means a bigger involvement and responsibility, it also allows freedom to perform everything according to one's own preference. Essentially, such a position empowers focusing and responding to issues that are important by their philosophies and values.

The advantages are not implicit in such a structure. However, when this position is used skillfully and considerately, control can be applied for grounding the label's operations in practices that bring positive impact, for example, on cultural and societal levels.

5.4 Materializing values

Ultimately, these foundations of the artisanal approach to fashion design and production, *skillful materiality, designer's integrated role* and *freedom for creative control*, allow for reflecting one's personal philosophy and ideas through the work itself, thereby providing a potential for *materializing values*. It is a possibility for the designer to articulate personal insight through both the aesthetical and practical choices, and contribute to areas meaningful whether to aspects of culture or society in large.

Intangible values of artisanal fashion

The artisanal approach to fashion encompasses a number of qualities that are not apparent, measurable or even easily describable – they carry weight as the intangible dimension (cf. Deserti 2014) of garments or of the brand itself. 'Human scale,' an expression encountered in a few slightly different forms many times during this study (see e.g. chapter 5.1, p. 90), is one such concept. In this study, the notion of 'human scale' covers aspects that are easy to understand and relate to from an individual's perspective. In practical terms, this refers, for instance, to small batch production, garment's provenance and the possibility to name a person behind the making of a product; in contrast to a product that originates from an anonymous industrial assembly line as one amongst thousands.

On the same level of ambiguousness is the concept of 'human touch': it is routinely used but elusive in substance. Another variation is the 'human factor' (Mola & Volonté 2014, p. 264). Based on the findings of this study (particularly papers # 4 and # 6), this concept can be attached to products, whose manufacture engages craft-based phases; hence, they have a person

From the collection of Marc Le Bihan. (Photo by Cécile Guyenne, courtesy of Marc Le Bihan.)

behind the making process, which at the same time relates to the skill and time needed to execute it. In such process, the garment has been granted attention by a person, and, as craft is often slow, much time has been spent making it. Along with this sense of human presence, there is also human emotion involved in the making process, and all this together – time, energy and skill – is symbolically embedded in the garment itself.

Such concepts are vague, but they reflect some of the appeal related to artisanally-made items. Similarly, Clark (2008) discusses the 'hand-made' qualities in the context of slow fashion:

> Hand-made items in particular … can offer something specific to the individual, in terms of fit and appearance. Such garments and accessories are investments – emotionally as well as economically and acknowledge that the materiality of what we wear on our bodies is part of their significance… (p. 441)

The interest in artisanal fashion is not only grounded on the quality of the process, but also on the aesthetic. Craft-based techniques can create an aesthetic that is not necessarily realizable with industrial methods, as discussed in the context of 'skillful materiality' (see also papers #5 and #6), which brings forth an intriguing perspective to the connection between the concepts of fashion and craft. Commonly, craft carries an image of a traditional, rather static or slowly changing aesthetic based often on functionality (cf. Becker 1982), which discords with fashion's essential characteristics of novelty and change (cf. Crane 1997; Kawamura 2005), generally not serving the contemporary 'fashion taste.' Yet, despite the utilitarian and pragmatic undertones of craft, it can be used in unconventional, even avant-garde ways, which according to Crane (1997) opposes the ordinary ideas of beauty, "challenges the public's preconceptions and consequently is not immediately accepted by [the] public" (Crane 1997). In this sense, craft is not held in the traditional supplementary role (cf. Adamson 2007), supporting the construction of garments so finely that it would "not reveal any particular trace of the human hand" (cf. Koskennurmi-Sivonen 1998, p. 52); on the contrary, craft may be used to show the touch of the human hand, as part of the aesthetic, parallel to the example of deconstructed fashion (chapter 2.7). Therefore, in this context, craft is not always used to create 'flawless' surfaces (e.g. to achieve an impeccable finishing of the hem), but it might be applied intentionally even in imperfect ways (e.g. finishing a hemline with raw, frayed edges or purposefully distressing fabric to create unusual surfaces).

Today's mass-marketed fashion brings commercially attractive garments to everyone's reach (in the west), and in this sense the fast fashion model has been able to democratize fashion, or, more precisely, the fashionable look. This surely has the potential to enrich the sartorial landscape by providing an affordable opportunity to dress in style, and also to express one's character through the sartorial choices; whether it is more about blending in with the rest or, as Gabrielli et al (2013, p. 207) argue, building "an eclectic personal identity by combining many different elements," as a sign of a post-modern identity. The focus of that garment sector is not on quality, as it would raise the production cost and the price as a result. Also, according to this mentality – which is a marriage of marketing logic and consuming habits – the quality, and moreover, longevity, are not crucial, since new goods are easily, and enticingly, in reach. However, by and large, mass-market fashion does not contribute to bringing fashion forward as culture. This market sector could be described with the idea of 'adaptive creativity' (cf. Ruppert-Stroescu & Hawley 2014); thus, in terms of fashion as sartorial culture, mass-market fashion tags along but does not take a lead to create new. The aim is not to explore different techniques and cultivate original vision, but to sell. Therefore, there is no cultural reflection other than the echo of the current trends. The progressive and original thinking – along the lines of avant-garde – of creating novel ideas and bringing culture forward, the 'leadership creativity' in Ruppert-Stroescu and Hawley's (2014) terms, resides elsewhere.

Such thinking enables us to appreciate why the designer's role in the sphere of (sartorial) culture is critical. Although artisanal designers are in the spotlight here, this idea does not concern merely their practice but also other designer-led fashion, for instance in the field of high-end designer fashion; the idea emerged from looking at the artisanal fashion design practice and the designer's immersion in the design process. In the artisanal mode the designer's role is prominent, and in this set-up – based on a different logic than merely making products to sell – their work is grounded on the activity of experimenting with ideas; whether it is mostly material and visual or also conceptual, depending on the designer's approach and interest. Of course, as noted by Malem (2008), to succeed as a fashion brand, a company has to combine the artistic and creative pursuits with business strategies (see also Ott & Cukier 2013), and in the end, make sellable pieces (unless the financial resources are secured some other way). But, according to this study, in the artisanal approach there is more room for exploration of materials and concepts. An artisanal designer

From the collection of Jan-Jan Van Essche. (Courtesy of Jan-Jan Van Essche.)

has a chance – and at least the designers of this study have the curiosity and skill needed – to approach design as a study, and test ideas according to personal interest. In this way, artisanal designers are able to create and cultivate original ideas, and by that account, fashion has a chance to function as another voice in the arena of culture, and reflect ideas. For example, for Belgian designer Jan-Jan Van Essche it means:

> [My values] have to do with openness and respect, but it is also a life philosophy that I want to share with the world. I would like my clothes to breathe the same values. [It means] making it in worthy situations, working with fabrics that are from an okay background, chemically, economically, and ecologically. All these things are values I would love to work with – and honesty. (Van Essche 2014)

Interestingly, while the labels of the study can be described with the conditions of high-end designer fashion, many designers do not associate their brand with the word 'fashion.' For instance, Marc Le Bihan (2014) states: "My point is not to make fashion." In his words, he is not interested in the often thematic, seasonally changing trends, as "[i]n fashion, sometimes you are in and other times out" (Le Bihan 2014). Generally speaking, these labels represent a niche, and are more comfortable residing at the edge of the fashion system, rather than in the midst of it (see paper # 6). Some may be more 'in the system' than others, but as illustrated throughout the study, many of them, if not all, operate according to their own principles in various ways.

All the abovementioned themes fortify the intangible values of artisanal fashion. Practically, in terms of the origin and the aesthetic, handcrafted and small-batch produced garments are rare in the market; since many of the details are a result of skillful craft, whether of patternmaking, garment construction or finishing, they are not easily replicable. Such scarcity may also enhance its value. As for the implications of the intangible qualities, the materiality of these items, including the aesthetic and quality, but also the values and ideas embedded in them, as discussed above, can offer meaningful relationship to the garment. As Chapman (2014) argues, products, besides their functional properties, connect us to complex narratives that involve issues of self, culture, society, economy and ecology. According to Chapman, it is exactly the meanings and values, our "interpretation of both material and immaterial encounters," that carry the ability to endure the test of time beyond mere function (p. 138). This in turn can develop bonds beyond the

physical relationship, enhancing the affinity towards the garment, and lengthening the garment's lifespan (Chapman 2014; Niinimäki 2010). In this sense, materiality, as the fundamental quality of artisanal fashion, can support similar ideas of longevity that Clark (2008) proposes in the context of slow fashion: "[For a garment to retain] its attraction for the particular consumer or user beyond the fashion season … the subject-object relationship needs to be more substantial than that of the typical transitory, fashion item, which appeals largely through its visuality of image" (p. 440).

Contribution to societal issues

Although having chosen a profession that basically centers on producing garments, many designers interviewed in this study were concerned about the environmental burden of the fashion industry, and feel conflicted about producing more things into the world, already so full of things. The independent position allows acting in response to these concerns. In fact, some of the artisanal designers have ideologies similar to slow and sustainable fashion at the core of their work, yet they might not identify with those terms. As a couple of designers of this study mentioned, proclaiming such principles could restrict the label, so one might choose not to use those terms; following sustainable ideologies in every step is very challenging, thus announcing it would not allow you to make any exceptions without criticism.

Anna Ruohonen's business model is a very practical example of utilizing the designer's centralized position and creative control for 'materializing values.' While the idea of producing only on-demand links directly back to tailor-based practices of the past, it is unconventional within the prevailing business environment, and truly sustainable in terms of production quantities, as only the individually ordered garments are produced. It is an alternative business logic that is clearly in line with sustainable actions of aiming to create less harm toward environment by supporting slower cycles of fashion.

Another exceptional case is Geoffrey B. Small's company, which epitomizes the ideas of local production and the cultivation of skill. For instance, he aims to keep the sourcing and production within a radius of 250 kilometers, and apply a high percentage of craft in the design and production phases (see also paper #6). In addition, also a rare practice within the current fashion industry, he voices social, political and environmental messages through his fashion shows.

Geoffrey B. Small's Autumn/Winter 2012 collection presentation was dedicated to the people of the Occupy Movement and non-violent activists around the world working for freedom, dignity and equality for all. (Photo by Guido Barbagelata, courtesy of Geoffrey B. Small.)

As a shared philosophy of these labels is a certain considerate attitude and respect that is integrated in their work in different ways; respect towards employees, collaborative partners, suppliers and clients; reverence for artisanship and the work itself. Many designers mentioned the synergy between their suppliers, often long-term partnerships, significant also in terms of the products final quality; it also enhances the possibilities to realize one's own vision. Good relationships are built on mutual understanding; considering not just the designer's needs but also the factory's capacity. Such quality resonates again with the attitude of slow fashion:

> [Slow fashion] changes the power relations between fashion creators and consumers and forges new relationships and trust that are only possible at smaller scales. It fosters a heightened state of awareness of the design process and its impacts on resource flows, workers, communities and ecosystems. (Fletcher & Grose 2012, p. 128)

Artisanal production is often advertised as an earnest way, something inherently good, and certainly worth mentioning. However, the respectful and humane attitude discussed above, cannot be taken for granted and claimed as a universal nature of artisanship: technically speaking, artisanal approach itself does not guarantee more sound production in terms of ethical and environmental matters. But, the artisanal elements – such as small scale, local orientation, interest toward provenance and long-term relationships – and the entrepreneurial, independent position that enables control, provide an opportunity to align the aspects of design, production and business operations with one's values and philosophy. Ultimately it hinges on the designer's choice to engage in these matters. This is the more profound level to the idea of 'skillful materiality': it symbolizes the potential for considered action throughout the operations. In other words, skill can be applied also on other than the tangible, material levels. As depicted in Figure 3, dexterity is the base of the material level, the designing and making of garments. Yet, through the designer's centralized role and possibility to control, this setting can be applied skillfully to a greater extent, touching upon cultural and societal matters, even toward more sound practices in terms of ethical and environmental matters. By no means is this is an intrinsic quality of artisanal fashion; rather, the aim here is to show how such skillfulness is a potential of artisanal fashion.

6
CONCLUSIONS

Artisanal fashion is situated at the intersection of fashion and artisanship: its framework is partly contemporary fashion and partly traditional craftsmanship. Although these underpinnings might seem conceptually and practically worlds apart, artisanal fashion takes elements from both. Here, fashion stands for such clothing that, unlike ordinary, functional clothing, is concerned with symbolic and aesthetic values (Kawamura 2004; 2005), and determined as fashion on the grounds of quality, mode of production, market sector and retail outlet (cf. Malem et al. 2009), but also with regard to objectives and reputation (Lipovetsky 1987/1994). Craft, then, is used to support these objectives, not merely in a supplemental but often also in central role in terms of forming the aesthetics. It is applied in novel and even unexpected ways (cf. Crane 1997), at times leaving traces of the human hand boldly visible.

Artisanal production is nothing new in the context of fashion, as craft-based methods have always been at the core of custom-made creations such as *couture* (e.g. Breward 2003). However, artisanal fashion does not even aim to be on a par with the exceptional couture in the use of craft, nor in its symbolic value. If using the framework, in which couture and mass-manufactured garments are at polarized ends of the range of clothing production (Lipovetsky 1987/1994), artisanal fashion falls in-between these two, but is arguably situated closer to the couture end. Considering the aims toward high quality (evident, for example, in the cut, construction, finishing of garment and the use of fabrics) and production rationale (generally produced according to standard sizes; not custom-made), it is within the realm of *high-end designer* fashion (cf. Malem et al. 2009). Yet, because of the significant amount of handwork used in the production,

and the particular attention given to skill and materiality, artisanal fashion could be considered a distinct mode within the sector of high-end designer fashion.

On one hand, the artisanal fashion labels examined in this study generally operate within the conventional fashion system, particularly in terms of the symbolic values and aesthetic ambitions, as unfolded above. For instance, they mostly present their collections in Paris, considered the fashion capital, or in other fashion centers, such as New York (cf. Breward 2003; Kawamura 2005). In terms of retail outlets, the collections are sold to urban clientele in prominent boutiques next to celebrated, cutting-edge ready-to-wear brands. On the other hand, they represent a niche, and might in fact not wish to be associated with the notion of fashion. Artisanal fashion has a complicated relationship with the fashion system, but its independent position allows plotting alternative routes within the system. As Jan-Jan Van Essche (2014) expresses: "It is this cliché, but we are doing what we want to do" – a view that is shared with all the labels within this study. This approach parallels the description of the 'Artisan' business approach identified by NESTA (2008, p. 28): "The defining feature of Artisan businesses is their concern with intrinsic goals rather than financial or market imperatives. Artisan values tend to be artistic and highly personal, rather than commercial".

The concept of artisanal fashion can also be likened to that of slow fashion: their foundations lie partly in the same ground, and sometimes an artisanal type of fashion production could be included as an element of slow fashion. Small-scale and local production, the use of traditional craft techniques and the emphasis on quality are at the core of both of these modes (cf. Fletcher & Grose 2012). Definitions of slow fashion, such as "a vision of the fashion sector built from a fundamentally different starting point" and "a break from the values and goals of fast (growth-based) fashion" (Fletcher & Grose 2012, p. 128), could equally be used to describe the practice of artisanal fashion. All these features existing in common with the slow and artisanal modes of fashion also place them distinctively apart from the current practices of mass manufactured fashion (namely fast fashion), which is typically produced on massive scale, utilizing low-cost labor, inexpensive materials and complex, global supply chains (cf. Allwood et al. 2006; Christopher et al. 2004).

There are a few distinctive characteristics by which slow fashion and artisanal fashion can be distinguished. Based on this study, while some artisanal labels share the ideals of slow fashion to a great extent, not all of them do, and therefore the study did not entirely remain within the

boundaries of slow fashion. The framework of slow fashion is linked with the context of sustainability, whereas, generally speaking, artisanal fashion does not represent such a coherent philosophy. The binding element of the profiled cases is *artisanship*, not their ideologies; so, some of the cases give a lot of weight to these very principles, clustered as slow fashion, and yet practically, in terms of design and production, artisanal labels center on what is called here 'skillful materiality.' In other words, slow fashion describes a type of fashion in philosophical terms and includes traditional craft techniques as one of its features, whereas the artisanal approach takes artisanship in the context of contemporary fashion as the starting point, highlighting the artisanal aspects in more detail. Artisanal fashion may not be directly associated with sustainability in fashion, as it does not ensure more sound production in terms of ethical and environmental matters – responsibility of actions is still in the hands of the particular companies themselves – but, as it operates in a similar way to slow fashion, it carries the same potential.

As one of the findings of this study, designers embracing an artisanal approach often have a centralized role in the company. Firstly, this position can be used to apply different strategies in the phases of design and production, and even be used to support the creation of "'better' garments" (Gwilt 2011, p. 67), or clothing that is aligned with more sustainable principles. Furthermore, their knowledge and creative solutions do not inform only the design and production phases but also their business strategies, similar to Sinha's (2000, p. 40–41) suggestion to integrate "designerly" thinking into organizational strategy as a means to remaining innovative in the current business environment. In this way, even companies of this minute scale can be thought of as small systems, in which the designer can use creativity in arranging the operations in line with his or her core values (cf. Meadows 1999).

According to Dormer (1997), today, "'having ideas'... can be divorced from a knowledge of how to make things" (p. 18), yet artisanal designers unite the two; they are heavily involved in the actual design and production processes, and often skilled in both. These designers *design* fashion, but the making process itself is also central in the phases of design. So, in a way they combine the skills of a designer and an artisan; in other words, they master the conceptual and artistic activities of the design process, but also have the material knowledge and manual dexterity of artisans in their hands (cf. Becker 1982; Bettiol & Micelli 2013; Frayling 2011). They are not mere craftsmen in the sense that their work would consist of fulfilling customer's orders; instead, they are realizing

their own vision (cf. Lipovetsky 1987/1994). In these ways, they bear a close comparison to Becker's (1982) description of *artist-craftsmen* by uniting technical proficiency with high ambitions for the aesthetic composition.

Although the artisanal designers of the study associate with craftsmanship, and their methods come from the domain of craft, it does not follow that artisanal fashion is connected with the 'maker' cultures in which 'making' is an amateur pursuit (cf. Atkinson 2006; Campbell, 2005; Dougherty 2012). These designers are professionals who produce garments for the high-end fashion market. It is the "invisible elements included in clothing" (Kawamura 2005, p. 4) which render their products fashion. Furthermore, artisanal fashion is symbolically very different than clothing in the folkloric framework (cf. Littrell & Frater 2013); after all, the aesthetic is not classifiable as folkloric but urban and contemporary.

Artisanal products may, however, have a trace of a 'romantic aura,' like craft in general (Adamson 2007). To my observation, some of the attraction towards the artisanal mode of fashion does indeed rest in the symbolic and nostalgic realm; a framework that Adamson (2007, p. 104), Greenhalgh (1997, p. 31) and Frayling (2011, p. 66) critique as a romantic idea of an imaginary past. This criticism is understandable especially if the idyllic image is used for mere marketing; yet, the sentiment toward artisanal fashion has more content than mere nostalgia. The time, energy and the capabilities of human skill interwoven in the making of the artisanal products, as well as the uniqueness and scarcity, may be part of the attraction. Importantly, however, the symbolic and aesthetic aspects, often coming right after the practical functions of clothing, provide an essentially intangible value that may enhance the emotional connection and thus also the product's longevity (cf. Chapman 2014).

The unpacking of artisanal fashion, as the main aim of this study, intends to show its core characteristics and reflect upon the qualities it potentially carries. This study, however, represents only one reading of the artisanal mode of fashion. This interpretation is not definite but subjective, and another researcher might have analyzed the data somewhat differently (cf. Becker 1998; Glaser & Strauss 1967; see also chapter 3.4). Time and scope permitting, even more cases could have been included in the study to obtain potentially an even wider range of ideas. In lieu of a larger number of interviews, the data is composed of many layers (see chapter 3.3). The decision to include the designer's real names depicts the concept of artisanal fashion in a more factual way; because the citations are authentic, the description of the concept may also be more tangible. At the same time, though, that choice limited any potential

From the collection of Daniel Andresen. (Photo by Julien Boudet, courtesy of Daniel Andresen.)

critical analysis of their practices. Therefore, although recognizing that the artisanal way is not free of challenges, the study mainly set out to construe what artisanal fashion is and how it is executed.

Pinning down the exact boundaries of the concept remains a challenge. The artisanal practice in question does not imply that the work is conducted entirely by manual methods; instead 'artisanal' here refers also to the other elements condensed within the concepts of 'skillful materiality,' 'designer's integrated role' and 'freedom for creative control.' The study could have mapped out the different approaches *within* artisanal fashion – the diverse ways and various amounts of utilizing craft – and categorized them into modes that represent these approaches. This would have helped to show the range within the artisanal mode and clarify how some of the labels could be regarded as 'more artisanal' than others depending on how much craft they use in the production processes.

The study also did not assess aspects related to fashion marketing, such as cost breakdown and profitability, because the focus was on the practice itself (also monetary matters are often quite personal). In my observation, artisanal fashion relies on high-quality fabrics (see also Malem et al. 2009), which is one of the major costs of the product; in addition, the budget is not used for excessive branding and advertising, so I can only assume that a great part of it goes to the making of the product, i.e. materials, manufacturing, labor and overheads. The cost is obviously higher compared to a similar imported product, and the retail price is equally high; however, if the garment is produced locally from high quality materials utilizing some (often time-consuming) craft-based techniques, and if the employees have received a fair paycheck, the wholesale price reflects (mostly) the true cost of the product.

Future research could examine the consumer's perceptions of artisanal fashion: what values and meanings they see in it, for example. Moreover, many questions regarding the designer's role, and especially his/her thoughts about the work remain to be unfolded. Particularly interesting questions to explore in more depth relate to sustainable matters – key issues to be solved today – such as, what do designers think about sustainability in practical terms; what do they suggest, and what potentially hinders them to shift towards greater sustainability? In addition, recently a few celebrated designers of major fashion houses have

stepped down from their highly respected positions,[57] raising questions about the fashion designer's role in large companies, as well as the demands and pressures that a fashion designer has to face: what kind of challenges do they encounter, and what, in their opinion, would be a more optimal way to handle the work?

On a descriptive level, the study has outlined the concept of artisanal fashion in breadth describing its main characteristics, and illustrating it with existing case examples. On a more theoretical level it offered a condensed, conceptual view of the elements entailed in this approach and aimed to highlight their relationship to each other. The study also canvassed the designer's role, or many roles, in a small-sized fashion company, thus adding to the body of work about fashion designer's practice. Furthermore, it singled out aspects of how the designer could participate in the societal and cultural context through his/her work.

The artisanal approach to fashion highlights the integration of skillful design and craftsmanship, creativity and distinctive aesthetic vision. On the aesthetic level artisanal fashion centers on materiality, and as a practice it is founded on skill. Moreover, the structure of an artisanal fashion house provides a potential for "the intimate connection between hand and head" (Sennett 2008, p. 9), which is a chance to couple dexterity with discursive power (cf. Margolin 2007), and be engaged in the work even in aspects beyond the material levels. Such skillfulness, in turn, offers possibilities for conscientious action, thus contributing positively to our time.

57 For instance, Belgian fashion designer *Raf Simons* resigned from the position as creative director of French fashion house *Christian Dior* in October 2015 (Horyn 2015). The Israeli designer Alber Elbaz stepped down from his position as the creative director of Lanvin also in October 2015 (Socha 2015; see also Bennett 2015 and Menkes 2012).

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Appendix 1: Interview schedule

The following interview schedule was used as a guide, and these are examples of the areas discussed in the interviews. Although the participants were not asked exactly the same set of questions, the main themes (general questions, the design and making processes, philosophy and aesthetics) were nonetheless discussed with each interviewee.

