

BE A COUNTER-
MASTER, MY FRIEND.
USE COUNTER-TOOLS.

BE A COUNTER- MASTER, MY FRIEND. USE COUNTER-TOOLS.

**HOW TO DISMANTLE THE FASHION SYSTEM IN ORDER TO ENABLE
FERTILE SOIL TO EMERGE OR LITTLE MANUAL OF RESISTANCE TO
THE DOMINANT THINKING OF THE FASHION SYSTEM.**

summary

preface
introduction

22 BE
36 A COUNTER-MASTER
50 MY FRIEND
58 USE
68 COUNTER-TOOLS

conclusion
postface

summary (expanded)

preface

introduction

- 13 Statement
- 14 Situatedness
- 15 Does what we create justify what we destroy?
- 18 Great problem, greater means

22 BE. bin.

- 23 To be
- 27 Responsibility
- 28 Re/member
- 30 Effective altruism

A hole to fill: Sustainable fashion without repair is just green consumerism.

36 A COUNTER-MASTER. fashionleaks.

- 37 Investigation
- 41 Refuse
- 43 Counter-master

How much does a hole cost?

50 MY FRIEND. love.

- 51 House

58 USE. sabotage.

- 59 Fashion doctor
- 61 User manual

Loopholes: What would you take with you?

68 COUNTER-TOOLS. seam ripper.

- 69 Unstitching
- 70 Language

conclusion

postface

“I hope they listen to the storytellers. I hope through our personal stories they understand we used our youth to serve the people.”

Barbara Easley-Cox, *Sub(ti)tle Magazine*, no. 1 (2021).

“Stories are the means by which we navigate the world.”

George Monbiot, “How do we get out of this mess?” *The Guardian*, September 9, 2017.

“Ce n’est pas en donnant à celui ou celle qui lira ce thésis une sélection de récits arrachés à cette généalogie que je veux re/member a house. J’aimerais pouvoir trouver une alternative à la narration linéaire de la mémoire, la complexité d’un corps collectif qui pourrait faire barrage, cheval de Troie des histoires officielles.”

Lorelei Regamey, /ˈniː.dəl.wɜːk/: *means of re/membering*, 77.

preface

I have seen these photos,
I have read the articles.

This thesis is not a collection of alarming figures on the state of the world.¹
Nor is it a factual illustration of reality.
No. This thesis is an attempt.
An attempt to move upstream.

With his famous phrase “Be water, my friend”, Bruce Lee teaches us the fluidity of the body and the soul. I would like to be that water. But I would like to be a drop of water, and precisely the one that will always try with all its strength to swim upstream, to counter the force of inertia with which it is pushed forward alongside its sisters², to counter causality.

This thesis is a bottle in the sea. Or rather several bottles. Bottles with messages of hope, support, love. And I would like so much to carry them to the source. I feel very concerned about the production sphere within the fashion system. About the working class that makes this industry possible and its, for the most part, deplorable working conditions. So, I would like so much to respond to garment workers’ cries. To tell them that I have heard them, that I am with them and that I am trying my best *here* to help them *there*. Fighting for their rights. Changing the narrative since day one.

I would love them to know that they have an ally at the end of the chain. That we are bound and that I will always cherish this bond no matter what.

This thesis is for them.

1. There are already tons of resources on the internet and in libraries. But throughout the text in footnotes and in the bibliography at the end of this thesis, I will quote a selection of relevant, in my opinion, references for your further readings.

2. I choose to use the notion of sorority here, because the word “drop” in French (“goutte”) is a feminine noun.

introduction

Statement

“Un statement n'est pas une introduction,
une conclusion ou un résumé d'un travail.
Mais une trajectoire, une
évocation du processus.
Un poème.”

– Unknown

Before starting to write this thesis, my technical background in fashion design led me to wonder about the very concrete tools we have, we use, we pass on from generation to generation as relics that must not be questioned, desecrated or even burned. And deep down I felt like there was something to be done with them. I had the impression that maybe rather than turning, or worse, tearing the page – as we are too often advised to do – for moving on, we have to think about changing the pencil. To think about changing our way to tell our stories. Abolish everything on our path is an attractive idea, I conceive. But maybe we have to stop destroying. Maybe all monuments must not fall. Maybe some of them should stay.

Fashion. What about fashion? Should fashion stay? The fashion industry is problematic. Admitting today that it is the 2nd most polluting industry in the world after oil is however questionable (some say it is the 3rd)³. Admitting today that it is responsible for 4% of global carbon emissions is questionable as well (some say it only emits 2%)⁴. Admitting today that 1/3 of the world's population works in some way for the industry and therefore feeds the system is no less questionable (some say that only 1/6 is confirmed, and that is already enough)⁵. And yet, it cannot be denied that the whole industry is held in the hands of the ruling class, the richest of this world⁶. This is a fact. The fashion industry is an accomplice of the Capital. In reality, it is the *tool*, and not the least, of capitalism⁷. But tools can be changed.

The concept of fashion is not so old. Fashion (with a capital F) hasn't even existed for seven generations, to refer to the Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee (but we will come back to this later). The history of fashion is generally understood to date from 1858 when the English-born Charles Frederick Worth opened the first authentic haute couture house in Paris. Before Fashion, there was Costume. After Fashion, only time will tell. And the cycle of the seven generations for the fashion industry will not be complete until 2061. But will it survive until then or will it be replaced by another entity? We know today that the economic bubble encompassing the fashion system keeps growing and there is a good chance that this one will explode soon. Fashion is a product of Modernity, but can we already talk about a stillborn baby?

3. Alexandra Pizzuto, “La mode est-elle vraiment la deuxième industrie la plus polluante du monde ?”, *Marie Claire*, January 23, 2021, <https://www.marieclaire.fr/mode-pollution.1369341.asp> (accessed March 12, 2022). Whether it is the 2nd or 8th most polluting industry in the world, fashion is nonetheless extremely dangerous for the planet and those who live on it, explains the fashion journalist.

4. Achim Berg, Anna Granskog, Libbi Lee, and Karl-Hendrik Magnus, “Fashion on climate,” *McKinsey* (report), August 26, 2020, <https://www.mckinsey.com/industries/retail/our-insights/fashion-on-climate> (accessed March 12, 2022).

5. According to the 2015 documentary *The True Cost*, today one out of six people on Earth work in the global fashion industry, which makes it the most labor-dependent industry out there. Dana Thomas' book *Fashionopolis* (New York: Penguin Press, 2019) concurs in saying the same thing.

6. Namely Bernard Arnault (2nd richest man in the world, chairman of LVMH), Amancio Ortega (17th position, chairman of INDITEX), Phil Knight (25th position, former chairman of Nike), François Pinault (28th position, chairman of Kering) and many others. Live data from Thursday 17 February at 22:50 on: <https://www.forbes.com/real-time-billionaires/#6bb2a4e43d78>.

7. Giulia Mensitieri, « *Le plus beau métier du monde* » (Paris: La Découverte, 2018), 270. The anthropologist Giulia Mensitieri mentions several times in her book that fashion is often the laboratory of contemporary neo-liberalism and uses the lexical field of the tool to evoke it. She draws, for example, the metaphor of the “spearheads [of the capitalist economy]” to describe the fashion industry alongside the other cultural and creative industries.

In any case, Fashion in its modern expression must stop one way or another. Because Modernity comes with slavery. And the POC climate activist Karishma is not afraid to use this latter strong word to address her message to fast fashion influencers in an open letter posted on Instagram: “Fashion is a form of art, and I can respect that. However, when a form of art also becomes a form of slavery – we need to reassess.”⁸ I repeat after Karishma, we need to reassess. I don’t want to cancel Fashion at all costs. I want to tell stories, share, have joy through it, in it. I want to participate, celebrate, support, love. But all forms of domination and violence – extraction, exploitation – must stop. So yes, Fashion in its modern expression must stop. And if Fashion and Modernity are inseparable, then Fashion must end.

But Fashion is still there, and we have to deal with it. Livia Firth, the Creative Director of Eco-Age and a fervent long-term campaigner for sustainable fashion, reaffirms the potential of Fashion as a tool by stating: “We dress every day so fashion is an incredible political tool that we can use as activists.”⁹ Of course, we can, but this is not enough. With all due respect to Livia Firth and although I realise, like her, that everything is political and so is fashion, this is not enough. My opinion may seem unpopular because too radical, but we are in a war against the Living (human and non-human beings) right now. And to end this war, we must prevent the enemy from waging it. In the face of this, the only morally tenable position is to oppose the system. As the American writer Lierre Keith says: “The task of an activist is not to negotiate systems of power with as much personal integrity as possible – it’s to dismantle those systems.”¹⁰

Nevertheless, Livia Firth was undoubtedly right about one thing in her statement: you can’t avoid Fashion. We have to dress up. So, we have to navigate *through* it. “Clothing necessarily has [this] intrinsic political function, which is whether we conform or, on the contrary, we differentiate,” highlights Elodie Nowinski, Dean of Faculty of Creative Industries of Glasgow College.¹¹ Fashion is therefore both the tool and the house. We can reject the tool, but we must situate ourselves in the house.

Situatedness

To be able to situate ourselves, we need to know who we are, where we come from. For my part, my background is in fashion design. But I don’t like to describe myself as a fashion designer. I prefer to say that I am a designer of human interactions. There are enough clothes on Earth (but we can talk about that later), so I am more inclined to create social links.

“Là, ça fait 20 ans que ça fait 10 ans qu’on sait qu’il est urgent d’agir, et on continue avec les mêmes discours.”

– Clément Viktorovitch

I am also a designer in the sense that I am a manipulator. The first designers were magicians, fairground entertainers, people – like you and me – who had to reinvent the wheel overnight, use their imagination to innovate and deceive, to entertain and distract this new urban class of working people who came to the city looking for work with the industrial revolution of the late 19th century.

So, I manipulate the people I meet by making them believe that I did a Bach-

8. Karishma Porwal (@_makeearthgreatagain), “Trigger warning [...] Hello friends,” Instagram post, February 14, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZ8Cq7aOk6Z/>.

9. La Caserne (@lacaserneparis), “« We dress every day [...] »,” Instagram post, January 10, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CyixltXgXIU/>.

10. Aric McBay, Lierre Keith, and Derrick Jensen, *Deep Green Resistance: Strategy to Save the Planet* (New York: Seven Stories Press, 2011).

11. Caroline Hamelle, “Quand le vêtement devient étendard,” *T Magazine* #16, October 23, 2021, 31-33.

elior's degree in fashion design because I simply love fashion or because I want to become the next Yves Saint Laurent, when, in reality, I chose fashion in order to combat the climate crisis. The climate change was announced long before my birth, which is why the question of my life's mission did not arise. All joking aside, I believe that everyone should act for the common good in their field of specialisation. Indeed, all legitimacy confers power, and all power can make a difference. It is therefore best to use it wisely. I myself am using the privilege that comes with my degree to write and address these lines to you, dear readers, about a subject that is close to my heart, in the hope that they eventually will make a difference.

But no matter what the subject is, I have two life principles:

#1 Do not participate in the disaster.

#2 Act for a responsible, resilient and altruistic future.

Finally, I give myself the means to try. And I call on those around me to give themselves the means to do so too. However, I do not lack the motivation to commit myself. On the contrary, I find a lack of willingness from people surrounding me to get involved in my direct environment, that of my school, my city, my country, my field of specialisation. Yet, commitment – in many forms – is worth living. Because to deprive ourselves of it is to protect ourselves from the worst, but it is also to give up the best, to give up the beauty. The beauty of solidarity and love. The beauty of life and its possibilities.

In sum, I delivered who I am to you, but you have not learned much about me. I have only given you one side of me, but I am plural. We all are. Yes, I can work in the most prestigious cultural establishment in Geneva and the next day spend 48 hours in prison. I can advocate (soft) care and the next day call for civil disobedience. I can help institutions to improve themselves and at the same time seek ways to abolish them as much as work, state and money. I simply stay on the move. I am a troublemaker. I call myself a counter-master. And I invite you to be a counter-master with me.

We will need to come together in order to be stronger for the uncertain times ahead. We will need to find the courage to face the threats and consequences of the ongoing and impending crises. We will need to become resilient. And resilience starts with the de-dramatization of the reality. The optimistic entrepreneur and co-founder of the project Time for the Planet, Arthur Auboeuf explains on the basis of his own case: "I confess that I never felt the slightest symptom of depression with the subject of climate change, really. Yes, the issue is serious. But, at worst, we just all die."¹² Still. How to detach yourself from the situation and to take a step back, when you are worried? Because I *am* worried.

Does what we create justify what we destroy?¹³

I am an advocate of economic and material degrowth¹⁴, of decelerated

"Can seams of excess and exclusivity really be rewoven into ones of regeneration and recovery, or is fashion's recent obsession with sustainability only skin-deep?"

– Atmos #ReFashion

12. Louise Aubery, host, "Arthur Auboeuf, Co-fondateur Time for the Planet - C'est l'heure de sauver l'humanité," *InPower* (podcast), July 6, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k1as0MqT3fw> (accessed April 14, 2022).

13. This question would have been once asked by the Australian design theorist and philosopher Tony Fry. However, the source is unknown, at least untraceable.

14. While there are many definitions of degrowth, according to the Research and Degrowth association, "sustainable degrowth is a downscaling of production and consumption that increases human well-being and enhances ecological conditions and equity on the planet." Research and Degrowth (R&D), "Definition," *Degrowth.org*, July 19, 2011, <http://www.degrowth.org/definition-2> (accessed April 14, 2022). Moreover, although degrowth has been around since the 1970s, the concept is struggling to convince the general public. However, in the second part of the sixth IPCC report (February 2022), it has been men-

production patterns and lifestyles. I talk about *slowing down together* and *doing less, but better*. I even argue that doing nothing *may* be the best thing to do today. That it *may* be the solution to the crises we are going through, which are the direct consequences of a society that is going wrong. A society governed by the actions of an extractivist system, which does not care about the social problems of violence it generates. I really feel it is time to stop. To take a break. To have an overview. But do we have time? Do we have time to take a break? Because the clock is ticking. Do we have time not to take actions? We don't.

I live with this conflict in me. A time-conflict. An incessant struggle. Between the Now and the Far-far away. Between the infinitely close and the infinitely distant. While the media confronts the end of the month with the end of the world, I struggle with the end of this sentence coupled with the end of the snow on our mountain peaks. The end of clean water in the drylands. The end of biodiversity. The end of joy, laughter, hope. Simply, the end.

So, I can't stop asking myself, do the means justify the end? Does what we create justify what we destroy? Even if it is in the name of fashion, art or whatever beauty? Even if it is emancipatory? Do we need to create more? More clothes, for instance? I say this, because often we think that we are doing the right thing, but probably not, and – I will repeat myself – the best thing to do in most situations is to do nothing.

Today, we already have produced enough clothes, not to say too much. For us, and for others. We even have enough clothes to dress all the next generations, after us, until 2100.¹⁵ The story of Dobby the house-elf from the fantasy saga that marked the beginning of our century is, then, no longer relevant for the ongoing century. Indeed, Dobby becomes a free elf, once he gets a garment as a gift.¹⁶ But who still needs to receive clothes in order to feel free? In other words, who still needs to experience liberation through clothing donation? (Does this not, on the contrary, subjugate the people?) Here, I will permit myself to speak out for others – no one. At least, not the Global South, as the Global North commonly tends to think. Africa (alongside Latin America, Southeast Asia, etc.) is crumbling under the clothes that come to it, with “the best of intentions”, from our Western world. In Ghana, a term has even been coined for these arrivals – “obroni wawu”, which means

tioned twenty seven times: Jason Hickel (@jasonhickel), “The new IPCC report makes [...]” Twitter post, February 28, 2022, <https://twitter.com/jasonhickel/status/1498332286688935949?lang=en-GB>. And it goes without saying that, in the third part of the same edition (April 2022), for the first time, “colonialism” has made it into an IPCC report: Yessenia Funes, “Yes, Colonialism Caused Climate Change, IPCC Reports,” *Atmos*, April 4, 2022, <https://atmos.earth/ipcc-report-colonialism-climate-change/> (accessed April 14, 2022).

15. If we rely on a different studies published after 2015 which state that global clothing production almost doubled between 2000 and 2015, producing for the only year 2010 150 billion garments, i.e. enough to provide, that year, 20 new garments for every person on the planet, but also that the amount of global clothing production is increasing exponentially (around 200 billion garments per year by 2020 or 25 new items per person), we could do the math and extrapolate without fear the research by saying we have enough – *we are good by now* – we can stop the production of clothing and start using, reusing, repairing what we already have without throwing it away anymore (in this way, we should be able to last until 2100, at least). See for example: Ellen MacArthur Foundation, *A new textiles economy: Redesigning fashion's future* (Coves: EMA Foundation, 2017). In addition, the first global lockdown of the COVID-19 pandemic has been a good example of how we can do without new clothing purchases and compose our outfits for 3 months with the only clothes already present in our wardrobes.

16. Joanne K. Rowling, *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* (London: Bloomsbury, 1998).

literally “clothes of dead white men”.¹⁷ Unfairly, African countries become garment cemeteries of privileged people, that not only cause an economic, social and environmental crisis, but that redraw the very borders of natural territories and reshape landscapes.¹⁸ So, since clothing has an impact on the geological structures of our planet, can we speak of a new geological era within the Anthropocene¹⁹ (that would go beyond Andreas Malm’s concept of the Capitalocene²⁰)? Can we imagine talking about a *Fashionocene*? I would like to follow up on this thought by rephrasing the end of a famous Native American saying: “when the last tree has been cut down, the last river has been poisoned, the last fish has been caught, only then we will realise that we cannot eat clothes.”²¹

To go further, if post-apocalyptic fiction narratives such as *Snowpiercer* (Bong Joon-ho, 2013) are to be believed, there will be no shortage of clothes in the future. Clothing is not what will be missing, in every sense of the word. Other resources will. On the one hand, the ones that can satisfy our basic needs. Because, as stated before, everyone will undoubtedly have something to wear (but we will need to feed ourselves). On the other hand, will be lacking perishable goods, such as cigarettes, coffee or chocolate. We will be nostalgic for what is (or was) ephemeral. So no, in a collapsed world, clothes are not what we will think of producing and consuming (if the term “consuming” will still be applicable) as a priority. We will use what we already have. And that will be ok.

But to return to the present, why not try to live with what we already have today? Why not simply *try* today? We are here to reinvent everything, right? To start from scratch? To build the society of the future? So, how do you want it to be? Responsible and resilient? That is what I want, for my part. That is what I hope it will look like.

I hope the future will be common. And I hope that time will not come too late. I hope we will unite soon and not fear each other anymore. I hope that we will all find the courage to answer honestly the question “Does what we create justify what we destroy?”. I hope that we will all agree with Broey Deschanel’s statement that claims that “the road to revolution will not be paved with

17. ABC News In-depth, “The Environmental Disaster that is Fuelled by Used Clothes and Fast Fashion | Foreign Correspondent,” *YouTube*, August 12, 2021, documentary, 30:02, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bB3kuuBPVys>.

18. To convince of this, see photos of landfills (real mountains of discarded clothing) on Accra’s beaches or in Chile’s Atacama desert.

19. The Anthropocene is a geological era, where human activity on the planet turned out to be a world-shaping force, and in which, for the first time, human species managed to modify not only its proper conditions of existence, but also the ecosystems it lives in, thus becoming its own threat that can lead to its own extinction. Scientists who defend this division in time place the Anthropocene era between 1800 and the present. See, for example: Paul J. Crutzen, and Will Steffen, “How Long Have We Been in the Anthropocene Era?” *Climatic Change* 61, no. 3 (2003): 251–257.

20. Andreas Malm, “The Anthropocene Myth,” *The Jacobin*, March 30, 2015, <https://www.jacobinmag.com/2015/03/anthropocene-capitalism-climate-change/> (accessed April 18, 2022). The Swedish author and lecturer in human ecology at the University of Lund, Andreas Malm, even suggests that our era should be called the Capitalocene rather than the Anthropocene. Basing his reasoning on the internal dynamics of capitalism rather than on those of a “bad” Anthropos, i.e. on humans as the culprit for all the planet’s ills, he explains that blaming the whole humanity for climate change lets capitalism escape its own trial.

21. Quotereseach, “When the Last Tree Is Cut Down, the Last Fish Eaten, and the Last Stream Poisoned, You Will Realize That You Cannot Eat Money,” *Quote Investigator*, October 20, 2011, <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2011/10/20/last-tree-cut/> (accessed April 18, 2022).