General

- Company size
- Products (men's/women's and types of products, e.g. garments, accessories)
- Operational structure (the division of work, production location)
- Selling/ distribution

The design and making processes

- Materials – e.g.
  - What materials do you use?
  - Why these materials?

- Craft – e.g.
  - What kind of craft is used in the making processes?
  - How much craft is used in the design and production processes?
  - Why is this type / this amount of craft used in the production?
  - Is the significance of craft in your work related to the process or the product?

- Designer's role – e.g.
  - What exactly does your work entail?
  - How much are you involved in the design and production processes?
  - How much control is in your hands?
  - What elements can you control?
  - What do you gain from the control?

Philosophy – e.g.

- How do you position yourself in the current fashion industry?
- Why have you chosen to work as an independent label?
- What kinds of advantages do you gain from this way of working?
- Are there any disadvantages?
- Is there anything that can be avoided by this way of working?
- What kinds of philosophy/ideas are behind the label?
- What values are important to you?

Product aesthetics

- What is your aesthetic vision based on?
- What guides your aesthetics (e.g. patternmaking, idea, form, visuals, functionality)?
- Are the products' aesthetics bound to time or trend?
- Are there classic pieces in the collection?
- How have they become classic?
- What creates/composes a classic piece?

Appendix 2: The phases of research

THE PHASE OF RESEARCH	DESCRIPTION AND METHODS	PRIMARY DATA SET	SECONDARY DATA SET	CONFERENCES AND REPORTS	FINAL ARTICLES
INITIATION (2012) Scoping the area, and searching for an interesting phenomena	- Practical experiments - Preliminary data gathering - Preliminary interviews	- 4 semi-structured interviews	- 3 studio visits - 6 showroom visit	- A report for the Baltic Fashion Project (Aakko & Niinimäki 2012, "Innovation Analysis: Case Studies of Finland")	#1 "Less But Better: Towards Sustainable Fashion" #2 "Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges"
FORMATION (2013–2014) Establishing the research interest and questions	- Data gathering - Interviews - Coding - Analysis	- 9 semi-structured interviews	- 8 studio visits - 21 showroom visits - 3 fashion shows/ presentations	- Conference paper and a presentation for the European Academy of Design 2013 Conference (Aakko & Niinimäki 2013, "0% Waste, 100 % Aesthetics") - Presentation at the Sustainable and Innovative Fashion seminar at Aalto University - Conference presentation at the Global Fashion 2014 Conference - Conference paper and a presentation for the Academy of Design Management 2014 Conference (paper #4)	#3 "Artisanal and Slow: The Case of Anna Ruohonen" #4 "Creative Control in Sustainable Fashion"
CONCLUSION (2015–2016) Drawing conclusions	- Data gathering - Interviews - Coding - Analysis - Conclusion of the study	- 3 semi-structured interviews	- 3 studio visits - 9 showroom visits, - 2 fashion shows/ presentations - 100 hours of participatory observation	- Conference paper and a presentation for the IFFTI 2015 conference (paper #6)	#5 "Crafting Aesthetics: The Meaning Of Materiality and The Making Process in Artisanal Fashion" #6 "Unfolding Artisanal Fashion"

Appendix 3: Summary of the articles

ARTICLE	KEYWORDS	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	DATA	METHOD	CONTRIBUTION
[1] LESS BUT BETTER: TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE FASHION	fashion industry, sustainable fashion, slow fashion	What are sustainable and slow fashion? How are these practices currently applied?	Academic literature, carefully selected journalistic articles and websites, and interviews with fashion designers	Integrative literature review, illustrated with case studies	The article summarizes some of the major environmental and social implications. It also introduces current practices in sustainable and slow fashion.
[2] DESIGNING SUSTAINABLE FASHION: POSSIBILITIES AND CHALLENGES	sustainability, fashion, clothing, fashion design, theoretical model	Which concepts and methods are commonly considered as sustainable fashion design?	Academic literature, carefully selected websites and journalistic articles	Grounded Theory; constant comparative method	The study presents a theoretical model that unites different ideas about sustainable fashion; it takes the designer's point of view
[3] ARTISANAL AND SLOW: A CASE OF ANNA RUOHONEN	fashion, fashion designer, small-scale fashion house, slow fashion, artisanal fashion, case study	How can the philosophy of slow fashion be applied in practice? What kinds of general features could describe the concept of artisanal fashion?	Interviews with the designer and with a staff member of the company, visits to the atelier in Paris and the showroom in Helsinki, a fashion show, journalistic articles and the company's website.	Case study and inductive approach	The case study discusses and illustrates the concept of 'slow fashion' and outlines the major features of 'artisanal fashion.'
[4] CREATIVE CONTROL IN SUSTAINABLE FASHION	sustainable fashion, design thinking, control, design power	How could sustainable thinking be integrated in the system level of fashion business? What benefits could be gained from creative solutions?	Interviews with designers and a questionnaire	Case studies of three fashion companies; qualitative and descriptive methods	The study illustrates how design thinking applied together with control can benefit design, manufacturing and business practices, and how it can empower the transition towards sustainable practices in fashion

ARTICLE	KEYWORDS	SPECIFIC QUESTIONS	DATA	METHOD	CONTRIBUTION
[5] Crafting Aesthetics: The Meaning of Materiality and the Making Process in Artisanal Fashion	fashion design, artisanship, aesthetics, materiality, design process	What is the process of shaping aesthetics in artisanal fashion design?	Interviews with six fashion designers as well as material and visual data from their collections	Qualitative and inductive analysis	The study offers designers' perspectives to the artisanal design approach and its significance for the aesthetic of a garment; specifically, it describes the significance of materiality and the making process behind the creation of an aesthetic.
[6] Unfolding Artisanal Fashion	fashion, fashion designer, artisanal production, skill, craft	What are some of the fundamental elements of artisanal fashion? What are the potential meanings of artisanal fashion in the current cultural and societal environment?	Interviews with the head designers of ten selected labels, journalistic articles, companies' websites, and ethnographic methods, such as atelier visits, seeing collections of these labels during showroom sales, presentations and/or fashion shows, and participant observation at a fashion design studio.	Qualitative and inductive analysis	The study outlines characteristic features of the artisanal approach to fashion, and discusses its potential meanings in the current cultural and societal environment.

ABSTRAKTI

Valtaosa vaatteista valmistetaan nykyisin teollisella massatuotannolla, mutta silti osalla vaatesuunnittelijoista on *artesaaninen* lähestymistapa muotiin. He valmistavat vaatteita pienissä erissä, usein paikallistuotantona, ja hyödyntävät perinteisiä käsityötekniikoita osana suunnittelua ja valmistusta. Tämä väitöskirja tarkastelee *artesaanisuutta* nykymuodin kontekstissa ja pyrkii määrittelemään artesaanisen muodin erityispiirteitä sekä käsittelee sen merkitystä nykyajan kulttuurisessa ja yhteiskunnallisessa kontekstissa. Väitöskirja syventyy tarkastelemaan vaatesuunnittelijan roolia artesaanisen muodin tuotannossa sekä analysoi hänen mahdollisuuksiaan kontrolloida ja vaikuttaa toiminnan eri vaiheisiin. Käsityötaitoja ja laatua vaaliva artesaanisen muodin menetelmä edustaa vaihtoehtoista lähestymistapaa muodin tuotantoon sen vallitseviin käytäntöihin verrattuna.

Koska artesaanisen muodin aluetta on toistaiseksi tutkittu vähän, väitöskirja pyrkii kartoittamaan sen keskeisiä ominaisuuksia aineistolähtöisesti. Tutkimuksen aineisto koostuu artesaanisten vaatesuunnittelijoiden haastatteluista sekä muusta etnografisesta aineistosta, kuten showroom- ja studiovierailuista sekä osallistuvan havainnoinnin avulla kerätystä aineistosta artesaanisessa vaatesuunnitteluyrityksessä.

Tutkimustulokset kuvaavat, miten artesaaninen muoti yhdistää vaatteiden perinteiset valmistustavat ja ajanmukaisen muotisuunnittelun: käsityöllisiä menetelmiä hyödynnetään luovasti, muodin konteksti huomioiden. Tätä lähestymistapaa luonnehtii erityisesti käsite *taidokas materiaalisuus* (”skillful materiality”): se kuvastaa keskittymistä korkealaatuisiin materiaaleihin ja vaatteen taidokkaaseen valmistukseen. Lisäksi siinä painottuu suunnittelijan *yhdistynyt rooli* (”integrated role”): Usein pienissä, artesaanisissa vaatesuunnitteluyrityksissä suunnittelija on samalla myös yrityksen omistaja ja johtaja. Tämä keskeinen rooli mahdollistaa suunnittelijan osallistumisen suunnittelun ja tuotannon kaikkiin vaiheisiin sekä läheiseen yhteistyöhön työntekijöiden, alihankkijoiden ja usein myös asiakkaiden kanssa. Tällainen itsenäinen asema merkitsee samalla *vapautta luovaan kontrolliin* (”freedom for creative control”) ja antaa suunnittelijalle tilaisuuden kontrolloida suunnittelua, tuotantoa ja

yrityksen toimintaa hänen omien periaatteittensa mukaisesti; se on ikään kuin mahdollisuus *materialisoida arvoja* (”materializing values”).

Yleisesti ottaen tämä väitöstutkimus käsittelee muotia, joka sijaitsee vaatetusteollisuudessa vallitsevan järjestelmän reunoilla, ja tarjoaa näin vaihtoehtoisia näkökulmia nykyiseen, resursseja tuhlaavaan systeemiin. Väitöskirja on mukana luomassa harkitumpia muodintuotannon tapoja, jotka tukevat muodin hitaampaa kiertokulkua. Lisäksi se osoittaa, että perinteiset ja käsityölliset menetelmät ovat relevantteja myös nykyajassa. Artesaanisten vaatesuunnitteluyrityksien itsenäinen asema sekä paikallinen ja pienen mittakaavan tuotanto antavat mahdollisuuden asettaa eettisesti ja ekologisesti korrekteja periaatteita muodin suunnittelun ja tuotannon perustaksi.

ASIASANAT:
muoti
vaatesuunnittelu
artesaaninen tuotanto
”hidas muoti”
materiaalisuus
taito
käsityö

ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPERS

#1
Aakko, Maarit, and Eugene Rabkin. 2013. Less But Better: Towards Sustainable Fashion. Helsinki: *Futura* 4/2013.
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#2
Aakko, Maarit, and Ritva Koskennurmi-Sivonen. 2013. Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges. *Research Journal of Textile and Apparel 17* (1).
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#3
Aakko, Maarit. 2014. "Artisanal and Slow: The Case of Anna Ruohonen." In K. Niinimäki (ed.). *Sustainable Fashion: New Approaches* (pp. 56–67). Helsinki: Aalto University.
Reprinted with permission.

#4
Niinimäki, Kirsi, and Maarit Aakko. 2014. "Creative Control in Sustainable Fashion." Proceedings of *Design Management in an Era of Disruption, The 19th DMI: Academic Design Management Conference*, London, September 2–4, 2014.
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#5
Aakko, Maarit. 2015. "Crafting Aesthetics: The Meaning of Materiality and The Making Process in Artisanal Fashion." Proceedings of *Momenting the Memento, The 17th IFFTI Conference*, Florence, May 12–15, 2015.
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#6
Aakko, Maarit. (Unpublished; in review) "Unfolding Artisanal Fashion: A Study of the Artisanal Approach to Fashion Design and Production."
Unpublished, in review

Maarit Aakko and Eugene Rabkin

Less But Better: Towards Sustainability in the Fashion Industry

Introduction

"Don't buy this jacket" announced Patagonia (www.patagonia.com), an American outdoor clothing brand, on the front page of The New York *Times* on Black Friday, the biggest shopping day in the US, in 2011[1]. To be sure, it was an ad, but it was exceptional in its counterintuitive approach from a company whose reason for existence, simply put, is to sell clothes. Instead of following common marketing logic of inviting as many people as possible to buy their products, they advised against it. Instead, Patagonia encouraged people to reduce, repair, reuse and recycle. In the ad, the company included information about the environmental impact of its production, for example that the making of the said jacket required 135 liters of water and created nearly 20 pounds (about 9 kg) of carbon dioxide, which gave a lot more information about what resources are used to produce just one jacket.

Companies rarely make statements such as, "The environmental cost of everything we make is astonishing", as Patagonia did. The information that Patagonia disclosed in their campaign is generally carefully hidden from customers. On the contrary, fashion companies are very good at skirting the environmental and ethical issues related to garment production in order to lull consumers' conscience so that they can be sold as many products as possible. Being exposed to continuously changing trends and having the opportunity to buy clothes at low-prices, consumers easily forget that the fashion industry causes a lot of harm. We may love clothes for their beauty, function and the emotional satisfaction they give us, but the current consumption patterns of buying too much and keeping too little, of throw-away fast fashion, have consequences for the environment and the society at large.

As the Patagonia campaign demonstrated, our consumer society overuses resources, such as water and energy, creates pollution and waste, and encourages unfair labor practices across the globe.

Recently, there has been a lot of research and initiatives that address these issues and aim to make fashion more sustainable. Some of these issues are briefly summarized in this article under the concepts of "sustainable fashion" and "slow fashion." The article also provides examples of how some designers apply these practices. These case studies, based on designer interviews, available literature and carefully selected internet sources, are not strictly categorized into sustainable or slow fashion, but they all represent valuable approaches to fashion creation that utilize ecological and ethical practices.

What is sustainable fashion?

In everyday use the words "clothing" and "garments" are often used as synonyms for fashion. Yet, they are different concepts. According to Yuniya Kawamura (2005), clothing and garments refer to material objects but fashion itself is immaterial, embodying ideas around clothing, "the invisible elements included in clothing". Nevertheless, fashion is manifested through clothing and thus the two are hard to separate. (Kawamura 2005, 1–4.)

Kawamura's definition of fashion is one among many, and despite conceptual differ-

ences clothing and fashion are difficult to keep explicitly separate. Fashion is often used as a synonym for clothing, garments and apparel (Kawamura 2005, 2), and so it is when we talk about sustainable fashion. In this context, "fashion" is mostly used to refer to the material aspect, to clothing, especially when examining fabrics, patternmaking, and production. However, sometimes the same word signifies the symbolic aspects of fashion, especially when discussing emotional values associated with clothes, as well as trends and other aspects of the fashion cycle.

The term "sustainable fashion" was coined in the early 2000[2]. It added a new word to the existing lexicon for environmentally friendly fashion[3]; labels such as "green fashion" and "ecofashion" were already used in the 1990's (Thomas 2008, 530). "Sustainable fashion" is a term formed in the spirit of sustainable development (Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008, xvii), a concept already known from the often-cited report, *Our Common Future*[4]. This document defined sustainable development through a statement, "Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (WCED 1987).

Sustainable fashion has not yet been clearly defined; instead it serves as an over-arching term for ideas, efforts and actions towards minimizing environmental and ethical impact of clothing production and consumption (see e.g. Aakko & Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2013). In simple terms, the challenge of sustainability in fashion involves human and ecological wellbeing (Fletcher 2008, xii). The aim is to direct clothing production and consumption towards minimizing pollution and waste and eradicating unfair labor practices (Fletcher & Grose 2012, 10). An ideal interpretation of the term suggests that clothing production and consumption should not cause any harm at all to people or the planet; on the contrary it could be directed to "enhance the well-being of the people who interact with it and the environment it is developed and used within" (Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008, xvii).

When fashion, which is essentially rooted in change (Kawamura 2005, 5), is paired with sustainability, which denotes preservation and continuity, the term "sustainable fashion" might appear as an oxymoron (cf. Clark 2008, 428). Nevertheless, it serves as a base for important discussions related to environmental and social issues of textile and clothing production, similar to other areas of sustainable development (see e.g. Allwood et al. 2006; Fletcher 2008; Gardetti & Torres 2013; Hethorn & Ulasewicz 2008). Sustainable fashion could be seen as a response to the increasingly common view that garment production has harmful impact on natural resources and is responsible for unfair working conditions in the developing countries.

A short overview of environmental and ethical issues

The environmental issues of textile and clothing industry encompass the entire production phase, including marketing, sales and transport, as well as the consumer use and disposal phases. The major environmental issues of the fashion industry involve energy and water consumption, use of toxic chemicals and generation of high volumes of waste. The major ethical issues are unfair labor practices in the developing countries, including unsafe working conditions, child labor, and unfair wages. (Allwood et al. 2006, 14.)

Environmental concerns begin even before the garment manufacture stage, in textile production. Some manufactured fibers, such as polyester and viscose are very energy-intensive, while many natural fibers, especially hemp and flax, are less so. (Fletcher 2008, 8–14.) Yet, in 2010 out of the global apparel fiber consumption of 69,7 million tons 60,1% was synthetic fibers (41,9 million tons), while the demand for flax in 2010 was just 1 % (682,000 tons) (ICAC 2013). The use

phase of garments, which consists of washing, drying and ironing, adds another layer of environmental impact in terms of energy consumption (Fletcher 2008, 76–77).

Water is another natural resource that is needed throughout the production chain. Again, its use varies widely between fibers and growing regions. For example, manufacturing a T-shirt made out of cotton/Tencel-blend takes approximately 379 liters of water while a polyester fleece top takes 135 liters. (Fletcher & Grose 2012, 26–30.)

Various chemicals used in the different stages of fiber production, for example in conventional cotton cultivation, in the manufacture of polyester, and in dyeing and other finishing processes pose risks to both human health and the environment, especially soil and water. Transportation, with garments increasingly traveling across the globe from the manufacturer to the consumer, as well as production of synthetic fibers contribute to atmosphere pollution. (Allwood et al. 2006, 17; Gardetti & Torres 2013, 7–8; Fletcher & Grose 2012, 26–30.)

Textile waste is another significant problem. It occurs in both production and use phases. For example, the cutting of garments may create waste of up to 10-20% of the total fabric used. (Rissanen 2013, 3–4.) And as consumers are getting used to fast and cheap fashion, disposing of often barely used garments is becoming the norm. For example, in the US, 13.09 million tons of textile waste was generated in 2011, out of which only 2 million tons was recovered. The rest, 11.09 million tons, was finally discarded. (EPA 2013.) Recycling facilities, such as UFF, report receiving garments that have never been used, still in packages or with sales tags attached (Jompero & Pajari 2013).

Social implications in the clothing and textile industry involve child labor, forced labor, unreasonable overtime, low wages, health and safety hazards as well as psychological and physical abuse (Dickson et al. 2009). For example, in Uzbekistan the use of child labor in harvesting cotton is still common; hundreds of thousands of students are pulled out of schools in the fall during the cotton-picking season and forced to work in the fields for little or no money, picking from 20-50 kilos of cotton per day. (Clancy 2013, ILO 2013a; See also, Ander 2011.)

Practices detrimental to human health are common in the clothing and textile industry. Exposure to hazardous chemicals may have cancerous and neurological effects, cause allergies and affect fertility. Textile fiber dust can cause respiratory diseases. Notable other risks can come from noise in the textile factories, and highly repetitive processes in production may lead to injuries. (Allwood et al. 2006, 14; Gardetti & Torres 2013, 7–8.) Another great health-related risk is a long-term exposure to silica dust in sandblasting – a fabric treatment method used to achieve the worn-out look in jeans – which can cause severe respiratory problems and may also lead to fatal diseases such as lung cancer. This treatment was banned in 1966 in Europe but is still used in some developing countries. (Clean Clothes Campaign 2012.)

Safety in the factory buildings in the third world is of general concern, with routinely hidden violations and faked factory inspections (Clifford & Greenhouse 2013). The worst-ever accident in the textile sector happened on April 24, 2013 when a factory building in Bangladesh called Rana Plaza collapsed, killing 1,129 people and leaving approximately 2500 people injured. This occurred only a few months after a November 2012 fire in a Bangladeshi textile factory that killed over a hundred workers and a fire in a Pakistani textile factory in September 2012, which killed more than three hundred people. (Boone 2012; Butler 2013; Burke & Hammadi 2012.) Many smaller accidents are often reported in the news.

Even though the above summary is incomplete, it underlines some environmental and social concerns that sustainable fashion aims to address.

Towards sustainability

As mentioned earlier, sustainable fashion does not have an exact definition; rather it is an umbrella term for a variety of proactive practices that can be tailored to tackle each specific situation where sustainability concerns arise. The point is that while we should strive towards fully sustainable fashion industry taking some steps are better than taking none.

Some methods give more weight to environmental issues and others to social ones, but they are also interconnected (see e.g. Aakko 2011). Innovations related to the sustainability of textiles generally focus on reducing the levels of processing inputs such as water, energy and chemicals. There are also developments in rapidly renewable fibers and in materials produced with reduced waste or recycled fibers. (Fletcher & Grose 2012, 13.) Social issues deal with improving working conditions in the textile and garment production, especially in the developing world where labor standards are lax.

On the environmental side, processing fibers to fabric creates a great impact. Some of the damage can be reduced by minimizing the number of processing steps, combining processes, and minimizing or eliminating harmful chemicals. Current innovations in processing methods include low-chemical bleaching by ozone treatment and enzyme technology and low-chemical dyeing. Natural dyes are an alternative to chemical dyes, though because of their limited supply using natural dyes requires a change in the attitude on the part of producers and consumers, such as getting used to the seasonal availability of certain dyes and limited variations in color. (Fletcher & Grose 2012, 33–43.)

Since raw materials are the base element of the clothing industry, innovations related to them are among the most common approaches for sustainability in fashion. Products made of organic cotton and fast-growing bamboo can already be found in the "eco"-selections of any department store. Other innovative materials such as lyocell or milk fibers are now available. Yet, each fiber has its own environmental concerns, which makes navigating materials a challenging endeavor. Though each fiber might have its environmentally friendly virtues, none of them are perfect (Chen & Burns 2006, 252, 258). As mentioned above, while polyester is energy-intensive and wasteful, its production uses significantly less water than that of cotton. Still, using a diversity of materials such as organic cotton, flax, hemp, lyocell and wool instead of cotton and polyester would decrease the concentrated impact on the environment that result from producing large amounts of one fiber (Fletcher 2008, 4).

Some of the unnecessary textile waste could be eliminated or minimized at the stages of designing and patternmaking with a zero waste design approach (Rissanen 2013, 4–5). With the zero waste patternmaking method, a piece of fabric used for a garment or multiple garments is cut so meticulously that it leaves no fabric waste. This approach is based on traditional practices that recently have been rediscovered as a useful tool for sustainability in fashion design. The zero-waste patternmaking method directly helps the manufacturer to eliminate waste during production. (see e.g. Rissanen 2013; McQuillan 2011.)

Managing waste during consumer phase includes recycling fibers and reusing and reconditioning garments. These methods expand the lifespan of garments and fibers. Traditionally, textile waste is recycled by reclaiming fibers from discarded fabrics by using either mechanical or chemical methods. Recently, it has become possible to recycle polyester fibers from post-consumer plastic waste, for example from water bottles made out of PET. (Fletcher 2008, 99–107.) Some are experimenting with utilizing wasted fabric in other ways. For example Reet Aus, an Estonian fashion designer is using industrial textile waste in order to create mass-produced garments and one-off pieces. With a process

she calls upcycling Reet has created collections that have been shown internationally (Aus 2011).

The prospect of recycling can be already embedded at the design stage with methods like "design for recycling" and "design for disassembly" (Fletcher 2008, 105–106). A product design method called "Cradle to Cradle" presents the idea of lifecycle thinking. Its slogan is "waste equals food", meaning that all materials are reusable as nutrients for either biological (natural) or industrial (technical) cycles. (Braungart & McDonough 2008, 92–106.) For example, the Swedish fashion designer Matilda Wendelboe (www.matildawendelboe.se) has applied this method in a few pieces in her collections. However, the limited availability of Cradle to Cradle-certified fabrics hinders its widespread application in fashion design. (NICE/featured projects.)