SHEIN clothes”.²² I hope that we will all understand that the road to revolution will be paved with human concerns for their surroundings. Let’s move, then, *from now on*, from degrowth to human-centred sustainability (living-being-centred sustainability is even better), still taking degrowth with us. Let’s reimagine our society around (living) connections instead of stuff.²³ Let’s move from freedom to liberation. From the *passive*²⁴ freedom to the *active* liberation. Let’s struggle. And let’s converge our many struggles in one. Let’s make our common fight intersectional. And let’s use accountability as our hobbyhorse. As a matter of fact, without accountability, the call for social and climate justice is empty. But what this call will be even emptier without is the *planet*. The American political activist, philosopher and author Angela Davis makes it clear: “there can be no liberation if there is no planet left for us to enjoy that liberation. So, I always say that climate justice is always ground zero of social justice.”²⁵

I hope the future will *be*.

Great problem, greater means

I think we do not realise how great is the problem. And how this great problem can be interwoven into another great problem (or several ones). Especially here, in Switzerland. How to talk about sustainable fashion, and raise awareness about fashion’s harmful effects on the living world, in a country that has actually *no fashion*? Indeed, Switzerland has no real, strictly speaking, fashion industry. Historically, it had an important industrial basin for textile (in the areas of Zurich and St. Gallen), which today is no more than a semblance of industry, given that, although textile innovation research keeps going on Swiss territory, most of the production is carried out abroad. Moreover, Switzerland does not officially have a fashion capital²⁶, which is a non-negligible mirror image of the presence (or the absence) of a fashion scene. In the past, Geneva was close to being called the Swiss fashion capital.²⁷ But times are fast changing, energies are uncontrollably dissipating,

“A problem is only a problem if you see it that way. It could be something completely different. It is a different pathway, a different root. It is another way of thinking. It is never a straight line. There are a beginning and an end, and there is a whole bunch of stuff in the middle. There are doorways, windows, and you spend your time bumping into each other. And you can’t never ever know where the answer will come from.”

– Pat Fitzsimmons, Arc’teryx Advanced R&D

22. Broey Deschanel, “Why No One Wins the Fast Fashion Debate,” *YouTube*, December 20, 2021, critical informative video, 34:53, <https://youtu.be/XT6Hwx20m5M>. SHEIN is a Chinese online fashion retailer, the leading clothing brand of the ultra-fast fashion (the new production pace faster than fast fashion), and certainly the worst ecological and human disaster in fashion history. To find out more, see: Timo Kollbrunner, “Toiling away for Shein: Looking behind the shiny façade of the Chinese ‘ultra-fast fashion’ giant,” *Public Eye*, November 2021, <https://stories.publiceye.ch/en/shein/index.html> (accessed April 18, 2022).

23. I am referring here to the 2019 Biennale Internationale Design Saint-Étienne, the theme of which was “Systems, not Stuff”. The exhibition tried to respond, with its proposals, to major questions of our contemporary society, while navigating systems of aesthetics, function, manufacturing and distribution. To learn more, see: <https://biennale-design.com/saint-etienne/2019/fr/programmation/?event=systems-not-stuff-13>.

24. In our world that places human freedoms (of movement, of thought, of religion, etc.) at risk, we should not take our fundamental rights for granted. On the contrary, maintaining those we have and fighting for those we don’t should be a lifetime struggle.

25. FIFDH Genève, “Angela Davis on racism • Closing remarks by Barbara Hendricks • FIFDH 2021,” *YouTube*, March 11, 2021, lecture video, 38:23 to 38:38, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CN1NkOOHlBo&t=1953s>.

26. Though, Zurich claims for this title for a decade now, that is, since the spring 2012 launch of *Mode Suisse*, a Swiss edition of the world-famous Fashion Week. To find out more, see: <https://www.modesuisse.com/start.html>.

27. Indeed, ideally located between Paris and Milan, Geneva became in the second half of the 20th century a crossing point for fashion. At that time, was developing the Bongénie store, which contributed a lot to the rise of the city

and the flourishing past of fashion in Geneva, and all across the country, is factually fading from the collective memory.

Today, while Swiss long-established historical brands that produce big quantities of clothing are struggling to get the necessary funding to ensure their sales agreements to continue to produce within borders,²⁸ Swiss young brands that produce small quantities of clothing are struggling to get the necessary recognition from the State to ensure their integration into the local environment to continue to exist. This is not rocket science. Moral and financial supports are the two not-so-magical ingredients to keep and sustain people and their businesses. They are the two key components that can make a real difference. That can help Swiss fashion brands not to give up, not to relocate, by default and as a last resort, their production abroad or, in the worst case, not to go out of business. And it is actually not an impossible match, since the Swiss army benefits from both. Though, the institution chooses to produce all its uniforms everywhere except in Switzerland. This begs the question: why? The production is spread over several Eastern European countries and far beyond Europe. Yet, there is no relevant reason for Armasuisse (the body in charge of the Swiss army) to purchase from the cheapest foreign suppliers, rather than to provide jobs to local producers at a fair price.²⁹ Because the faith in the public institution is there,³⁰ and the money is not missing. Indeed, the Swiss army is funded by

in terms of the place that clothing and creation could take in the hearts of its inhabitants and in the eyes of travellers. In the 1950s, the store started to organise fashion shows, photo shootings, and even to offer designer pieces made on site by in-house tailors with the agreement of the fashion houses. Bongénie was, in fact, much inspired by American specialty stores, and wanted, thus, to think big. However, approaching the 21st century, its situation suddenly changed with the emergence of large groups such as Kering, LVMH or Richemont, that have impacted it negatively by changing sales rules within the system (i.e. sales of clothing, but also of dreams, of desire, of prestige, and therefore of symbolic capital): Joan Plancade, “Bongénie : le pari de l’expérience,” *Paris Match Suisse*, December 13, 2018, <https://paris-match.ch/bongenie-le-pari-de-l'experience/> (accessed April 20, 2022).

28. Serge Enderlin, “L’industrie textile suisse doit s’adapter pour continuer à exister,” *RTS*, February 27, 2017, <https://www.rts.ch/info/economie/8420826-l-industrie-textile-suisse-doit-sadapter-pour-continuer-a-exister.html> (accessed April 20, 2022). As explained in the report, most Swiss companies are forced to relocate their production abroad, due, among other reasons, to the difficulties imposed by globalization and the strong franc (“franc fort” in French). The strong franc is a characteristic given to the Swiss franc. The strength of the Swiss franc comes from the strong competitiveness of the Swiss economy and the macroeconomic and political stability of the country. Perceived as a safe currency, the franc is highly sought-after, particularly in times of crisis. However, the *franc fort* is a significant burden for the entire Swiss economy. Local companies must reduce their costs if they want to remain competitive on the international scene and continue to export their products. The policy can help them by continuously improving the framework conditions. Only in this way can Swiss competitiveness be preserved.
29. Pascal Schmuck, “Et si les uniformes étaient fabriqués en Suisse?” *Tribune de Genève* [online], February 24, 2017, <https://www.tdg.ch/suisse/uniformes-fabriques-suisse/story/13562052> (accessed April 22, 2022). As mentioned in the article, the Swiss army uniforms “have become very international in recent years, with boots made in Romania, t-shirts made in Thailand and underwear made in India.” These production patterns apply to all uniforms, except to the hundred made-to-measure outfits (including those of the military orchestra staff) ordered annually and produced by the Swiss family-owned company Schuler Manufaktur 6418 in the canton of Schwyz: Ron Bertolla, “Confec-tion d’uniformes : parfois, le sur mesure est un must,” *Armasuisse*, March 18, 2021, <https://www.ar.admin.ch/fr/armasuisse-wissenschaft-und-technologie-w-t/home.detail.news.html/ar-internet/news-2021/mitteilungen-allgemein/herstellung-von-massuniformen.html> (accessed April 22, 2022).
30. Armasuisse, “Étude « Sicherheit 2021 » : attitude positive à l’égard de l’Armée suisse,” *Armasuisse*, June 21, 2021, <https://www.vbs.admin.ch/>

the Confederation, and thus, as frustrating as it may be, by taxpayers' money. What is missing is the will.

My postulate is, therefore, the following: Switzerland *will not* have a proper fashion industry as long as the Swiss army does not relocate the production of its uniforms within the country.³¹ As a matter of fact, if public entities cannot challenge the Swiss competitive market, how could private entities do so? If the former will not open the gate for the latter, who will?

I think we do not realise how great is the problem. To zoom out of fashion, capitalism is not just a few (Swiss) banks or a bunch of bad guys at the top (of Glencore³² or Holcim³³, for instance), as it would have us believe. No, capitalism is relations of domination that we have integrated, that we feel like they are natural, because they are so deeply rooted in us now.

But I think we do not realise either how greater are our means to defy those relations. I had plenty of opportunities and a million reasons to leave (the fashion system itself, but also simply Switzerland to follow a ready-made well-beaten path of a fashion designer in a fashion capital), but I am still here. I am still here, because I care. Because I believe in the power of *us*. And this belief is my driving force. For the rest, I align myself with the doubts, reflections and conclusions of Rachel Wang, who, in my opinion, found the right words for describing the ambivalent positioning we can have within a conflicting love-hate relationship with the system in which we evolve. The New York based stylist and creative consultant had at one point a conversa-

[fr/ddps/faits-chiffres/opinion-armee.html](https://www.ddps.ch/fr/faits-chiffres/opinion-armee.html) (accessed April 22, 2022).

31. The rectification of this situation is, however, in progress. Indeed, the Swiss army announced in 2018 the initiation of a procedure for the acquisition of the modular clothing and equipment system ("Système modulaire d'habillement et d'équipement [SMHE]" in French) for its entire staff, which consists of the conceptualization and creation of brand-new uniforms. The good news is that these latter will be partially Swiss-made. The service providers for the production of military textiles (such as the camouflage fabric) have already been confirmed and are mostly based in Switzerland (and producing in Switzerland). Yet, the clothing manufacturing is still waiting to find takers, in Switzerland or abroad: ATS, "Qui fabriquera les nouveaux uniformes de l'armée?" *Blick*, October 26, 2021, <https://www.blick.ch/fr/news/en-partie-swiss-made-par-qui-sera-fabrique-les-nouvelles-tenues-de-combats-de-l-armee-id16936411.html> (accessed April 22, 2022). One interesting aspect of the whole procedure is that it went unnoticed until the topic of the cut of the uniforms was addressed in 2021 – what leads to conclude that the material sourcing and the production sites speak less to the general public than clothing shapes. After having completed the SMHE test phase, conducted on 350 military staff (men and women), Armasuisse announced that the introduction of the new uniforms will be possible from 2022. Servicewomen will finally have suitable (for them) clothing, right down to the underwear (which were, until then, the same for women as for men, and, as you might expect, initially designed for men): Kalina Anguelova, "L'armée taillera des uniformes pour les soldates," *Femina*, March 29, 2021, <https://www.femina.ch/societe/actu-societe/larmee-taillera-des-uniformes-pour-les-soldates> (accessed April 22, 2022).
32. Glencore is a multinational commodity trading and mining company with headquarters in Baar, Switzerland. Glencore is subject to numerous indictments and convictions for tax optimisation practices, exploitation of children, and poisoning of populations. To find out more, see for example: Andreas Missbach, "Mopani : le numéro d'équilibrisme de Glencore," *Public Eye*, January 22, 2021, <https://www.publiceye.ch/fr/regard/mopani-le-numero-dequilibrisme-de-glencore> (accessed April 24, 2022).
33. Holcim is a multinational cement manufacturer with headquarters in Zurich, Switzerland. Holcim is subject to numerous indictments and convictions for destruction of biodiversity, exploitation of children, and poisoning of populations. To find out more, see for example: Milorad Ivanović, "Comment Holcim pollue l'air en Serbie en toute impunité," *Public Eye*, June 30, 2021, <https://www.publiceye.ch/fr/a-propos-de-public-eye/prix-dinvestigation/comment-holcim-pollue-lair-en-serbie-en-toute-impunite> (accessed April 24, 2022).

tion with herself: “Am I leaving the fashion industry because it’s an exploitive industry and hurts the environment? And, if everyone with a conscience leaves the fashion industry, then what is left? So, I [feel] responsibility in a way to stay. Maybe I [can] use all of the network and resources that I’d accumulated in the industry and try to use that for good.”³⁴ I feel responsibility too. So, I should, at least, try. *We* should try.

It is true that I said earlier that, in order to try, we have to find the means first. But sometimes, the means are already in us. “Humans do two things that make us unique from any other animals,” declares the mythbuster Adam Savage in his *10 Commandments of Making*, “we use tools, and we tell stories.”³⁵ So, knowing this, we already have everything to succeed in defying the relations of domination, in overcoming the great problem. However, for this purpose, we will need to go not only beyond our egos (to be able to share our tools), but also beyond “grand” narratives (to be able to listen to all stories). Global narratives are never global, to be fair. They are rarely totally representative and inclusive. They have a specific point of view, and a certain context. We must then be very cautious about repeating stories that we have heard. Indeed, there are lots of different versions of the same story. Yet, according to the American lesbian writer Dorothy Allison, the ones that matter are the ones that serve *us*.³⁶ In this way, let’s combine the two, let’s make stories our tools, tools our stories, and let’s keep only those that will serve us.

In conclusion, as the self-managed environmental, libertarian, feminist and anti-racist podcast *Floraisons* announces at the beginning of each episode, “if resisting the dominant culture is the last chance to save us, then we need a culture of resistance”.³⁷ Accordingly, *Floraisons* has set itself the task of cultivating this kind of culture through its format, with us, and in a non-dogmatic way. In line with the podcast’s mission, I share, in my turn, with you a modest and non-exhaustive list of (counter-)tools to resist the dominant thinking of the fashion system. Take what you have to take. And may the stories narrated in this thesis connect us.

34. Landon Peoples, “Rachael Wang On Why “Sustainable Stylists” Can’t Exist,” *Atmos*, January 12, 2021. <https://atmos.earth/rachael-wang-sustainability-stylist-interview/> (accessed March 12, 2022).

35. Adam Savage, “My 10 Commandments for Makers,” *Tested*, May 20, 2014, <https://www.tested.com/making/461282-my-10-commandments-makers/> (accessed April 14, 2022). The entire commandment (which the short sentence comes from) of the manifesto is formulated as follows: “1. Make something. Anything. Weld, carve, cook, sculpt, sew. Make something in the world that wasn’t there before. As humans, there are two things that make us truly unique: the ability to use tools and the need to tell stories. Making things is both. Everything made has a story embedded in it. When you make something, it becomes part of your story. Humans are natural storytellers, and when you make new things, you join in the most ancient and important story of all.”

36. Dorothy Allison, *Deux ou trois choses dont je suis sûre*, translated by Noémie Grunenwald (Paris: Cambourakis, 2020 [1995]), 70.

37. See, for example: Stagiaires, hosts, “Pour une écologie radicale,” *Floraisons*, March 19, 2020, <https://floraisons.blog/pour-une-ecologie-radicale/> (accessed March 12, 2022).

BE. bin.

To be

To be. Or rather, to become. In my Bachelor's thesis³⁸, I talked a lot about how we, actors in our fields of specialization, should all strive to be a positive example on our own scale. However, there was one exception to this statement, and I was part of it. Indeed, I was considering that we, students, are immune until our graduation. Even though I argued that we should still be careful, responsible and accountable in our school projects, I dreamed of – and shared my dreams with my fellows about – the seeds of change that could be planted in the great game of Fashion outside the schoolyard. I was pretty sure that we have no power in our studies, no say in the industry, no weight in the balance of the system. I was convinced that we were outside the realm time and not yet in the promised space, that we were somewhere else, in another space-time which would be close to a gestation period in any incubator. I believed in that so deeply and praised with faith the post-diploma field of possibilities. And I was actually supported by my school in this approach. For the institution, showing our best after our studies (whatever the nature of our personal performance) is enough. In other words, being responsive *after* is enough, although the school also encourages – in its words – the proactivity of its students *during* the study period. But how far is sowing seeds of change *before* the planting season accepted? How far is initiative-taking allowed? As experienced myself, questioning the school is still permitted, challenging it becomes risky. In reality, the institution pushes only very slightly, or not at all, its students to be positive examples on their own scale along the way. It keeps them busy, precisely because it has the will of not seeing them taking any action that could disturb the established status quo. "This is an old primary tool of all oppressors to keep the oppressed occupied with the master's³⁹ concerns. [...] That is a diversion of energies and a tragic repetition of racist patriarchal thought," explains Audre Lorde, with whom we will get to know more later.⁴⁰

I am nearing the end of my Master's degree at HEAD, and it took me five years with my Bachelor's degree (six, counting the gap year in between) to understand this. To understand I was wrong. To understand I did not do enough, I was not enough. Not enough vigilant. Should we not all be extremely vigilant about everything in the present time? Should we not all actually follow, in our respective lives and in all circumstances, the Vestoj's⁴¹ manifesto? In particular, the following two commandments:

"6. Everything shall be questioned—nothing is holy. We must challenge the status quo. We must always ask why.

7. We must always remain independent in thought and action. We must actively encourage critical thought and never be satisfied until we have examined every theme intrepidly. We will keenly promote criticism and draw attention to the paradoxes within the fashion world."⁴²

Some people in my school, though, were vigilant enough long before my realization, as for example the former CCC student and researcher Vinit Agarwal. The latter did not adhere to the dominant thinking. He did not

38. Mikhail Rojkov, *La crise de la liberté : Comment le problème écologique impacte-t-il le système mode ?* (Geneva: Haute école d'art et de design de Genève, 2019).

39. Audre Lorde introduces the oppressor as the master. The master possesses his master's tools and his master's house.

40. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Crossing Press, 1984).

41. Vestoj is an online (and print) platform for critical thinking on fashion, as it self-defines.

42. Vestoj, "Manifesto," Vestoj, unknown publication date, <http://vestoj.com/manifesto/> (accessed April 10, 2022).

accept the single truth. Instead, he has turned HEAD's history upside down, and so the institutional violence against itself, by judiciously connecting the dots.⁴³ Yet, and despite my profound respect for the great integrity of people like Agarwal, I wonder today if it is enough. If criticism is enough. I mean, I can't stop thinking that there's, in reality, no consideration of any cause whatsoever at all (no "*I feel concerned by...*"). But that there are only *proofs* of consideration ("*I am involved in...*"). That there are only *actions*. Relying on what the academic and practicing artist Denise da Silva has often said, "we cannot stay in the work of critique, but we must go *through* critique to get to the work." Through critique means through the dirty work that follows it. And only through this process, "we might find some [tools] useful for a third world," in the words of la paperson.⁴⁴ Indeed, criticize the institution is fair enough, but what do we propose afterwards? Because we *have* to propose something. We cannot leave the change to the goodwill of the institution. We have to try out at the risk of failing. We have to prepare the ground for a school, in our case, of the future, by building bridges between people for a progressive soil change. Today, everyone is isolated, on their own tracks. Most of us forgot that we are composed of others, since we are born among people and have to live together. In fact, we are, each of us, a third world university at our own. Because we plant seeds in other people's mind. Sometimes without even meaning to. To exist is already to influence, it is already to have an impact on others. So, I would even say, we *are* the seeds. Let's therefore be *loyal* seeds, that is, which stick to doing good around them. And, from time to time, let's be disruptive seeds, whether in foreign or familiar soil.

Because we *have* to disturb. Indeed, "sometimes, we have to resolve to [...] break the mood, to spoil the party", in the words of Olivier Marboeuf (with whom we also will get to know more later).⁴⁵ Sometimes, in order to see the change happen, we have to make the effort ourselves by creating a new, although less comfortable, reception situation. We decidedly have to practice the confusion, because the reward is greater.⁴⁶ So, let's not be afraid to wreak (emancipatory) havoc, to "take the [other] out of their usual routine, shake them out of their torpor, strike them. And perhaps even [let's consider to] put them [also] in an uncomfortable situation. Not for the purpose of humiliation. It would not be a degrading provocation, but an awakening. [Let's resolve] to hit the other, to extract their sensitivity so that they looks up. [It would be] a fertile provocation."⁴⁷

43. Vinit Agarwal, "Architecture of Continuous Enslavement," *Tongues* [online], August 5, 2020, <http://www.tongues.xyz/2020/08/05/architecture-of-continuous-enslavement/> (accessed September 28, 2020).

44. la paperson, "A Third University Exists within the First," in *A Third University is possible* (Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press, 2017). The concept of three-world universities (with a proposal for a *fourth world university*, autonomous from the university and so sovereign) is discussed and developed by the professor and scholar in Indigenous organizing and critical pedagogy K. Wayne Yang (under the avatar la paperson) in his book *A Third University is possible*. He states "the first world university accumulates through dispossession. The second world university "liberates" through liberalism." While, "in contrast, the third world university defines itself fundamentally as a decolonial project." However, these concepts are not to be considered as separate spaces. Yang explains that they exist by superposition. Thus, the third university "already exists [...] within the first and second universities".

45. Olivier Marboeuf, "La leçon de Genève / The Geneva Lesson (fr/eng)," *Toujours Debout*, March 27, 2021, <https://olivier-marboeuf.com/2021/03/27/la-lecon-de-geneve-the-geneva-lesson-fr-eng/> (accessed March 12, 2022).

46. Lecture [zoom], Olivier Marboeuf, CCC RP: Curatorial Politics seminar, HEAD-Genève, March 30, 2021.

47. Anne-Claire Villefourceix-Gimenez, "Pour un design de provocation," *Zephyr – Designer Demain* (blog), 2016, <https://zephyrs.fr/?p=769> (accessed March 24, 2022).

But very often, it is still not enough. Of course, making “case-by-case” provocations or simply doing loyal efforts individually⁴⁸ is already a lot. But we should not limit ourselves to these actions. We should unite. “The only way we can truly stop climate change [and initiate a positive change] is to act less as individuals and more as a collective voice to force emissions heavy industries [such as the fashion industry] to move past the age of carbon and urge [people in power] to represent our voices.”⁴⁹ We need a structural change at all levels, starting with our schools. So, let’s meet, and have a conversation. Let’s agree on common demands, and join our voices. Let’s muster the courage, and question. But most importantly, let’s remember that not knowing *who* to ask is an evasion of responsibility.⁵⁰ Let’s not do that. Let’s ask simple questions to people in charge of concrete tasks. For instance, nothing could be easier than to interrogate the technical assistant from HEAD’s Fashion design department about game-changing details.

What about the threads? Since all the threads ordered for HEAD’s sewing machines are made of polyester, it would be worth considering replacing them with recycled polyester threads.

What about the cotton fabrics? Since cotton canvas and cotton twill are the fabrics most used in the production of prototype garments in the school, it would be responsible to demand full traceability from the suppliers (i.e. from the cultivation of the cotton in the fields). HEAD must demand transparency from its partners and provide transparency to its community. “80% of Chinese cotton, or 17% of the world’s cotton, comes from this region [Xinjiang]: from luxury to sportswear to fast fashion, all the textile industry’s production chains are potentially affected.”⁵¹ Thus, as fashion producers, we have a 1 in 6 chance of using cotton canvas for our prototypes from Uyghur forced labour. And this is without counting all the Uyghur workers deported and sentenced to forced labour, especially in the textile sector, in other parts of China⁵².

What about the washing machine? Since HEAD provides a washing machine in its machine room, it would be appropriate to equip it with a filter to capture the plastic micro-particles (and other environmentally harmful products) that are released from the materials treated in the washing process.⁵³ Undoubtedly, the school serves as a role model (towards the art and design, allegedly, of tomorrow) for its student body. It would therefore be better for the school to set an example and show consideration for contemporary issues to all those who use the material provided or do not use it, but share the space with it.

There would be much more to discuss, but this is not the place. The elements of change need to be discussed with the right people, the concerned

48. In the case of fashion studies, we can, for example, include upcycling, natural dyeing, zero waste pattern in our personal designs. I believed in the potential for change of these practices during my Bachelor’s degree, and was a frequent user of these techniques, an approach which, with the benefit of hindsight, I permit myself to partially question today.

49. Our Changing Climate, “What YOU can do about climate change,” *YouTube*, February 14, 2020, informative video, 11:35, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RSgXcFdHxFl>.

50. Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Crossing Press, 1984).

51. Raphaël Glucksmann, *Lettre à la génération qui va tout changer* (Paris: Allary, 2021), 97.

52. *Chine : le drame ouïghour*, directed by Romain Franklin, and François Reinhardt (ARTE G.E.I.E, Découpages, Yuzu Productions, 2021), 1:05:14 to 1:07:04, VOD.

53. The company Mimby offers such a solution. To find out more, visit: <https://www.mimby.se>.

ones, in real life. And I do not fail to create this exact space for dialogue outside the present thesis. However, what I wanted to conclude with is that I do not feel I am asking for too much. I actually ask for the least: if the school requires its student body to be proactive, it must be proactive too. Both in the framework for studying it sets up and in the teaching. Unfortunately, my school is currently lagging behind in terms of education. Speaking for fashion schools in general, most of them do not teach us, students, the most important tools – the critical tools. Today, we have to look for them ourselves.

This is not ok. However, if we are forced to self-educate, we should not be prevented from doing so. Putting on critical glasses should not be an obstacle course. Not helping your students is one thing, getting in their way is another. I know that “survival is not an academic skill”⁵⁴ and I don’t expect that much from HEAD’s education, but still. Why should I *strive* to get obvious things to be done?

At the beginning of the sixth year of my in-(critical-)depth journey, i.e. my last year of study, I have launched a campaign for a textile waste sorting justice, and more specifically in regards to the case of fabric offcuts in Switzerland, generated in local workshops, factories, and schools, starting with mine. I called it *Textile Recycling Before Fashion Shows*. Me embarking on this adventure was, in fact, a pure act of despair. I could no longer be a bystander. I was witnessing a disaster for too long, and I felt the need to find the way to put the brakes on the machine anyhow. I wanted to do my hummingbird’s part, to bring my drop of water by the fire in order to throw it on it in the hope of putting out the flames a little.⁵⁵ So, I just set myself in motion. I started, as I usually do, by connecting with people and asking questions. My commitment, that I carry out completely independently of my Master’s degree, took various forms since then: mailing, awareness-raising at HEAD and in other schools, performative intervention, open letter, establishing contact with journalists, meeting Swiss fashion actors with influential roles, etc. But above all, my involvement crystallized in the form of a very naive home-made infrastructure. I have installed a system of toothless bins at HEAD for textile “waste”. And since the very beginning of 2022, every Friday, I do a round in each class, I collect all the fabric scraps discarded by students in a week, and I centralise them for their incoming sorting and reusing in-house. This is my kind of Fridays for Future⁵⁶ contribution. I do this work within my means: financial, psychological, logistical. It makes me feel good, and I do not ask for anything in return, except for letting me keep *doing*. However, I encounter from all sides *resistance*: financial, psychological, logistical.⁵⁷

54. Audre Lorde pursues: “It is learning how to stand alone, unpopular and sometimes reviled, and how to make common cause with those others identified as outside the structures in order to define and seek a world in which we can all flourish.” Audre Lorde, “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House,” in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Crossing Press, 1984).

55. I am referring here to *The Story of the Hummingbird*, a tale that originally comes from the Quechan people in Peru, and that is used for decades in many environmental circles as a parable for the environment. See, for example: Pacific Opera Victoria, and Vancouver Opera, “The Story,” *The Flight of the Hummingbird*, unknown publication date, <https://www.hummingbird.vancouveropera.ca/story> (accessed April 18, 2022).

56. School Strike for Climate (Swedish: Skolstrejk för klimatet), also known variously as Fridays for Future (FFF) is an international movement of young people who skip Friday classes to participate in demonstrations to demand action from political leaders to prevent climate change and for the fossil fuel industry to transition to renewable energy. The first School Strike for Climate was launched by the activist Greta Thunberg, on August 20, 2018.

57. Among other things, I find it, for instance, difficult to simply access the corner of that storage room that the Fashion design department has allocated to me for my practice, as this space is constantly locked and no key

So, I wonder: how sick is the system to put a dome on the fire that ravages it and prevent all those, who wish to stop this fire, from approaching it? How sick is the system to let itself burn, and refuse any treatment? How deep is its denial?

Responsibility

Picture me in a lab coat. Then, imagine that I come to you to present a research I have been conducting for some time, and you receive from my hands a sample from the field. Done? Now, do you know what you have in your hands? Keep it tight! If you say “easy! a piece of cloth in a plastic bag”, I will respond to you “hmm no, try again”. What you are holding right now is actually a piece of *responsibility*. “Whose then?”, you would ask. “Maybe yours?” That is actually the question raised by the study. And we will try to find it out now together.

Let’s set the scene. One of our case studies is a boy named Misha. We will stick to Misha for the next two chapters. Misha grew up with the awareness of how dangerous for the planet are overproduction and overconsumption practices and with the consciousness of how important it was to take care of Living and Non-living beings and resources. In 2016, Misha started a degree in fashion design in a university called HEAD in Geneva, Switzerland. From the very beginning, Misha was astonished to witness that textiles at the end of their cycle were not sorted in his school, before we could even discuss about their potential recycling⁵⁸. Misha reported this logistical dysfunction to the school’s management, but faced the institutional immobility to overcome it. You might be tempted to stop me and say “everything is clear, the school is responsible for these losses then”, but listen to what follows, you haven’t even heard a quarter of the whole story. Immediately and in order to, at least, minimise the impact on the environment and people by doing the best he can at *his own* scale, Misha started collecting all the fabric offcuts that were generated during his work process. He brought them home and stored them in his basement. That is where our team of researchers moved to, to get the samples I distributed you earlier. But Misha is not an isolated example. Many fashion design students who feel concerned about the ecological issue are doing the same. They collect. They usually collect until they can’t anymore. Too-much-waste.

And I hear you screaming “a-ha! so it was *Misha’s* responsibility not to produce waste in the first place and, now he did it, he can only blame himself, we discovered the culprit.” Not so fast!

These caring people do not actually want to participate in the catastrophe. For this purpose, people like Misha are looking for *allies*. They usually find some near them, but Misha lives in Switzerland. The situation is quite complicated. Misha does not have allies within his proper school, here he talks about the Fashion design department. Indeed, HEAD with its teaching staff and its student body does not consider itself responsible for the textile waste generated inside, because no infrastructure is set up outside to pick this waste up, in order to deal with it out of the building. The school does not want to collaborate with Misha. So, Misha came to the conclusion that he has to look for allies outside.

can be lent to me to facilitate my labour which is actually totally free.

58. I must specify that moving the problem away (recycling, by a service provider) is not a viable long-term solution. From a circular economy perspective, the ultimate goal is to reuse all resources without exception handled by an institution within the institution itself (upcycling, by yourself). But in sustainable fashion, and in sustainability more generally, we – system changers – very often speak about closing the loop, and very rarely about making this loop smaller. When we actually should.

But I don't hear you, what about government policies? Isn't it all the fault of the state authorities that somehow there is a loophole in textile recycling chain in Switzerland and therefore they would be responsible for Misha's fabric offcuts? What do you think?

Not convinced? Me neither. And that's not really true. I'll make it short for this part. In the Swiss Confederation, there are two designated subcontract private companies. Texaid and Tell-TEX are the only two textile recycling service providers in the country. They share the monopoly, make money and don't care about Misha's altruistic requests, to be honest. So, we could point to *them* as the bad guys. We could say that, by refusing to deal with fabric scraps, they are responsible of wasted resources. But can we really blame them for not tackling the huge task of sorting of small pieces of cloth, when it is like looking for a needle in a haystack while sorting each separate twig of hay by size? As the Director of the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (FOEN), Katrin Schneeberger explained to me, "currently no company in Europe recycles [mixed] textile waste".⁵⁹

But someone *has* to be responsible for this waste in the end?
Who would that be?

Maybe the entire fashion sphere? Yet, it is a vague concept to which it would be complicated to attach responsibility before having detected in it, at least, a form of consciousness and a capacity for discernment. But fashion is a human invention and humans wanted it to be *autonomous*. So, just like Frankenstein's monster, fashion has a year of birth, a certain amount of life history to remember, and a potential *dead-line*.

59. This is not entirely correct. On the *Swiss Textiles* website, we can read: "There are currently two recycling technology categories: mechanical and chemical recycling. In the first category, discarded textiles are processed mechanically. The fibres are extracted without the use of chemicals, and are then spun again, or PET is chopped, and the resulting granules are melted down and spun into threads. Depending on the area of application, certain losses in terms of quality have to be taken into account with mechanical recycling. [...] Chemical recycling is more promising, but is also somewhat more complex: here, the basic components of the materials – for example, cellulose in the case of cotton, and oil-based components of polyester – are extracted from the textiles. This means that the materials have to be in the purest possible form, and thus that prior sorting should therefore be carried out where possible. In the meantime, however, for processing mixed fabrics there are already innovative methods, for example a step-by-step process that extracts the various components of the textiles one at a time. The pulp produced from chemical recycling can be used to spin new fibres. In the case of cotton, these are no longer exact matches of the original fibres, but they meet similar quality requirements and can be used in the same areas of application (e.g. as lyocell for clothing). One of the challenges regarding chemical recycling concerns the need to structure the process so that it meets today's requirements: chemistry offers countless opportunities, but only a small proportion of these are ecologically sound and thus suitable for textile recycling." See: Nina Bachmann, and Mirjam Matti Gähwiler, "What we really mean when we speak of 'textile recycling'," *Swiss Textiles* [online], June 24, 2021, <https://www.swisstextiles.ch/en/issues/textilrecycling-worum-es-wirklich-geht> (accessed March 12, 2022).

In 2019, to the question “What is important to remember in fashion?” asked in an interview, the French fashion historian Olivier Saillard answered without hesitation “the past”. For him, young or long-established designers would do a better job if they were, as in art history, accountable for the past⁶¹. But what past? Or rather, how deep into the past?

203. This is the number of years between seven generations, as the average time between two successive generations is now estimated at 29 years. Thus, according to the Iroquois philosophy – which consists of making decisions for the benefit of the seven generations to come⁶² – we should think today about our descendants who will be living in the year 2225 before acting. As we saw earlier, Fashion (with a capital F) hasn’t even existed for seven generations.

Should we not be responsible of the future?

Well, this is not the point. We are, here reunited, to determine who should take responsibility for the 21st century’s fabric scraps. Can we, for instance, say that Charles Frederick Worth⁶³ is responsible of them? Did he think of us before he switched the fashion machine on, before he opened this Pandora’s box, when he first came up with the idea of having his models walk in salons where customers came to choose? When he reversed the rules by proposing the offer before the demand? When he imposed a top-down system with the creative mind of the genius at the top? Where he set the pace by introducing the seasonality of the collections, opening up the fashion cycle (spring-summer, autumn-winter)?

Or, we can give him the benefit of the doubt and look for another scapegoat. How about Pierre Cardin⁶⁴? What do you think about him? The son of Italian immigrants, he started working for Christian Dior in 1947, before opening his own fashion house in 1950 at the age of 24. From there, “70 years of crazy ideas and innovative clothes”, tells us a report from Franceinfo.⁶⁵ Crazy ideas, this is the word. Anyway. If Charles Frederick Worth opened the Pandora’s box, Pierre Cardin has opened its double bottom. Indeed, Pierre

60. The title of this sub-chapter is a tribute and a direct reference to the methodology used by Lorelei Regamey in their research: Lorelei Regamey, /’ni:.dɛl.wɜ:k/: means of re/member-ing (Geneva: Haute école d’art et de design de Genève, 2021).

61. Sabrina Champenois and Marie Ottavi, “Olivier Saillard : «La mode est devenue un Festival de Cannes organisé à Las Vegas»,” *Libération*, October 28, 2019, https://www.liberation.fr/mode/2019/10/28/olivier-saillard-la-mode-est-devenue-un-festival-de-cannes-organise-a-las-vegas_1760238/ (accessed April 2, 2022).

62. This is what is called the Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee.

63. For a brief and accurate overview of Worth’s work and life, see for example: Jessa Krick, “Charles Frederick Worth (1825–1895) and the House of Worth,” in *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History* (New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2004), https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/wrth/hd_wrth.htm (accessed April 14, 2022).

64. For a brief and accurate overview of Cardin’s work and life, see for example: Jean-Pascal Hesse, press contact, *Pierre Cardin Biography* (Paris: pierrecardin.com, 2021), <https://pierrecardin.com/wp-content/themes/pc/res/pdf/bio-pierre-cardin-EN.pdf> (accessed April 14, 2022).

65. Mélisande Queinnec, “Le couturier français Pierre Cardin est mort à l’âge de 98 ans,” *Franceinfo Culture*, December 29, 2020, https://www.franceinfo.fr/culture/mode/createurs/le-couturier-francais-pierre-cardin-est-mort-a-lage-de-98-ans_3681731.html (accessed April 14, 2022).

Cardin was a precursor in many fields, and, through his initiatives, he has brought fashion closer to what it is today.

He was the first fashion designer to display his logo on his garments. He was the first fashion designer to produce merchandising derived from its brand (lighters, pens). He was the first fashion designer to design everything except fashion and presented, for example, in 1970 a furniture collection. He was the first fashion designer to massively invest in real estate properties (shops, restaurants, houses, castles, hectares of land). But above all, he was the *first* to relocate a part of his production to China, paving the way for the next generations of fashion designers and brands.

At 98 years old, Pierre Cardin left behind him in 2020 an empire, a signature ...and an ecological disaster. But he was just one of many. Indeed, we could easily pick any fashion designer after him ...until now. "*Pas un pour rattraper l'autre*", as we say in French (literally, "[there's] not one to redeem the others"). It is broadly stated today that in our oversupplied linear economy, every new garment is waste until proven otherwise. And this concerns the final product as well as the production process. Thus, any garment can avoid being created if it does not meet a demand. If it cannot be *justified*.

Effective altruism

For me, what is important to remember is also the past. In high studies, for example, I feel I have the duty to cherish the memory of other Master's theses (in French, "*la mémoire des autres mémoires*"), by reading them, quoting them, honouring them and, if possible, adding my contribution to the work already done, adding my stone to the world's edifice, to the monument that is Memory. So, I entered into conversation with the writings of Lorelei Regamey and Sophie Fellay, among others.

For me, to create spaces in my work for their work is not to let the voices of the people featured in their research and their personal voice be silenced. It is to allow them, at best, to get amplified. It is to multiply the chances of the stories not getting lost. Yet, my research is not the destination, but simply a stopover. A port at sea. And I am a smuggler, one of many, making the journey of these stories (and stories about stories) as pleasant as possible. Because I care. Because I believe in the collective body and collective intelligence.

For me, in this respect, contemporary schools, and in particular fashion schools, should function as "funnels", to use the architect Renaud Haerlingen's term.⁶⁶ Indeed, it's no longer time for "everyone for themselves" in our scarcity world.⁶⁷ We should converge our efforts in one point. We should join forces and knowledges. We should *share*. Academic actor should rethink curricula that would serve as models that encourage a culture of mutual support. And school projects should be rethought and oriented towards research in line with the common need. More specifically, topics for diploma dissertations (and even the diploma collections of industrial objects, such as clothing, jewellery and accessory), in my opinion, should be "imposed" to students by (or rather "extracted" from the field of research of) designers,

66. Lecture [zoom], Renaud Haerlingen on *Intelligences Collectives*, TALKING HEADS, HEAD-Genève January 13, 2021.

67. According to specialists, the world economy entered in an era of uncertainties, and will experience scarcities of natural resources until, at least, the middle of the twenty-first century. From then, though, an international team of futurists speculates that a post-scarcity world might already become a reality: Stephen Aguilar-Millan, Ann Feeney, Amy Oberg, Elizabeth Rudd, "The Post-Scarcity World of 2050–2075," *The Futurist* 44, no. 34 (2010).

that are *right now* actively seeking solutions in the professional arena.⁶⁸ This way, students' contributions could respond instantly to the questions of our time, without ending up being just additional written theoretical or practical works that will be added to the schools' archives and that will bring concretely nothing to holistic knowledge and progress towards a collective goal⁶⁹. This is what we call *effective altruism*.⁷⁰

And for us? What is important for *us*?

68. I am referring here to the scientific world where students' graduation work is defined by a list of hot questions asked by the faculty or a partner laboratory.

69. For instance, holding global warming to 1.5°C above preindustrial levels or achieving circularity within the walls of a school.

70. Although there is a lot of criticism surrounding the concept, it is good to know what effective altruism is. Effective altruism is a set of ideas around which a social movement emerged in the late 2000s that aims to take an analytical approach to identifying the best ways to make a positive impact on the world. In 2009, Toby Ord and William MacAskill created the association Giving What We Can, an international organisation bringing together people who have decided to donate at least 10% of their income to NGOs considered to be the most effective. In 2011, in order to extend thinking about the best ways to act altruistically to professional career choices, MacAskill co-founded with Benjamin Todd the organisation 80,000 Hours (the number of hours most people spend on their career, as estimated by MacAskill). In the same year, the Centre for Effective Altruism (CEA) was established, bringing together Giving What We Can and 80,000 Hours. To find out more, see: <https://www.centreforeffectivealtruism.org>.

**A hole to fill:
Sustainable fashion
without repair is just
green consumerism.**

Someone asked me once: “Do you really think fashion can save the world?” This is a funny question, isn’t it? Especially being addressed to me, as the answer is obvious, and the person already knew my point of view. But, as a researcher, I replied with another question: “Can a tablecloth with a hole right in the middle save a family meal that goes wrong?” In my opinion – and with all due respect and love I have for textiles – it can’t. Sadly, in our generally denial society, the hole will just be hidden by a dish on top and go unnoticed. At worst, of course, this hole will just add fuel to the fire by contributing more to the disagreement, whatever the subject of the debate. But in no way, will this holed tablecloth save the meal, unless family members suddenly unite around this crack with a strong sense of solidarity making them want to fix things, starting with their relationships.