Traditionally, in modern society garments are reused through donations to charity shops, but there are other alternatives, such as year-round flea-markets, commission-based second-hand stores, Internet sites for second-hand clothes (e.g. Ebay.com) and Facebook groups and Internet forums, such as Superfuture.com and StyleZeitgeist.com, where members sell or donate clothes. There are also clothing swaps that take place in private circles or more organized, public events with a nominal entry fee (Ryzik 2006). Another example of a public initiative for selling clothes is the biannual "Cleaning Day" in various cities of Finland when people sell their unneeded items (siivouspaiva.com). Some companies run take-back operations. Patagonia began a program for taking back garments for recycling and repurposing in 2005 (www.patagonia.com). Another example is Filippa K, a Swedish fashion company, which has a store selling second-hand Filippa K clothes & accessories. The store offers the public a chance to hand in their used Filippa K clothes for sale on commission basis. (filippaksecondhand.se)

A closer look into the lifecycle of garments shows that the use phase has significant environmental impact, in some cases even bigger than that of production or disposal phases. For example, frequent laundering of a garment may end up using more energy than its production. Therefore, focusing on the consumer-care phase of the product lifecycle and encouraging consumers towards lower-impact care is important. This might include more precise information on care labels and using materials, such as denim, that require less frequent laundering and can be washed at lower temperatures and air-dried. (Fletcher 2008, 77–84; Fletcher & Grose 2012, 60.)

In cases of occasion-specific garments that are otherwise rarely used, such as formal wear, product service systems (PSS) could offer an option for decreasing material consumption. Instead of consumers buying new garments, the business model of PSS is focused in providing clothing-related services, such as maintenance, alterations, redesign and garment rentals. (Armstrong & Lang 2013, 6.) Traditionally, clothing rentals have focused on bridal and other formal wear, but nowadays it is possible to rent garments for more casual occasions. Some clothing rental companies, like Rent the Runway (rentherunway.com), offer memberships, which allow members to borrow a certain amount of garments on a weekly basis.[5]

The supply chain of the textile and clothing industry has become very global and complex, leading to increasingly obscure information about the origins of materials and the product beyond the designer label and the country of manufacture. Because production is often spread out between various locations, the "Made in..." label can be rather misleading. (Fletcher 2008, 57; Ander 2011.) Certificates, such as GOTS[6], OEKO-TEX[7] and Fairtrade[8], provide information about the environmental and social standards behind materials. Still, it is possible to offer even more transparency. A Belgian fashion

label, Honest by (www.honestby.com), has done great effort to provide detailed information about its production process and its actual operations. The company gathers all the available information about the origin and contents of their fabrics and details about the manufacturing process of a garment. Contrary to the common practice, the complete price calculations are also revealed to the customer.

Social implications of the fashion industry, such as unfair working condition, and health and safety hazards, are often addressed through voluntary corporate social responsibility initiatives, which aim to decrease the environmental impact of their operations and to improve labor standards. These include both their own internal processes and their interaction with other parties. (ILO 2013b; Dickson et al. 2009.) Many fashion brands are concerned about corporate responsibility, since their brand reputation and image are highly relevant. If any critical issues in the value chain are revealed, the risk of damaging their reputation is high. Investigations into corporate responsibility can be initiated by international labor agreements, NGO's, the media, and finally consumers themselves. (Larsson et al. 2013, 264, 273.) Many clothing companies are reportedly taking social responsibility into their agendas, even most of the fast fashion chains report largely about their ethical and ecological commitments on their websites.[9] These, however, should be carefully monitored as evidenced by continuous reports of labor abuses and faked factory inspections on the part of the suppliers in the third world countries (Clifford & Greenhouse 2013).

Slow fashion: less speed, more care

Many approaches towards sustainability in fashion are focused on specific, practical solutions that are easily scalable. For example, the fast fashion giant H&M is the biggest user of certified organic cotton in the world (Textile Exchange 2012) and is supporting transparency by publishing their supplier factory information (H&M/sustainability). They have also launched a garment-recycling scheme in order to reduce the amount of textile waste ending up in landfill (H&M/Garment collecting). Of course, it is better to apply some solutions rather than none, but with the great speed of change and disposability that is the fast fashion philosophy, sustainability is hard to achieve. On the fundamental level fast fashion conflicts with the goals of sustainability. A real challenge in achieving sustainability in fashion is to aim for change on the system level and in the long term (Fletcher 2009, 370–379). A movement called "slow fashion" could be one alternative (Fletcher 2010, 260).

Slow fashion stands in opposition to everything that fast fashion is – it moves at a slower pace, disregards trends, is concerned with a classic or "signature" look, and stresses the importance of artisanal production and emotions attached to the clothes we own. Since fashion connotes change, fast/slow fashion could be read as clothing that is consumed fast/slow. Yet, as Fletcher (2010) explains, the terms signify more than just the tempo of production and consumption. Fast does not only involve speed, but also producing and selling garments in large quantities; slow is a symbol for a worldview that emphasizes small-scale production, quality, and traditional craftsmanship. (Fletcher 2010, 260–264.)

The focus of fast fashion companies is on achieving continual economic growth, which they achieve with the help of low-cost materials and labor, short lead times and efficient, large volume production. This is how the likes of H&M are able to offer $20 sweaters in their stores. While efficiency and large-scale production may not necessarily be causing environmental and ethical problems, the fast fashion business model provides ground for accelerated fashion production, use and disposal, which in turn generate more impact on the environment and play a

part in unfair working conditions. (Fletcher 2010, 260–264.)

Slow fashion is fundamentally different from fast fashion. At the core of slow fashion is the search for balancing the fashion system together with economic, social, and ecological systems. (Fletcher 2010, 262–265.) The slow approach to fashion has its origin in the Slow Food movement, which began in 1980s as a reaction to fast food. As the Slow Food manifesto[10] from 1989 declares: "In the name of productivity, the 'fast life' has changed our lifestyle and now threatens our environment and our land (and city) scapes". The core idea of Slow Food is to link the pleasure of good food with a commitment to community and the environment. Taste, quality and rich variety of food is cultivated through local cuisines and old-fashioned food traditions. (www.slowfood.com).

Embracing this philosophy, slow fashion favors small-scale production, traditional craft techniques, local materials and local markets. Altogether, slow fashion represents a different worldview, in terms of economic logic, values and goals from the current fast fashion model. Instead of mass-manufacturing and globalized trends, it promotes artisanal production and diversity of styles, and instead of quantity, it emphasizes quality. The slow approach to fashion considers carefully the design and production process, and its impacts on society and the environment. (Fletcher 2010, 264–265.)

Different tempos, fast and slow, can be used in a balanced way in the fashion system and enhance quality not only in terms of the product but also in business practices and working conditions (Fletcher 2008, 173; Fletcher 2010, 265). A New York-based designer, Tara St James[11] of the clothing label Study (studyny.squarespace.com), has utilized this principle very literally to pace her workflow. Questioning the traditional fashion calendar of two annual collections and aiming to distribute workload more equally, St James designs a capsule collection every month. Though her schedule is the same as that of fast fashion companies, she designs only 3-4 pieces in each capsule collection. In this way, she designs the same amount of garments in a year, about 50 pieces, as she would do if she was creating a 25-piece collection biannually. Although shifting to the new schedule has required time to work out all the details, St James says that it has been less pressure to create only a few pieces at a time versus the stress and intensity of designing a complete collection every six months.

Under the ethos of environmentalism, local production of clothing is getting more popular. According to New York-based fashion designers interviewed for this article[12], local production is very convenient for small brands because it allows for establishing close ties to manufacturers and monitoring of the entire production process; it is also beneficial for sustaining local businesses. Titania Inglis[13], the designer of her eponymous fashion label in Brooklyn (titaniainglis.com), notes that many of her clients prefer locally-made products and are ready to pay extra to support local businesses. However, local production is a challenge in some areas. For example, according to many Finnish fashion professionals[14] it is hard to find production sites and suitable materials made in Finland. For many Finnish fashion labels a good alternative is an almost-local production, in Estonia[15].

Slow fashion often champions emotional values attached to clothing, such as aesthetic appreciation and connection between the producer and the consumer; these values may lengthen the garments' life span (cf. Niinimäki 2010, 195–199). The emphasis on the 'newness' in fashion is often forgone in favor of appreciating longevity and classic design. For example the "Fisherman" sweater that a Danish company S.N.S Herning (www.sns-herning.com) has been producing for eighty years is still the cornerstone of their entire production of knitwear. Also relating transparency of production methods, such as the aforementioned label Honest by (www.

honestby.com) provides, is a good tool for relating the garments' provenance to the consumer.

It is challenging to categorize fashion brands into "sustainable" or "slow" fashion, since there is no precise criterion for assessing what exactly these terms address. Most likely a brand cannot apply all possible methods that are mentioned in the context of sustainability. Therefore, it is understandable that designers integrate sustainable elements in their design and production processes or in their business models according to their motivation, capabilities and resources. The use of the terms 'sustainable fashion' or 'slow fashion' is convenient for indicating sustainable practices behind the product, but since there is no standard to define these labels exactly, nor is there a governing body that could certify a company as sustainable, fashion brands can use this terminology on their own terms. Thus, it is important to note that sustainability is easy to misuse for marketing purposes. The term "slow fashion" is also sometimes used just to offer a new marketing angle to certain products that represents just one aspect of slow fashion, such as classic design (Fletcher 2010, 262). At the same time, there are many brands that do not flaunt their sustainable credentials while adhering to environmental and ethical principles.

Anna Ruohonen[16], a Finnish, Paris-based fashion designer is a good example of such a brand. Ruohonen´s eponymous label operates in a similar way to the traditional Parisian fashion houses – the designer herself designs and makes patterns; the rest, samples and production, is done by her in-house team, which ensures fair labor practices since the labor standards are tightly regulated by the French government. Everything in Ruohonen's line is made-to-measure, like it was in traditional *haute couture maisons*. The customer gets to choose the garment's style and the fabric, the order is placed according to her measures taken at the showroom, and the garment is delivered in 3–5 weeks. Ruohonen's system of producing on-demand does not lead to any surplus of unsold garments. The label consists of two lines, Black Classics and White Label. The Black Classics consists of the designer's favorite pieces that she has created over the years. These styles stay unchanged in the collection season after season, but they can be ordered in different colors and fabrics depending on the season's selection. The White Label is a seasonal collection, which follows the regular fashion cycle. The best pieces from this collection may find afterlife in the Black Classics collection. In Ruohonen's view, successful design endures time, as she states on her website, "In a beautiful final product every tiny detail has found its place. It seems that the piece has always existed." (annaruohonen.com)

Conclusion

The fashion industry employs millions of people worldwide, including designers, manufactures, suppliers, garment workers and retailers. It serves many more millions of consumers. The problems of the fashion industry are manifold, ranging from environmental impact to social injustice, so, there is a lot at stake. Given the scale of the problems it is obvious that the fashion industry cannot continue operating the way it does now. However, trying to change the fashion system on the fundamental level is a great challenge; thus concentrating on specific, practical solutions has great import.

The efforts towards sustainability in fashion should not be viewed as the latest trend – sustainability is a long-term proposition and the only option for the future. The goal is to find alternative methods of operation that minimize, or, ideally, eliminate the damage fashion production and consumption inflicts on our planet. Some methods inevitably evolve with trial and error until the level of their success is determined. Still, even experimental approaches, successful or not, can be useful while we are searching

for new, sustainable practices or developing existing ones. These concerns are rooted not only in the present-day life; pollution, pesticides, toxic chemicals, depleted soils, use of non-renewable sources and the amounts of waste all have great impacts in the lives of the generations after us.

Still, it is much harder to act consciously, when the environmental and social issues of the fashion industry are neither visible in the product nor in any aspect of our everyday life. Therefore, providing information and some level of transparency to consumers is very valuable. Also, educating fashion design and marketing students about sustainability issues can be greatly beneficial, so in future they can make better choices and move the industry forward in terms of sustainability. Some of the big issues, for example working conditions, wages and factory safety are managed on the level of unions, government, factory owners and big fashion brands (Hoskins 2013) and on a large scale this is where changes for the better are most needed.

On a smaller scale, slow fashion offers a vital alternative to the current fashion system. It highlights aspects, such as quality, durability and diversity of styles that help build appreciation for garments and decrease the pace of consumption. It strives for balance across the economic, social and environmental fields by promoting small-scale production, local craftsmanship, thus offering another kind of starting point to the current mainstream fashion. (Fletcher 2010.)

"Don't buy this jacket!" may be an exaggeration, but there should be more of this attitude; buy considerately, buy just what you need. Investing in quality, seasonless aesthetic, durable and well-made clothing is one of the ways to support sustainability and ethical production. This implies also simply buying less, and using, taking care and repairing the existing garments, and not just filling our closets.

Even though fast fashion is still a gigantic industry, some consumers are beginning to develop fast fashion fatigue: sustainability issues are being discussed in today's media and more sustainable choices are offered in a variety of products. The orientation toward local and artisanal production that is especially apparent in the food culture of today seems to be slowly expanding to clothing, as shops offering locally made, artisanal and small-scale production multiply. These signs of the times give hope that our society can be steered toward considered consumption, with the focus shifting from quantity towards quality. We hope that the methods outlined in this article provide a blueprint towards building a more sustainable fashion industry.

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Designing Sustainable Fashion: Possibilities and Challenges

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ABSTRACT

In this study, we present a theoretical model, which draws together the elements of sustainability and fashion design. The data have been gathered from various sources, mainly academic literature, and a qualitative analysis has been carried out by following the principles of the grounded theory method: the data is analyzed by identifying and categorizing relevant concepts by using a constant comparative method, i.e. examining the internal consistency of each category. The aim of the model is to serve fashion designers, who wish to take sustainability into consideration. The analysis and the model answer the question of which principles and practices should be considered in sustainable fashion design. However, under further development, an integrated model helps to simultaneously see a number of facts and viewpoints that affect fashion production. The core category of the model is "considered take and return". It is based on design philosophies that are linked to other categories: material sourcing; fabric treatment; production methods; saving resources; societal implications; information transparency; and attachment and appreciation.

Keywords: Sustainability, Fashion, Clothing, Fashion Design, Theoretical Model

1. Introduction

Sustainable fashion is an endeavour that draws together sustainable development and fashion. Until recently, these two concepts together were an oxymoron. Today, it is vital to make this pair a promise for the future (cf. Clark, 2008). Sustainable development is defined as "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" in *Our Common Future*, also known as the Brundtland Report (WCED, 1987). However, the post-Brundtland world is a different place, because of the report itself and the issues that were not known in the 1980s. Yet, progress towards sustainable forms of production and consumption has been modest. While many complain that 'sustainable development' is difficult to define, our knowledge of what 'sustainability' means has considerably increased. It is 'development' that is more difficult to define (Sneddon et al., 2006). Furthermore, if we replace 'development' with 'fashion', that task becomes harder.

Fashion can be defined in a rather abstract way. For example, Kawamura (2005) argued that fashion and clothing are distinct concepts; fashion is immaterial, while clothing is material. On the one hand, this seems to make sense, especially in our time when fashion imagery may present a fantasy world. This perception of fashion does not seem problematic in the context of sustainability. On the other hand, we must admit that fashion drives changes in the clothing itself. As soon as fashion is defined as a *process* and a *product* (Sproles et al., 1994) or as a cultural industry that establishes the aesthetic and practical dimensions of our *clothing* habits (Craik, 2009), the material of the product and pace of change become vital. Whether the change is slow (Clark, 2008) or ephemeral (Lipovetsky, 1987), matters.

Ironically, fashion, which is commonly considered innovative, is desperately behind in sustainability, and as pointed out by Thomas (2008), fashion as a field of research is late too. Designers and design theorists in other fields of consumer products have long been concerned with sustainability; Papanek (1971/1984) is a prime example. Most relevant

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publications of fashion and sustainability are from the 21st century. However, we can agree with Ulasewicz (2008) in that fashion is about change, and if sustainable design and development are our goals, then let us thoughtfully and intelligently engage as we participate in changing what is considered fashionable.

The enacting of sustainable development in the global economy is disappointing and slow. But what about at a non-global scale? Numerous community and local efforts can be recognized (Sneddon et al., 2006). When gigantic global fashion brands continue to advocate frequent changes and cheap materials from unknown sources, consumers, designers, small-scale producers and dealers must act where they can. "Through individual introspection, followed by collective action, we will create sustainable futures together" (Hethorn et al., 2008). Different points of view and diverse examples might lead to new discoveries and ideas that could potentially be applied on a larger scale.

While the aim of sustainability in fashion may be rather clear, the methods of reaching sustainability are not clear at all. Sustainable fashion is a complex effort, including a lot of idealism, but its many elements have to be taken into consideration on a practical level. By drawing together various facts, concepts and requirements into one model, we aim to provide a toolkit that would help in confronting the complexity of the issues that surround sustainability, particularly from the designer's point of view, especially in small-scale production.

This study is mainly based on theoretical data, i.e. texts from academic publications. In addition to these, websites and journalistic articles are used. The analysis is carried out by following the principles of the grounded theory method (e.g. Glaser et al., 1999). The data have been analyzed by identifying and categorizing relevant concepts by using a constant comparative method, i.e. examining the internal consistency of each category. The study establishes a core category, called 'considered take and return', around which all other categories are integrated. The main categories and their subcategories are illustrated with a concept map in Figure 1, and discussed in the following sections.

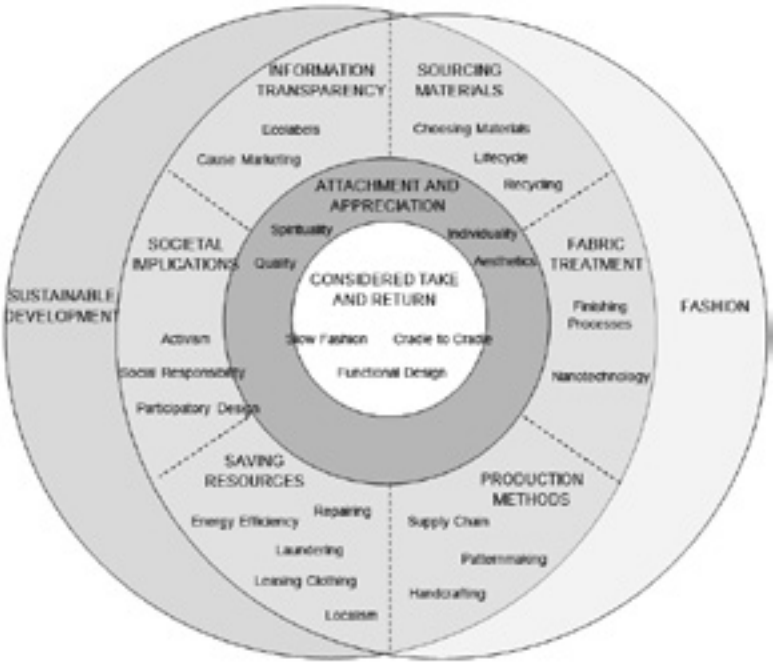

Fig. 1. Model of Sustainable Fashion Design

2. Considered Take and Return

Chouinard (2008) gave a strict definition for sustainability: "[Y]ou can only *take* out of a system the same amount of energy as you *put back* in, with no pollution or waste". Yet, he admitted: "There has never been, nor is there now, a sustainable business or a sustainable fashion on this planet" (p.ix). Chouinard's own career as a business leader indicates that one may see the limits of possibilities and still strive towards an ideal. Meadows (1999) remarked that in a single individual, change may quickly occur, but whole societies are another matter. The transforming of any system must start from the core, from the level of paradigms which are the sources of the systems. Despite the probable resistance to change, Meadows considered that it was important to point out the failures in the old paradigms and persistently advocate for better alternatives. In fashion at the moment, as added by Fletcher (2009), sustainability actions occur in small, incremental changes because they are relatively easy to execute. However, the real challenge in sustainable fashion is also to aim for change on a deeper level and in the long term. Instead of abandoning and denying changes in fashion, it is more fruitful to benefit on a practical level from design philosophies that take sustainability into account.

One of these is, **cradle to cradle,** a philosophy developed by Braungart and McDonough (2008). They suggested that instead of simply saving natural resources, attention should be paid to the lifecycle of materials. Instead of throwing products away, their material should be reused. In this way, their idea of "waste equals food" takes into account the same principles of take and return that Chouinard had pointed out. For Braungart and McDonough, it means that all products are nutrients of either biological (natural) or industrial (technical) cycles. Both can be reused in their own ways. The most difficult products are the hybrid ones that consist of materials of both types. Designing for recycling (DFR) and designing for disassembly (DFD) follow the same principles as cradle to cradle. Both suggest that recycling must already be considered during the design process (Fletcher, 2008).

While there is no perfect selection of sustainable materials available at the moment, Braungart and McDonough (2008) advised designers to categorize materials into three lists: 'X list' for harmful and toxic, 'grey list' for materials that we have to tolerate before finding better alternatives, and 'P list' for the "positive" and preferred materials.

The **functional design** of Papanek (1984, 1995) is based on the idea that design must be the bridge between human needs, culture and ecology. It is not limited to what 'functional' usually refers to. The function complex ties together use, aesthetics, associations, method (tools, materials and processes) and telesis of a product with human needs (Papanek, 1984). All these are given equal weight. Although Papanek did not specifically discuss fashion design, it is important to apply his idea in that aesthetics and utility are not mutually exclusive, and a designer is expected to develop these in unison.

Another important concept for fashion is telesis, the connection of a product with time, culture, society and nature. In his later model, Papanek (1995) replaced telesis with consequences of the product to the environment in order to emphasize sustainability. However, from fashion's point of view, it would have been more fruitful to have both telesis and sustainability in the model of functional design.

Slow fashion is a more diffuse and less defined concept than cradle to cradle or functional design. It has its roots in the slow food movement, but there is also a slow design theory (Fuad-Luke, 2002, 2004/2005) behind it. Slow fashion is an objection to fast fashion. However, it is not the opposite of fast fashion, as there is no dualism; rather it is a different approach of various actors in the scene of fashion (Fletcher, 2008). Here, 'slow' is not only about the temporality of fashion. It also embraces other important aspects. For example, Clark (2008) summarized three lines of reflection: the valuing of local resources and distributed economies; transparent production systems with less intermediation between producer and consumer; and sustainable and sensorial products.

Clark (2008) also discussed redesigning, remaking and reconstructing as elements of slow fashion and ways of saving resources. While mending clothes has been historically associated with poverty, perhaps rebranding it as "wardrobe

surgery" of quality clothes by skilled tailors would promote slow design by that with longevity (pp.435–438).

Change is one of the inherent features of fashion, and the advocates of slow fashion do not wish to deny or forget it. The aim is to look into different layers of time and bring to the market some quick-to-consume products with carefully planned material cycles, which satisfy the want of individuals for change and symbolic expression, while other products could be of high-value, slow-to-consume and bring key resource savings (Fletcher, 2008).

The examples given of slow fashion practices by Clark (2008) and Fletcher (2008) come from small-scale production. The challenge of extending slow fashion to a larger scale still remains.

3. Sourcing Materials

While **choosing materials** is an essential part of the aesthetic of any design, it also plays a remarkable role in the sustainability aspects of fashion. As Chen and Burns (2006) pointed out, the environmental concern with regard to each fibre is different. Naming fibres "green" or "environmentally friendly" does not paint a complete picture, since none of them are perfect in that sense; each fibre might have its virtue in terms of sustainability, yet each has its problems.