However, before trying or wanting to save anyone, let us repair ourselves. If any world is to be saved⁷¹, every aspect of it will have to be saved, or rather will have to save itself. Every sphere of our life. As we are all in holes. And we must start acting now to prevent ourselves from tearing apart. We have to change our way of thinking, to rethink our priorities, to break with certain habits, to betray⁷² some imaginaries.

I could suggest us to start making sacrifices, making cuts in our lifestyles. But are we not destroying enough already? Are we not burning enough? Our waste⁷³ and our forests, to name but a few. What we create – producing new goods and planting trees by the thousands⁷⁴ – does not justify what we destroy. So just, let us stop destroying. And if necessary, let us stop producing. I want to believe that we don’t have to make sacrifices. Because I believe in what we already have and in its preservation. I believe in the craft of use⁷⁵, in repairing, in healing. I, actually, believe in fashion as well. And fashion should start believing in itself, in its capacity to change in a very short period of time, sometimes instantly, and so, in its potential affirmative reincarnation.

71. Here is a reference to the field of political ecology. While ecology aims to study the relationship between an organism and the natural environment, political ecology is somehow the result of an awareness of the limits of human anthropocentrism. It also raises critical questions in anthropology about the ecological role of the species. The question of the end of the world and the saving of this world is recurrent in political ecology. If any world is to be saved, what world would it be? Western one? Capitalist one? What about the other worlds?

72. Aurélien Barrau, “A. Barrau : échange avec le prix Nobel J. Dubochet et les jeunes pour le climat suisses, partie 2,” *YouTube*, May 30, 2020, lecture video, 16:40 to 18:00, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o4fUnQk3AMo>. Betrayal is a solution to societal and ecological issues that astrophysicist Aurélien Barrau advances in an exchange with climate activists. By this he means that we are not necessarily the heirs of the system that gave us life and we have the right – and perhaps even the duty – to betray. To betray is to think outside our gender, our ethnicity, our social background, our professional environment, our nationality, etc.

73. To learn more about how fashion brands burn their unsold clothes, see for example: Florian Delafoi, “La destruction, grand tabou de l’industrie du luxe,” *Le Monde* [online], July 20, 2018, <https://www.letemps.ch/economie/destruction-grand-tabou-lindustrie-luxe> (accessed April 22, 2022).

74. To learn more about why planting trees is not the solution to global warming, see for example: Science de comptoir, “La SOLUTION pour SAUVER LE CLIMAT (personne n’y avait pensé),” *YouTube*, April 21, 2022, informative video, 19:35, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y4yeT-TOTfO8&list=FLzhgPqYB9Nv7cThtSe195xw&index=1>.

75. Kate Fletcher, *Craft of Use: Post-Growth Fashion* (London and New York: Routledge, 2016). The craft of use is a concept proposed by the researcher Kate Fletcher. She reminds us that the golden rules of sustainability are: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle. But at the same time, she calls us to *act* before re-act, so to *use* before re-use.

Because it is witnessing its own crisis for the past few decades now – the *fashion crisis*.⁷⁶

Thus, rather than trying to save the world, fashion should preferably think about saving its own skin first. Yet, it is failing in addressing the problem. But maybe, this is because the 3 P's haven't been met yet. Indeed, there exists, in ecological circles, a magic law which wants that, for a change to occur, three P (Personal, Perceptible and Practical) to be joined. In the case of fashion, the problem may already be (#1) personal (for example, if I wear close to my skin some clothes that might be treated with harmful chemicals, it can lead me to skin cancer; the problem therefore affects me personally), it may also already be (#2) perceptible (for example, the collapse of Rana Plaza in 2013 is one of many visible to the naked eye manifestations of the problem⁷⁷), but *maybe* the solutions are not yet (#3) practical (yes, the alternatives are already on the market, but a straightforward switch is – *apparently* – not yet possible).⁷⁸ Still, it is not so complicated to practice these solutions.

In her article with the evocative title “Could Living Wages Help Solve Fashion's Climate Crisis? New Research Says Yes”, the author and journalist Elizabeth L. Cline shows us how the only question of willpower and rethinking our priorities can change the situation overnight. As an expert and advocate in fashion sustainability and labour rights, she explains with simple words: “the presumption is that households have a fixed amount of disposable income, and every dollar spent on people's time and skills is de facto a dollar not spent on something with an innate environmental impact, such as taking a flight to Bali, buying a third flatscreen for the spare bedroom, or blasting the air conditioning all day.” Translated into our reference system, every dollar spent on garment workers' labour is de facto a dollar not spent on a new unwanted, not requested, at least not necessary garment's production.⁷⁹

But that would be sacrilegious. Paying people decently at the expense of the production volumes? Unconceivable.⁸⁰ Fashion definitely does not want to compromise in order to save itself, and imagines instead fixing the problem with treaties, pacts, and open letters. In 2019, for example, all around the world, actors of the fashion and textile sector (ready-to-wear, sport, lifestyle

76. Although we tend to link the fashion crisis directly to the climate crisis (unsustainable production leading to global warming and biodiversity loss) and the social crisis at the beginning of the chain (unsustainable working conditions for textile and garment workers), it encompasses much more distresses, such as the social crisis at the end of the chain (precariousness of the condition of fashion designers working, for most of them, as unpaid or poorly paid interns) or the identity crisis (the frantic speed and the gigantic quantities of production lead, in a significant number of cases, fashion designers to lose meaning in their profession) among many others.

77. See for example: Rainbow Collective, “TEARS IN THE FABRIC (RANA PLAZA DOCUMENTARY 2014),” *YouTube*, April 26, 2014, documentary, 29:58, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TiPm0tfdZ6w>.

78. Vox, “Why you don't hear about the ozone layer anymore,” *YouTube*, November 24, 2021, informative video, 4:14 to 5:04, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaLOiGEDPJQ>.

79. Elizabeth L. Cline, “Could Living Wages Help Solve Fashion's Climate Crisis? New Research Says Yes,” *Forbes* [online], January 17, 2022, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/elizabethcline/2022/01/17/could-living-wages-help-solve-fashions-climate-crisis-new-research-says-yes/?sh=582907516b27> (accessed March 12, 2022).

80. “Regarding overproduction, even the most demanding certifications ignore this problem. They all encourage more to lengthen the life of clothes rather than to slow down production,” explains the French advocate in sustainable fashion Mathilde Lepage: Mathilde Lepage (@makemyclothesgreatagain), “Savez-vous [...]”, Instagram post, April 15, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CcXMK5LqyNz/>.

and luxury), from brands and companies to suppliers and distributors, united around the Fashion Pact, a series of environmental commitments in the fashion industry.⁸¹ It started with a good intention. However, since then – no news.⁸² Just like with this other initiative from the Belgian fashion designer Dries Van Noten. In 2020, when the COVID-19 pandemic has locked us all down, the designer, supported by his industry peers, initiated an open letter with the purpose of saving fashion. In it, the signees propose a plan that would “transform” the way the industry works.⁸³

Let’s assume it eventually pays off. Is it enough? Is it *radical* enough not to let the trend reverse? I mean, radical enough not to let our world with holes be replaced by a big hole – *the void* – with fragments of a world. There is, undoubtedly, a hole to fill in fashion. But, before filling it, let’s ask ourselves the right question first: can we fill this hole with *anything*? Will putting a piece of paper (instead of a coin) in the coin space of a vending machine make the vending machine work? What do you think?

81. For more information, visit: <https://thefashionpact.org/?lang=fr>.

82. Considering that these commitments remain without sanctions or binding regulatory measures, relying on market regulation by consumers. See for example: Gnitekram, “Fashion Pact : un an après, la mode est-elle plus écologique ?” *Gnitekram*, November 2, 2020, <https://gnitekram.fr/fashion-pact-un-an-apres-la-mode-est-elle-plus-ecologique/> (accessed April 8, 2022).

83. Véronique Hyland, “Transforming The Fashion Industry? Dries Van Noten Has A Plan For That,” *Elle* [online], May 13, 2020, <https://www.elle.com/fashion/a32459989/dries-van-noten-fashion-industry-open-letter/> (accessed March 16, 2022).

**A COUNTER-
MASTER.
fashionleaks.**

Investigation

Bally. B. A. Double L. Y.

Bally is a Swiss luxury fashion house. That is all you need to know for now.

On December 17th 2020, in his interview for the Swiss online magazine *Luxury Tribune*, the current CEO of the Bally brand, Nicolas Giroto, said these words: “Today, it is essential for a company to be part of the solution, rather than part of the problem.”^{84 85}

I couldn't agree more. Humanity is facing, today, with a collapsing world that has entered a radically uncertain era. In the face of the climate emergency, we often hear that we must act, that nothing is done. This is not entirely true. Many thinkers, researchers and artists of the 21st century agree on the same idea: humans have never done so much, even worse they would have already done too much. Too much invented? Perhaps. A number of mistakes related to the “*inventiveness*” of Man could have been avoided in the past century. However, today humans have produced too much, consumed too much, polluted too much. Earth needs a break.

Thus, even before wanting to improve things, should we not consider, to begin with, not to participate in the catastrophe? *Not to be part of the problem?* In the words of the Swiss humourist Marina Rollman, let's pause for a moment, let's “do nothing. And if [we] are blamed, [we can] always say [in turn]: « Wait, I am not doing anything, I'm saving the planet right now. »”⁸⁶ But doing nothing is always advanced as the last way – behind all other possible alternatives – to achieve the resolution of contemporary issues related to climate change. Why not reverse the poles by putting *this* solution in the foreground?

Slowing down for a while is too much of a demand for Bally, knowing that the brand has taken off in China in recent years. Moreover, earlier last year, Bally was named one of China's most innovative luxury brands for 2019 by Tmall Luxury and Women's Wear Daily (WWD)⁸⁷. So, the brand prefers rather to bet on good resolutions to compensate for its *business-as-usual-style* bad game. I disagree with the brand on this point. You cannot simply add a good resolution to all the, already existing, negative commitments. The only way to go – as with monuments – is to abolish, to clear the space, to purify. Then, to start to be positive from scratch.

But how to erase 170 years of history? Bally is a Swiss luxury fashion house, founded as “Bally & Co.” in 1851 by Carl Franz Bally and his brother Fritz, in the province of Schönenwerd, in Solothurn. They inherited their father's elastic manufacturing business, which they reoriented towards a shoe production. The brothers had great visions. Generous and respectable. They wanted to make the shoe comfortable. But above all, to make comfortable shoes that

84. Cristina d'Agostino, “La Suisse, terre du nouveau luxe pour Bally,” *Luxury Tribune*, December 17, 2020, <https://www.luxurytribune.com/la-suisse-terre-du-nouveau-luxe-pour-bally> (accessed March 14, 2022).

85. Elizabeth L. Cline, “Wear Clothes? Then You're Part of the Problem,” *The New York Times* [online], November 3, 2019, <https://www.nytimes.com/2019/11/03/opinion/climate-change-clothing-policy.html> (accessed April 1, 2022). If the provocative title of Cline's article is to be believed, in fashion, wanting – and especially pretending – not to be part of the problem is hopeless and with a dead end.

86. France Inter, “L'humain n'a jamais autant fait - La drôle d'humeur de Marina Rollman,” *YouTube*, October 17, 2018, radio chronicle video, 3:17 to 3:37, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jKF0PeYlinE>.

87. Christine Chou, “Bally CEO on Powering Luxury Innovation with Tmall,” *Alizila*, August 25, 2020, <https://www.alizila.com/bally-ceo-on-pow-ering-luxury-innovation-with-tmall/> (accessed March 14, 2022).

would be affordable. It was the case, but not for long. By 1880, Bally shoes already stood for luxury. Growing up was in the interests of the brand. It had a desire for greatness, for conquest. And, indeed, it was becoming an empire – proportional to the size of Switzerland of course, *but an empire anyway*.⁸⁸ One hundred years later, in 1976, the brand added to their shoe products other leather accessories as handbags and a ready-to-wear clothing line. At that time, Bally finally became total, complete, and could claim a status equivalent to that of Parisian fashion houses such as Hermès. But the timing was badly chosen, with the two oil shocks which affected the world at the end of the Trentes Glorieuses. And everything has an end. Before being reborn from its ashes in the year 2010, the Bally Empire experienced its downfall in 1977, only one year after its “*completeness*”. From there, the brand passed from hand to hand. Bally was considered a national treasure in Switzerland and the transfer of the company out of the founding family was seen as a great loss.

So, after having passed from hand to hand several times, *here we are, 2021*. The company is still based in Switzerland, but in Caslano, a small town in Ticino – a canton known as the heart of fashion groups’ tax optimization system, and belongs now to the JAB Holding, a holding company of the German billionaire family Reimann. Since May 2019, on the brand’s board of directors and executive committee, sits as CEO, Nicolas Giroto.

Nicolas Giroto is a brilliant man with a brilliant career. He is famous in his community for his business transformation skills. Prior to joining Bally, he was head of finance for one of the leader companies in airport duty-free distribution. He also worked to relaunch a fast-fashion retailer and, before that, under supervision, an optical retailer.⁸⁹

Nicolas Giroto is a brilliant man with a great vision, like his predecessors. Bally needs to rethink its positioning and the CEO is sure he can guarantee it. He aims to demonstrate, with the brand and thanks to his business strategy, that Switzerland is the land of a new kind of luxury; one that is chic, discreet, sustainable.⁹⁰

Nicolas Giroto is a brilliant man who knows the numbers. However, when it comes to quantifying the budget for sustainability that Bally grants, the CEO struggles to answer. “The investments are spread throughout the company,” he says.⁹¹ But let’s close our eyes to this detail. Bally does *so much more* for the planet in return. Please don’t forget: Bally claims to be part of the solution.

In early 2020, Bally formalized its long-term commitment to mountain preservation by creating the Bally Peak Outlook Foundation whose mission is to safeguard the world’s most fragile mountain environments. In fall 2020,

88. For the most complete history of the Bally company in one book to this date, read: Peter Heim, *Königreich Bally: Fabrikherren und Arbeiter in Schönenwerd* (Baden: hier + jetzt, 2000). More recently, a research was led on the brand during a specific time period in its existence, which resulted in a publication: Anna-Brigitte Schlittler, and Katharina Tietze, *Bally - A History of Footwear in the Interwar Period* (Bielefeld: transcript Verlag, 2021).

89. Cristina d’Agostino, “La Suisse, terre du nouveau luxe pour Bally,” *Luxury Tribune*, December 17, 2020, <https://www.luxurytribune.com/la-suisse-terre-du-nouveau-luxe-pour-bally> (accessed March 14, 2022).

90. Ibid.

91. Tobias Bayer, “Transparenz ist fundamental,” *TextilWirtschaft*, September 4, 2020, <https://www.textilwirtschaft.de/business/news/tw-interview-mit-bally-ceo-nicolas-giroto-transparenz-ist-fundamental-227171?crefresh=1> (accessed March 14, 2022).

the Bally Peak Outlook capsule collection was launched. This is the first eco-friendly collection from Bally and it is composed of 37 items including accessories, shoes and ready-to-wear models. To be fair, the collection is restricted to a niche audience, and to be exact, it is geared towards the adventurer who will go into exile in the mountains during his expedition. But what about the brand's main audience? What about this casual woman, living in the city and dressing at Bally's for her everyday life? Can't *she* dress in an eco-friendly way? This is not really the inclusive solution that I imagined for our common future.

Oh, my bad! Actually, the capsule collection includes a tote bag for her. Seriously, a simple cotton tote bag? Do I have to remind someone the procedures to not be part of the problem? #1 Do not participate in the disaster. And only after, #2 act for a resilient, responsible and altruistic future. In that order.

So, is Bally still part of the solution? Is a brand, that produces items for the sake of producing items, part of the solution? Bally states that 100% of proceeds will be donated to the foundation and used for future preservation projects. But why go through polluting excuses, when you could simply call for the generosity of your customers by asking them to donate directly to the foundation? Because how do you engage your customers? By making them buy tote bags that they *don't need*?

Ok, my apologies! I'm going too fast. Very well. Let's don't skip steps. Maybe *we all forgot*. Maybe we all forgot our true selves, what do you think? Cartier's CEO Cyrille Vigneron kindly reminds us with his own words: "Luxury is part of what I call 'the necessary superfluous', something that we don't need but want and that makes us happy, in opposition to the 'utilitarianism' which would forget all the non-essential."⁹² So maybe we just forgot that our little daily pleasures are non-essential and that we need them to move forward in life. Maybe we forgot that, even if we don't need a 60 francs tote bag, it would make us happy!

Meanwhile, we know what makes Nicolas Giroto happy – inspiring and mobilizing his teams with the Bally Peak Outlook initiative. The CEO declares that, in the first year, the company representatives collected two tons of trash between the base camp and the top of Mount Everest⁹³. The whole Bally's group is *so proud* of it, that it could (if it wanted), *at this stage*, stop being a clothing brand and continue its activity exclusively as a waste collection company.

It's all good to pick up other people's trash, but what about the trash you produce? As we often say, the grass is always greener on the other side. In our case, we could say, the mountains are always dirtier on the other side. And the brand seems to be convinced of that. To the question "Have you set recycling goals?", Nicolas Giroto answers proudly: "Yes, we have set ourselves the goal of removing single-use plastic in our packagings by 2030."⁹⁴

I let you draw your own conclusions, but you know, the most curious thing is that this is the rare quantified objective in terms of ecological commitments that we heard from Bally's CEO and it appeared in the German magazine *Textilwirtschaft* in an article titled "Transparenz ist fundamental". Great, so

92. Fabio Bonavita, "Repenser le monde, c'est aussi repenser le luxe," *Luxury Tribune*, November 12, 2020, <https://www.luxurytribune.com/repenser-le-monde-cest-aussi-repenser-le-luxe> (accessed March 14, 2022).

93. Tobias Bayer, "Transparenz ist fundamental," *TextilWirtschaft*, September 4, 2020, <https://www.textilwirtschaft.de/business/news/tw-interview-mit-bally-ceo-nicolas-giroto-transparenz-ist-fundamental-227171?crefresh=1> (accessed March 14, 2022).

94. Ibid.

Bally has nothing to hide from us, doesn't it?

Ok, so what do we know about Bally? I mean, what do we *really* know? If you are still wondering, I give you the answer: nothing. Zero. As soon as the brand entered in 2020 in the Fashion Transparency Index produced carefully and annually by Fashion Revolution (the global movement campaigning since 2013 for an ethical and sustainable fashion industry), it was ranked at the very bottom, and more precisely at 0% transparency.⁹⁵ That is, 100% opacity. Is this normal? It should not be. Transparency does matter. Because at the end, transparency costs lives. Transparency is the first step to a social justice. Of course, transparency is nothing more than a public disclosure, but, if done well, it should enable accountability. So yes, transparency matters. And Bally wasn't transparent at the time when Nicolas Giroto was giving his sermon about what is fundamental and what is not in the above-mentioned interview. The brand is a little bit transparent now.⁹⁶ However, being transparent is not enough. Transparency is only "a tool for change, not the end goal", as reminds us Fashion Revolution.

So, let's be honest, Bally is definitely far from being a positive example in the fashion industry, even further a positive example to any other industry. But Bally is making an effort, at least it thinks it is. And we are not here to blame or to boycott any brand. It's too easy to say that "we are all related", "we are all parts of *the same system*, so things aren't so simple". No, it is too easy to generalize to cut short topics that seem to overwhelm us. It is important to understand *how* we are entangled all together and, once and for all, to *start* to disentangle ourselves, helping each other in this process. And I start to disentangle myself from Bally. From its history that sticks to me through my school, through the fact that I consider myself as an actor of the fashion system, through the fact that I am Swiss, through the fact that I am a citizen of this world and that my future depends, *indirectly and as little as it may be*, on Bally's today's actions.

In 2019, I wrote in my Bachelor's thesis that to build an "alternative imaginary"⁹⁷, to develop a "collective intelligence"⁹⁸, the world maybe just needs an "event", according to Michel Foucault's definition, to switch to a new, unpredictable state, freed from the grip of trends and capitalism as a whole. The French philosopher understands by this the "inversion of the balance of power, [...], the fall of power, the reconversion of a language and its use against its previous users". This change perhaps requires a more global change, which would touch the imagination of the possible, an event which would make us move towards "a form of life which would no longer be a form of production, which would even be something entirely unproductive."⁹⁹ In 2020, a question could be asked: has this *event* finally happened?

During the first lockdown of 2020 due to the pandemic of the COVID-19, my daily outfit was getting simpler with the arrival of warm spring days, while I was getting dressed by readings, discussions, and time spent listening to podcasts. Being a player in the fashion system, I left productivity aside,

95. Fashion Revolution CIC, *Fashion Transparency Index: 2020 Edition* (Leek: Fashion Revolution CIC, 2020).

96. Fashion Revolution CIC, *Fashion Transparency Index: 2021 Edition* (Leek: Fashion Revolution CIC, 2021). In 2021, the brand's score increased to 14% transparency, according to the same-year edition of the Fashion Transparency Index.