When analyzing the environmental aspects of fibres, the typical concerns are the energy use and the pollution caused by obtaining and processing the fibre. Both the resources and the disposal have to be taken into account; is the fibre made from renewable resources, and at the end of its lifespan, is it fully biodegradable or could it be recycled or reused (Chen et al., 2006)?

Considering aesthetic aspects of design along with sustainability may be complex, since the sustainable fabric choices on the market are very limited compared to the conventional options. Regardless, on a large scale, it makes a difference if designers choose to use if not the perfect, then the least harmful materials, while still keeping in mind both the functional and aesthetic goals of the design (see e.g. Fletcher, 2008).

The **lifecycle of materials** is important to consider, but this is difficult due to facts such as methodological inconsistencies of assessment, relational understanding of sustainability, and consumer behaviour in use and care of clothes. Even with the available methods of material lifecycle assessments, it is hard to say which fiber is the best (Fletcher, 2008). Natural fibres cannot be treated as the environmental choice just because they are grown in nature. For example, cotton has many complex issues with regards to its farming, irrigation, harvest and pesticide use, with concerning effects on soil, water, air, and even extending to human health risks (Grose, 2009).

Oversimplified statements about the qualities of fabrics may be misguiding, which in the end may not serve the realization of sustainable fashion. Designers ought to be aware of the facts related to different fabrics, and with the help of available fibre assessments and other's expertise, opt for better alternatives. As Fletcher (2008) counseled, to avoid possibly partisan results, multiple sources should be used.

The **recycling** of **materials** may be examined in two ways. A designer may choose to use recycled materials and/or create products in which their materials can be recycled at the end of their lifecycle. The recycling of materials saves new materials, but needs energy for the mechanical processing of natural fibres, chemical processing of synthetic fibres, and respinning them into new yarns. It is a way of managing waste, but not a way of reducing it. Moreover, fabric blends remain a problem in terms of their recycling. Designing with recycling in mind is a way to avoid problems. According to Fletcher (2008), recycling is a transition strategy, which is useful while society is transformed into something more socially aware and less energy intensive. However, as Hawley (2009) reminds us, when developing countries become wealthier, they will use more clothes, creating even more textile waste.

Recycling is often extended to mean various sorts of *re-lives* of consumer products, but here, it is limited to the most radical one, namely reuse of fibres. Reuse as such or reconditioning are the most sustainable ways of treating used clothes, and repairing will be discussed below. *Bricolage*, the age-old tradition of creatively utilizing any available fabric in a new way, could be also

considered as a way of reusing waste fabric (Savageau, 2011).

4. Treatment of Fabrics

Finishing processes actually cause the most environmental impact during the production phase. Besides the conversion from raw fibres to finished fabric, they both go through many other processes, such as desizing, scouring, bleaching, dyeing and printing. A lot of water, energy and chemicals are used in these processes, some of them containing toxins such as heavy metals. Some of the fabric treatments serve aesthetic purposes, others improve its performance and function – therefore some of them are essential and cannot be avoided (Fletcher, 2008).

There are attempts to reduce the environmental impacts of finishing, such as merging the processing stages and using updated methods that consume a minimum amount of water and energy. The European Commission (2003) has created a reference document for the best available techniques (BAT) for the textile industry, particularly for its production phase. Even though the designer may not be the person to effect these changes, acknowledging the key processes can guide him/her towards more sustainable choices, lending support to existing sustainable methods and enabling new methods to emerge.

Innovations in **nanotechnology** might introduce environmental benefits to the textile industry. Manipulating fabrics at a nano-scale can possibly change their properties in a remarkable way. Relevant to sustainable fashion are certain coatings and other finishes, which potentially extend the product life or reduce the need for laundering. They might also aid to improve dye uptake and color fastness that would further decrease the harmful impacts of the dyeing processes. Although nano-scale technologies seem to bring about environmental improvements, the long-term behaviour of nano-particles in fabrics is still under further research (Black, 2009).

5. Production Methods

Patternmaking could be one key to reducing unnecessary waste. Rissanen (2008) estimated that the cutting of garments creates 10–20 % fabric waste, which is typically discarded to a landfill or recycled. To avoid that, Rissanen suggested a zero waste design approach to patternmaking. It is a process that integrates sketching and patternmaking, and requires the consideration of technical and visual elements of design together (pp.184–186, 203–204).

The concept of zero waste design includes many different approaches which all aim to eliminate fabric waste. Although its name is new, the idea is much older: for example the traditional Japanese kimonos or Indian saris both make use of one complete piece of a fabric without wasting any of it. In some contemporary approaches, fabric is utilized by using rectangular and triangular shapes that easily fit together like a jigsaw puzzle (Rissanen, 2008). In zero waste design, each line of the pattern marks off two pattern pieces, instead of one that outlines just the particular piece. With a thoughtful design process, patterns can be more complicated and different than jigsaw shapes, and one layout can contain pattern pieces for more than one garment at a time (McQuillan, 2011).

Handcrafting can also be included as a part of sustainable fashion. Although hand-made production saves energy, it cannot be a requisite method for sustainable production in contemporary, mass-market manufacturing. However, on the symbolic level, it can strengthen appreciation and attachment towards a garment. Handcrafting can be a good way of adding unique details to a garment, thus emphasizing its individuality. In some phases of production, it may also ensure better quality. As Clark (2008) had put it, hand-made garments can offer something special, in the same way as *haute couture* does, and this can be one way to enhance the sensorial qualities of a product. Such garments can also be considered as investments on economic as well as on emotional levels (pp.440–441).

Today, the **supply chain** in garment production can be long and complicated. A country of manufacture in the label of a garment in many cases means just one of several countries involved in the chain. As Abrims and Astill (2001) reported, if the origins of all the materials and processes are counted, a regular pair of jeans could be labeled: “Made in Tunisia, Italy, Germany, France, Northern Ireland, Pakistan, Turkey, Japan, Korea, Namibia, Benin, Australia, and Hungary”.

However, some companies intend to keep their production and supply chain as transparent as possible. For example MADE-BY, a European not-for-profit organization, has developed a program which enables a consumer to trace all the supply chain stages of the garments of their partner brands.

6. Societal Implications

Social responsibility in the fashion industry, as discussed by Dickson, Loker and Eckman (2009), refers especially to the ethical and responsible actions taken by businesses towards labor standards and fair working conditions. According to them, the major problems in this field are related to forced labor, low wages, overtime, discrimination, health and safety hazards as well as psychological and physical abuse. In many cases, employees are also unaware of their rights, and have insufficient contact with management.

Some non-governmental organizations have particularly focused on improving working conditions in the global fashion industry. For example, a European-based alliance, Clean Clothes Campaign, reports abuses in the field, and makes recommendations for fighting them. The campaign also educates consumers, lobbies companies and governments, and offers support to workers who are fighting for their rights.

Activism, which denotes an intentional effort for change in environmental, political or social situations, is also a way for a fashion designer to strive for change. Papanek included similar ideas in his model of functional design. The concepts of telesis and consequences are concerned with design that reflects the socio-cultural systems of the time, but also acts towards improving its ecological and social aspects (Papanek, 1984). Along those lines, fashion design can reflect the *zeitgeist*. This can be seen, for instance, in the work of an American-born fashion designer, Geoffrey B. Small. His spring-summer 2011 collection, "Logomania," was dedicated to sending a message against nuclear power. As Small saw it, "Fashion reaches billions today in the world. Any artist with a potential audience of that size has an obligation to speak the truth, not lie about it, and to help make things better for people who need it, not just an elite few" (Williams, 2010).

Participatory design or co-design is also connected with a kind of design activism, but focuses on a more individual level by fostering an active role for users. It is based on the idea that the user of a garment would be involved in the design process. The designer would still be in the lead, but would not be so exclusive. In this way, participatory design aims to distribute power in a different way and actively includes voices and skills of the users more than the presently dominant way of mass manufacturing. By aiming at a participatory process, which is at the same time more transparent, this would also foster the understanding of materials and the levels that they are connected with, including those that are cultural, political and ecological (Fletcher, 2008).

7. Saving Resources

Energy efficiency must be considered throughout the lifespan of a garment, from the production phase through to use and disposal. As Fletcher (2008) remarked: "[U]nless we look at a product from a lifecycle or whole-system perspective, we risk ignoring major sources of environmental impact (such as the use phase) and opportunities for innovation and change". Energy could be saved at various stages and in many ways, with both innovations and traditional approaches. In addition to saving energy, alternative energy sources could be utilized.

Laundering, which includes washing, drying and ironing, is actually one of the most important phases to take into consideration in the whole lifecycle of a garment while aiming for sustainability. Frequent laundering of a garment ends up using more energy than what was used in the making of it. Therefore, choosing materials with forethought of the use phase makes a difference. For example, some materials, such as wool, demand less laundering, and others can be washed at lower temperatures and air-dried (Fletcher, 2008). Proper care is also essential to preserving fabric properties and ensuring durability to the full extent. For example, in the case of polylactid acid (PLA), very specific care is required – including pH level, washing temperature and drying conditions – in order to retain its properties after repeated laundering (Karst et al., 2009).

The **repair** of garments used to be a regular

activity. However, the recent cheap products of "fast-fashion" have made it uneconomic and unattractive: in many cases, the purchasing of new garments is cheaper than repairing the old ones. Nevertheless, prolonging their life through repair saves resources, and creates local jobs. Designers and manufactures could facilitate this, too, for instance, by providing spare parts and repair services (Allwood et al., 2006).

The **leasing of clothing** is proposed as a potential way to increase the intensity of clothing use. As positive outcomes of leasing, Allwood et al. (2006) explained that it provides access to more garments to wear, including special occasions or merely the desire for change. From the consumer's perspective, it would also mean easy maintenance since the leasing company would take care of that. Despite the probable increase of laundering, since the garments would be cleaned after every user, Allwood et al. claimed that when carried out by professional laundries, the impact would be smaller than that when carried out by home washing.

Fletcher (2008) wrote: "**(l)ocalism** is an antidote to unsustainability". In small communities, people see and sense the effect of their own actions on each other and the environment. Local action embraces diversity in fashion. In addition to creativity and activity, local production creates jobs and uses local resources. In spite of being locally designed and produced from regional materials, clothes can still be a part of the global fashion system (pp.141–146).

8. Information Transparency

Ecolabels serve a key role in transmitting information about standardized and certified processes related to a product (Thomas, 2008; Moore et al., 2009; Sherburne, 2009). Standardization of eco labels is important in order to avoid miscellaneous and misleading labels, which might be used only to "greenwash" products to look more sustainable than in reality. The consumer needs reliable information, and as sustainably produced clothes do not necessarily look different from others, the eco label would explain these qualities otherwise not known (Moore et al., 2009).

A number of information labels already exist, such as Ecoflower and ÖkoTex, but the fashion industry should also consider how to inform the consumer. It is easier to agree that ecolabels are needed than to decide the details that should be included in them. How specific should the information be? Should the labels contain only sustainable aspects or also warnings about less favourable aspects? Thomas (2008) noted that if a range of clothing is defined as ethical clothing, there may be the expectation that other clothing is unethical by default. If clothing had a swing ticket that could be scanned like barcodes, the consumer could obtain information, provenance information included, in his language (pp.536–537).

Cause marketing has been associated with musicians and charity for a long time. In the fashion business, it is relatively new. While directing profits to a good cause is commendable, the use of social causes to promote brands raises ethical questions. Ulasewicz (2008) pointed out that it may be difficult to know if campaigns are genuine or serve as a method for corporations to clean up their image. On the other hand, she provided examples of successful campaigns (pp.42–47). Therefore, if a business wants to promote its image as a producer of sustainable fashion, it should clearly show which environmental or social causes that it supports and how its profits are allocated.

9. Attachment and Appreciation

Aesthetics should be an inseparable aspect of functional design (Papanek, 1984). By discussing "a new aesthetic", Fletcher (2008) noted that making a sustainable alternative more attractive to consumers will encourage them to embrace it. Although ethical and ecological values are important to some consumers, by far, most people look first for aesthetic value, such as style, colour, and fit (Niinimäki, 2010). It is crucial for a designer of sustainable fashion to take this fact into account. Sherburne (2008) highlighted the role of a designer in creating aesthetically attractive work and suggested that methods and materials could be the very starting point in the process of creating sustainable fashion (pp.8–10). Beauty and creativity should not be in conflict with social and ecological sustainabilities.

Individuality refers to the unique qualities of a garment. Hethorn (2008) also noted that fashion

should boost an individual's sense of self and well-being. Therefore, she emphasized people instead of objects as the focus of design. Along with material qualities, sustainable fashion should possess emotional and expressive aspects. When meeting the needs and desires of a person, the resulting satisfaction leads to greater use and a longer product lifecycle (pp.53–55). Conversely, individuality on the maker's side means sartorial dedication and personal attention to the garment (Geoffrey B. Small).

Quality is a key property of sustainable fashion (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2008; Koskennurmi-Sivonen, 2009). Quality is not an easily defined concept, as it can be examined from many angles, and also at different phases of a product's lifecycle (Garvin, 1988). For example, Koskennurmi-Sivonen and Pietarila (2005) separated the conceptions of quality with regards to clothes, process, service, and the enterprise itself, and looked at them from the points of view of both designers and clients. Even though their model covers quality assessment of customized clothing, the aspects are applicable in a general sense. The quality of a garment may be assessed in terms of style, fit, features, material, design and technique. These are, of course, rough divisions since all of these aspects shape the quality of clothing.

Spirituality, which refers to the metaphysical qualities of an object, is not a required characteristic of sustainable fashion. Still, some consider spirituality as a conceivable aspect of design. Papanek (1995) viewed spirituality as a quality that design can reflect. In his opinion, spirituality is easier to realize in architecture, which is experienced in a place and possesses many sensory elements, such as light, sound, visual rhythm and atmosphere. According to Papanek, spirituality is much harder to achieve in a single product. Additionally, spirituality may be thought of not only as a reflection of the material properties of an object, but also as the intention of a designer. Here, Papanek meant that when a product is truly sustainable or helps to save resources, it nourishes our sense of well-being (pp.49–54).

Loori (2004) emphasized spirituality as an aspect of the design process. He did not make distinctions in terms of different mediums. Instead, he included the process of creating art and different forms of design as a means for contemplating one's own spirituality. Concentration and calm observation may lead to moments of creativity in which an artistic expression comes about by itself (p.106). Since fashion design is also a creative process and proceeds through paths of intuition, this line of thinking may apply to the work of fashion designers.

10. Conclusion

The analysis and the model presented here address the question of which principles and practices are included in sustainable fashion design. While the model depicts separate categories, these exist in close interaction. They are linked to each other in ways that are conceptually separable, but not always so in a practical sense.

The concepts of the core category, "considered take and return", have been derived from design philosophies that focus on sustainability. If designers do not adopt these philosophies, they can reflect on their own design methodology in relation to the concepts offered here.

A dynamic model is never a *fait accompli*. The very nature of the model presented here is open-ended. As the knowledge of fashion theorists and practitioners of sustainable fashion grows, the model can be further developed.

We have aimed to show the depth of the issue of sustainability. While the word 'sustainable' elicits in our minds a concern for the environment, natural resources, and pollution, in fashion, we should also consider the socio-cultural environment and individual well-being. Sustainable fashion suffers from terminology blur and "greenwashing." It is also hurt by its shabby image. This is why we have highlighted the role of aesthetics and quality in this context.

By replacing 'development' with 'fashion', we argue by following Sneddon et al. (2006) that the linkage of 'sustainability' with the vilified concept of 'fashion' need not signal the end of sustainable fashion. Fashion does not exist in a vacuum. It is created and consumed, and that is why both the designer and the wearer are responsible for their decisions. Although there is neither a formal

definition of sustainable fashion, nor a complete guide to achieving its goals, the more thoroughly the various elements of sustainability are applied, the closer we get to the commonly accepted ideals of sustainable fashion.

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ARTISANAL AND SLOW: THE CASE OF ANNA RUOHONEN

Maarit Aakko

INTRODUCTION

Fashion connotes novelty and change (Kawamura 2005, pp.5–6), and it currently operates at an accelerated pace, with continuously shifting trends, fast manufacturing, endless shopping opportunities not bounded to time or place, coupled with cheap prices keeping today's consumers easily in vogue. Although clothes offer us much more than just function – they may bring us emotional satisfaction, confidence, a feeling of belonging or simply beauty – at some point the more we buy the less we are assured of feeling satisfied. Current consumption patterns of buying too much and keeping too little, of throwaway fast fashion, deplete natural resources and negatively impact the environment and the society at large.

Fortunately, there are alternatives to the current flood of mass-produced, disposable garments. *Slow fashion* and *artisanal fashion* are two such alternatives. Labels based on these ideas have different emphasis in their ways of working. While utilising some of the elements that fashion celebrates, such as newness and change, they operate with a different, anti-mass-market mindset and at slower speed.

Slow fashion, which stresses especially traditional skills, small-scale and local production, and a search for balance in the fashion system together with economic, social, and ecological systems, is often associated with a more sustainable system of fashion (see e.g. Clark 2008; Fletcher 2010). The concept of slow fashion is derived from the philosophy of *slow food* that cultivates especially taste, quality and a rich variety of food (www.slowfood.com). Today, *artisanal* is also often associated with food, from bread and cheese to coffee and chocolate. It denotes the making process, typically handcrafted and based on traditional methods or recipes, which are fairly easy to understand in terms of cooking and baking. Artisanal is also paired with *fashion* to signify a certain type of fashion [1] similar in spirit to other artisanal products and thus referring to handcrafted, non-industrial, traditional and small-batch production. However, the term *artisanal fashion* has not been discussed in the academic context and does not have a precise definition. The concept of artisanal fashion is obviously close to that of slow fashion, and sometimes an artisanal type of fashion production is included as an element of slow fashion. One distinctive feature of artisanal fashion is that it highlights the fashion designer's skills.

Paris-based fashion designer Anna Ruohonen seems to embody both approaches to fashion, slow and artisanal. This case study looks at Anna Ruohonen's design philosophy and strategies in these two contexts [2]. Based on existing definitions, the case explains and illustrates the concept of slow fashion. Since artisanal fashion is not well defined, this study explores the concept and aims to outline some of its central elements with the help of the Anna Ruohonen case [3].

This case study does not intend to provide an explicit definition of artisanal fashion; instead it suggests what basic elements could form and contribute to it. With the concepts of slow and artisanal fashion, the aim is also to search for more considerate ways to produce and consume garments and thus examine their potential to advance more environmental and ethical practices in the field of fashion.

[1] For example, fashion designer Maison Martin Margiela established the fashion line "0", also called "Artisanal", already in 1988, which consists of unique pieces reworked entirely by hand from used garments and objects (Motwary 2010). Additionally, an Internet forum dedicated to men's fashion, StyleZeitgeist (stylezeitgeist.com), has discussions about "artisanal fashion".
[2] The data includes interviews with the designer Anna Ruohonen and with a staff member of the company, visits to the atelier in Paris and the showroom in Helsinki, a fashion show, newspaper articles and the company's website.
[3] This case study is a small contribution exploring the fields of artisanal and slow fashion. Acknowledging that one case is not substantial for generating explicit definitions or theories – more comparative data and case studies would be needed for such work – for the purposes of this chapter this particular case is opened up as an initial exploration and to show part of a work-in-process. Outlining the elements of artisanal fashion has been conducted following inductive reasoning, approaching the subject only with general knowledge and not on the basis of preconceived theories. This allows significant incidents and salient themes to emerge from the data itself, which may further be compared to other incidents within other cases. Exceptionally, using abductive reasoning, a dictionary definition is included in the analysis. (See Glaser & Strauss 1967; Timmermans & Tavory 2012.)

THE CASE OF ANNA RUOHONEN

Anna Ruohonen [4] is a Finnish Paris-based fashion designer and founder of her own eponymous clothing label. The line, founded in 1999, consists of women's and men's wear and has been located in Paris from the outset.

Ruohonen's label operates in a similar way to the traditional Parisian fashion houses – the designer herself designs and makes patterns; the rest, samples and production, is done by her in-house team. Almost everything is produced at her atelier and only knitwear is outsourced to a knitwear studio in Paris. Ruohonen's fashion house is a small-scale business: the atelier has six full-time employees and occasional interns in Paris and one full-time and one part-time employee in Helsinki, Finland.

Everything in Ruohonen's line is made-to-measure, as it was in traditional haute couture maisons. The designer has two showrooms, one in Paris and one in Helsinki. The customer may choose the style and fabric amongst the available choices, and the order is produced according to her measurements taken at the showroom. The orders placed in Paris are delivered in approximately 3–10 days; orders placed in the showroom in Helsinki are produced in Paris and delivered in approximately three weeks.

The main showroom and atelier operate in the same building in the 14th arrondissement in Paris. The building consists of six floors: the ground floor and basement operate as the showroom and the floors above house manufacturing, patternmaking, the design studio, the office and a staff's area.

The concept of Ruohonen's label is quite unique in the contemporary fashion world. The label consists of two lines, White Label and Black Classics. The White Label is a seasonal collection, which follows the regular fashion cycle of spring/summer and autumn/winter. In contrast, the Black Classics line is a "timeless collection" in which the pieces stay unchanged season after season; currently the oldest piece has been produced for twelve years. The Black Classics collection is on continuous display in the showrooms and online in their web store and can be ordered throughout the year. All the sample garments in this collection are black, but they can be made in different colours and fabrics depending on the season's selection. Otherwise the production process and the quality of garments of the Black Classics line is the same as it is for the White Label.

Although Ruohonen shows the White Label collection twice a year, she does not follow the traditional fashion calendar. She shows men's and women's collections together twice a year both in Paris and in Helsinki on her own schedule, not in conjunction with Paris's fashion weeks [5] when most of the other fashion labels show their collections. Compared to typical fashion retail, in Ruohonen's system one step, the store buyers, is absent. The clients basically replace them, as they are the audience of her fashion shows and place orders directly with the company.

SLOW APPROACH TO FASHION

Fashion can be seen as a concept that is immaterial itself but is manifested through clothing. Although from a sociological point of view, *clothing/garments* and *fashion* are different concepts, in everyday language they are used as synonyms. Fashion can be used to refer to the material aspect, to clothing, especially when examining fabrics, patternmaking and production. However, sometimes the same word signifies the symbolic aspects of fashion, especially when discussing emotional values associated with clothes, as well as trends and other aspects of the fashion cycle. (Kawamura 2005, pp.1–2) When adding the attributes *fast* or *slow* to fashion, it denotes both the material but even more so the symbolic aspects of fashion.

> *Slow fashion stands in opposition to everything that fast fashion represents – it moves at a slower pace, disregards trends, is concerned with a classic or "signature" look, and stresses the importance of artisanal production and emotions attached to the clothes we own.*

Since fashion connotes change, fast/slow fashion could be read as clothing that is consumed fast/slow. Even so, as Fletcher (2010) explains, the terms signify more than just the tempo of production and consumption. Fast does not only involve

[4] Interviewed on 28 June 2013.
[5] For example, women's fashion week in Paris for the SS14 collections was in September 2013 (Mode à Paris); Anna Ruohonen showed her SS14 collection in November 2013.

speed, but also producing and selling garments in large quantities; slow is a symbol for a worldview that emphasises small-scale production, quality and traditional craftsmanship (Fletcher 2010, pp.260–264).