97. Serge Audier, *L'âge productiviste : Hégémonie prométhéenne, brèches et alternatives écologiques* (Paris: La Découverte, 2019).

98. France Culture, "Cyril Dion : « Le challenge du XXI^e siècle, c'est l'intelligence collective », " *Facebook*, January 5, 2019, radio interview video, 1:48, <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=788412264834780>.

99. Byung-Chul Han, *Psychopolitique : Le néolibéralisme et les nouvelles techniques de pouvoir*, translated by Olivier Cossé (Strasbourg: Circé, 2016 [2014]), 99.

although still accepting to make masks, because society was demanding (we could clearly see how the function of design was put to the test again). Well, I left productivity aside to observe the behaviour of people outside this system. Whatever our relationship to the pandemic, we were (and still are) all affected by this crisis. And I would say, the main “field observation” I made is that people realized (or started to realize) in self-isolation that they could live with a dozen of garments, or even a lot less. We had to wait for a health-related crisis to realize that we have a problem in our closets, not to say on the whole Earth. Indeed, there is this assumption that your planet is cluttered with garments and that, even if the textile industry stopped working overnight, humanity would have enough material to dress, up to several generations, as I mentioned previously.¹⁰⁰

But let's focus on another assumption. However, crises are considered by many people as quintessential pivotal moments when the field of possibilities widens, the Russian political scientist Ekaterina Schulmann warns us that nothing new will happen, once the storm has passed (and she was right actually). According to her analysis based on several historic crisis situations, everything that was developing (before the storm) will accelerate, as well as everything that was damaged (before the storm) will collapse (during or at the end of the storm). In this way, online services, telecommuting, delivery of goods were growing in strength during the past year following the same example of the expansion of surveillance and data retention after the September 11 attacks, for instance.¹⁰¹ With this thinking in mind, I then asked myself the question: What was exactly developing in fashion before the COVID-19, that could *potentially* flourish after the pandemic? The second-hand market? DIY trends? Digital collections? And what about nostalgia, the ultimate ingredient (which works pretty well though, because it sells) on which a large part of our neocapitalist consumer society seems to rest, in particular the fashion system?

When I chose to study the field of fashion design, I did it for the love of the object, the textile material. I was motivated by learning about the technique, the technology, the sensitivity, how to wear the garment. Today, I feel the need to question the human being and the actor of the system (fashion, in particular) with their habits. Is it possible not to dress? No. Is it possible not to consume? Certainly. How can we live without it now? *And above all*, how to live without, but together (so as not to separate human from society)?

As well as Tara Mabiala, a former student of HEAD's Fashion design department, I believe that we don't necessarily need “spaces to physically share dressing or the making of clothes. A lot of people in the literature [...] talk about setting up workshops and creating new spaces for fashion, but maybe the space is *verbal*. It is about *talking* about our relationship to clothing”,¹⁰² in order to reconnect people with themselves *first of all*, people with each other *then*, practices between themselves, human beings with the know-how and *finally* fashion with the rest of the world.

100. See the chapter: *Introduction: Does what we create justify what we destroy?*.

101. Yeltsin Center, “Мир после пандемии. Екатерина Шульман. Вирус – не худшее, что с нами происходит,” *YouTube*, April 13, 2020, lecture video, 33:47, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N8EpbFqGFGU&t=321s>.

102. Tara Mabiala, and Aude Fellay, “SUSTAINABILITY REVISITED. Mémoire de master de Tara Mabiala,” *Issue journal* [online], June 12, 2020, <https://issue-journal.ch/focus-posts/sustainability-revisited-2/> (accessed March 12, 2022).

Refuse

“We all saw in the spring of 2020 that we, in Europe, had become incapable of producing masks and paracetamol, gowns and curare,” writes Raphaël Glucksmann in his book *Lettre à la génération qui va tout changer*.¹⁰³ Indeed, China has become the *workshop* of the world, and the pandemic has once again revealed it to us. In many cases, China has also become the (main) *market* for some parts of the world, some industries or some companies, as in the case of Bally. The lesson we should learn from COVID-19 is that we can no longer rely on that (single) country, because doing this we condemn ourselves being dependent on it upstream (production) and downstream (sales). And this is relative to any other country that we would use for our own purposes. So, we have no choice but to learn to be self-sufficient, to strive for sovereignty. We *must* reconsider not only the temporalities and quantities of our production chains, but also the territories involved. We must *relocate* our production sites. We need to *refuse*. To refuse is not to cancel. So, I repeat, we *need* to refuse when it is necessary.

And we *can* do it. We have the ability to refuse to follow the business-as-usual, to fit into the mould, to comply with the dominant thought. We *are* able to say “no, I don’t accept the rules” and one of the best ways to do so is to tell the truth, to enlighten the systems and the power relations within them. Earlier, I said that we do not have to make any sacrifice, and I really meant it. Indeed, rather than talking about sacrifices, we could imagine that we are simply refusing the inheritance. Thus, Jason Hickel’s prediction in *Less Is More* takes on a whole new meaning. The anthropologist insinuates that we will have to abandon industries like fashion altogether to meet our ecological goals.¹⁰⁴ Thus, fashion becomes, all of a sudden, no great loss. Thus, the grief over its potential loss becomes bearable.

So, yes, we can refuse. Yet, it is important to *spell* it. Of course, we can show our refusal by boycotting products, brands, countries, etc., but we can also show it by confronting real people, looking them in the eyes, and telling them in words: “I refuse”. It is, therefore, all the more important to do the latter in our direct environment, that is, in the places of life, work, studies, etc., that we share with our peers. At HEAD, for example, we can refuse, to begin with, the productivist injunctions embedded in our curricula (if we consider that they go against the times we live in or for any other reason that we deem compelling). We can refuse the collaborations with external parties that the school imposes on us (if we consider that the intentions of those parties are bad or contrary to our values or for any other reason that we deem compelling). We can refuse the passivity of people who place themselves as authority figures over us and demand more from them (if we consider that they are not doing enough or for any other reason that we deem compelling). Finally, we can refuse, in turn, our own passivity. Indeed, we can refuse to be a passive accomplice in the choice of others. We can take a step back, a step aside. We can decide no longer to be carried by the current, and *move* aside. We can reach the shore, get out of the water, observe. Then, in order to get a big-picture view, we can take the time to learn the facts. We can conduct *investigations*. To some people, they will seem to have no value, even to be counterproductive. But our investigations are not supposed to please, they are supposed to disturb. Our investigations are not simple investigations, they are *counter-investigations*. They can take many forms¹⁰⁵, but the

103. Raphaël Glucksmann, *Lettre à la génération qui va tout changer* (Paris: Allary, 2021), 118.

104. Jason Hickel, *Less Is More: How Degrowth Will Save the World* (London: William Heinemann, 2020).

105. In this respect, Evidentiary Realism is an art movement that focuses on artworks engaged in investigative, forensic, and documentary visual language and mediums. Although these artworks diverge from traditional

essential thing is that they keep being conducted. Let's remember that, if the situation is opaque, we can always pull the curtain ourselves. We can refuse to watch it hanging still one more time from our chair. Transparency mattered at all times¹⁰⁶, and in all places. Our schools should not be an exception.

Let's refuse to do things dictated to us, and let's do things freeing us instead. Let's do them without asking permission. Let's impose ourselves. We do not have to go knocking – no one will come to open to us. Instead, we have to grasp the handle, and push the door. We have to get up, and take what we want to take. From our seat at the table to our role in the co-creation of our common future. To any inaction, let's respond with an action. We see a gap? So, let's take the initiative to remedy it. We see too many cars in the city? So, let's paint the bike paths on the ground, as Vincent Verzat, from the YouTube channel *Partager C'est Sympa*, invites us to do.¹⁰⁷ We see that homeless people can no longer lie down on public benches because of anti-social policies? So, let's remove "anti-homeless" devices or add extensions on top of them, as Félicien Bogaerts, from the YouTube channel *Le Biaïs Vert*, proposes to act.¹⁰⁸ I suggest that we simply create an alternative reality *from today*, and we do not wait for any permission to impose it *now*. Of course, the door could be locked, and we could imagine to force it. And if it does not open, we could even try to enter through the window. But why keep forcing our way inside? Let's go out. Let's go out into the streets. And while the masters will be watching us from their ivory towers, let's write history. While they will be spectators, let's become the players. Let's miss no opportunity to make our way through the breach. Let's become counter-masters.

Counter-master

But what does it mean, to be a counter-master?

To be a counter-master is to be an ally.

To be a counter-master is to work on dismantling power structures, and so, all kinds of masters. It is about being smarter (without being pretentious) than the ruling class and the dominant culture. It is about being elusive and audacious. As a snake or as a chameleon. It is about being a hijacker, an infiltrator, an impostor. Someone who plays the adult in the "adult world".

journalism and reportage, they reflect aesthetics of social engagement, socio-critical and protest art, interventionism, institutional critique. The movement intends that "realism is out of sight" today. To find out more, see: Paolo Cirio, *Evidentiary Realism* (Berlin: NOME Gallery, 2019).

106. Indeed, the concern for full transparency in the supply of raw materials (and in the supply chain, more generally) in nothing new, and was already a hot topic at the time, for example, of the marriage of the princess Elizabeth II in 1947. The anecdote says that the wedding dress of the Queen-to-be was made of two different satins. One was spun and woven at Lullingstone Castle, in Dartford, near London, and was ideal for the train. The other, for the body, was ordered by the dress designer, Norman Hartnell, from the Scottish firm of Winterthur, near Dunfermline. The scandal broke when the British media questioned the origin of the silkworms, and put about the rumour that the Scottish satin could be made from "enemy silkworms", either from Italy or possibly Japan (the UK's enemies during WWII). Mr. Hartnell, on behalf of Buckingham Palace, assured that the silkworms were bought from Nationalist China. And to be even more politically correct, according to some sources, they were from Taiwan and not from Mainland China. To learn more, see: Pauline Weston Thomas, "Queen Elizabeth II's Ceremonial Wedding Dress and Robes Designed by Norman Hartnell," *Fashion-Era*, July 24, 2018, <https://fashion-era.com/the-queens-robres.htm#Politically%20Correct%20Silkworms> (accessed April 24, 2022).

107. Partager C'est Sympa, "On S'est Planté...", *YouTube*, March 1, 2019, conversational video, 34:50 to 35:15, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lvdcKQKz_Q.

108. Ibid., 36:25 to 37:15.

Someone who plays at taking oneself seriously, when it is a game. Someone who plays the *master*, but without reproducing the master's patterns of domination, oppression, and violence. A Robin Hood among Robin Hoods. One among many, then. Never alone. Among all those who steal for their fellows in order to do them justice. All those who make common cause in order to honour sharing. All those who become "thieves of one world for another"¹⁰⁹ in order to exist.

To be a counter-master is to be an ally.

To be a counter-master is to be a foreman ("contremaître" in French) (or a foreperson, in a gender-neutral terminology), but allied to the cause of the workers, not as in the tragic case of the garment workers of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire.¹¹⁰ It is about protecting others. It is about *protecting*, not *doing nothing*. And it is about using tools. It is about truly *using* them. However, to be a counter-master is not necessarily about building a house. It can be about deconstructing it. And even about not building a house at all. In fact, it is about building something else, like a bridge or a ladder (or a fire escape). It is probably about building a counter-house.

To be a counter-master is to be an ally.

To be a counter-master is to be the ally of *all the people* who are going to inhabit the counter-house(s). It is about taking care of the people, and taking care of the place(s). The etymology of the word "economy" (borrowed from the Latin "oeconomia", itself from the ancient Greek "oikonomía") is "the management of the house". So, from a post-capitalist perspective, how shall we call the management of a counter-house? "Aneconomy"?¹¹¹ But does it need any management? Because its condition is not permanent. A counter-house is as elusive as its counter-masters. A counter-house is always in motion. It is a ship navigating the world.

109. Olivier Marboeuf, "La leçon de Genève / The Geneva Lesson (fr/eng)," *Toujours Debout*, March 27, 2021, <https://olivier-marboeuf.com/2021/03/27/la-lecon-de-geneve-the-geneva-lesson-fr-eng/> (accessed March 12, 2022).

110. The Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire, on March 25, 1911, in New York City, was one of the deadliest industrial disasters in the city's history. The fire killed 146 garment workers and injured 71 more. Most of the victims were immigrant young women and girls, mainly from Southern Italy or of European Jewish descent. What sets this incident apart is the building context, and, more precisely, a locked door. Indeed, long before the disaster, a search system had been put in place in the factory to prevent theft. The workers were searched by the foremen at the end of their working day. To improve the controls, one of the entrances to the factory, which was located on the top three floors (8th, 9th and 10th), was closed. On Saturday 25th, the fire had broken out on the eighth floor, and spread to the two upper floors of the building. The workers were nothing more than trapped by flames. The foreman who held the stairway door key, at that time, had apparently fled. In consequence, the social shockwave caused by the disaster led to the emergence of the largest piece of social legislation in New York and American history, particularly with regard to improving factory safety standards. It led, among others, to the desire to have concrete (physical) means of dealing with fires, such as the presence of fire escapes built outside, or the installation of sprinklers inside. See: David von Drehle, "Uncovering the History of the Triangle Shirtwaist Fire," *Smithsonian Magazine*, August 2006, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/uncovering-the-history-of-the-triangle-shirtwaist-fire-124701842/> (accessed April 24, 2022).

111. While I speculate about alternative vocabularies, the word "aneconomy" already exists. Indeed, the French philosopher Jacques Derrida used this term to suggest a move beyond an "economy of the possible". His thinking started from the concept, that he had elaborated earlier in his career, called "différance". The word "différance" expresses the relationship between two movements: mediation and radical otherness, respectively economy and aneconomy. However, aneconomy was not invented by Derrida. But Derrida's use of it is a response to Freud who employed this notion in his works on the economy, more generally. To learn more, see: Jacques Derrida, and Eric Prenowitz, "Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression," *Diacritics* 25, no. 2 (1995): 9–63.

A kind of counter-ship. A bit like a pirate ship.

Talking about pirate, when Pippi Longstocking grows up, she will be a pirate, she says. The counter-master is someone who wants to be like Pippi, but who understands that the time has already come. Who understands that they has grown up, and that the time has come to be a pirate. To take action. At that very moment, the counter-master becomes the counter-master.

**How much does
a hole cost?**

“As a general rule, the charge is €2 per hole – beyond that, think about checking with consumer associations to make sure such an amount is legal,” answers the question the real estate and housing magazine *Cnepn.fr* in 2019.¹¹²

My flatmate, however, does not agree, as she considers the hole to be empty and, de facto, priceless. Yet, what do we mean by *priceless*? An infinite, zero or subjectively variable value (where the estimation of the intrinsic value of this or that hole would be up to us personally)? To measure the value of emptiness, we must first look at the value of fullness.

The *fullness* has, however, been estimated, calculated, weighed up many times. As the researchers Kerstin Stakemeier and Susanne Witzgall describe in their book *Power of Material / Politics of Materiality*, materiality has recently become as important as the natural sciences.¹¹³ Indeed, materiality has become the new focus of various art and design disciplines that emphasise the importance of matter, and its power, in the web of relationships between culture and nature. But what is the power of the immaterial, the counter-form, the void? What is *their* value?

I have in mind this pair of new jeans hanging on the front of the shelf in some department of a normal clothing store. This new pair of jeans has holes in the knees. And the lack of material on these surfaces intrigues me. Regardless of whether or not this physical characteristic given to (or, should I say, inflicted on) the garment is aesthetically pleasing to my eye, I wonder about the price of this missing material. Not only does what we see have a price, but what we don't see can also have one. On these holed knees, the matter *did* exist and, consequently, must have represented a certain amount of money during production. At the time of my writing, no one has yet developed a weaving process including, from the outset, holes in the woven fabric in order to continue to offer on the market the much-desired ripped jeans, but *without* the post-production step. This would be far too expensive for the industry, which prefers to intervene on the assembled garment afterwards. So, considering that the matter had to be removed from the “finished” trousers, how much of the final price of the product is the creation of the hole in the garment? To turn the question in a more poetic way, what part of this price is represented by this fictional past grafted onto this inanimate object?¹¹⁴

Although the brand Levi's has shown the way to its peers in 2019 by replacing for ethical reasons human with machine (that, now, is laser cutting brand's

112. La Rédaction, “Etat des lieux de sortie : dois-je reboucher les trous dans les murs ?”, *Cnepn.fr*, June 8, 2019, <https://cnepn.fr/immobilier/etat-des-lieux-de-sortie-dois-je-reboucher-les-trous-dans-les-murs/> (accessed November 20, 2020).

113. Kerstin Stakemeier, et Susanne Witzgall, *Power of Material / Politics of Materiality* (Zurich and Berlin: diaphanes, 2015).

114. The process of grafting (through bleaching, sandblasting, tearing, etc.) a fictional past onto new clothes has a name. The British anthropologist Daniel Miller calls the concept “get a life”, by analogy with the Anglo-Saxon expression. However, today, we are witnessing a *double lie*. Indeed, the industry started to capitalize on a new booming market, that of sustainable fashion. It appropriates the cultural background of alternative fashion practices (such as repair and upcycling) by taking up their visual codes while rejecting their substances (in this present reference system, we can find logics as: making the jeans, ripping them, patching the holes). How could we call, then, the fictional *augmented* past that is now grafted onto new clothes? “Get a life++”? “Get 2-in-1: a life and an afterlife”? What is certain is that all of these “techniques” are designed to mimic a coincidental result of nature from the denim fabric: Daniel Miller, and Ludovic Coupaye, “Le blue-jean. Pourquoi la « technologie » vient en dernier”, *Techniques & Culture* 52-53, no. 2-3 (2009): 232-255.

jeans¹¹⁵), embellishing new clothes with traces of wear and tear remains mostly manual work. So, how much money do entrepreneurs save by using human labour (instead of choosing to automate the process) and making those people work at a killing pace? Because the latter are killing themselves. Slowly. Inhalation by inhalation, of textile fibre dust (or minerals, in the case of sandblasting¹¹⁶). How much do the entrepreneurs *pay* for each hole and how much, in comparison, does this archaic industrial technique cost to the life of those who are subjected to it? What is the *human* cost in the process? Or rather, what is the amount of the loss? What is the price of disappearance? What is the price of erasure?

I cannot help but think that we will find the answer to these questions in the value given to the whole, the complete, the full. The human cost brings us back to the value given to a human life, but also to the value given to life, in general, on Earth. To go even further, it brings us back to the value given, more globally, to the Earth itself, whether it is a matter of moral value or quantified value in US dollars in 1997 by the economist Robert Costanza.¹¹⁷

But let us return to holes. While we have known since Costanza's research the approximate price of each ecosystem composing our biosphere, we know nothing about the worth of the stratosphere and, more specifically, that of the ozone layer. If the exercise consists of estimating the monetary value of *services* provided by a biotope and/or a biocenosis to humans, what is the value of this transparent layer that absorbs most of the ultraviolet solar radiation that is dangerous for living beings? And, as a corollary, and to follow the same first line of reasoning, what is the economic loss related to the hole in the ozone layer? But above all, what is the human price to be paid by present and future generations for this hole, that represents a real ecological debt inherited from past generations?¹¹⁸

Relying on the vision of the debt as a bond that seals past-present-future, the Australian design theorist and philosopher Tony Fry invites us to remember that the future is inseparable from the time that precedes it. "[It] is never empty, never a blank space to be filled [...]. [The future] is already *colonised* by what the past and present have sent to it."¹¹⁹ *Our* future is colonised. It is perforated. And we must start acting without delay to prevent it from being torn apart, as mentioned in the chapter *A hole to fill*. Let us just ask ourselves: in the name of all that – and all those – we love, isn't it worth making the shift towards change *now*? Hasn't the time come for those priceless things – and beings – that we cherish most to be cherished *more*? Hasn't the time come for care? In other words, isn't it time to take care of each other? To take care of our clothes? Isn't it time to put an *end* to the clothes with holes? Because, ultimately, isn't repaired clothing the resurgent¹²⁰ symbol of resistance?

115. For more information on the Future Finish technology developed and used by Levi's, see: https://www.levi.com/US/en_US/blog/article/levis-presents-future-finish/.

116. The disease caused by excessive exposure to (silica) dust is called silicosis. It is incurable (except in the case where lung transplantation is occurred) and can lead to death.

117. Laura Garwin, "The worth of the Earth," *Nature* [online], October 8, 1998, <https://www.nature.com/news/1998/981008/full/news981008-3.html> (accessed November 20, 2020).

118. It is, however, important to specify that today, in 2022, the ozone layer is healing. And that, by 2065, it is expected to be recovered completely. See, for example: Vox, "Why you don't hear about the ozone layer anymore," *YouTube*, November 24, 2021, informative video, 8:34, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CaLOiGEDPJQ> (accessed April 8, 2022).