The slow approach to fashion has its origins in the Slow Food movement, which began in the 1980s as a reaction to fast food. As the Slow Food manifesto [6] from 1989 declares: *In the name of productivity, the 'fast life' has changed our lifestyle and now threatens our environment and our land (and city) scapes*. The core idea of Slow Food is to link the pleasure of good food with a commitment to community and the environment. Taste, quality and a rich variety of food are cultivated through local cuisines and old-fashioned food traditions. (www.slowfood.com)

Embracing this philosophy, slow fashion favours small-scale production, traditional craft techniques, local materials and local markets. At the core of slow fashion is the search for a balance in the fashion system together with economic, social, and ecological systems. Altogether, slow fashion represents a different worldview, in terms of economic logic, values and goals, from the current fast fashion model. The focus of fast fashion companies is on achieving continual economic growth, which they achieve with the help of low-cost materials and labour, short lead times and large volume production. Instead of mass manufacturing and globalised trends, slow fashion promotes artisanal production and diversity of style, and instead of quantity, it emphasises quality. The slow approach to fashion carefully considers the design and production process and its impacts on society and the environment. (Fletcher 2010, pp.260–265.)

> *Common to the zeitgeist, the fashion industry emphasises newness and enables quickly changing trends through efficient capturing of new looks [7], followed by rapid production, low prices and pervasive marketing. Such a system supports consumerism and high turnover of garments. Contrary to this fast fashion mentality, the slow approach to fashion champions long-lasting products.*

This is also seen in Anna Ruohonen's ethos, alongside other ideas of slow fashion embodied in her fashion line. *The seasonal trends are not my driving force. My clothing is neither in nor out of fashion,* Ruohonen states. According to the slow fashion philosophy, different tempos, fast and slow, can be used in a balanced way in the fashion system (Fletcher 2010, p.265). In Anna Ruohonen's case different tempos are utilised in the two collections, the seasonal White Label and the permanent Black Classics. Although the aim of the latter is to offer timeless pieces, in her opinion, the concept of classic has to be seen as broad enough: *A classic does not equal boring. [A garment's] aesthetics can be unique and interesting and at the same time long lasting.*

The Black Classics consists of the designer's own favourite pieces that she has created over the years and that clients appreciate and want to reorder. In this way, the best pieces from the White Label may find an afterlife in the Black Classics collection. In Ruohonen's view, a successful design endures over time, as she states on her website: *In a beautiful final product every tiny detail has found its place. It seems that the piece has always existed.* (annaruohonen.com)

The mindset of slow fashion in Anna Ruohonen's collection is also reflected in terms of quality. The concept of *quality* is not easy to define but it can be examined from many angles, for example with regards to the garments themselves, the process of making them and service. The quality of the garments may be assessed from the perspectives of style, fit, features, material, design and technique (Koskennurmi-Sivonen & Pietarila 2005). In Ruohonen's collection, high quality is evident in fabrics and construction. She uses only European fabrics made from natural fibres such as wool, linen, silk, cashmere and mohair. The quality

[6] http://www.slowfood.com/filemanager/Convivium%20Leader%20Area/Manifesto_ENG.pdf
[7] It is common practice that some fashion companies create similar garments to what other more well-known ready-to-wear fashion companies have presented in their biannual collections (see e.g. Rissanen 2012).

Design by Anna Ruohonen: Cleopatra Dress, Brooklyn dress (textile design by Johanna Gullichsen), Nutria Dress (Photo: Victor Matussiere)

of the garments is ensured through the in-house production: it is done by two carefully selected professionals, and the designer can easily monitor the entire production process and make corrections if needed. For Ruohonen, quality is also a personal matter that is related to emotional bonds with garments: *I am so passionate about clothing that I wouldn't want anything to break; it is really annoying if something you like breaks. I have garments that are ten years old, and I still wear them actively.*

Since everything is made according to one's size, the company is able to provide well-fitting clothes to everyone. According to Ruohonen, this is an appreciated quality of the product and service, since the common, standardised sizes do not necessarily provide the right fit and nowadays it is increasingly rare in the West to have clothes tailor-made.

Time plays a role in Anna Ruohonen's concept of fashion, making it also literally slow: since all the garments are samples, there are no actual garments to buy on the spot in the showroom unless one wants to buy a sample piece. Production starts only after placing an order and thus the customer has to be ready to wait for the garment for up to a couple of weeks. Determining whether this system affects people's overall buying habits or not is impossible to say, because the decision-making can happen just as spontaneously. Nevertheless, one has to invest a little more effort in the purchasing decision by first selecting the details of the garment and then be willing to wait for it.

Ruohonen's system of producing on demand does not lead to any surplus of unsold garments, which is beneficial both to the environment and to business. As Ruohonen points out, the system allows a quick reaction to customers' demands, which are ever changing and hard to predict. It saves resources in the making phase, and it creates no wasted garments. Moreover, unused fabric is still valuable and can be reserved for any future garment.

In Ruohonen's case, production is done either in-house or locally, and this is essential to Ruohonen's concept since clothes are made individually per order; this allows any number of pieces to be made per style. Although producing in Paris is not the most cost-effective choice, as the cost of labour is currently one of the highest in Europe (Pelli 2013), Ruohonen insists on keeping the production local. The company's values are not based primarily on growth but on doing great work and offering quality products. Making clothes in-house also ensures fair labour practices in terms of working hours, conditions and wages, which is important to Ruohonen.

Some level of transparency in the production system and more collaboration between designer, producer and customer are also suggested as being part of the slow approach to fashion (Clark 2008, p.435). Similar ideas are behind Anna Ruohonen's label and are embedded even in the architecture of the company's building: besides being a showroom and a store, all the procedures, from design to production, are located in the same house. Big windows facing the street display tailors at their work, similarly to how an open kitchen in a restaurant lets customers see where their food is being made. Since the designer and the production team work just upstairs from the store, the customer has a chance to see them working and even observe the making of his/her own order. The designer herself is also reachable: besides her two annual fashion shows, where she welcomes guests at the door herself, Ruohonen also invites clients to the showroom to meet with her over a glass of sparkling wine a couple of times a year.

The concept itself embodies respect towards the clients: the customer never has to walk out of the store because her size wasn't available, she didn't like the colour of a particular style, or because she came to the shop too late in the season and was left with the last, unwanted pieces. Although the designer creates the styles and decides on the seasonal selection of fabrics, the client gets to design her own combination of style, colour and fit, or even order a winter coat in the middle of the summer.

SKILLS BEHIND ARTISANAL FASHION

The adjective *artisanal* comes from the word *artisan*, which according to the Merriam-Webster dictionary is (1) *a person who is skilled at making things by hand*. Additionally an *artisan* is (2) *one that produces something (as cheese or wine) in limited quantities often using traditional methods* or (3) *a worker who practices a trade or handicraft: craftsperson*. The synonym for *artisan, craftsman* (or *craftsperson*), has a similar definition: (1) *a person who makes beautiful objects by hand* and (2) *a person who is very skilled at doing something*. The first known use of the word *artisan* dates to 1538. Its Italian origin, artigiano, derives from the Latin word *ars (art)*, which means *skill*. (Merriam-Webster dictionary; Oxford Dictionaries.)

The word *fashion* paired with *artisanal* is used in the same way as in *slow fashion*: often as a synonym for clothing and garments but also to signify the symbolic aspects of fashion, such as the emotional values associated with clothes.

> *Artisanal itself connotes handcrafted objects but when used in conjunction with fashion, it seems to be elevated from a mere handmade or handcrafted garment to something symbolically different*

– as Kawamura (2005, pp.1–4) puts it, fashion provides *the invisible elements included in clothing*.

Looking at the first definition of the word *artisan*, skill is one of its major elements. In fashion design essential skills are related to the design process itself, such as sketching or draping the form of the garment, choosing fabric, and creating its character, as well as the ability to execute the garment successfully with the skills of patternmaking and garment construction. It is possible, and also common today, to work as a fashion designer who only envisions and sketches clothes but does not partake in the making process. In this way, patternmaking and garment construction can be separated from the design process and be considered the craft of fashion. However, a fashion designer may master both skills – those of the creator of form and of the skilful maker – and integrate them in her work. In the case of Anna Ruohonen, she is the one who sketches or drapes the garment forms and draws the initial patterns. Later, a tailor develops the patterns further if necessary. Earlier Ruohonen also used to make samples herself; now, tailors do the task but she is much involved in the process. Notably she is skilled in sample-making and understands the process thoroughly.

Another element of the first definition mentioned above is *making things by hand*. Related to the second definition of the word *artisan*, production is done in limited quantities and some traditional techniques are used. This differs from *industrial* production where products are made particularly using machinery and in factories that employ large personnel (Merriam-Webster dictionary). On the industrial scale, patterns are mostly made with the help of computer-aided design programs and garments are cut using machinery, which allows many garments be cut at once. In contrast, in small-scale fashion production, patterns may be drawn entirely by hand and all garments may be cut by hand either individually or only a few pieces at a time.

It can be noted that by and large in garment making, some machinery is always used both in industrial and small-scale production, such as sewing machines and sergers, and thus making things entirely by hand does not literally apply to garment production. At the same time, some procedures are mostly done by hand, such as assembling the garment together and trimming the extra threads after sewing. Therefore, artisanal production in fashion does not imply that machines are not used at all.

In Anna Ruohonen's fashion house, patterns are made in the traditional way, by hand, and the garment pieces are cut individually and not by machine. The garments are constructed from start to finish by two tailors, which also includes handcrafted details such as assembling knits, sewing buttons and finishing hemlines, especially in garments made of silk.

All garments at the Anna Ruohonen fashion house are made-to-measure from selected styles only based on customers' orders – the method of *semi couture* [8], as Ruohonen calls it. Entirely unique pieces are also made on request. Made-to-measure pieces are far away from standardised ready-to-wear pieces produced on a mass scale, but such a system of production is even more time consuming than just small-scale production, since every garment is crafted individually.

Anna Ruohonen's local and mostly in-house production allows the designer to have control over the whole production process, to inspect quality and easily revise the process if anything needs to be changed. The designer works closely with her team and the in-house production enables frequent communication with the team members. As Ruohonen says, *We communicate all the time; everyday, we discuss the garment finishing, fabric choices, improvements, problems and potential changes. This is literally teamwork.* Although certain people do certain steps of the garment design and production, the designer is very much involved in the whole process. As the designer, she creates the aesthetics of the clothing and makes the final decisions on the garment construction after considering the suggestions from the team members. In this way the designer has a holistic role in the company as the key person in designing and decision-making.

[8] Although garments at Anna Ruohonen's fashion house are made-to-measure and thus individual, and include also some unique pieces, the method can be called semi couture. It should be noted that semi couture differs from haute couture, which defines a certain kind of fashion production strictly controlled by Fédération Française de la Couture du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers and Créateurs de Mode and based on criteria first established in 1868 in Paris (Mode à Paris).

Design by Anna Ruohonen: Best Top, Maitresse Dress, Morning Light Dress (Photo: Victor Matussiere)

DISCUSSION

The case of Anna Ruohonen can certainly be viewed through a slow fashion lens: it embodies many elements of the slow approach, such as small-scale and local production, long-lasting products, cultivating classics and utilising different tempos of fast and slow. Ruohonen's work also emphasises quality in terms of materials, garment construction and fit, and customer service. The company produces almost everything in-house, which enables some transparency in the production process. Ethical and environmental considerations are also embedded in Anna Ruohonen's company values.

Ruohonen's design practice also illustrates aspects of artisanal fashion. The concept of artisanal fashion sketched here is not conclusive, but this case study, together with dictionary definitions, indicates some basic features of *artisanal* in the context of fashion as a hypothesis. This analysis suggests that the integration of the skills of design and craftsmanship is one of the main distinctive features of an artisanal fashion designer. Artisanal fashion also refers to a process that involves making garments not by industrial means but either individually or in small quantities, employing traditional and handcraft methods. The production is done in-house or locally, so the designer can have control over the process. The role of the designer is holistic; she is strongly involved throughout the design and production processes but she also works closely with her team.

What makes the defining of *artisanal fashion* challenging is that most of its potential elements cannot be measured precisely, such as the amount of handcrafted details necessary to denote artisanal or the quantities indicating small-batch production, and therefore it can be difficult to create strict guidelines for artisanal production. Many of these elements are qualitative, such as skill or the role of the designer, and cannot be described explicitly. Thus, the framework can only be suggestive.

Artisanal fashion shares many aspects with slow fashion. According to the dictionary definition and this case study, the artisanal approach to fashion has a strong focus on the designer's skill and her/his holistic role in the making processes, whereas slow fashion does not address these questions and is therefore a more general concept. These approaches can also be applied at the same time, as in the Anna Ruohonen case. In fact, traditional craftsmanship, synonymous with artisanal making (cf. Merriam-Webster dictionary), is often mentioned as one of the methods within slow fashion (Fletcher 2010).

Slow fashion has been explored in the context of sustainability as a means to systematically change the mindset of fast fashion that has many environmental and ethical implications. While the efficiency and large-scale production of fast fashion may not in themselves necessarily cause these negative issues, the fast fashion business model provides grounds for accelerated fashion production, use and disposal, which in turn generate more impact on the environment and play a part in unfair working conditions (Fletcher 2010, pp.260–264). Artisanal fashion may not be directly associated with sustainability in fashion, but as it operates in a similar way to slow fashion it carries the same potential.

As Ruohonen says, *All of us working in the fashion sector have to consider if we want to produce more clothing into this world.* In her company's case, more garments are produced but environmental and ethical issues are taken into consideration through the system in which the company operates. On the environmental side, the garments are crafted individually and made according to the customer's request, with the emphasis on high quality. These efforts support not only material durability but also emotional values, such as appreciation and attachment, which may help lengthen the garments' life span (Aakko & Koskennurmi-Sivonen 2013; Niinimäki 2010, 195–199). Ethical issues are addressed especially through the small-scale and local, mostly in-house, production. Working closely with the

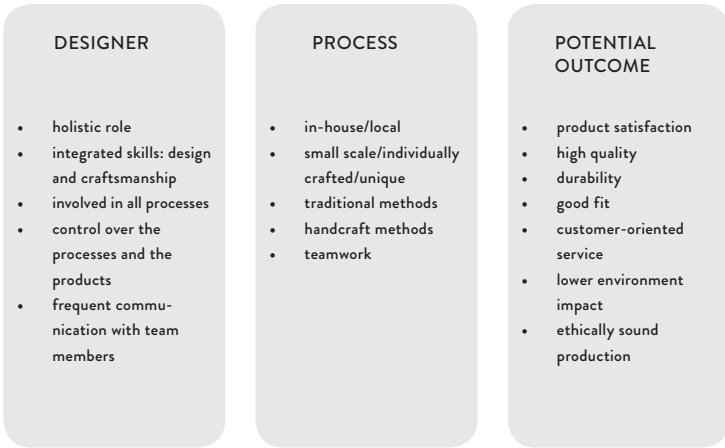

Figure 1. Artisanal approach to fashion in Anna Ruohonen's company

team and having control over the process enables monitoring and providing fair working conditions.

Manzini (2009, p.5) suggests that sustainability should be the meta-object of all design research and not a separate, specialised sector. Along the same lines, to enhance sustainability in fashion consumption and production, fashion companies should address environmental and ethical issues as a meta-object at the core level. As shown through the Anna Ruohonen case, and the concepts of slow and artisanal fashion, taking control over the process and the product frees up the possibility to make a difference in what kinds of garments are offered and how they are produced.

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Creative Control in Sustainable Fashion

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Sustainable fashion has been mostly approached by focusing on decreasing the environmental impact of manufacturing, developing eco-materials and improving ethical issues in manufacturing. However, when aiming for sustainability, even more benefit could be gained if sustainable thinking is integrated in the system level instead of being as an add-on to the original product.

This paper presents a case study related to design and strategic thinking in small, entrepreneurial fashion companies, those oriented towards sustainability, in which designers often play a significant role in decision making. The study focuses on examining how design thinking applied together with control can benefit design, manufacturing and business practices, and how it can create creative power for transition towards sustainable practices in fashion. The studied cases represent such strategy formulation that is based on experienced understanding of the fashion industry and fashion-related business thinking. Therefore their strategy formulation can be described as "design-driven" and "practice-based".

This study shows that controlling the fashion system through creative solutions provides an opportunity to increase product quality and consumer satisfaction. Creative and strategic thinking based on design practices and implemented by designers can benefit planning, manufacturing and business practices toward increased sustainability. Such approach can be realized in a profitable way and without compromising the quality of design.

***Keywords**: Sustainable fashion; design thinking; control; design power*

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Introduction

A technological approach has dominated eco-design the last thirty years, mainly focusing on decreasing the environmental impact of manufacturing, developing eco-materials and improving other technical details (Verhulst, Boks, Stranger & Masson 2007). However, Goworek, Hiller, Fisher, Cooper and Woodward (2013) argue that sustainability should be integrated in the system, such as in the garment design process instead of being engineered as an add-on to the original product. Thus, designers should be already included in the planning stage of manufacturing practices, and creative design thinking should guide the entire process (Goworek et al. 2013, p. 389). Based on these ideas, creative thinking and designers' knowledge, i.e. design thinking, could also be utilized in constructing sustainable business models and marketing practice, which engage consumers with more sustainable fashion consumption.

One of the goals of sustainable fashion is to support emotional bonding by designing garments that are aesthetically attractive, gracefully aging, and durable; in other words, to promote slower cycles of fashion. While sustainability-focused fashion, like all other fashion, is still by and large based on the traditional linear system of designing, manufacturing, selling, consuming and discarding, some alternative systems are emerging. In that respect, creative solutions could provide opportunities to challenge the current system and facilitate more sustainable practices.

Fashion designer's knowledge could be integrated already within the company mission, business processes and strategy (Sinha 2000, pp. 37–40). Controlling one's own design, production and business procedures can steer a company towards more sustainable practices (e.g. Aakko 2014) and ensure that production and other processes are actually conducted in ethically and environmentally sound conditions.

This study investigates questions related to control in small, entrepreneurial fashion companies, where the designer is the owner or a principal of the company. In such companies designers are often responsible not only for design, but also for production and business decisions. This study looks at the practice-based strategies by which the companies operate. Moreover, it aims to examine how control over different aspects of the system can benefit design, manufacturing and business practices. In addition, we discuss how tighter control by the designer creates power for transition towards a more sustainable fashion system.

Designers in the Fashion System

The Current Fashion System and its Implications

The current fashion system has its early origin in the two-tiered order of fashion dominated on one hand by made-to-order creations, especially *haute couture*, and mass-produced clothing on the other. Yet, there have always been other levels of couture between these two extremes (Lipovetsky 1987/1994). Similar to the original fashion system, today, the fashion industry also includes different types of production but is significantly dominated by a range of mass-manufactured clothing, especially by "fast fashion" produced by large multinational companies.

Characteristic to the mass manufacturing practices of today are short lead times and efficient, large volume production achieved with the help of low-cost materials and labor often in Asian countries such as China, Bangladesh and India. The fashion industry has notably contributed to environmental problems such as the use of toxic chemicals and generation of high volumes of waste, as well as ethical issues, such as unfair labor practices in the developing countries, including unsafe working conditions, child labor, and unfair wages. (Allwood et al. 2006, p. 14; Fletcher 2010, pp. 260–264.)

While efficiency and large-scale production may not necessarily cause environmental and ethical problems, the fast fashion business model provides ground for accelerated fashion production, use and disposal, which in turn generate more impact on the environment and play a part in unfair working conditions. Because of their manufacturing practices and business models many fashion companies are able to offer clothing for very affordable prices, which has further created the fast fashion phenomena; this has increased fashion consumption but also decreased the quality of the garments and shortened their lifespan (Fletcher 2010; Niinimäki 2011).

Designers' Role in the Current Fashion Industry

Since the beginning of the institutionalization of fashion in France in 1868, dressmakers and tailors became couturiers and designers. This was also the beginning of a system where the designer would be the key figure in the production of fashion regardless of the amount he/she participated in the actual designing and manufacturing processes. Similarly today, designer's role as a creator is central and his/her involvement beyond design varies greatly between different types of companies. While the designer is often emphasized as the unique creator, it should not be forgotten that

fashion is not created only by designers themselves but in collaboration with other fashion professionals and producers. (Kawamura 2005, pp. 57–72.)

It seems self-evident that a fashion designer's job consists of designing garments. Yet, as Pammi Sinha (2000) sums up in her study about the designer's role in the fashion design process, a designer is also a market researcher of visual and qualitative data, an interpreter of meanings and a medium for current moods. Generally a designer also needs to understand what her customer wants, as well as take the social, cultural, economic and political environment into account. (Sinha 2000, p.27.)

In general the design process involves visual research, design development and manufacture. The designers in Sinha's study were all actively involved in the design process up to design development, namely sample making; in some cases manufacturing also influenced parts of the creative phase. According to Sinha, designers' understanding of the consumer needs, the ability to interpret them into desirable design and to communicate this to the sample-makers played a great role in the success of the design. Nevertheless, designers' actual influence on design decisions – about color, fabric, style, conceptual range and manufacturing range – varied greatly in different companies.[i] The designer/owner of a small company employing 3 people interviewed for this study ranked highest in his ability to influence design decisions. (Sinha 2000, pp. 27–37.)

Design and Strategy to Approaching Transition

Transition

Meadows (2008) argues that the future cannot be predicted but it can be envisioned, and through the reflective process of "systems thinking," systems can be designed and redesigned according to one's vision. Based on systems thinking and aiming towards the same goals, the transition theory describes how simultaneous processes on multiple levels, involving different social groups/actors, play a role in system innovations. These processes are also interlinked and reinforce each other. This multi-level perspective proposes that a transition can have influence on the local, national and even global levels. In other words, the transition theory emphasizes global thinking but local action. Additionally, a transition benefits from co-designing and co-learning processes, which both stress people-centered thinking. (Grin, Rotmans & Schot 2010; Geels 2005.) A transition is not a simple and linear process but an open-ended one, constructed through different kinds of actions, experimentations and co-learning. Therefore,

small-scale, niche processes in transition towards sustainable society are as valued as large-scale structural changes in the system. (Doordan 2013.)

Many designers feel that because they work in the industrial system, they have limited possibilities to influence sustainability of design (e.g. longevity of a product).

Keeping costs down is also a dominant concern in the apparel industry (Cooper 2013). This influences the choice between more or less sustainable, options. If designers want to have a more influential role in transitioning fashion towards more sustainability they could benefit from turning their attention to systems, processes and dominating business models; designers' creativity could also be used towards changes on the system level.

Design Thinking and Design Management for Transition

Utilizing designer's knowledge could be a way for fashion companies to find new methods for more sustainable practices. As Sinha (2000) points out, incorporating "designerly" thinking into organizational strategy is not purely a question of company size or market constraints but also of organizational culture and management. Operating on a small scale has integral disadvantages; yet it allows a lot of flexibility and space for experimentation. Thus, small scale and certain "risk-taking" can provide opportunities to remain innovative in the current business climate. (Sinha 2000, pp. 40–41.)

Design knowledge and design thinking is more of a process for problem solving rather than an end result. Creative design thinking can help companies challenge their practices and focus on innovative ideas when reassessing processes related to sustainable development, such as societal and environmental issues. (Sherin 2013.)

Therefore, design thinking that looks at problems holistically, can be a useful tool in transition. Design thinking is best described as "productive reasoning", combining both practice-based and theoretical knowledge (March 1976, cited by Cross 2007), thus integrating skills and knowledge, actions and intellectuality (Trotto et al. 2010). It applies empathy and creativity in the problem-solving processes. Design thinking utilizes a human-centered approach and abductive reasoning, suggesting that something may be more than its initial impression. (Cross 2007.)

Cooper, Junginger and Lockwood (2009) argue that in design management the way of "thinking about design" is concerned with a more system-wide perspective, whereas the traditional "thinking of design" focuses more on a singular product. According to them, thinking *through*

design changes the perspective and takes into consideration how the business system operates. This can be seen as a strategic approach to design and design thinking, which can aim for a transition and even systemic changes in the industry. While traditional design management has focused on product design and incremental improvements, "design thinking represents a more radical shift in an organizations overall way of doing business." (Cooper, Junginger and Lockwood 2009, p. 50.) Through this approach, design thinking can enable transformation by design. It can benefit organizations or even societies by focusing on problems with a wide perspective and applying systems level thinking, not only product development. (Cooper et al. 2009.)