119. Tony Fry, *A New Design Philosophy: An Introduction to Defuturing* (Sydney: UNSW Press, 1999), 11-12.

120. In order not to use the adjective "new" (what is *new*?), and because "other"

and “alternative” would not really fit in this precise context (where it is a matter of *renewal*), I am referring to the notion of resurgence. Having no faithful equivalent in French, resurgence symbolises the “act of rising again”. It is “a kind of renaissance that is simultaneously resistance”, as Irmgard Emmelhainz describes, remembering Leanne Simpson’s work: Irmgard Emmelhainz, “Decolonial Love,” *e-flux journal* [online], Issue #99, April 2019, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/99/262398/decolonial-love/> (accessed March 12, 2022).

MY FRIEND.

love.

House

Let's take another case study. You should all be familiar with the luxury brand Dior.¹²¹

So, Dior built a house. Or to be more precise, the couturier Christian Dior built an haute couture house – not forgetting, of course – with the participation of the entrepreneur Marcel Boussac who invested in the brand's debut 60 million francs and offered a physical space to the fashion house at avenue Montaigne (Paris, 8th).

So, I was saying, Dior built a house.¹²² In this house, lie now the archives. But to be fair, only symbolically, since Dior inaugurated in December 2016, a few steps from the historical address, a unique space dedicated to them and their consultation, called *Dior Héritage*.¹²³ These archives include a *trompe-l'oeil* dress from the Spring-Summer 2013 Couture collection designed under the creative direction of Raf Simons.¹²⁴ This dress inspired this exact dress worn by the actress Jennifer Lawrence who has been under the spotlight of the celebrity press in 2013 after her controversial moment at the Screen Actors' Guild Awards where while she was taking the stage to receive Best Actress Award the audience believed that she tore her custom-made dress.¹²⁵ In fact, she didn't.¹²⁶ And even if she did, that would not have been her intention. Unlike these scandalized Parisian women in 1947 who found it outrageous – despite Christian Dior's promise for a colourful, opulent and beautiful future – to use not less than forty-five meters of fabric to create pleated skirts in traumatized post-war France where the population still used ration tickets, who consequently were *intentionally* during photoshoots tearing dress off models.¹²⁷ Some angers are legitimate. Theirs was, at the time. But history repeats itself and resistance does not die out. A similar incident occurred on April 7, 2021, in London. In an action in two steps by the environmental movement Extinction Rebellion, which was directed against banks that invest in fossil fuels, firstly, posters with the message "In Case of Climate Emergency – Break Glass" were pasted on the front of the Barclays' bank's building. Secondly, seven women, who agreed with that message,

121. If not, see for example: Marie-France Pochna, *Christian Dior* (Paris: Flammarion, 2004).

122. In Haute couture, a house is commonly understood to be both a brand and a physical address where the workshops are and where the garments that will be presented and sold under the brand name are produced.

123. Caroline Rousseau, "Or collection, les archives de la maison Dior," *Le Monde* [online], December 2, 2018, https://www.lemonde.fr/m-styles/article/2018/12/02/or-collection-les-archives-de-la-maison-dior_5391685_4497319.html (accessed March 14, 2022).

124. Marcus Tondo, photographer, and Vanessa Axente, model, "Christian Dior SPRING 2013 COUTURE: Look 28 / 47," *Vogue* [online], January 20, 2013, <https://www.vogue.com/fashion-shows/spring-2013-couture/christian-dior/slideshow/collection#28> (accessed March 14, 2022).

125. Chelsea White, "And the prize for worst supporting dress goes to... Jennifer Lawrence - whose frock fell apart as she accepted SAG gong," *Daily Mail* [online], January 28, 2013, <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/tvshowbiz/article-2269380/Jennifer-Lawrence-dress-rips-SAG-Awards-2013-Wardrobe-malfuction-accepts-Best-Actress-gong.html> (accessed March 14, 2022).

126. Lorena Blas, "Dior: Jennifer Lawrence's dress did not rip at SAGs," *USA Today* [online], January 28, 2013, <https://eu.usatoday.com/story/life/people/2013/01/28/jennifer-lawrences-dress-did-not-rip-at-sags/1870937/> (accessed March 14, 2022).

127. Anne-Sophie Hojlo, "Rétrospective : et Dior inventa le new-look," *L'Obs* [online], June 18, 2015, <https://o.nouvelobs.com/mode/20150618.OBS1055/retrospective-et-dior-inventa-le-new-look.html#modal-msg> (accessed March 14, 2022). See also photographs by Walter Carone (1920-1982).

found it legit to act in times of crisis by using hammers in order to smash windows.¹²⁸ This act of protest completed another Extinction Rebellion's action that took place on September 29, 2020, in Paris, during the Fashion Week, and more precisely during Dior's Spring-Summer 2021 Ready-to-Wear Collection presentation. In that action, an infiltrated militant – a woman – got up at the end of show and walked in the middle of the runway waving a yellow flag with the words “We Are All Fashion Victims”. By her act of bravery, she raised one more voice to warn of the climate crisis, pointing the finger at the fashion industry.¹²⁹ Although the activist is absolutely right, my friend and ex-colleague from the Bachelor's degree Thomas Clément responds more drastically to the environmental movement's statement. He presumes that we are all responsible at least of one death of a living being on this planet according to our consumption (and some of us, production) of fashion items, a point of view that can be resumed by the words “We Are All Fashion Killers”.

I know what you are thinking of. Our story goes dark, very quickly. Yes, indeed. So, let's remove the sequence with Thomas. Now, we are back to the fashion show. And let me introduce to you, here, Olivier Marboeuf.

Olivier Marboeuf is an author, storyteller and independent curator, who supports *the art of destroying* – but with care – a call for decomposition which immediately involves a *re-composition* by imagining what will replace the ravaged, thus disagreeing with the principle of “sabotage for sabotage”, a criticism often addressed to the environmental movement.¹³⁰ Alongside Marboeuf, we could position another figure, opposed to Extinction Rebellion's principles. Piotr Kropotkin, a Russian scientist, philosopher and activist, advocated in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for anarcho-communism and, in particular, for a form of activism defined by “violent action and propaganda by the deed”¹³¹ or, in other words, the total opposite of “non-violent direct action”,¹³² real basis of the environmental movement. I said that history repeats itself, but sometimes it does not. Tatiana Kropotkina, a Russian princess and a distant granddaughter of Piotr Kropotkin, arrived in Paris with the First Wave of emigration (1919-1939) from the Russian Empire and quickly became among other women one of the muses of Christian Dior.¹³³ She succumbed to the couturier, and in succumbing to him, she signed for an opulent life filled with greed and punctuated by two times – wear and possess, always more and more dresses – going against the current of thought of her anarchist predecessor who fought against the capital.

This is the little we can learn from the house that Dior built. A house that is now in flames. Not alone, though. This house is in the middle of a fire next to all its sister houses.

128. Extinction Rebellion, “‘Better broken windows than broken promises’ – Extinction Rebellion women break windows at Barclays HQ in Canary Wharf,” *Extinction Rebellion UK*, April 7, 2021, <https://extinctionrebellion.uk/2021/04/07/breaking-better-broken-windows-than-broken-promises-extinction-rebellion-women-break-windows-at-barclays-hq-in-canary-wharf/> (accessed March 14, 2022).

129. XR Fashion Action France, “WE ARE ALL FASHION VICTIMS : DÉFILÉ DIOR,” *Extinction Rebellion FR*, September 28, 2020, <https://extinctionrebellion.fr/actions/2020/09/28/we-are-all-fashion-victims-defile-dior.html> (accessed March 14, 2022).

130. Tutorial [zoom], Olivier Marboeuf, CCC RP, HEAD–Genève, May 19, 2021.

131. Including bombings and assassinations aimed at the ruling class.

132. I.e. non-violent civil disobedience, such as sit-ins.

133. Modny podcast, “Модный дом Dior: эволюция или революция,” *YouTube*, April 23, 2021, lecture video from Alexandre Vassiliev, 44:00 to 44:45, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cvlYKaLbz4>.

And here I am, wondering if (option 1) we should convince the inhabitants of those houses that their habitat will collapse soon or if (option 2) we should evacuate them by force. Not wanting to pretend to be a saviour of anyone or anything, there is of course a third option: let people come to their own conclusions at their own pace. If you care, you let them go, you let them choose. But holding them back, interfering in their way of life, isn't it a way of caring too? Who am I standing by and watching those houses burn while spreading fire on all the surrounding houses, including our common home, the Earth?

This story is not about fashion. But about people, about us. And this story is actually not a story. This is not a song. Neither a poem. Nor thoughts. But tears, pain, despair, rage.

I am devastated to see that the actors of the fashion world that used to give my life meaning and in which I was very soon disillusioned don't want to change. So, in order to keep myself afloat, I practice the confusion. I face the absurd. I am not perfect, and I don't have any solution to the advanced problem. Being imperfect means taking accountability. I take mine. I don't know what we could replace the fashion system with, to follow Olivier Marboeuf's philosophy.

Or – you know what – maybe, I do. What about love? Could we replace clothes with love?¹³⁴ We should try.

However, this raises the following collateral question: don't we need fashion designers anymore either, then? Maybe we don't. If seeking to become a fashion designer is looking for success, we don't need fashion designers anymore. Because we don't need more "successful" people. Instead of this, we desperately need more peacemakers, healers, restorers, storytellers, and lovers of all kinds. Because, as the French essayist and ecologist Pierre Rabhi said in the preface to Christophe Chenebault's book, "we will have to respond to our true vocation, which is not to produce and consume without end, but to love, admire and take care of life in all its forms."¹³⁵ To a radical call for love, we need to respond with a more radical love.

134. Here, I propose to make a speculative transaction, hardly equivalent a priori, but which supposes to challenge our imagination. With this, I refer in particular to the provocative anti-establishment posters of *Le Grand Soulagement* which illegally appeared in April 2021 on the walls of various cities in France, and which in 2022 were legally published for large public distribution. There are, for example, propositions, such as "Replace surveillance cameras with birdhouses", "Replace Macron with clementine peels" or "Replace capitalism with a good nap": Quentin Faucompré, and Cyril Pedrosa, *Le Grand Soulagement* (Paris: Editions du sous-sol, 2022).

135. Christophe Chenebault, *Impliquez-vous ! 101 actions solidaires et écolos pour un monde meilleur* (Paris: Eyrolles, 2011).









ROBAFLÖR, 2021, archival work

USE.

sabotage.

Fashion doctor

“Il y a trois sortes de violence. La première, mère de toutes les autres, est la violence institutionnelle, celle qui légalise et perpétue les dominations, les oppressions et les exploitations, celle qui écrase et lamine des millions d'Hommes dans ses rouages silencieux et bien huilés. La seconde est la violence révolutionnaire, qui naît de la volonté d'abolir la première. La troisième est la violence répressive, qui a pour objet d'étouffer la seconde en se faisant l'auxiliaire et la complice de la première violence, celle qui engendre toutes les autres. Il n'y a pas de pire hypocrisie de n'appeler violence que la seconde, en feignant d'oublier la première, qui la fait naître, et la troisième qui la tue.”

– Don Helder Camara (1909 -1999)

Have you ever wondered where does vandalism begin, and where does it end?

This is a question which has tormented the general public for a long time regarding various practices, including graffiti for more than half a century, to give you an example (*art or vandalism?*). Vandalism of art objects is not a new thing either (*art on art or vandalism on art?*). Actually, the very notion of vandalism comes to us from the art world. The term was first used in 1794 by Henri Grégoire, bishop of Blois, to describe the pillage and destruction of artworks in the course of the French Revolution. In fashion, though, we no longer speak of art when mentioning an aesthetic intervention on a garment, but of *embellishment*. Yet, the meaning remains the same. An embellishment, in textile- and needlework, is anything that adds design interest to a piece of clothing. That *adds*, not that *removes*. This is important for what lies ahead. However, the term “embellishment” has been used in so many different ways and contexts that there is a danger that it may begin to mean everything and nothing. So, what can be considered as an embellishment and what cannot?

From the French verb “embellir” (literally “to make beautiful”), the term refers to beauty, and so, by definition, to a subjective notion. Vandalism, in its turn, is systematically equated with violence which is also subjective. Yet, by this analogy, violence is reduced to the infringement of private property, the simple act of transgressing the liberal vision of the world which considers private property to be an inalienable, essential, absolute right and almost an organic extension of the individual. When, in fact, violence is not only damaged mailboxes or broken windows. It is much bigger and specific to each person. So, how to navigate between these two subjective concepts – beauty and violence? Where to draw the line (if a line is to be drawn, of course)?

If vandalism is the act of destroying, damaging, and thus *removing something* (*dis-mantling*), any act of *adding something*, as seen above, is *de facto* embellishment, right? However, can the two merge, overlay or simply cross? Can embellishment be considered as vandalism?¹³⁶ And, conversely, can vandalism be considered as embellishment? Can it be a non-violent action? Can it be done *with care*?

On a more concrete level, is embroidering a distress message on a garment label vandalism or embellishment?¹³⁷ I think we would all agree that a cry for help must never be ignored, discredited or even discussed. If violence is inflicted, victims' voices must always be heard, without being put in a box. But what if the embroidery is done downstream?¹³⁸ Vandalism or embellish-

136. In other words, can embellishment be considered as infringement of the integrity of the garment itself, but also of the environment and the garment workers' dignity and health? Because the following collateral question arises: how to understand the so-called embellishment that consists of *removing* matter from newly produced clothes (bleaching, sandblasting, tearing), as in the case of ripped jeans? It goes without saying that the practices involved are destructive on all levels.

137. Here, I refer to messages hidden in clothes by garment workers. They were intended to warn the consumers about the deplorable working conditions upstream. See, for example: Susanna Rustin, “This cry for help on a Primark label can't be ignored,” *The Guardian*, June 25, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/jun/25/primark-label-swaneasa-textile-industry-rana-plaza> (accessed March 14, 2022). Or, later on: Associated Press, “Unpaid Turkish Garment Workers Tag Zara Items to Seek Help”, *Business of Fashion*, November 3, 2017, <https://www.businessoffashion.com/articles/news-analysis/unpaid-turkish-garment-workers-tag-zara-items-to-seek-help/> (accessed March 14, 2022).

138. Indeed, some of the tagged labels appeared to be hoaxes and/or con-

ment? To go further, is altering, in any way, new clothes in stores vandalism or embellishment? I mean, is it *necessarily* vandalism or *can* it be embellishment? And can we rather speak of *sabotage*, to group together these two intersecting abstractions? Can we speak of *emancipatory sabotage*?¹³⁹

I would like to tell you a little about myself. Repair is my form of resistance. Taking care of clothes is my way of taking care of people. People who made these clothes, people who wear them, people who, without even having seen them in their lifetime, (will) suffer the consequences these clothes (will) have caused on our planet (through their production, their use or their disposal). Accordingly, I repair – with no distinction – all clothes with holes, whose path I cross, even the ones in stores. I repair the latter ones in changing rooms, before putting them back on display. I allow myself to heal them, because they are truly injured. Because they have been inflicted with unconsented wounds. Without asking permission, I undermine the very notion of ownership and get us closer to the *commons*.¹⁴⁰ Without waiting to be asked, I make a proposal and pave the road with my cobble towards a *money-free world* and a *gift economy*. On my scale, I help the narrative to get changed. The days of ripped jeans are over. Today, the resistance wears repaired clothes.

Neither vandalism nor embellishment, repair is, therefore, one of my many small but *radical acts of sabotage*. But should it not become common practice for everyone? Should we not all disobey? Should we not all desacralize the products of Modernity and dare to alter the nature of so-called immutable things, the ones that are believed will never change? Should we not all *sabotage*? In his book *Comment saboter un pipeline*, the Swedish author and lecturer in human ecology, Andreas Malm, asks us naively: “The Berlin Wall, we didn’t bring it down by caressing the cement, did we?”¹⁴¹ And he reminds us that “slavery was not abolished by conscientious white people gently disassembling the institution.”¹⁴² Radical acts of sabotage were needed. Only placed end-to-end, they enabled emancipatory alternatives to emerge.

sumer-to-consumer awareness campaigns: Scarlett Kilcooley-O’Halloran, “UPDATE: Primark Concludes Labels Were A Hoax,” *Vogue* [online], June 27, 2014, <https://www.vogue.co.uk/article/primark-conclude-exhausting-hours-label-hoax> (accessed March 14, 2022).

139. Emancipatory sabotage leads us to a positive or affirmative sabotage. *Affirmative Sabotage* was first theorized by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, Indian literary postcolonial theorist, feminist critic, and professor of comparative literature. In 2020, the concept of affirmative sabotage has been taken up by two researchers, self-described saboteurs, Miriam Yosef and Thu Hoài Tran, and crystallised in the form of The Institute for Affirmative Sabotage (IAS). The saboteurs explain, relying on Spivak’s work, affirmative sabotage by critical-performative acts of disruption and dismantling power structures. “Instead of systematic destruction, affirmative sabotage relies on the fact that it is possible and necessary after all to appropriate instruments and theories of hegemonic discourses for critical intervention.” To find out more, see: <https://affirmativesabotage.org/en/manifesto/>.

140. The *commons* are the cultural or the natural resources that a community decides to treat as a shared wealth. The commons imply that property is not conceived as an appropriation or a privatization but as a *use*. Yet, there is no commons without *commoning* (the process of community participation). Indeed, commons are managed and maintained collectively by the community, which establishes rules with the aim of preserving and perpetuating these resources, while providing its members with the possibility and the right to use them, or even, if the community so decides, by granting this right to all. The concept of commons is raised today as a viable alternative to capitalism that puts human wellbeing and the planet above profit.

141. Andreas Malm, *Comment saboter un pipeline*, translated by Etienne Dobenesque (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020), 128.

142. *Ibid.*, 50.

It is now our turn to *desperately* need radical acts of sabotage, as small as they may be. As seen before, we are facing with a collapsing world that has entered a drastically uncertain era. But at the same time, we are facing with a general lack of action in response to planetary meltdown. So, to counter mass apathy, we *do* need to *re-engage* with sabotage. "In the context of the climate emergency, [sabotage] is simultaneously a logical, justifiable and effective form of resistance."¹⁴³ We need to embrace sabotage today, at least, to shift the *Overton window*.¹⁴⁴ To make it clear that nothing can be taken for granted anymore. To make it acceptable that our civilization is certainly doomed to change into makers, repairers, cleaners, assemblers, constructors, as illustrated in the science fictions of Octavia Estelle Butler.¹⁴⁵ To make it thinkable that we *have* the power to drive change. Even a little.

User manual

I really like the object of the manual, the guide, the charter, the code, the manifesto. Did you know that in French, to designate a "user manual", we use the term "mode d'emploi"? Very naively and poetically, we could translate it literally as "the fashion of use". And it may remind you of Kate Fletcher's theory of Craft of use. But we digress.

What if the future of fashion is not selling and buying garments anymore, but selling and buying tools, for instance? Before the pandemic, it was reported that ELLE magazine is back to including Burda patterns in its print issues. During the pandemic, the TV show *Emily in Paris* was released worldwide, and Marie Claire magazine seized the opportunity to integrate a similar practice on its online platform. Since then, in its articles related to the series, Marie Claire is not redirecting its readers to shops and ready-to-wear garments anymore, but to pay-per-click patterns in order to enable them to replicate the character's most iconic looks at home.¹⁴⁶

Among many other actors in the fashion industry, the Swiss design collective Prototypes has made it its trademark. Rather than producing new garments, the studio opted, from the beginning, for an approach focused on strategies of upcycling and repurposing. Prototypes sells guidances, called *Proto Packs*, and anybody can buy them. As we can read on its official website, "The Proto Packs equip those with the will and desire to [create pieces of clothing] themselves with a manual and sewing patterns to do so. [They come] in different difficulty levels."¹⁴⁷ And, unfortunately, with a price.

So, what about offering ideas for free, rather than selling them? Of course, for the producer part, if we cannot sustain ourselves financially, we cannot

143. Ibid., 85.

144. The *Overton window*, also known as the *window of discourse*, is an allegory that locates the set of ideas, opinions, practices and policies considered politically acceptable in the public opinion of a society at a given time. Forged in the 1990s and developed by liberal lobbyists, the concept first defined the spectrum of what can be said within a society before becoming a tool for changing standards. Since its conception, it has not lost popularity and is still much used today in politics and rhetoric.

145. See, for example: Octavia E. Butler, *Parable of the Talents* (New York: Warner Books, 1998).

146. See, for example: Marine Jacquet, "Emily in Paris : 8 looks coups de coeur à coudre soi-même," *Marie Claire* [online], February 23, 2022, <https://www.marieclaire.fr/idees/emily-in-paris-8-looks-coups-de-coeur-a-coudre-soi-meme,1423459.asp> (accessed March 26, 2022).

147. Prototypes, "About," <https://proto-types.ch/ABOUT-1> (accessed March 26, 2022).

call, by definition, the system in which we navigate *sustainable*.¹⁴⁸ But can we stop for a second and imagine a post-consumerist fashion? In fact, we don't have to go very far, because this ideal does already exist in the actions of people who believe in the culture of sharing, lending, giving; where free of charge goes hand in hand with circularity.

These examples include the initiative Fixing Fashion, a proposition from One Army, a group of people that tackles, through its projects, global problems. On Fixing Fashion platform, the collective shares ideas on making, repair, care and upgrade of clothes. In contrast to Prototypes, Fixing Fashion sells none of its ideas. It learns them to you. And if you persist in wanting to buy the instructions, you will be prevented from clicking on the Store button, as reminder banners will cover your screen.¹⁴⁹

But can we go further? What if fashion doesn't actually owe anything to anyone? What if fashion could *live on its own* and create just air and nice pictures? In the post-truth era we live, everything is a lie until proven otherwise. And some lies do materialise.

Kezako is a fashion brand, or to be more precise a *fake-fashion* brand, launched in 2019 by two friends. They wanted it as much independent of any market forces as possible. They dreamed it as a space without rules, without order, without restrictions.¹⁵⁰ Yet, it cannot be said that Kezako does not produce clothes. It *does* produce, but a very small number of pieces, all unique. And it cannot be said that Kezako doesn't sell its creations. It *does* sell, but at a price the two founders randomly decide. However, regardless these two aspects, Kezako offers *above all* speculations, and we – as consumers – consume stories.¹⁵¹ But isn't storytelling the best tool to have and to use today? The one that will harm *the least* humans and other living beings on Earth?

Well, it is good to have the tools, but...

148. Beatrice Danelli, "Resisting the neoliberal utopia that is fashion," *1granary*, February 10, 2022, <https://1granary.com/opinion/resisting-the-neoliberal-utopia-that-is-fashion-sophie-fellay/> (accessed March 26, 2022). In conversation with the interviewer, Sophie Fellay develops the idea of what sustaining ourselves means. See also her Master's thesis: Sophie Fellay, *Fashion as bread and butter* (Geneva: Haute école d'art et de design de Genève, 2021).

149. One Army, *Fixing Fashion*, <https://fixing.fashion/index.html> (accessed March 26, 2022).

150. Kezako Paris, *KEZAKO*, <https://www.kezako-paris.com> (accessed March 26, 2022).

151. Patrick Stasny, "How to make a fashion brand that doesn't sell clothes," *1granary*, January 10, 2022, <https://1granary.com/designers-3/how-to-make-a-fashion-brand-that-doesnt-sell-clothes/> (accessed March 26, 2022).

Loopholes:
What would you
take with you?

“What will you take with you, if you never come home again?”¹⁵²

This is the question raised by the Russian-Tajik singer Manizha in the introduction to her song “City of the Sun” (Город Солнца), which talks about the forced exodus she and her family experienced alongside thousands of Tajiks who had to flee the country during the 1992-1997 civil war, but also about present-day migrants and future political, war and climate refugees. She addresses this question to her audience and I, in turn, address it to you. Have you ever asked yourself *what you will take with you, if you never come home again?*

Many thinkers, writers, media personalities and, generally, people from all over the world have already done publicly a look-alike thought exercise, by reflecting on what they would take to a desert island. Among them are celebrities. Among the celebrities is, for instance, on the one hand the American actor, singer and writer Billy Porter who answers he would take his computer (“because everything is on it”), on the other hand is his German-Irish colleague from the industry Michael Fassbender who would grab a surfboard (because, obviously, “[he would be] on an island”)¹⁵³, on a third hand is the French influencer Nabilla who reveals in a recent Instagram live she would not leave for a desert island without a concealer.¹⁵⁴

But stranding on a beach¹⁵⁵ is fantasy, impossible or, at least, with-a-low-probability-to-happen-in-our-lifetime situations. So here is another more realistic thought exercise: If you had to keep just one object to put aside today, in 2022, and to use in 2050, what would it be? The founder of Tesla and SpaceX companies, Elon Musk has already responded to this question back in 2018. For the billionaire, everything is clear – the must-have item we should all invest in is a firearm. Indeed, in his opinion, we need to equip ourselves with appropriate tools to survive a potential next zombie apocalypse.¹⁵⁶ This “tool of (for?) the future” says a lot about the so-called future that accompanies it. As well as about the present, about our current desires for the next decades and generations. Because it actually raises the question of imaginary. We are witnessing today a war of narratives¹⁵⁷. What kind

152. Translation from Russian of: “Что ты возьмешь с собой, если больше никогда не вернешься домой?” To watch the music video: MANIZHA, “MANIZHA - Город Солнца,” *YouTube*, December 16, 2020, music video, 4:26, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Emcn2tJX6bw>.

153. Molly Fitzpatrick, “Celebrity Speed Round: What Would You Bring to a Desert Island?” *Speed*, December 21, 2016, <https://nymag.com/speed/2016/12/celebrity-speed-round-what-do-you-bring-to-a-desert-island.html> (accessed March 12, 2022).

154. The live show was not recorded, but the influencer had been saying this for a long time, see for example: Caroline Siavy, “L’interview beauté (ni oui ni non) de Nabilla,” *Elle* [online], March 7, 2019, <https://www.elle.fr/Beaute/News-beaute/Beaute-des-stars/L-interview-beaute-Ni-oui-ni-non-de-Nabilla-3741646> (accessed March 12, 2022).

155. Here, without any apparent sign of human life.

156. He sold off his promised limited pre-order edition of 200,000 units (500 dollars each). For more information, see for example: Andrew Griffin, “Elon Musk sells 20,000 flamethrowers to the American public, jokes about ‘zombie apocalypse’,” *The Independent*, February 1, 2018, <https://www.independent.co.uk/tech/elon-musk-flamethrower-boring-company-sells-out-release-date-when-details-features-a8189886.html> (accessed March 12, 2022).

157. For as long as humans have been fighting, there has been one main category of wars that were commonly understood as “conventional”, i.e. where people fought with cold weapons and firearms (and where panic among civilians was triggered). Then, in the second half of the 20th century, they were joined by the so-called “technological” wars, where smart weapons, drones, cameras, sat-

of world do we want to live in? What kind of society do we project ourselves in? What kind of desirable future do we want to imagine and have in 2050?

To stick with Elon Musk, the entrepreneur sees by 2050 one million people on Mars. I do not have the same vision. In fact, I have in mind something at the opposite extreme. By 2050, I imagine the world differently, starting with my hometown. I imagine Cointrin airport closed and turned into arable land to feed the canton, I imagine – as sad as it sounds – rationed coffee for everyone and one shower per week per inhabitant. I want to believe in the most ambitious scenario to avoid the catastrophe, the resilient one, presented in the study published in 2020 and carried out by the Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability (CID) of the University of Lausanne (UNIL) for the State of Geneva, which speculates on the measures to be taken to make Geneva truly carbon neutral by 2050.¹⁵⁸ As you can see, there is an obvious collision of imaginaries. And if we are really in a *war* of narratives, should we not *fight* for ours? Should we not defend our point of view? Should we not resist?

Resistance has many faces. I haven't seen them all, but I know that paying attention is one of them. So, I pay attention, and I act. I change the *I* into a *we*. I seek to be connected. With people, with stories, with spaces and times. I explore art and design practices that think about the *here and now*. But I don't forget the past. I address messages. I ask for sensitivity, transparency, accountability. Political authorities, public institutions, private companies. Individuals. And I receive messages. I make cartographies, genealogies, power relations visible. I stay in conversation. I stand for a convergence of struggles and I converge my body to that of others. I move. I join and build communities with my fellows. Together, we build alternative realities from today. Together, we share, we love, we have fun. Together, we *counter* the dominant culture. For that, we organise ourselves. And we suggest: Be on the side of those who organise themselves.¹⁵⁹

Make connections, then take actions.

Go produce in the places where you have consumed.

ellites were used (and where panic among civilians was also triggered). Today, we are witnessing a third kind of wars – an online media war. It is no longer necessary to use physical weapons. The panic among civilians is still triggered, but people fight with headlines and cliffhangers. The winner is the one whose narrative captures the audience the most: Redaktsiya, "Редакция. News: война новой эры, скандал с фигуристками, чиновник в «Доме-2»," YouTube, February 20, 2022, news video, 0:44 to 1:21, <https://youtu.be/NfcptNW8FeI>.

158. This study has the particularity to take the problem by the end. Rather than starting from current carbon emissions and trying to reduce them, the study proposes to start from the carbon budget that would be available by 2050, i.e. that each Genevan has one tonne of CO₂, and determine the conditions for achieving this goal retrospectively. The study, however, does not address the delicate issue of the political and social conflicts that these changes will entail. It at least has the merit, through its scenarios, of giving an insight into the difficult path ahead. Nelly Niwa concludes: "Our scenarios, which are not necessarily appealing, are also there for us to propose others. The story has yet to be written. There is therefore a tension between what is desirable for the climate and what we are capable of doing in accordance with our democratic principles." To read the report: Service Cantonal du Développement Durable (SCDD), "Etude exploratoire "Neutralité carbone" à Genève en 2050," *République et canton de Genève* [online], November 20, 2020, <https://www.ge.ch/document/etude-exploratoire-neutralite-carbone-geneve-2050> (accessed March 12, 2022).

159. The appeal is borrowed from the authors' collective Comité invisible, which explains in its book *L'insurrection qui vient* that "faced with the evidence of the catastrophe, there are those who are indignant and those who take note, those who denounce and those who organise themselves". The collective places itself on the side of the latter and calls everyone to do the same. See: Comité invisible, *L'insurrection qui vient* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2007).

Or don't produce at all. But don't hesitate.¹⁶⁰
Go hack, play, celebrate.
Change the narrative.

Be a counter-master, my friend.
Use counter-tools.

160. As says Serbian political activist Srdja Popovic, "there is a universal advice that you can give to the people around the world. It works well. In Serbia, in North Korea, in France: if you want to change, it has to be you. There will be nobody else to do this change for you." librairie mollat, "Srdja Popovic - Comment faire tomber un dictateur quand on est seul, tout petit, et sans armes," *YouTube*, November 4, 2015, presentation video, 3:41 to 3:55, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jQq4AvLMecE&list=FLzhgPqYB9Nv7cThtSe195xw&index=1&t=137s>.

**COUNTER-
TOOLS.
seam ripper.**

Unstitching

“Prends appui sur ce que tu sais, travaille-le, contourne-le, invente, découds, défais, transforme, cherche les racines, la trace, fais un montage, prends position. Glorieuse, n’abandonne jamais.”

– Sonia Rykiel, *Les Lèvres rouges*

What if Audre Lorde was right?¹⁶¹ What if “the master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house”?¹⁶² What would be the *counter-tools* to succeed in dismantling it then? For instance, the *fashion master’s* house? Very concretely, if we consider the needle as the pragmatic fashion master’s tool, should we not see in the seam ripper the ultimate counter-tool that will allow us to disrupt the massive status quo of the fashion system?

I do see. With the seam ripper, I unstitch fast fashion clothes and put them back on the shelf in the store. By deconstructing the garment (carefully, seam by seam), I bring to light the work of sewing that is still invisibilised and taken for granted in our contemporary consumerist society. By sorting and storing the garment parts in separate bags, by taking my time, I work. It is a labour of love. For the garment itself, of course, but also and above all for the next person. By returning the garment in pieces as I would have liked to receive it, I invite everyone to take it. I make an offering. So why not give ourselves a chance to deviate from the ready-made paths and seize it?

We accept to complete the assembly of our ready-to-assemble furniture purchased from globalized retailers at home. But we find it totally unthinkable to touch a sewing machine or to take a needle in hand on behalf of our clothes. We prefer them ready-to-wear. In the 18th century, though, it was common practice for people – both women and men – to carry with them in their clothes a needle with a thread, in little cases called by the French word “nécessaires”. They were necessary for (privileged) people to darn their clothes during their coach travels. Times have changed. Most people got disconnected from the sewing skills. And practices have adapted themselves to the overflow of clothing on Earth. So today, I carry with me a seam ripper, which I keep in my wallet in the coin pocket. I carry it with me in case I need to gently unpick a seam. Sometimes it is necessary to deconstruct in order to better repair. That is what I do. I *un-*do to better *re-*do. Following the example of the author and researcher Sandrine Roudaut¹⁶³, I “build the boat of tomorrow while making holes in the hull of the one of today”.¹⁶⁴ “Mad, but brilliant,” as the filmmaker and climate activist Jack Harries¹⁶⁵ would have said. I am like these machines, in his documentary *Seat At The Table*, on the Scottish Highlands chopping down forests in order to fight climate change,

161. Audre Lorde (1934–1992) was an American writer, feminist, womanist, librarian, and civil rights activist. We remember her as a self-described “black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet”. In her life, through her prose and her poems, Audre Lorde never stopped fighting racism, sexism, homophobia and all forms of social injustice.

162. “The Master’s Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master’s House” is Audre Lorde’s most famous essay and is included in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (1984). Lorde questions in it the scope and ability for change to be implemented when examining problems through a racist, patriarchal lens. Speaking from her experiences, she addresses the then-burgeoning feminist academia with its heterosexual white bias. She writes of the need to understand and embrace the true power of difference. Since then, Lorde’s well-known declaration was many times questioned, reappropriated, developed, rejected, rewritten and even misread, as it can be applied to absolutely everything. However, there is no doubt that her statement and the idea behind it still don’t leave anyone indifferent.

163. Sandrine Roudaut is a French perspectivist, lecturer, editor (Editions La Mer Salée), essayist and novelist, convinced of the power of fiction and the need for combative and luminous narratives to authorise another world.

164. Thomas Firh, and Solene Roge, “Edito,” *les others*, no. 12 [(Re)construction] (2020): 3.

165. Jack Harries is a documentary filmmaker, producer, and presenter with an interest in climate change and the natural world. In 2021, he co-produced a documentary series titled *Seat At The Table*, which he and his team presented at COP26 in Glasgow, Scotland (Oct. 31, 2021 – Nov. 12, 2021).

to save what is left to be saved.¹⁶⁶

My practice, then, can be perceived as totally unproductive (or *de-productive* [in the sense of *undoing*], if we consider that stitching [here, *doing*] is production). And that is alright. I basically do a profitless work. I play, I trick, I hack. I “do the wig” (“fais la perruque”), in the terms developed by Michel de Certeau, amongst others.¹⁶⁷ I am a wig maker. My job is to create diversionary tactics. And this thesis is one of them. This thesis is an attempt to make the writing practice a way of wiggling too.

Language

We need to rethink our vocabularies. As the French writer and philosopher Albert Camus declared in 1944, “to name an object badly is to add to the misfortune of this world.” In 1951, Camus echoed this idea, nuancing it, “the logic of the revolted is... to strive for clear language so as not to thicken the universal lie.”¹⁶⁸ I agree with the author and call for making an effort to use words that will allow a paradigm shift. I also align myself with the thoughts of the fashion designer and activist Lucie Chaptal: “If the ecological transition starts with ourselves, the language needs to support this development. Indeed, the vocabulary positions the ideas, the projects, the practices. Finally, the words are also seeds that inspire.”¹⁶⁹

Talking about words, for me, the term *waste*, for instance, is a distortion of the language. What we call *waste* today will not be waste tomorrow in a circular economy (it already is not in some parts of the world or has never been in some cultures), but a resource, a product at the end of its cycle that becomes raw material in the making of a new product. So, why not lay the foundations of these alternative imaginaries (not to say realities) today without waiting for tomorrow? Let’s no longer talk about waste, let’s talk about *resources*. Moreover, let’s get out of binary and novelty. Let’s talk about *plural existences* and *alternative perspectives*. And above all, let’s stop naming our practices *sustainable*, if we are only doing some “bricolage” without taking into account the past, the present and the future. If we cannot be *accountable* for our actions.

And once the words have been changed, let’s apply them in our practices. Let’s talk about *compostability* rather than *biodegradability* of materials. Everything on Earth is by definition biodegradable. Indeed, everything will

166. Jack Harries, “Fighting Climate Change With Nature | Seat At The Table,” *YouTube*, November 3, 2021, documentary, 3:39 to 3:43, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ezto3Mcntu0&list=PLCz4fqxNcuDkYWHO83DRQXB-KJ4Ww2001&index=8>. Jack explains that “[the chopped forests] aren’t native forests, they’re plantations. In the ‘70s and ‘80s this landscape, known as peatland or peat bog, was seen as wastelands, so it was drained, dug up, and tree crops were planted. But we now know peat bogs are far from wastelands, they are carbon-storing wonder worlds. Peatland only covers 3% of the land on Earth, but it stores about 25% of global soil carbon.”

167. The French word “perruque” designates the use of materials and tools by a worker, in the workplace and during working hours, for the purpose of making an object outside the normal production of the enterprise: Michel de Certeau, *L’invention du quotidien, tome 1 : Arts de faire* (Paris: Gallimard, 1980), 43–49. The precise English equivalent is a “homer”. See: Michel Anteby, “La « perruque » en usine : approche d’une pratique marginale, illégale et fuyante,” *Sociologie du travail* 45, no.4 (2003): 453–471.

168. Jean-Laurent Cassely, “Marine Le Pen ne sait pas citer Camus (ni faire une recherche Google),” *Slate*, January 19, 2015, <http://www.slate.fr/story/97011/mal-nommer-les-choses-marine-le-pen-cite-camus> (accessed April 2, 2022).

169. Lucie Chaptal, “Inspiration by words,” *We made together*, April 9, 2020, <https://www.wemadetogether.com/inspiration/> (accessed April 2, 2022).

degrade, sooner or later, thanks by Living beings. It is just a matter of time. Let's think twice before making thick seams (folded seam, French seam, etc.) on our clothes, for example. Let's think about the end of the cycle of our resources. Let's consider composting them, and make the process easier, keeping in mind that multiple layers of fabric make biodegradation longer. Furthermore, in a very literal way, the word *biodegradable* can be understood, when deconstructed, as the ability (-able) to lose (de-) value (grad) through life (bio-). So, why not turn back to fulfilling practices where humans (anthropo-) would reconnect with the ability (-able) to give value (grad) to the non-human life that surrounds them? This approach could be called then *anthropogradable* towards stuff, systems, living beings. It could be seen as anthropocentric. But human beings must recognise that they have caused (and are still causing) harm to living beings, starting with their fellow human beings, and must take responsibility and provide reparations to the concerned people and other living species.

To return to clothing, we need to develop a relationship to textiles as close as the one we have with soil. In this paradigm, textile resources considered at the end of the cycle could be seen – as well as words – as *seeds*, their collection as a *harvest* (for the next generations), and the circular practices accompanying them (sorting and reusing), in view of their application, should benefit from *arable land*, a space of its own, of material and social exchange. This space would be a space of life. Or rather of several lives. A new type of *tissuthèque* (*textile library* in French). A *tissu-aux-multiples-vies-thèque* (*multiple-lives-textile library* in a literal translation). This space would be – for textiles – a shelter, a cradle, a bed. In the sense of a stream bed. This space could become a *fibershed*¹⁷⁰, for instance, in reference to watersheds. Fibres need to be accompanied, to be cared for. So, we have the responsibility to create structures to enable them to go back to land (nourishing it, not polluting it). By runoff. Little by little. And to do so, we need to consider rewinding our practices.¹⁷¹ But also, to rethink already existing spaces, the spaces where we live and work.

In this latter context, we need to address once again¹⁷² the question of fashion schools. Giulia Mensitieri has already spoken of fashion as a whole in the term of *heterotopia* (that could be understood as *an other place*), borrowing the concept from the French philosopher Michel Foucault.¹⁷³ However, fashion schools should not, in my opinion, be located within this perimeter (because they are in it, despite my first illusions), but on the contrary should become a third place, *an-other-than-other-topia*, i.e. a framework distinct from that of the industry, where the time would be worth taking.¹⁷⁴

170. And the good news is that this kind of space already exists.

To find out more, see: <https://fibershed.org>.

171. Alice Payne, "Fashion Futuring in the Anthropocene. Sustainable Fashion as "Taming" and "Rewilding"", *Fashion Theory* 23, no. 1 (2017): 5-23. Payne theorized rewilding actions within the fashion system, assigning them such practices as making, using or repairing of clothes.

172. Indeed, many thinkers have already done this job. Among them, is Sophie Fellay who discussed the building of alternatives to precarious work in the fashion industry and schools in her Master's thesis: Sophie Fellay, *Fashion as bread and butter* (Geneva: Haute école d'art et de design de Genève, 2021).