Crafting the Strategy

Whittington, Molloy, Mayer and Smith (2006) propose that formulating a strategy could include a practice-based approach. According to them a strategy formulation could be based on three different work processes: strategy workshops, project management of strategic and organizational initiatives, and the creation of symbolic artefacts to communicate strategic change. Whittington et al. see strategy formulation through the lens of "practice theory", where practical activities are linked to strategizing and organizing. Opposite to a more formal and traditional strategy construction, they emphasize "the importance of hands-on and crafting skills in getting strategy done" (ibid., p. 615). In addition, Whittington et al. point out that practitioners have skills to "renew formal strategy by injecting craft directly into the process" (ibid.). This approach highlights the importance of practice-based knowledge while formulating the strategy, and therefore could be a fitting approach for design entrepreneurs.

Additionally, Mintzberg (1994) suggests that a strategy could be crafted through emerged processes, which then allows practice and strategy work to be intertwined and simultaneous. Moreover, such approach is centered mostly on practicalities of strategizing and organizing; in communication, coordination and control, and less on research-based analysis and forecasting. Physical objects and artifacts communicate the strategy. According to Whittington et al. (2006), the process needs creative, artful and adaptive skills. This approach to strategy formulation can be applied in design-driven strategies, in other words, strategies based on design practice, design skills and experienced design knowledge.

Research Methods

For this study three fashion companies were chosen that operate on an entrepreneurial base and small-scale (employing 2–6 people), and where the designer has a central role not only in design but also in business decisions. Additionally, each company has made a conscious effort towards deploying more ethical and ecological production processes.

The data of these case studies was gathered mainly by interviews with the designer-entrepreneurs; additional information was also obtained with a questionnaire (Figure 1.) sent via email and from the companies' websites. The aim of the questionnaire was to investigate what elements these companies are able to control within the core functions of their work: design, production, business management/marketing and sales.

Qualitative and descriptive analysis was used for examining aspects regarding control by focusing on questions: What elements are the companies able to control and how do they do it? What do the companies gain from control? What aspects are they still not able to control? The study also touches questions on company's vision and strategy as they are considered to be related to control in an essential way: control can be a part of the strategy by which one aims to reach for an aspired vision.

CONTROL. How much control does your company exercise over the following elements?

DESIGN PROCESS	none	some	full	Would like to have more impact
PRODUCT				
• form and aesthetics (=the design)				
• pattern making				
• material quality (e.g. fabrics, seams, finishing)				
• fit				
MATERIALS/ FABRIC				
• fabric quality (e.g. fiber quality, color fastness)				
• fabric composition				
• color of fabric				
• structure of fabric (e.g. weave, weight)				

PRODUCTION PROCESS	none	some	full	Would like to have more impact
• cycle/speed of collections				
• product safety (e.g. chemical residue)				
• working conditions				
• speed of production				

BUSINESS MANAGEMENT	none	some	full	Would like to have more impact
MARKETING AND SALES				
• pricing				
• customer satisfaction				
STRATEGY				
• business model (e.g. customer target group, managing strategy)				

DIVISION OF WORK. How are the operations of the company organized?

OPERATIONS	In-house	Partly in-house, partly outsourced	Outsourced
DESIGN			
PATTERN MAKING			
SAMPLE MAKING			
PRODUCTION			
MARKETING			
SALES			

Figure 1. Questionnaire on the possibilities to control company's operations.

Studied Cases

Case 1: Anna Ruohonen

Anna Ruohonen is a Finnish, Paris-based fashion designer and a founder of her eponymous clothing label of women's and men's wear. Ruohonen's fashion house, founded in 1999, is a small-scale business with two showrooms/stores, one in Paris and one in Helsinki[ii].

Everything in Ruohonen's line is made-to-measure. The customer gets to choose the style and fabric amongst the available choices, and the order is produced according to her measurements taken at the showroom. Almost

everything is produced at her atelier; only knitwear is outsourced to a knitwear-studio in Paris.

The label consists of two lines, White Label and Black Classics. The White Label is a seasonal collection, which follows the regular fashion cycle of spring/summer and fall/winter. In contrast, the Black Classics line is a "timeless collection" in which the pieces stay unchanged season after season. The Black Classics collection is on continuous display, and pieces can be ordered throughout the year.

Originally the label operated as most other fashion companies: showing collections to retail store buyers during fashion weeks and producing garments based on the orders the buyers made. However, as Ruohonen says, this way was very unpredictable. "One season buyers might make big orders, and you sell well and hire more people, but next season the same stores might not buy your collection at all." Also, every season a varying amount of clothing had to be marked down if it was not sold within the current season, and even then some clothing would remain unsold. At the same time, a considerable amount of orders were placed directly by friends and acquaintances; in fact, their support was significant. As the direct orders kept increasing, Ruohonen realized that this could be an alternative strategy for fashion retail. In 2008 Anna Ruohonen started her current business concept based merely on direct orders from individual clients.

Producing in-house allows Ruohonen to have complete control over almost everything regarding her line including design, production, marketing, sales, business management and working conditions. As the company does not produce their own fabrics and trimmings, they are the main elements the company is not able to control. However, Ruohonen's aim is to use only high-quality European fabrics from natural fibers, such as wool, silk and linen, and they mostly source from mills they have long-term relationships with. Making clothes in-house also ensures fair labor practices in terms of working hours, conditions and wages. According to Ruohonen, it would be possible to obtain the desired quality by outsourcing production, but since it takes a lot of resources and money to control that everything goes as anticipated, for a small company this system works well.

Quality is an essential element of Anna Ruohonen's ethos. The quality of garments is ensured through in-house production and thus the ability to control the manufacturing process as much as possible. It allows constant communication regarding the design and production processes, and enables immediate adjustments. Quality in Ruohonen's line means both material durability and aesthetics that are not bound by trends. "The seasonal trends

are not my driving force. My clothing is neither in nor out of fashion," Ruohonen states.

The apparent gain of Ruohonen's system of producing only on demand is that it creates no surplus of unsold garments; this brings both environmental and commercial benefits. As Ruohonen says, "It is hard to predict what customers want. But in our model, we can make what they want. Customers just have to wait a little for that." Additionally, any leftover fabric can be utilized for future orders.

The concept itself also embodies respect towards the clients: all garments are made to measure, which ensures the right fit. As standard sizes rarely fit perfectly, Ruohonen's clients appreciate the possibility of customized garments as well as the individual service.

Case 2: Frenn

Frenn is a Helsinki-based men's wear label founded by Antti Laitinen and Jarkko Kallio in 2013. Frenn designs clothing for the urban working man, with a casual touch. The core of Frenn's clothing is high-quality materials, craftsmanship and tailoring.

The brand's aim is to create comfortable and well-fitted clothing based on long-lasting aesthetics. Through this approach Frenn intends to deepen product satisfaction on consumer's part, thus creating deeper attachment to the garments and therefore lengthen the garments' lifespan. An earlier study has shown (Niinimäki & Koskinen 2011) that deep product satisfaction is a way to extend the use time of garments. On the other hand the most important factors in clothing dissatisfaction are bad fit and low quality (Niinimäki 2014b). The designer Laitinen states that most of the existing mass-manufactured garments have lost the quality of tailoring, which allows Frenn to offer an alternative.

Frenn's garments are manufactured in Estonia[iii] and to monitor the conditions of subcontractors and control the quality, they visit the factories periodically. Frenn's fabrics come from EU countries such as Italy, Portugal and Lithuania, and 80% of them have been certified by the Oeko-Tex 100 standard (www.oeko-tex.com), which guarantees that the material is safe for the wearer. According to Frenn, finding high quality fabrics that fulfill such criteria is a big challenge. Delivery of fabrics is another problem; sometimes the ordered materials do not arrive on time or at all. This may cause delays or even stop-overs in manufacturing.

Laitinen and Kallio say that the fashion business has a reputation for being "evil." Frenn aims to achieve the opposite (as suggested already by

the company's name, which comes from the word "friend"). Through the blueprint of Frenn, Laitinen and Kallio want to make a change in the fashion system. (Niinimäki 2014a.)

Value base is an important grounding for this company and its practices. As stated on Frenn's website, "humanity, responsibility and individuality" are important values in which the Frenn company and its products are grounded and which they want to inform to their clients. The brand addresses such values by building close relationships with both their producers and consumers, and by making design decisions based on environmentally and ethically better choices.

Case 3: Nurmi

Nurmi is a small-scale fashion label[iv] based in Lahti, Finland that consists of men's and women's wear and accessories. The label was founded in 2010 by the designer Anniina Nurmi.

Nurmi's aim is to provide clothing that is as sustainable as possible. All fabrics in the collection are selected according to ecological and ethical credentials. Information about the fabrics and production are kept transparent. Nurmi's production is done either locally in Finland or in Estonia. The production is guaranteed ethical as it is based on long-term relationships and either ethical certificates or personal visits to the factory.

One of Nurmi's main goals is to contribute in steering the fashion industry towards better environmental and ethical practices. Nurmi also gives lectures and courses both on organizational and educational levels and keeps a blog, Vihreät Vaatteet (www.vihreatvaatteet.com), through which she shares her knowledge about sustainability in fashion to a wide audience.

The blog actually played a significant role in Nurmi's decision to start her own sustainable fashion label. Nurmi was one of the pioneers of sustainable fashion in Finland, and thus the blog, created as a hobby, gained popularity and inspired Nurmi to establish her own line. As Nurmi reflects, the company formed organically; after the initial idea of a sustainable fashion label, the vision and the strategy have grown gradually together with her experience.

The cornerstones of the Nurmi label are sustainability and transparency. Therefore, all garments are produced according to considerate environmental and ethical credentials. Keeping the production process as transparent as possible conveys credibility about the sustainable methods employed to consumers. Nurmi also aims to design garments that last. In

such way, Nurmi's goal is clothing that "doesn't only look good but is also good from within".

The main strategy for carrying out Nurmi's objectives is through controlling all aspects of the design and production processes. The aim is to do it as completely as possible for a label of this size. As Nurmi says,

> *Having such goals [sustainability], it is especially important to be able to prove that the production is factually sustainable and responsible. If I could not control the production chain nor know where the materials come from, it would not be possible. It is the utmost important to keep the control in my own hands.*

Although the selection of environmentally friendly and ethically produced fabrics has grown notably over the past five years, finding good quality materials that meet the right ethical and ecological criteria is still difficult. Available supply and minimum order quantities add to that challenge. In certain details, such as zippers or metal buttons, sustainable criteria is still nearly impossible to reach.

Because Nurmi designs and chooses all the materials herself, she is able to control the design process thoroughly. However, since the production is outsourced, achieving high product quality remains a challenge. According to Nurmi, "it is not easy to find local production sites that fulfill my criteria and produce excellent and consistent quality". In any case, local production would be the ideal; the further the factories are, the more complicated it becomes. As Nurmi says,

> *Most of my production is local, so it is very easy: I know who they are and I can go there whenever needed. Communication is flexible. But, the further I have to go, the more time I need for making sure everything goes properly.*

Results and Discussion

Lessons from the Cases

All the studied companies state to have complete control over design. At the same time, all designers wish to have more power to influence on the ethical and environmental aspects of fabric manufacturing. Although all the profiled companies have high standards for design and aesthetics, due to the limited availability of suitable and accessible sustainable materials, the quality of fabrics is not always up the desired standard.

Both Frenn and Nurmi note that finding fabrics that fulfill the criteria of desired quality and environmental standards is especially difficult; the selection of such materials is limited and their delivery is unreliable. According to them, organic cotton is easily available but, diversity being an important aspect of sustainability both companies would prefer to use a greater variety of materials. Frenn uses only Oeko-tex 100 certified fabrics, which is a guarantee for the absence of any harmful substances (www.oeko-tex.com), and increases the environmental control over the product in that way.

Anna Ruohonen's main criterion for fabrics is quality and due to her long business history her relationships with fabric mills are established and stable. Nevertheless, Ruohonen also wishes to have more control over fabrics.

As Porter (2004) notes, one of the early barriers to creating a successful business in an emerging industry is the access to raw materials, while the more mature companies have already overcome this challenge. According to the findings of this study, this is also the case with the emerging companies in fashion that focuses on sustainability.

With the help of in-house pattern making and manufacturing, Anna Ruohonen has complete control over manufacturing and product quality. This empowers Ruohonen to create her own retail system that supports slower cycles of fashion. Additionally, Ruohonen exercises control over collection cycles, and she has found success showing collections on her own schedule. Both Frenn and Nurmi, whose manufacturing is outsourced, evaluate having little control over manufacturing and product quality, and wish to be able to control them more. They also state to have less control over collection cycles.

All the studied companies reported having complete control over their business model and business strategy. Being design-driven companies, all of them have created their own, unique business models and strategies grounded on sustainable methods and their own value base.

Anna Ruohonen is able to manage customer satisfaction in the most tangible way with her strategy of made-to-measure service. Besides providing well-fitted and high-quality products, Frenn addresses customer satisfaction by having the business grounded on social responsibility (and the aim of creating "a more friendly fashion system"). Similar to Frenn, ethical and environmental responsibility is also at the core of the Nurmi label. Additionally, Nurmi manages customers' intellectual satisfaction by offering information about sustainability in fashion through her blog and her

company's website; this information is open to anyone, not just to customers, as Nurmi wishes to do her part in building a generally more sustainable fashion industry.

According Porter (2004), a company is able to differentiate itself from others by providing not only products but also services, even if the product is not superior to that of its' competitors. Such differentiation, for example offering excellent customer service, creates product satisfaction and brand loyalty among customers. This results in lower price sensitivity, in other words, an opportunity to offer good quality at a premium. (Porter 2004.) Along the lines of Porter, Ruohonen has been able to differentiate her brand and build a profitable company through a business model based exclusively on made-to-measure orders. Such a model provides great example of slow fashion and sustainable logic. Having started as experimentation (as Ruohonen operated her business earlier in a more conventional way), the case of Anna Ruohonen shows how change for sustainability, without losing business competence, is possible.

Creating Control

Based on this study the design-driven control in the fashion system can be examined through the following elements: design, fabrics, manufacturing, business model and customer satisfaction.

Controlling design and aesthetics is the starting point for creative control. Since these aspects are at the core of every fashion designer's work, they are also fairly easy to reach.

Fabric quality is already significantly more complicated to control. Small companies cannot produce their own fabrics but purchase them from an agent or directly from a mill. Therefore, the possibility to control or have an impact on the quality of fabric and the manufacturing conditions are limited. To get the best and suitable eco-materials might be difficult for small size companies.

Controlling manufacturing is another essential element to ensure the quality of the product and safeguard the environmental and ethical conditions of manufacturing. This is best addressed with in-house manufacturing.

Also a potential aspect for control is the business model. As seen through this study, the design-driven approach in these small, design entrepreneurial companies has given the possibility for unique business models and strategies.

In this context, the most demanding element is control related to consumer satisfaction. However, control over the previously mentioned aspects, the quality of design, fabrics and manufacturing, and alternative business model, can have an impact on consumer satisfaction. According to this study it is best addressed by providing unique design, high quality products, good tailoring and made-to-measure garments.

Additionally, the more control the company has, the more radical approach it can implement in the business. Control may also support a system level transition towards slower cycles of fashion and more sustainable consumption. Therefore, it can be argued that tight control over a system, in this case a small company within the larger fashion system, can create power for transition.

Practice Based Strategies for Transition

The studied cases support Sinha's (2000) suggestion about the benefits of integrating design thinking within the company mission, business processes and strategy. These cases provide successful examples of how small scale, and even certain "risk-taking" can help to remain innovative in the current business environment. (Sinha 2000, pp. 37–40.) As in Anna Ruohonen's case, having control over many elements of the business has enabled to realize a vision different from the current system and create a unique strategy towards slower fashion cycles.

The studied cases represent a strategy formulation that is based on experienced understanding of the fashion industry and fashion-related business thinking. This is in line with the strategy formulation proposed by Whittington et al. (2006), which suggests grounding it on practice and injecting craft into the strategy formulation process. The studied companies have constructed their strategies through design practices. Design knowledge, rooted in experience, has been used to create control over company's practices and products, constructing their own local and micro-level system. Each profiled case has utilized such approach for gaining better control over product quality and sustainability. While doing so the goal has been in transition towards a more sustainable fashion system.

As stated earlier, Cooper et al. (2009) argue that thinking through design, i.e. creative strategic thinking, can offer new perspectives in business systems. This approach can facilitate transition, and even systemic changes in the industry. The studied cases are good examples on how fashion practices combined with an environmentally-oriented value base can create better control over the system, and also create power to transform and lead

the fashion system towards sustainability. These cases further exemplify how local action can influence global development, as suggested in the transition theory.

Conclusions

Many designers and manufacturers would like to integrate more sustainable methods in their products, but the possibilities for making more environmentally and ethically sound choices in the fashion system are still limited.

Although pursuit of sustainability is often driven by designer's personal values, faced by the reality of limited opportunities, a common approach in many such businesses is so called "best practices"; fashion companies choose the best existing environmental and social solutions. Even then, some decisions remain compromises. As highlighted in this study, this is especially the case for small- and medium-sized companies: finding suitable sustainable materials that are available in small amounts and controlling manufacturing while aiming to produce long-lasting, high-quality product and achieve customer satisfaction is challenging.

This study showed how design thinking coupled with control has potential for providing better quality, product satisfaction, transparency, fair working conditions without compromising the quality of design. The cases illustrate how sustainable development with the help of designer's control and power, can be reached in a company.

In such a way, creative and design-driven strategic thinking based on design practices does not only enable better control over the system but also creates power to transform and lead the fashion system towards sustainability.

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[i] Sinha (2000) interviewed several designers in five companies across different market levels in the UK fashion industry. Designers of each company were asked to indicate how design decisions (about color, fabric, style, conceptual range and manufacturing range) were made and rank them according to how influential they felt their recommendation were to the company. The maximum score was 25 points. Designer E, who was the owner of his own small business, employing 3 people, ranked highest, with 21 points, for his influence on design decisions; designers A (from a company of 70,000 employees) and C (from a company of 210 employees) ranked the lowest. (Sinha 2000, p.35)

[ii] Anna Ruohonen's atelier has currently six full-time employees in Paris, and one full-time and one part-time employee in Helsinki, Finland.

[iii] Estonia is the closest country with an industrial-scale capacity for garment manufacturing.

[iv] Nurmi currently employs two people full-time and one part-time. The label releases two small collections a year.

CRAFTING AESTHETICS: THE MEANING OF MATERIALITY AND THE MAKING PROCESS IN ARTISANAL FASHION

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Abstract

Fashion, and particularly its physical embodiment, clothing, is a medium for a designer to render her emotions and visions into material form, and to further communicate them at an aesthetic level through cut, fabrics, construction and other details. This study aims to trace the process of crafting aesthetics in fashion design, with a focus on artisanal fashion. In particular, it explores the concept of artisanship as manifested in the design process and the creation of an aesthetic. Based on interviews with six fashion designers as well as on material and visual data from their collections, the study combines a qualitative analysis and a conversation about aesthetics in the artisanal approach to fashion design. The paper pays specific attention to the materiality of garments and to the creative process. The study is not concerned with establishing what artisanship could be in the aesthetic sense; rather, it offers the perspectives of different designers on the artisanal approach and its significance for the aesthetic of a garment. The study does not attempt to deconstruct that process in detail, but it provides examples and anecdotes.

KEYWORDS: fashion design, artisanship, aesthetics, materiality, design process

Introduction

Fashion, and particularly its physical embodiment, clothing, is a medium for a designer to render her emotions and visions into material form, and to further communicate them at an aesthetic level through cut, the fabrics, construction and other details. Each art form has its own language. In fashion, it is the aesthetics of clothing that functions as a language; it can produce a conceptual or technical study, or simply visual poetry.

This study aims to trace the process of crafting aesthetics in fashion, but it focuses especially on designers with an artisanal approach to design and production. As pointed out in earlier studies (see Aakko 2014, Bettiol & Micelli 2013, Sandino 2004), central to the artisanal approach to fashion is the integrated role of designer, which makes possible a high level of craftsmanship, skill, and quality. Based on this premise, this study explores primarily how the concept of artisanship manifests itself in the design process and the creation of an aesthetic.

The paper pays specific attention to the materiality of garments and to the creative process. The study is not concerned with establishing what artisanship could be in the aesthetic sense; rather, it offers the perspectives of different designers regarding the artisanal approach and its significance for the aesthetic of a garment. The study does not attempt to deconstruct that process in detail, but it provides examples and anecdotes. As such, the study should not be considered as a set of guidelines to achieve a certain aesthetic; rather, it offers insight into the various invisible processes that lead to a finished garment or to an entire collection.

Artisanship in fashion design

In general, fashion design involves different stages. Among them are the creation of the shape and overall aesthetic of the garment, the choice of fabrics and trimmings, the creation of patterns, the construction and finishing of the garment, and, potentially, fabric manipulation (e.g. dyeing and other treatments). However, the design process is not necessarily linear. Fashion designers can work in significantly different ways one from another. Most fashion designers distribute part of the design-related work, like pattern and sample making, to a team of assistants. Depending on the scale of the business, some designers act as creative directors, usually translating their ideas through sketches and then supervising the work of their assistants, while others are heavily involved in first person in the phases of design, development and production or even execute the work

largely by themselves (see Niinimäki & Aakko 2014). Besides an aesthetic vision, the latter approach requires an extensive set of artisanal skills in the areas of patternmaking, construction, and textile manipulation.

Linda Sandino (2004) points out that, although mass-manufactured products and craft objects can be seen as polar opposites, there is also room for practices that do not belong exclusively to either extreme, but rather merge craft and design. Although Sandino's remark concerns design at large, it is a perfect description of fashion that embraces artisanal skills as a notable part of the practice, thus falling somewhere between craft and industrial design.

According to the Merriam-Webster and the Oxford dictionaries, the word *artisan* refers to "a person who is skilled at making things by hand" and *artisanship* to "skill in a particular craft". If one adopts the above definitions, the design process in artisanal fashion could therefore indicate a design practice that integrates skillful design and craftsmanship (Aakko 2014). Similarly, Marco Bettiol and Stefano Micelli (2013) provide a description of the collaboration between a designer and an artisan in a design process that focuses on the dynamic of the process itself:

> Developing a prototype [...] was an iterative process that required several interactions between the designers and the artisan [...] time was used to change, adjust, and refine not only the project but even the original idea. The final design was a synthesis of the invention of the designer and the artisanship (Bettiol & Micelli 2013, p.8).

In fashion design that integrates artisanship, the designer has many artisanal skills and uses them in the design process to various degrees. Even when some of the work is performed by her team or by local artisans, the designer still plays an integrated role, working closely with them to control and supervise all the phases of design and production (Aakko 2014). To summarize one could say that artisanship in fashion typically focuses on *skill*, the *making process* itself, and, since it deals with the creation of tangible objects, *materiality*.

While the artisanal approach is central in this study, my primary interest lies in the ideation and creation of an aesthetic. This paper looks at how fashion designers craft aesthetics with particular attention to materiality and the making process, and considers the role these aspects play in their work. Based on interviews with six fashion designers as well as on material and visual data from their collections (i.e. showroom visits, fashion shows and lookbooks), the study combines a qualitative analysis

and a conversation about aesthetics and their formation especially with regard to what I call here "artisanal fashion design". Object analysis was partly used to gather data, i.e. looking at the garments, examining and touching them, and at times, even trying them on (see Steele 1998). However, this data merely served the understanding of the designer's intentions.

The concepts that emerge from this multiple case study originate mainly from inductive analysis rather than from pre-established theoretical framework. However, abductive reasoning (Timmermans & Tavory 2012) is applied when addressing the notion of materiality (see Sandino 2004). All the designers included in this study run small, studio-based, independent labels that embody aspects of artisanal and slow fashion, such as an emphasis on local, small-scale production, artisanship, and a high level of skills and quality (Aakko 2014; Clark 2008; Fletcher 2012). Being independent also allows them to have aesthetic freedom, as most decisions fall into their own hands.

Crafting the aesthetics of clothing

Generally speaking, aesthetics is concerned with perception, that is what we can see or hear, and with sensation, the emotional reaction evoked by perception (Welsch 1996). In fashion, aesthetics can be applied to study clothes at a visual level, for example to analyze the silhouette, the fabrics, the trimmings and other details. But as Joseph Kupfer (1994) suggests, the interaction of the body with the garment also produces a sensuous aesthetic experience. The visual aspect is crucial in fashion design, whether the aim is just to aestheticize a garment (see Welsch 1996) or to convey a conceptual message, and it is equally important in artisanal fashion.

Although aesthetics is preoccupied with the physical object, this study does not aim to "read a dress" (Steele 1998, p.329) nor scout the sources of inspiration behind it (see Petre, Sharp & Johnson 2006). The aim is also not to search for visual similarities between the work of these designers; even if parallels exist, no specific aesthetic is required to qualify a design approach as artisanal. Rather, the goal is to uncover some of the elements that are commonly found behind the aesthetic of fashion that integrates artisanship.

In general, ideation, that is the initial creation of an idea in design, is a multimodal process that involves conceptual, practical and materially embodied activities. Approaches to ideation can include

graphic, material, verbal and mental methods, such as sketching and material experimentations (Laamanen & Seitamaa-Hakkarainen 2014). However, this study focuses specifically on materiality, which emerged as a fundamental element in the approach to aesthetics of the designers interviewed. In addition, artisanship, for which the making process and skill are central (e.g. Aakko 2014; Bettiol & Micelli 2014), also plays a role in the formation of their aesthetic, which often evolves throughout the making process itself.

Materiality in artisanal fashion

First and foremost, materiality refers to the materials used in the collections; materials play a significant role in the overall aesthetics created by the designers examined in this study. All are adamant about using exclusively high-quality fabrics and trimmings, even if it affects the price point notably. Similarly, they also share a preference for distinctive textures as determined by specific weaves and weight of the fabric, yarn quality and fiber combinations. Generally speaking, they all favor natural fibers such as silk, linen and wool for their visual and tactile characteristics (e.g. texture, feel, weight and warmth). For instance, Italian-based designer Geoffrey B. Small pays meticulous attention to sourcing materials for his collections. The fabrics he uses are often designed in collaboration with and woven by the oldest factories in Italy, while the buttons are carefully sourced for each garment and always made out of natural materials like horn, wood, shell or bone. Even the thread used for building the pieces is always pure cotton, and for hand sewing the buttonholes is silk. Similarly, Paris-based designer Marc Le Bihan prefers natural fabrics but sometimes uses polyester because of its specific material characteristics rather than for its ability to simulate other fabrics at a cheaper cost.

Whenever possible, all of the designers interviewed develop their own fabrics in collaboration with mills. This ensures the availability of exclusive fabrics that may become a part of the designer's signature. As Italian-based designer Issei Fujita explains, one of their own fabrics, a two-layer wool and linen blend obtained through a specific technique, embodies their brand's aesthetic. Despite having been included in his collections for a number of seasons, it is still popular among customers. Uniqueness can also be created through fabric manipulation: techniques such as cold dyeing, boiling and felting, just to name a few, contribute significantly to the personal aesthetic of many designers. Even small

details can make the difference, as in the case of Daniel Andresen, an Antwerp-based knitwear designer who leaves some of his pieces to dry in the sun, a treatment that makes the wool acquire a unique crispness.

Craftsmanship, which is central in the work of the designers considered in this study, is often made apparent in the garment itself. This can be seen for example in the uneven dye, a common result of hand-dyeing, or in the irregularities of hand-stitched details. Such small imperfections and minor irregularities, impossible to replicate by machine, intentionally highlight the artisanal element in the design and are also an aesthetic choice.

The charm of hand-made things is not necessarily visible, but is imbedded in their materiality, which induces a sensuous aesthetic experience (see Welsch 1996) difficult to translate into words. According to Belgium-based designer Jan Jan Van Essche, a hand-made garment often demands attention and respect:

> My hand-spun, hand-made sweater was the magnet of the showroom. People were just standing there for half an hour with the sleeve in their hands talking [about something else]... You feel that there is humanity in it. It is acoustic; it resonates.

Materiality in the context of aesthetics also implies a connection to the body. Above all, clothing serves function, which generally drives many aesthetic choices. Functionality aside, in this case materiality refers to the design process and the relationship of the garment with the body. According to Le Bihan, this dimension of materiality is especially important in fashion design for the creation of an aesthetic: "[You have to know] how to build something around the body, the real body... To have a reflection about the cut, how things are made, is very important."

For Van Essche the body and its materiality are also central at an aesthetic level. However, Van Essche is not necessarily interested in form-fitting clothes but in the ideas of "elegance, comfort and openness," which he materializes into garments "that are not restricting." Van Essche's aesthetic is often guided by a principle he learned from studying ethnic cuts: "the body shapes the clothes more than the clothes shape the body." This results in the loose and uncomplicated shapes typical of his design: "The shapes I make have a certain feeling to them when you are in [the garment] ... a feeling of freedom," he explains.

Discovering aesthetics through the process of making

Since artisanship pertains to skill and the process of making, in artisanal fashion the same holds true when it comes to aesthetics. The manual skills required, such as patternmaking and garment construction, are important also for the creation of the overall aesthetic of a garment. "Cutting and sewing," Le Bihan says, "equals to grammar in fashion design." For him, mastering these technical aspects enriches one's sensibility as a designer, and this understanding helps to discover alternative ways to carry out these tasks. According to him, "Designing is not just about using fabric, but [it is essential] to know how to use it, and how to change things."

Patternmaking is often set aside when in discussions about fashion design, where the focus is given to ideation, sketching and draping. Even in the industry fashion design and patternmaking are typically two different professions. But their interdependence is central in the development of the aesthetic and functional elements of a garment. Patternmaking can even be considered essential to the fashion design process, as it may guide the aesthetic of a garment (Rissanen 2013). For Van Essche the initial rough, inspirational sketch represents the feeling and volume of the garment, while the technical sketch includes the exact details. However, the subsequent phase of patternmaking may change the garment dramatically, which is why he prefers to do it himself:

> [Patternmaking] for me is 50% of the designing. We don't send sketches somewhere because with my kind of shapes it is really important [to keep the patternmaking in-house] since, there is not much. I only have few seams in my garments, so what is there should be in the right place.

Paris-based designer Anna Ruohonen, whose eponymous label is designed and produced almost entirely in-house, considers the making process as a significant part of her design method: "Sketching serves mostly as my own notes. For me designing is very much a hands-on, material-based process. The ideas often originate and develop through the process itself." According to her, having an in-house team is fundamental for the fine-tuning of a garment: "Since we have sample making in-house, we never have to be satisfied with a product that is almost-good. We can keep on tweaking it until the aesthetic is exactly what we want." Additionally, the in-house production grants Ruohonen complete independence also in terms of working methods. As she explains, "Since I have the freedom to create my own system, I can also decide what interests me. If I want to perfect a certain garment, I can do it as long as I want."

More often than not, designing, prototyping and producing are not linear processes but involve plenty of trial and error. Andresen does most of that work alone, so for him the roles of designer, sample maker and producer are intertwined, which means that he is equally familiar with all the challenges related to these individual phases. Andresen embraces uncertainness and mistakes, and welcomes those as a part of his design process. Production, which is commonly repetitive and uncreative, can be a chance to learn because making the same garment over and over again directs one towards new solutions. In his opinion, it also allows to come across mistakes or surprises that can better the aesthetic of the design. What these incidents, surprises and mistakes bring about could not necessarily be designed deliberately, and thus spontaneity is an important part of his design process. "The more you try, the less you find" is Andresen's motto-like conclusion.

Despite being rooted in the tactile process of making, draping, patternmaking and constructing, composing the garment's aesthetic remains a mystical experience, only unfolded to the designer herself:

> You should never over-analyze the design process; that way you destroy your creativity. Instead you have to trust your intuition. The ideation process is not calculated; the ideas are a sum of many different things (Ruohonen 2015).

Along the lines of Ruohonen, Small concludes:

> You have to find that zen. And there *is* zen in creating pieces, when you sort of get that groove, and the thing hits. And then you have to know well enough, like any artist, when to stop, when to back off. You've got to have a light touch, you've got to know when it is right, to leave it alone. It is very important. You have to *listen*; there is sensitivity about what is going on.

Conclusion

The process of creation is personal for each designer, and so is the aesthetic that each of them creates. However, as this study shows, designers that integrate the artisanal approach to fashion have in common an aesthetic that relies heavily on materiality and matures during the process.

The creation of an aesthetic is difficult to verbalize, as the process is not completely visible, traceable, concrete or linear; on the contrary, it is abstract and excursive. It seems to follow a form of thinking whose

nature resides largely in the realm of the subconscious or even in “zen”, in a meditative state, rather than in logical thinking. There is something mystical about it; perhaps no recipe, but just hints on the ingredients.

The insights presented in this paper follow the premise that, after all, the creation of an aesthetic is so meshed with the creator herself that its architecture cannot be reproduced without the designer, even when the very same elements are at disposal. This study offers a glimpse into the internal process of a designer and does not wish to deconstruct it in detail, as we believe that part of the magic should be kept hidden.

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UNFOLDING ARTISANAL FASHION

Maarit Aakko

Abstract

This study outlines the distinctive features of small, contemporary fashion labels with an artisanal approach to fashion, which highlights the integration of skillful design and craftsmanship. It examines labels that merge fashion and artisanship, operate on a small scale, and employ traditional and handcraft methods, within and contributing to today's cultural and visual milieu. Showcasing several entrepreneurial fashion brands, the data is gathered mainly by interviewing the head designers of these labels and visiting their ateliers, amongst other fieldwork. While not a unified group of designers in terms of philosophy or aesthetic, certain features common to all, such as skill, handcrafted work, small batch production and provenance are identified. This approach is also characterized by the integrative role of the designer. The independent position of these artisanal fashion companies enables freedom and thus the possibility to control design, production and business management according to their own philosophy.

KEYWORDS: fashion, fashion designer, artisanal production, skill, craft

Today, *artisanal*[1] is a charming byword used to sell anything from food to furniture, including fashion. While the term 'artisanal', referring to things made by hand by a skilled person, is easily associated with traditional craft-based professions such as blacksmiths and carpenters, it equally pertains to clothes-making. Skillful craftsmanship has been the foundation of the custom-made creations of *haute couture* since its beginning in the 19th century, and the same methods are being used even today (e.g. Breward 2003; de Marly 1980). However, artisanal methods are used in different ways and in varying amounts also in other fashion production, not quite as meticulously as in *couture*, but resourcefully and creatively, a phenomenon named here as *artisanal fashion*.

Even though the fashion industry is mainly dominated by giant mass-manufactured brands, interest in artisanship in fashion has not ceased. Established fashion houses such as *Chanel* have always valued fine craftsmanship highly and make a significant effort to cultivate those skills also today (cf. Mellery-Pratt 2015). One of the first fashion houses to introduce a more contemporary idea of 'artisanal' in fashion, using craft in even *avant-garde* ways (Crane 1997), was *Maison Martin Margiela* with their line *0* in 1988, nicknamed later the '*Artisanal*' collection. It consisted of handmade garments reworked from recycled garments and materials, as it does also today (Motwary 2010). Besides labels working in couture, high-quality craft is also used as one of the production methods in *ready-to-wear* collections. For instance, some of the fabrics in the Belgian fashion label Dries Van Noten's collection are hand-embroidered in India (employing roughly 3000 textile artisans) and some are hand-woven at a small mill (*The Talks* 2015). Artisanal values are also at the core of Bruno Cuccinelli's Italian-based luxury sportswear enterprise, demonstrated particularly through his active support of local production and the maintenance of fine craftsmanship (Desserti 2014; Mead 2010; Mora and Volonté 2014).

A growing interest in artisanship can also be seen in the many newspaper articles profiling artisanal production (cf. e.g. Bain 2015; Mellery-Pratt 2015; Rabkin 2015). Featuring the artisans of fashion to even wider audiences, the fashion house *Dior* showcased the fine craftsmanship behind their haute couture collection in the film *Dior and I* (2014). This trend is evident even in fashion advertising: during recent years, several fashion brands have used workmanship as a theme in their commercial campaigns or display windows (Gautrand 2014). However, as Pascal Gautrand (2014) points out, while this indicates interest in the phenomenon, it does not mean all these brands are necessarily using a great amount of craft in their production; such imagery and vocabulary

related to 'artisanal' can also be used similarly as 'greenwashing', i.e. as a marketing ploy. In fact, as *The Business of Fashion* (2015), one of the leading media channels for the fashion industry, asks in their special issue on artisanship, "How can traditional craftsmanship survive in the modern world?", there is also some concern about its existence.

In the same vein, this study explores the concept of 'artisanal' in the context of contemporary fashion[2]. It focuses on micro- and small-scale fashion labels that operate in the realm of ready-to-wear and aims to unpack the characteristics of such labels with an artisanal approach to fashion[3]. Artisanal fashion does not pursue to be on par with exceptional *haute couture* in the use of craft, nor in its symbolic value; however, all of these designers employ traditional and handcraft methods, yet in innovative ways and sensitized to the cultural and visual climate of today. While not a strictly unified group of designers in terms of philosophy or aesthetic, certain features such as the integration of skillful design and craftsmanship, a hands-on approach to fashion design and an integrative role of the designer were identified as common to all. The garments are mostly produced in-house or locally, typically in small batches. The cases merge fashion and artisanship, by centering on high quality in fabrics and garment construction and a unique aesthetic vision.

The work of artisans related to clothing and textiles can refer to two very different contexts, folkloric[4] (e.g. Fletcher and Grose 2012; Littrell and Frater 2013) and contemporary (e.g. Farnault 2014) – in this study the focus is on the latter context. The context of contemporary fashion, "[t]he invisible elements included in clothing" (Kawamura 2005), render garments as symbolically very different from clothing in the folkloric framework. Applying ethnographic methods and inductive analysis[5], the study describes and dissects the fundamental elements of artisanal fashion, highlighting the designer's perspective. The article also contemplates the significance of the artisanal approach to fashion in the current cultural and societal context. The key themes of this study are introduced in the following sections and illustrated with examples from the interview data.

The intention is not to establish 'artisanal fashion' as one definitive category, especially because it is challenging to pin down the exact borders of such a category. Instead, if looking at a continuum of production methods – with couture and craft on one end and industrial methods on the other – the type of fashion discussed here falls at the artisanal end of such a scale.

Fashion, Crafted by Hand

In fashion, artisanal methods refer to old craft techniques, such as knitting and embroidery, but pertain to all the material-related phases in fashion design, e.g. spinning, weaving, fabric dyeing and manipulation, patternmaking, garment construction and finishing. The artisanal approach to fashion is not a rigid system of couture; instead, craft is used as a part of production in different ways and in varying amounts[6]. At one extreme, the eponymous fashion label of designer *Geoffrey B. Small*, based in the Veneto region of Italy, integrates a high amount of handwork in the production including, for example, paper pattern drafting (of more than 3000 individual patterns), hand-stitching (e.g. buttonholes, hems, seam finishing and pad-stitching coat fronts and collars), hand-dyeing fabrics and other extensive hand treatments on fabrics. The label has also produced garments sewn entirely by hand and uses hand-loomed fabrics as part of the collection. Similarly, Paris-based fashion designer *Marc Le Bihan* explains that the making of a garment often starts with raw fabric, which is first processed with a series of treatments, such as boiling and dyeing, and then possibly finished with embroidery and hand-stitching. Whereas these two labels have a high percentage of handwork in their production, most others apply artisanal methods as part of their production. Apart from the purist examples of using basically no technology, most designers, even while utilizing many artisanal methods, commonly use certain technology in production, such as sewing machines; they might also prefer grading patterns with the help of a computer.

Despite the utilitarian and pragmatic undertones of craft (e.g. Becker 1982), it can be employed in various ways. Many methods are applied in the same traditional way as they have for centuries, or even longer, but some are being tweaked, developed and used in unusual ways, creating new variations of old techniques. One such example is cold dyeing, which is often, for aesthetic reasons, purposefully used in a way that results in uneven dye.

As many of these methods utilized in artisanal fashion are exactly the same or variations of traditional techniques, the processes are also as laborious and slow as they used to be. However, this is not an issue in artisanal production: the inherent slowness is simply embraced as it is, and the work produced mainly by hand or with very little technology simply takes the time needed. The scale and methods of production, and the time used, are actually some of the fundamental differences between the artisanal and industrial production modes of clothing. Moreover, as Colin Campbell (2005) explains,

> The contrast is not really between hand production and machine production, but rather between a production system in which the worker is in control of the machine and one in which the machine is in control of the worker (Campbell 2005: 28).

In industrial manufacturing the products are made using machinery, typically in factories that employ a large workforce. This type of automated, industrial production started replacing handwork from the late 19th century, and it accelerated the making of goods significantly (Breward 2003). Currently, fashionable clothing is produced and consumed in fast cycles, which makes artisanal fashion production quite different from the prevailing fashion system.

Mastery over Craft

Besides craftsmanship, artisanal production implies skill, a combination of knowledge and dexterity (Frayling 2011). The skills of a fashion designer with an artisanal approach involve technical proficiency but also high ambitions for beauty, bearing comparison to Becker's (1982) portrayal of *artist-craftsmen*. In other words, skillful execution of the work is essentially embodied in material quality, such as the construction and finishing of the garment, but also in the quality of design and the aesthetic, for example in the form, cut, fabrics and other details (cf. Kupfer 1994).

The hands-on approach to fashion design is often evident in the expertise of patternmaking; all the designers of this study either make the patterns themselves or are at least actively involved in the process. In fact, for many, patternmaking equals designing, as ideas commonly evolve in the experiments and in the making process itself (see also Aakko 2015). As Marc Le Bihan puts it,

> It is very important to know how to make things, if you want to create. The technical skills can help you design: you know the limits, but you also [know alternative ways of making]. The point is not just using fabrics, but to know how to use and how to change things. (Le Bihan 2014)

According to Becker (1982), "Sometimes virtuosity also includes mastering a wide variety of techniques, being able not only to do things better than most others but also to do more things." Similarly in artisanal fashion, a designer's skill often manifests as multilayered expertise. Some designers are proficient in all the aspects related to fashion design and

production – i.e. in design, patternmaking, sewing, dyeing and finishing – and will perform any of these tasks at any time. For example, besides designing, Le Bihan often makes the patterns for his collections, but he says, "In fact, if I need to, I can make the whole collection by myself; I can do everything [related to that]." For Le Bihan, patternmaking and garment construction are essential skills in the design process. "It is like the grammar," he says. Doing part of the craft oneself can also serve as a break from the design work, as Belgian fashion designer *Jan-Jan Van Essche* highlights:

> [Craft] can be really meditative. For instance, when you are weaving, you can think about a lot of other stuff, but you can also think about nothing – you can just reset.

Much in craft has been maintained by tradition and developed over time. Mastering a skill such as embroidery, weaving or patternmaking takes years of extensive study and practice. Historically, artisanal skills have been transmitted through master-apprenticeships in which a novice learnt the craft from an expert through the work itself. The same is common practice also in the artisanal production of fashion. Training people in-house can also be crucial to having the right kind of workers in the team, as Le Bihan explains: "It is more and more difficult to find people who have good skills and understand what we try to do." At the same time he feels that "it is nice to teach and to explain, to transmit your skills to others." Some designers, such as *Van Essche*, envision even larger set-ups, where the professional artisans working in-house would educate young designers and artisans. "My dream *maison* would also be a school. It would be great also to educate people. Otherwise these things are also going to get lost, which would be a big shame. Actually, all these artisans that I know love to share their work [and knowledge]," Van Essche explains.

Skills and competencies, such as a designer's creativity and artisan's expertise, can also be *combined* through collaborations. Such partnerships with other professionals can enrich the work and its quality. As Geoffrey B. Small says,

> I am not a lone genius, and I don't think there is such a thing in most cases. The geniuses are ones that accumulate the information better than others – make use of it better. So, we have to know a lot. You want input from people that know. Therefore, I want to work with the best guy who is still weaving fabrics: I want to know what he knows when it comes to weaving fabric. I want to

> work with the best living tailors still on the planet because I want their knowledge combined with mine. (Small 2014)

Collaboration is a way to utilize techniques that designers appreciate even if they do not master it themselves. As *Jona Sees*, designer behind the New York-based fashion label *Inaisce*, explains,

> It just comes naturally for me because I fall in love with various people's work, and I know that would be something I would never be able to master myself in one lifetime - not all these different things. But I want to put my angle on it; I want to present it in a different context than it has been presented in [previously]. (Sees 2015)

It is attractive for these designers to work with artisans who master a different craft. According to Sees, "The advantage to collaborating with an artisan is [what] the experience of years, or decades, of what they have been doing, brings to the table." Collaboration, for instance between a fashion designer and a textile artist, can benefit both, since the designer can use an interesting, perhaps even a unique, technique, and the craft can be used in a non-traditional way. "It is a meeting of two visions. We can produce something that is completely different than either of us would have produced alone," Sees describes.

Made in Small Batches

Artisanal production does not only refer to handcrafted practice but also to producing in small batches. In practical terms, garments are made in small editions, for example, only five to twenty pieces of a certain style, and some items may be created as one-of-a-kind. Although this type of fashion is not couture – made-to-measure clothing created exclusively for private clients – some designers might produce *demi-couture* garments, according to individual measurements. For example, the eponymous fashion label of designer *Anna Ruohonen*, based in Paris, produces all garments custom made based on customers' orders. The garments are constructed by made-to-measure in the chosen style and fabrication from start to finish by two tailors. Every garment is crafted individually; the process also includes some amounts of handwork, such as assembling knits, sewing buttons and finishing hemlines. (See also Aakko 2014.) "If I decided to produce garments in a more industrial way to lower the price point, I should ask the staff to work faster, not to pay as much attention to

quality and not to construct any details by hand – but that would make it a different product," Ruohonen explains.

Although often a practical choice, such a scale of production is also a chance to create limited editions or entirely unique details, such as individually laid patchwork (e.g. Geoffrey B. Small), hand-embroidered details (e.g. Marc Le Bihan), hand-woven trims (e.g. Jan-Jan Van Essche) and exclusively crafted silver buttons (e.g. Inaisce). Some designers, for example Geoffrey B. Small, number each item and the total of the series, similar to graphic prints, such as "1/20". This label, hand-written, emphasizes the uniqueness and in some sense serves to certify it.

Provenance

Industrial-scale garment manufacturing is often outsourced to countries with cheaper labor costs, such as China, Bangladesh and India, and, by and large, the country of origin is not underlined. In contrast, while artisanal production could be practically performed anywhere as long as it happens according to its core principles, its provenance is typically highlighted. Obscured production chains, and especially the many tragedies in the garment industry of the recent past, such as the collapse of *Rana Plaza* in Bangladesh in 2013, have shifted attention to the origin of garments. Transparency has become important, as seen in many examples ranging from large-scale fashion companies, such as *H&M*[7] sharing their supplier information amongst other data, to the smaller scale, such as *Honest By*[8], a fashion label transparent even to the minutest detail.

The production of artisanal fashion is not driven by cost-effective reasoning and outsourced offshore but is mostly kept in-house, local or nearby, depending on resources, but also by preference. Compared to the requirements of in-house production – e.g. workspace, machinery, employment and management – local production enables frequent visits to the factory and the monitoring of production processes and product quality, even while offering a lighter structure. While in-house production is an investment both of money and time, designers at the artisanal end of the scale do not want to rely on subcontracted work, but prefer a set-up similar to traditional artisanal production where everything from design to production was done in-house. As Marc Le Bihan explains,

> [We want] to check everything, to know who produces, and the condition of production. I refuse to send things far away because I want to know how it is made. I don't want to have things made

> by children, women, and low price… We organize everything here, because [otherwise] it is difficult to check how things are made. Even if some factory guarantees the work is done in good conditions – you never know what actually happens. (Le Bihan 2014)

The gain from producing in-house is the ability to control how everything is done. While in-house production means a bigger involvement and responsibility, it also allows freedom to perform everything according to one's own preference. That, in turn, is a chance to focus on and respond to issues that are important in labels' philosophies and values. (See also Niinimäki and Aakko 2014.)

As evident in Le Bihan's comment, in-house production is one way to ensure ethically correct working conditions: when control is in a designer's own hands, harmful and unjust practices can be avoided, such as child labor and unreasonable working hours (often combined with low wages), and fair working conditions provided. In-house production also makes possible the monitoring of product quality; the opportunity for constant communication with staff, particularly with the patternmaker and the tailor, enables immediate improvement.

Although locally manufactured fabrics may not be easy to obtain, their origin plays a significant role, and most designers are adamant about the fabric suppliers they use (see also Desserti 2014). Often these connections have been established over many years and yield resourceful relationships that ensure expected quality; they may even enable exclusive fabrication. The significance of materials and their origin is emphasized especially in Geoffrey B. Small's collection, as he describes:

> [The fabrics originate from] collaborations primarily with the oldest continuously working woolen mill in the world, Fratelli Piacenza in Pollone (founded in 1733), and the master weaver Luigi Parisotto in Sarcedo (one of Italy's leading research-based textile mills) and made exclusively in cashmere, silk, wool, linen and cotton yarns; buttons are created also primarily in collaboration with Claudio & Cinzia Fontana (one of Italy's last great remaining artisan button-makers) for each garment in the collection, and always made out of natural materials such as horn, wood, shell or bone; even the thread used for building his pieces is always pure cotton never polyester, and for hand sewing the buttonholes is pure silk Bozzolo. (Small, email message to author April 15, 2015)

The Integrated Role of Designer

Couturiers and designers of the past were mere tailors or artisans executing designs consigned by upper-class women. In the mid 19th century, Charles Frederick Worth was one of the first designers that started creating his own designs and assembling them as seasonal collections. This new system initiated the shifting of power and design decisions from the clients to the tailor, elevating them from craftsmen into designers of their own vision and taste. (de Marly 1980; Lipovetsky 1987/1994)

Today, the work of a fashion designer varies greatly depending on the scale of the business. Designers may focus on the concept and the creative vision, typically by sketching ideas and supervising assistants who translate the designs into garments; most designers distribute part of the design-related work, like pattern- and sample-making, to a team of assistants. Nevertheless, they may also be directly involved in the phases of design, development and production and even execute the work largely by themselves. Besides an aesthetic vision, the latter approach requires an extensive set of artisanal skills in the areas of patternmaking, construction, and textile manipulation.

Small fashion houses are often entrepreneurial fashion houses, where the designer is the owner or the principal of the company (see also NESTA 2008; Ott and Cukier 2013). For a small business, hiring a manager might be financially too burdensome; therefore, the designer-owner might also take the role of manager. This position typically involves much coordinating and managing, such as organizing work, production, sales, photo shoots, employment, wages, finance, and perhaps even running a web store. Thus, the time intended to be dedicated to creative work, i.e. design and experiments, often includes micromanagement, such as instructing other workers, from a runner to a tailor, in a variety of tasks. In such a set-up, a designer's skills must extend much beyond mere design, and she/he truly has to balance between design and management. At the same time, the small scale allows staying agile and being able to quickly respond to changing conditions. As Van Essche explains, "If you have a small team to do everything, you also feel when it goes wrong very fast. Also when you don't have the budget to make mistakes, you are extra cautious not to make any."

Often in small, artisanal ateliers work and life become intertwined: the studio might be at home, in the same building or very near, and designers' partners or other family members might also work for the company. Being the manager of one's own work and company means the

boundaries between work and life often blur and the work becomes more like a lifestyle. At the same time, an artisanal atelier – referring to an atelier with very hands-on approach to design, and where some or all the phases of production are done in-house – is an opportunity for the designer to take an integrated role in the process and work closely with her workers and suppliers. It is also an independent way of organizing the work, thus allowing the designer to be in charge of most of the aspects related to design, production and business management, and use artisanal methods the way he/she wants.

Bridging Artisanship and Fashion

Underlining *fashion* as the context of this type of artisanal-made garments is crucial. Traditionally, craft tends to carry a rather static or slowly changing aesthetic, generally based on functionality (cf. Becker 1982), which juxtaposes with fashion's essential characteristics, novelty and change (cf. Kawamura 2005). Nonetheless, although the craft used in the making process is actually often old and traditional, considering the context in which the artisanal clothing is presented and used, it can be viewed as fashion.

Fashion is a particular arena that is concerned with the symbolic and aesthetic value of clothing, distinct from ordinary, functional clothing. Fashion can be defined as a socially constructed idea of clothing, in which the globally operating fashion system plays a great role (involving e.g. Paris, New York, Milan and Tokyo)[9] (Kawamura 2005). As Yuniya Kawamura (2004) explains,

> Although fashion obviously relies on clothing as its raw material, it is highly selective and situates itself within a particular system of hierarchy of success, reputation and power. Fashion activities and events are regulated and controlled by specific individuals, groups, institutions and organizations that are responsible in making fashion. (Kawamura 2004: 15)

Such a notion of fashion, a system differentiating fashion from mere clothing, is also the context of the cases of this study. For instance, the collections of these fashion labels are mostly presented in Paris, considered the fashion capital, or in other fashion centers such as New York and London (cf. Breward 2003; Kawamura 2005). They are sold to urban clientele in prominent boutiques next to celebrated, cutting-edge ready-to-wear brands, such as *Comme des Garçons* and *Rick Owens*.

Considering the high quality of materials, construction and finishing, they can be regarded as high-end garments (Malem et al. 2009).

Since the context is fashion, aesthetics also play a significant role. Artisanal fashion can be described as urban and contemporary, "in tune with the zeitgeist" (cf. Crane 1997). Parallel to more conventional fashion, artisanal fashion does not embody one, unified aesthetic; instead, these methods can be used to create diverse outcomes. Nevertheless, a common, non-temporal, thread of this type of fashion is materiality, referring here to the use of high-quality materials and trimmings and to meticulously crafted details such as cut, seam technique, fabric manipulation and finishing; the attention to detail can be displayed even in distinctive garment tags and packaging. Such craftsmanship, which is central to artisanal methods, is sometimes made apparent in the garment itself, through a certain rawness and small imperfections, such as hand-stitched details or uneven dye, displaying the handwork behind the garment. Since the aesthetic is often embedded in materiality, it is not easily replicable with other methods. (Aakko 2015) In addition, at times certain techniques may become common, or trendy, and create aesthetic resemblance. Moreover, labels sharing similar interests and visions might embody a similarity in their aesthetic, seen, for example, in the minimalist yet strong look currently embraced by a group of designers (cf. Bain 2015). The cases of this study also share such an understated tone, but based on the different styles created by artisanal methods within different cultures throughout history, these aesthetic characteristics, although current, are not encoded in artisanal methods.

At the Margins of the Fashion System

On the one hand, the labels examined in this study often operate within the conventional fashion system; for instance, they participate in the fashion weeks particularly in Paris, present collections according to the fixed fashion calendar (Spring/Summer and Fall/Winter), and handle sales through the regular retail structure. On the other hand, these labels represent a niche and are more comfortable residing at the edge of the fashion system, rather than in the midst of it. Some of them are more "in the system" than others, but most of them operate according to their own principles in various ways.

One apparent distinction between the mainstream industrial and artisanal fashion companies is their approach to advertising and branding. The artisanal labels do use branding to a certain extent to

communicate the essence of the label and its product. However, they are not only "hammering out [...] the idea, the lifestyle, the attitude" (Klein 2000: 195) – but also the actual product. A major part of the budget in artisanal production goes to the making of the product, i.e. materials, manufacturing, labor and overheads, not to branding. Therefore, the wholesale price (mainly) reflects the true cost of the product. If the garment is produced locally from high quality materials utilizing unhurried techniques, and the employees have received a fair paycheck, the cost is obviously higher compared to one coming from offshore. In fact, these brands often do not aim to compete in price; instead they focus on uniqueness, exclusivity and quality.

The balance thus differs: there is less time and money spent on brand creation and image-making and more on materiality: the production of well-designed and well-made garments. For example, most artisanal brands do not advertise or do it extremely selectively. Publicity is usually channeled through photo shoots, often compiled as look books on the company's website or through a (varying) presence in social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram). In addition, most of the labels do not organize biannual fashion shows. Shows are powerful in précising the designer's vision and for exposure, but they are also very costly.

In many cases the designer's identity is also quite intertwined with the brand identity and aesthetic. Artisanal designers often embody their aesthetic choices quite thoroughly in their life, in a sense, personifying the clothing they design. For example, all the designers interviewed in this study primarily wear their own designs; at the same time this works as an indirect but potent marketing method. Moreover, it speaks of the fact that the clothing serves the designers' own aesthetic and functional preferences, not only their customers': it is not designed according to trends set by forecasting companies but echoes the personal aesthetic of the designer. Often the designer's philosophy or values are also in one way or another incorporated into the design and the brand's identity.

At the same time, logos of these artisanal brands are often not prominent or not even visible. Therefore, identifying the clothing is based on a much more subtle game than a loudly printed logo or an evident monogram. Instead of logos, the aesthetic details of garments reveal the brand to its followers, and the brand's signature can be recognized like a code composed of the style and form and of details such as cut, seam technique, buttons, fabric or finishing.

Whether or not these brands intend to be underground, because of their small scale and selected presence in terms of Public Relations,

many of them are not known to large audiences. Some brands even have a kind of cult following that gathers in style forums (e.g. StyleZeitgeist). Some designers, such as Marc Le Bihan, deliberately choose to stay in the shadows of the fashion system. "I am independent and just decide what I do. I am not missing anything by not participating in the system. I avoid the system completely – it is not for me," he explains.

The concept of artisanal fashion can also be likened to that of *slow fashion*. They have practical similarities, such as small-scale production, the use of traditional craft techniques, and utilizing of local resources (Clark 2008; Fletcher 2010; Fletcher and Grose 2012). Likewise, in both approaches, the "emphasis is on quality (of environment, society, working conditions, business, product, etc.)" (Fletcher 2008: 173). In addition, many of the cases of this study reflect the slow ideology in the collections directly: the aesthetic direction does not change drastically between seasons. Instead it is often a slow development from one collection to another. Nonetheless, the collections are not static but balance between new and iconic pieces. For example, Le Bihan describes his collections as work-in-process, in which some pieces stay for a very long time, even fifteen years. In his seasonally presented collections some pieces are taken out, some are added, and older ones might be modified, but a large part of the collection stays the same. According to Le Bihan, "If a piece is good, it can stay as it is." Along the same lines, Jan-Jan Van Essche says,

> The same mood board has been on my walls now for three years. There are some things I take away or add, but in the end it is a very slow process that retains certain key elements. I don't reinvent myself with every collection. I see it more as a continuous story. (Van Essche cited by Toth 2014)

Definitions of slow fashion, such as "a vision of the fashion sector built from a fundamentally different starting point" and "a break from the values and goals of fast (growth-based) fashion" (Fletcher and Grose 2012: 128), generally also resonate with the practice of artisanal fashion. The cases of this study might share – in fact many do – the ideals of slow fashion; however, artisanal fashion does not primarily represent such a coherent philosophy. Some of the cases do stress the very principles clustered as slow fashion, but practically, in terms of design and production, the binding element of these cases is *artisanship*, not their ideologies. In other words, slow fashion describes a type of fashion in philosophical terms and includes traditional craft techniques as one of its

features, whereas the type of fashion under study takes artisanship as the starting point, highlighting it in more detail.

Materializing Values

There are elements commonly associated with artisanal products themselves, such as uniqueness and high quality. While these features may be found in artisanal products, they are not intrinsic but accomplished through skillful design and production. Obviously, such features are not exclusive to artisanal goods. Certain properties are equally achievable by industrial means, and it might even be easier, faster and cheaper to do so. Artisanal products must, therefore, carry some other appeal existing only in the artisanal realm.

One of the aspects driving the sentiment for artisanal products could be scarcity. In terms of the origin and the aesthetic, unlike mass-produced clothing, handcrafted and small-batch-produced garments are quite unique in the market. Being made in small batches, by old, rarely used techniques, and sold in few stores in the world, artisanal garments are unique and scarce, which forms a large part of their attractiveness. Since many of the details are a result of skillful craft, whether of patternmaking, garment construction or finishing, they are not easily replicable and embody authenticity.

Even though some designers might enjoy artisanal methods as a working mode, the charm of artisanal fashion is not only grounded in the quality of the process, as described above, but also on the aesthetic. Compared to garments made in industrial settings, customers can see and feel the handwork in the garment, and the aesthetic artisanal techniques can create is not necessarily realizable with industrial, automated methods. Surely, products can be made very precisely by programmed machines, but the small imperfections and minor irregularities stemming from the inaccuracy of handcraft can, in fact, be an aesthetic choice and a part of the appeal.

At times the artisanal methods behind the product are not obvious, but even then, merely knowing the artisanal origins, the garment may be attractive.

> When you look at the garment, you can see that someone, a person, made it. You can feel the hand that made it. It is not something industrial, and without a soul. (Le Bihan 2014)

As captured in Le Bihan's comment, the special quality of garments that are handmade, or which have gone through craft-intensive processes, may be difficult to dissect or put into words analytically. This quality is not necessarily even visible; thus, some of the appreciation of the artisanal approach, of craft and skill, rests in the symbolic and nostalgic realm, in the sentiment towards the "handmade".

Handmade products have a person behind the making process, which at the same time relates to the skill and time needed to execute it. As with any performance and accomplishment, it is attractive to see the effort put in and the capabilities of human skill. Perhaps it is also the human touch: the garment has been granted attention by a person and, as craft is often slow, much time has been spent making it. Along with this sense of human presence, there is also human emotion involved in the making process, and all this together – time, energy and skill – is symbolically embedded in the garment itself. As expressed by Van Essche, "It is human in a sense. You feel that there is humanity in it. It is acoustic, it resonates."

Although attempts to describe the qualities of artisanship easily become poetic, the fact that there is a great deal of handwork behind the making process, and the garment has received quite individual care – instead of originating from an anonymous industrial assembly line as one amongst thousands – possibly makes the product also feel compelling and more personal. All this points to a kind of human scale: it is close to people, easy to relate to, and easy to understand.

Artisanal production is often advertised as earnest, something inherently good, and certainly worth mentioning. However, the respectful and humane attitude discussed above cannot be taken for granted and claimed as a universal nature of artisanship: technically speaking, the artisanal approach itself does not guarantee more sound production in terms of ethical and environmental matters. Nevertheless, the artisanal elements – such as small scale, local orientation, interest in provenance and long-term relationships – and the entrepreneurial, independent position that enables control, provide solid ground for working according to one's own values and philosophy. The small scale and independence enable exercising control over matters close to the heart and executing work with the same skill and care as the design and production itself. For example, for Van Essche it means,

> [My values] have to do with openness and respect, but it is also a life philosophy that I want to share with the world. I would like my clothes to breathe the same values. [It means] making it in

> worthy situations, working with fabrics that are from an okay background, chemically, economically, and ecologically. All these things are values I would love to work with – and honesty.

Freedom and the ability to control can be used skillfully, toward more sound practices in ethical and environmental terms, and many labels do. Some designers have ideologies similar to slow fashion or sustainability at the core of their work, even if they may not categorize their brand in those terms nor choose to promote them. As one explanation, *Daniel Andresen*, a Belgium-based fashion designer, asks rhetorically, "Shouldn't these practices be normal and not something special?" Moreover, some designers state that proclaiming such principles could restrict the label, as following sustainable ideologies at every step is challenging. An explicit commitment to 'sustainability' would subject the label to criticism for even minor exceptions.

In any case, environmental considerations are one of the values of many companies. For example, Anna Ruohonen produces garments only on demand, which thus creates no surplus of unsold garments; even leftover fabric can be used for future orders. Even though Andresen does not identify his company as a "sustainable fashion label", he prefers ordering organic and fair trade materials whenever possible. Working according to environmental values is evident also in Geoffrey B. Small's case. Being strongly against nuclear power, Small uses solar energy as an energy source in production as much as possible. He also voices political and environmental messages through his fashion shows.

> Fashion reaches billions today in the world. Any artist with a potential audience of that size has an obligation to speak the truth, not lie about it, and to help make things better. (Small, cited by Williams 2013)

Although having chosen a profession that basically centers on producing garments, many designers interviewed here expressed conflicted feelings about the burdensome environmental impacts of the fashion industry and producing more things in a world already so full of things. As an unspoken, shared philosophy of these labels lies a certain considerate attitude, founded on *humanity* and *respect,* which is integrated in their work in different ways: respect towards employees, collaborative partners, suppliers and clients and reverence for artisanship and the work itself. As Small says,

> [One big issue of sustainability is that] the industry is not helping people and it is unsustainable in its treatment towards people. But we really need human beings. That is what it is all about, that is what makes it happen. So, we have to make sure that the human beings that we work with are able to sustain themselves.

Conclusion

At best, artisanal fashion embodies a "desire to do a job well for its own sake" (Sennett 2008: 9) and a considerate connection to people, the environment and resources. Such quality resonates again with the ideals of *slow fashion*:

> [Slow fashion] changes the power relations between fashion creators and consumers and forges new relationships and trust that are only possible at smaller scales. It fosters a heightened state of awareness of the design process and its impacts on resource flows, workers, communities and ecosystems. (Fletcher and Grose 2012: 128)

The artisanal approach to fashion bridges fashion and artisanship. Broadly speaking, such a framework is partly contemporary fashion and partly traditional craftsmanship, which conceptually and practically seem worlds apart. Nevertheless, the artisanal approach to fashion takes elements from both worlds. It draws attention to production, the material side of fashion, but weaves it together with the symbolic qualities of fashion. Although many of the labels in this study do not side with the current state of the fashion industry, and may even prefer to remain at the margins of the prevailing system, the artisanal way allows the designer to articulate personal reflections through both the aesthetical and the practical choices. In a world so full of excessively marketed mass-produced clothing, the artisanal approach to fashion brings a welcome voice of authenticity.

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Notes

1 The adjective *artisanal* comes from the word *artisan*, which refers to "a person who is skilled at making things by hand"; as a synonym, an *artisan* can also be titled a craftsperson. Additionally, an *artisan* is defined as "one that produces something in limited quantities often using traditional methods" (Merriam-Webster online dictionary). Therefore, an artisanal product does not need to be *entirely* handmade, but artisanal methods can be used in part of the production.

2 Ten small fashion design ateliers were examined for this multiple case study. The cases of this study were selected by theoretical sampling, i.e. by considering their prospective relevance for the emerging concepts of the study (Glaser and Strauss 1967). The main data was gathered through interviewing the head designers of these labels who, in all cases, were also central figures behind the companies. Complementary material about these companies and their ways of operating was collected from journalistic articles and companies' websites and by ethnographic methods, such as visiting their ateliers and seeing their collections during showroom sales, presentations and/or fashion shows. Personal visits to Paris fashion weeks biannually in 2010-2015 (either during men's or women's Fashion Week) also contributed significantly to forming an overview of artisanal production of fashion, by providing the opportunity to have many casual conversations with designers and observe the phenomenon in general. As materiality is an essential part of the artisanal approach to fashion, object analysis – i.e. looking at the garments, examining and touching them, and, at times, even trying them on (see Steele 1998) – helped form a more complete understanding of the phenomenon and its objects. Additionally, participant observation through the author's own experience as a fashion design assistant at a local fashion design studio in New York, a men's wear fashion label that shares similar principles of artisanal fashion production as the other labels of this study, has offered significant insight in this study.

3 The cases included in this study are micro- and small-scale, independent fashion labels employing two to ten people (including the designer and often a manager, pattern cutters, seamstresses/tailors and assistants, and often also interns) (cf. NESTA 2008). They produce garments in small quantities (e.g. one to thirty pieces of each garment) and apply artisanal methods as part of their production. The chosen cases focus on either men's or women's clothing, but some labels also design and produce accessories, such as shoes, bags and wallets. All the companies have been operating for at least five years, some for even over 30 years. As the study centers on finding similarities in the working methods and philosophies of these companies regardless of their location, it includes cases from several places: Paris (France), Venetto (Italy), Rome (Italy), New York (USA) and Antwerp (Belgium).

4 The term 'artisanal' is easily linked with the folkloric, traditional craft of artisans in rural communities (e.g. Littrell and Frater 2013).

5 The study was conducted with an inductive approach, with the aim to uncover conceptual patterns behind this particular type of fashion. The data collection, coding and analysis were conducted simultaneously; thus, the analysis has guided the collecting of data. All the interviews were recorded and transcribed. Along with other data, the interviews were analyzed qualitatively, first by reviewing the data several times to identify essential concepts and explicating them as memos. Further, the concepts with salient similarities were grouped into categories (such as "The integrated role of designer"). These concepts represent the essential features of the phenomena under study and thus attempt to answer the research question "What is 'artisanal fashion'?". Citations and other excerpts from the data were used to describe and illustrate the concepts. The concepts that emerge from this multiple case study originate mainly from the inductive analysis, not from a pre-established theoretical framework. However, since the phenomenon is already

named ‘artisanal fashion’ by the media and members of fashion forums, dictionary definitions have been utilized in decoding the term ‘artisanal’ and its existing meanings. (Cf. Glaser and Strauss 1967; Timmermans and Tavory 2012)

6 A clear line separating the terms *artisanal* and *industrial* is challenging to draw, as artisanal work may include parts made with the help of a machine and vice versa, industrial production might involve some handwork or at least a human behind the machine. There are no exact measures to define what could be counted as artisanal; instead, *artisanal* and *industrial* could be placed at the opposite ends of a continuum. (See also Aakko 2014.)

7 http://about.hm.com/en/news/newsroom/news.html/en/hm-releases-a-new-sustainability-report.html

8 www.honestby.com

9 The most famous fashion system is that of the French, regulated by the *Fédération Française de la Couture, du Prêt-à-Porter des Couturiers et des Créateurs de Mode* (http://modeaparis.com/en; see also Kawamura 2005). However, none of the cases in this study are a part of the institutionalized fashion system of France and thus do not represent *Haute Couture* nor *Pret-a-Porter*.

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Fashion In-between looks at entrepreneurial, small-scale labels that share an artisanal approach to design and production of clothing, and an ambition for a unique aesthetic. Illustrated with case examples, this dissertation outlines the main characteristics of artisanal fashion, and discusses its significance in the current fashion environment. It also examines the artisanal designers' multilayered skills and their centralized role in artisanal fashion houses.

Artisanal fashion embraces traditional clothes-making techniques as part of design and production processes, but it also merges fine craftsmanship with contemporary aesthetics. This approach highlights materiality, a resourceful use of high-quality materials, and the skillful construction of garments. The independent position of artisanal designers allows them the freedom to organize and control their operations, including design, production and business management, according to their personal philosophy and ideas.

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