173. Giulia Mensitieri, « *Le plus beau métier du monde* » (Paris: La Découverte, 2018), 12.

174. Here, my proposal resonates with the proposal for a safe space submitted among *The Propositions for the school of tomorrow* (Geneva: CCC MA program, 2020) by a group of students with whom I am completing my Master's degree right now. However, I do not see the school as a dome with bulletproof walls, but as an indefinable (because elusive) zone with permeable surfaces and ever-shifting lines. In short, I agree with the nuance brought by Olivier Marboeuf who specifies the safe space by saying that it should be, in his opinion, constantly moving and reshaping itself: Oliv-

They must become places where kindness, devotion and sharing can be learned and experienced. They must become life-worlds where there are room for error (which does not hurt anyone) and room for play. They must become children's huts. With many doors and windows though, that would be always open and could be used at any time as emergency exits.¹⁷⁵ And in these children's huts, we would find the necessary tools for navigating, after graduation and *during* our studies, in a changing world. As of now, in her classes, the environmentally-minded artist and teacher Sue Bamford takes care to give the right keys, she says, to her pupils. That is, when Sue teaches sewing skills, she teaches them as *postapocalyptic life skills*.¹⁷⁶ Although the naming can be a bit frightening, she puts confidence and meaning into it. She makes her words *desirable*. And I am sure, in consequence, if we make our words desirable, we will be able to make the future we portray with them *desirable too*.

ier Marboeuf, "La leçon de Genève / The Geneva Lesson (fr/eng)," *Toujours Debout*, March 27, 2021, <https://olivier-marboeuf.com/2021/03/27/la-le-con-de-geneve-the-geneva-lesson-fr-eng/> (accessed March 12, 2022).

175. I have to acknowledge the importance of the emergency exits in the building of alternatives. As long as academic institutions, in this case, have not rid themselves of the notion of ownership, have not put an end to the inside/outside divide and have not brought down their *walls*, we will need emergency exits. In this respect, the latter have a key role in Lorelei Regamey's work: Lorelei Regamey, *'ni:.dɛl.wɜ:k/: means of re/member-ing* (Geneva: Haute école d'art et de design de Genève, 2021), 25.

176. Lecture [zoom], Fashion Act Now on *Defashion*, December 14, 2021.

conclusion

"Interdependency between women is the way to a freedom which allows the I to be, not to be used, but in order to be creative. This is a difference between the passive be and the active being."

– Audre Lorde, *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*

Here we are. This thesis, which has been punctuated all along by declarations from great figures, starting with Bruce Lee and finishing with Audre Lorde, is coming to an end. However, what if we don't conclude it? I mean, what if we *don't take sides*? What if we break with the pros and cons, avoid the polarisation of means, and don't choose between tools and counter-tools? Indeed, the anthropologist David Scott calls to get out of the binary and to stop the confrontation "resistance/domination". According to him, to oppose these two is to reproduce imperialist patterns.¹⁷⁷ In our reference system, the counter-tools would correspond to resistance, when the tools would be the crystallisation of the dominant culture. Yet, both of them can be useful to achieve our ends. If our intentions are good, we must do everything possible for our purpose, try everything at our disposal for *change*. "In our world, divide and conquer must become define and empower."¹⁷⁸ So, let's welcome disagreements, host conversations. Let's keep *talking*. Let's resist in and out. Within the institutions and outside of them. Let's use *their* tools and those that don't belong to anyone. Let's not be dogmatic. Let's face our points of view. In and out. Within the resistance and outside of it.¹⁷⁹ And eventually, we will all come out of these experiences richer.

So maybe, this thesis should be renamed to "Be whole. Use both tools and counter-tools." or simply "Be you. Use any tool you want, but keep *being*. Resist." However, resistance has its limits in our capitalist society if we do not consider money, as dirty it can be, as a tool as well. Indeed, it should be kept in mind that, today, "money is the biggest driver [of change] and not environmental or social concerns, not altruistic concerns as often speculated."¹⁸⁰

This way, and in order not to reject money ex officio, we need to rethink our relationship to it. We need to engage in alternative discussions regarding it. We need to talk, for example, about *tax relief*. Indeed, people often think that the solution is to *add* (carbon taxes, for example, to "bad" performers), when in fact it is to *remove* (VAT taxes, for example, to "good" performers).¹⁸¹ It is to *un-burden*. It is about removing a burden. And developing a culture of mutual aid and supply. Multiplying, among other things, repair services and spaces for co-creation and horizontal learning.

We also need to talk about debt. To begin with, about the ecological debt. We cannot and should not turn a blind eye to the past, but rather than abdicating our responsibilities by blaming previous generations for the ongoing ecological disaster, we should absolve ourselves of our responsibilities to future generations by recognizing that the condition of our planet is presently in our

177. David Scott, *Refashioning Futures: Criticism after Postcoloniality* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999).

178. Audre Lorde, "The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House," in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (New York: Crossing Press, 1984).

179. In ecology alone, at the very core of the environmentalist struggle, there are many differences of opinion on what is effective and what is not. However, although the movements must continue to discuss with each other, this debate is, in fact, futile. Since their purpose is common, everyone must embrace the practices of their peers. The interns on the Floraisons podcast remind us from episode to episode that, for example, "fighting only through the prism of non-violence impoverishes the spectrum of available tactics and weakens the whole of the resistance. Therefore, it is important to rehabilitate violence as one tactic among others. [The diversity of tactics matters.] We can no longer afford to be ineffective." See: Stagiaires, hosts, "Le mythe de la non-violence," *Floraisons*, November 5, 2021, <https://floraisons.blog/le-mythe-de-la-non-violence/> (accessed March 12, 2022).

180. Lecture [zoom], Dr. Katia Vladimirova on *Stream 3: Sustainable Garment*, Asia-Europe Environment Forum (ENVforum) 2020: Creating an Enabling Environment for SDG 12 in ASEM, November 10, 2020.

181. Ibid.

hands. Rather than talking about debt, we should be talking about *lending*. As the famous saying goes, “we do not inherit the land from our ancestors, we borrow it from our children.”¹⁸²

Then, the financial debt, and money in its pure form. We should stop seeing investments in alternatives as budget cuts in our everyday comfort. As well as we should stop thinking that (material, digital, energy, etc.) sobriety is a matter of *everything* except money. In resistance, we usually want to *pull* the curtain on all interconnected systems of injustice, including racism, classism, sexism and many more, without dwelling on it. But sometimes, it is important to take a closer look at that curtain, its composition and price, and to see how much it would cost to repair it or to replace it with a fairer, healthier, more responsible one. In this regard, what is the price of sustainability in fashion? According to a study by BCG (Boston Consulting Group) in collaboration with Fashion For Good (a platform for sustainable fashion innovation), making the clothing industry sustainable will require an investment of between 20 and 30 billion dollars per year.¹⁸³ It is a lot of money, but there is a lot more to gain in terms of social and environmental justice. In terms of love and life.¹⁸⁴

Finally, what about the positive debt, a debt that cannot be monetised? In his book *L'ordre de l'argent*, the Swiss philosopher Nino Fournier tries to think of a world outside of money. Relying on the works of Graeber, Derrida, Godbout and Mauss (among others), he formulates the following idea on *giving*: “The giver and the receiver [...] always give and receive more than what they concretely give: they give the other the possibility of entering into a human relationship.”¹⁸⁵ The positive debt (generated by the act of giving,

182. Quotersearch, “We Do Not Inherit the Earth from Our Ancestors; We Borrow It from Our Children,” *Quote Investigator*, January 22, 2013, <https://quoteinvestigator.com/2013/01/22/borrow-earth/> (accessed April 8, 2022).

183. Bettina Bush Mignanego, “Le prix de la durabilité,” *Luxury Tribune*, June 8, 2020, <https://www.luxurytribune.com/le-prix-de-la-durabilite> (accessed April 2, 2022).

184. By the way, did you know that *change*, in general, is actually cheaper than *business-as-usual*? Studies in different spheres of life – ranging from the scale of the private homes to international politics – show year after year, for more than half a century, that we cannot continue to act according to role models based on individualism, hate and profit. But above all, they show that we cannot keep using the economic factor (what is cheaper, what is more expensive) as an argument justifying our behaviour patterns. However, as part of an exercise, we can turn the argument against itself. For example, many prison studies in the United States, between 2009 and 2012, showed that death penalty actually costs about three times more than life imprisonment. Lives matter and so does social justice. Death cost and so do social inequalities. Indeed, to give you another example, the introduction of free public transport in different parts of the world have also already proven their long-term profitability in comparison to the traditional widespread charging of public transport. Moreover, the Finnish state provides since 2008 free accommodation for homeless people until they are reintegrated into the labour market. The end of the costs generated by life on the street (hospitalization costs, legal costs, emergency accommodation costs, etc.) means that this programme ultimately costs the community *nothing*. Solidarity turns out to be profitable. To push further, the anthropologist and economist Paul Jorion even maintains in his book *Vers un nouveau monde* (Paris: La Renaissance du livre, 2017) that the universal basic income would be even more expensive than a money-free world. At all levels: healthcare, education, housing, food, etc. Thus, moving towards change saves money (and lives). As a matter of fact, and more recently, the third part of the sixth IPCC report (April 2022), which addresses solutions to limit the damage of climate crisis (and avoid the 6th mass extinction), announced and demonstrated that *taking action* will truly cost *less* than business-as-usual: Bon Pote, “Nouveau rapport du GIEC : agir coûtera moins cher que le Business as Usual”, *Bon Pote*, April 4, 2022, <https://bonpote.com/nouveau-rapport-du-giec-agir-couter-moins-cher-que-le-business-as-usual/> (accessed April 8, 2022).

185. Nino Fournier, *L'ordre de l'argent: Critique de l'économie* (Montréal: Liber, 2019), 187.

as theorised by Mauss) is therefore that which does not wait to be repaid, but which is there to establish contact, to initiate a dialogue. The philosopher adds: "Giving could be read as an act of gratitude for the simple fact that the other exists [...]. Giving is just another name for love."¹⁸⁶ And since love calls love, should we not start the virtuous circle from now on? Should we not lay the foundations of a sharing economy and a caring society from today?¹⁸⁷ Of course, the first rule of capitalism is "nothing has to be free". But can we try? Because, ultimately, should not the most expensive things on Earth (in terms of symbolic value) be *priceless*?

In sum, as long as money exists in our world, it will remain a tool, which it will always be possible to (re)direct towards worthy causes of common good or towards less noble ends to the detriment of the collectivity. A tool that will be there, at our disposal, that we can choose to use or not. But there are also naturally priceless tools, one of the greatest being *communication*. It costs nothing to question, to challenge, to deconstruct. And this is what I mostly do. I do not do fashion. I simply ask questions. And if art is about asking questions, then probably I do art. Anyway, I do not want to leave you without clues, because I know how open endings can be disturbing, confusing and frustrating. So, putting myself in your shoes, I am inclined to ask myself: to understand my questions, do you actually need tools? In other words, and it opens up a wider question: do we need tools to understand *other tools*?¹⁸⁸ The artist Valentina Desideri answers: "No, we all already have the capacity of paying attention, that allows us to perceive tools. Then, everyone makes their own connections, parallels, conclusions."¹⁸⁹

The same here. All I did, in reality, throughout my thesis is that I shared with you my views on *sharing*. Nothing more. And you paid attention, which I thank you for. All conclusions, though, you draw now yourself.¹⁹⁰ But don't forget this little reminder from Vestoj's manifesto: "nothing is holy."¹⁹¹

186. Ibid., 195.

187. One of the finest examples in fashion is Blue Tin Production, an apparel manufacturing cooperative founded in Chicago by Iranian-American writer and activist Hoda Katebi and run by immigrant, refugee, and working-class women of colour. It is close to Katebi's heart that "at Blue Tin, power and ownership are equally distributed among cooperative members. This means profits are shared, decisions on issues like wages and waste management are made collectively, partnerships with clients are formed without sub-contractors, and the role of production lead rotates among members. The cooperative also offers all members access to healthcare (physical and mental), social services, and childcare." To read more: Daphne Chouliaraki Milner, "Hoda Katebi's Mission to Abolish Sweatshops," *Atmos* [online], January 27, 2022, <https://atmos.earth/hoda-katebi-blue-tin-production-mission-to-abolish-sweatshops-fast-fashion/> (accessed March 12, 2022).

188. For instance, other tools that might be exhibited, such as tarot cards.

189. Lecture [zoom], Valentina Desideri, and Denise Ferreira da Silva, CCC RP: Curatorial Politics seminar, HEAD-Genève, April 20, 2021.

190. Translated in Russian, "Все выводы [...] вы делаете сами." takes on a special meaning, as it is used as a catchphrase by the Russian independent media Redakciya at the end of each of its videos (reports and news). To its YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC1eFXmJNkjITxPFWTy6RsWg>.

191. Vestoj, "Manifesto," *Vestoj*, unknown publication date, <http://vestoj.com/manifesto/> (accessed April 10, 2022).

postface

I would like to tell you one last story.

This thesis is an attempt, right.

Yet, while I *try* to move upstream, others have already managed to counter-act the current. And I feel duty-bound to acknowledge their efforts.

During a stay in Berlin, I met the creative social entrepreneur Yayra Agbofah. Native of Ghana, Yayra launched in his country in 2018 *The Revival* project. The latter reminded me of *Marché Noir* (established since 2016) by the Togolese fashion designer Amah Ayivi.¹⁹² This is no coincidence, as the two men actually know each other (Amah being Yayra's mentor). Together, they are trying to rebalance the social justice within the fashion system, because there is an obvious imbalance, a concrete flow direction that generates inequalities. Indeed, today, the Western world (in most cases) produces fashion goods in Asia, consumes them in Europe and discards them in Africa. Yayra and Amah, through their initiatives, bring back (in a restored or even improved form) the wasted clothes stranded in their respective land's landfills to the European continent, thus confronting those who are responsible for the ecological and human disaster on the African continent with their waste.¹⁹³

And I won't surprise anyone if I say that each "waste" travels with its own story.¹⁹⁴ Yayra told me that once, while rummaging through a pile of clothes, he came across a military uniform that still bore the service number of the British officer it belonged to. The entrepreneur then decided to call the concerned person, after having traced the associated phone number, and informed the former military officer that his co-called "donation" to charity had ended up on a beach in Ghana. The man on the phone, surprised and disturbed, asked to have his uniform sent back to the UK, offering to pay all shipping costs. Yayra agreed to take care of that individual request. This is not his job. This is free labour. But is this not a strong symbolic gesture? Is this not the (re)connection that we are looking for? Is this not a *successful* attempt to bend and pierce space and time, to bring together two universes at opposite ends of the spectrum, which were destined *never* to meet? Is this not a great, causality-tackling and narrative-changing, example? Is this not a *bridge*?

If so, this must be honoured. As a matter of fact, if some monuments must fall, bridges must stay and be preserved. We need them, as we need to build more of them. I set, for instance, myself the task of building some. However, what I am currently building is actually not really a bridge, but rather a ladder. A sort of fish ladder for my bottles in the sea, that will enable them to travel up the flow. A *bottle ladder*, I would call it. It is being built slowly, but surely. Pebble by pebble. And one day, this ladder will be finished. And on that day, you will receive the messages of hope, support, love I promised you. You, for whom this thesis is intended.

I vow. I will never let you go. Please, trust me. See you on the other side.

Sincerely,

M.

192. For more information, see for example: ARTE, *Les mille et une vies de nos vêtements: La fripe c'est chic !*, ARTE Regards, 2021, 32 min, VOD.

193. Moreover, Yayra confirmed to me that most of the clothes that arrive in Africa are winter clothes and therefore of no use to the African people.

194. While not every clothing bale travels with clothes. Sometimes, clothing bales are filled with stones. Indeed, as sad as it sounds, their price is determined by three factors, where one major factor is weight (the other two are number of items and garment type or country of "origin"). The heavier the bale, the more the export company will be paid.

acknowledge- ments

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Thanks to Nino Fournier for having given me the taste for freedom.

**non-
exhaustive
thematic lists**

Instagram accounts campaigning for a fair, clean and transparent fashion:

@fashion_act_now
@xrfashionaction
@fash_rev
@remakeourworld
@theslowfactory
@cleanclothescampaign
@venetialamanna

Investigative journalism:

—Forensic Architecture
—Bellingcat
—Public Eye
—Anne Berest, *La carte postale* (Paris: Grasset & Fasquelle, 2021).
—Patrick Modiano, *Dora Bruder* (Paris: Gallimard, 1999).

House:

—Tenant of Culture, artist

Love letters:

—Nashilongweshipwe Mushaandja, “Making Love: Solidarity in Decolonial Times,” in *Changes in Direction – A Journal*, edited by Heidi Brunnschweiler, Laura Horelli, (Berlin: Archive Books, 2021).
—Irmgard Emmelhainz, “Decolonial Love,” *e-flux journal*, Issue #99 (2019).
Valentina Desideri, and Stefano Harney, “A Conspiracy without a Plot,” in *The Curatorial: A Philosophy of Curating*, edited by Jean-Paul Martinon and Irit Rogoff (London: Bloomsbury, 2013).
—Michel Delon, “Lettres d’amour, lettres de combat. Sophie de Monnier et Mirabeau (1775-1789).” *Revue de la BNF* 35, no. 2 (2010): 18-24.
—Alain Badiou, and Nicolas Truong, *Éloge de l’amour* (Paris: Flammarion, 2009).
—bell hooks, *All About Love: New Visions* (New York: Harper Collins, 2001).
—Jacques Derrida, *La carte postale: De Socrate à Freud et au-delà* (Paris: Flammarion, 1980).
—Roland Barthes, *Fragments d’un discours amoureux* (Paris: Seuil, 1977).
—Jean-Claude Carrière, *Lettres d’Amour* (Paris: J’ai lu, 1962).

Sabotage:

—Andreas Malm, *Comment saboter un pipeline*, translated by Etienne Dobenesque (Paris: La Fabrique éditions, 2020).
—François Jarrige, “Sabotage, un essai d’archéologie au xixe siècle,” *Techniques & Culture*, no. 74 (2020): 28-41.
—Comité invisible, *L’insurrection qui vient* (Paris: La Fabrique, 2007).
—The Institute for Affirmative Sabotage (IAS).

User manuals:

—*The Commoner’s Catalog for Changemaking: Tools for the Transitions Ahead* (David Bollier, 2021).
—*Guide pour faire échouer des projets contre (la) nature* (François Verdet, 2021).
—*Hacker citizen: le guide de survie citoyen en milieu urbain* (Geoffrey Dorne, 2016).
—*The Toaster Project* (Thomas Thwaites, 2010).
—*How to Disappear in America* (Seth Price, 2008).
—*198 Methods of Nonviolent Action* (Gene Sharp, 1973).
—*The Anarchist Cookbook* (William Powell, 1971).
—*Whole Earth Catalog* (Stewart Brand, 1968).

Tools:

<https://goodonyou.eco> (consumption)

<https://fiberstorm.ch> (production)

On tools:

—Audre Lorde: “The master’s tools will never dismantle the master’s house.”

—Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak: “Perhaps it is possible after all to dismantle the master’s house with one’s own tools.”

—Sanjay Sharma: “Can we dismantle the master’s house, by dismantling ...no, hacking the master’s tools?”

—Ariella Aïsha Azoulay: “Not with the master’s tools, not with tools at all.”

Manifestos:

—Vestoj: <http://vestoj.com/manifesto/>

—Fashion Act Now: <https://www.fashionactnow.org>

—Fashion Action: <https://www.xrfashionaction.com/manifesto>

—Fashion Revolution: <https://www.fashionrevolution.org/manifesto/>

—Craftivism: <https://craftivism.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/craftivism-manifesto-2.0.pdf>

—Repair: https://www.ifixit.com/Manifesto?pk_vid=c4b6e4b-9048541f016519096765e834e

—Affirmative Sabotage: <https://affirmativesabotage.org/en/manifesto/>

—Manon Waneukem, *Manifeste pour un design conscient* (Geneva: CCC MA program, 2021).

—Group of students, *The Propositions for the school of tomorrow* (Geneva: CCC MA program, 2020).

—The Care Collective, *The Care Manifesto: The Politics of Interdependence* (London and New York: Verso Books, 2020).

—Ecosocialism (2001): <http://environment-ecology.com/political-ecology/436-an-ecosocialist-manifesto.html>

—Situationist International (SI) (1957): <https://hts3.files.wordpress.com/2010/12/situationist-international-manifesto.pdf>

—Dada (1918): http://www.writing.upenn.edu/library/Tzara_Dada-Manifesto_1918.pdf

Personal interventions (in chronological order):

—2021.09.14 / Sustainability week, HEPIA (Geneva). Lecture on Sustainable fashion production.

—2021.10.04 / *Rebellion against extinction* week, Extinction Rebellion (Zurich). Participation in an action. Arrest. 48-hour detention in prison.

—2021.10.26 / Fashion Show, HEAD (Geneva). Performative intervention as part of the campaign *Textile Recycling Before Fashion Shows*.

—2022.03.18 / Symposium *Jeansdinge*, HEAD (Geneva). Moderation of a session on Denim politics.

—2022.03.30 / Symposium of the International Research Network on Sustainable Fashion Consumption 2022, PLATTE (Berlin). Lecture on Sustainable fashion consumption.

—2022.03.31 / Cantonal Sustainability Competition, the State Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva (Geneva). Submission of a project for a collecting, sorting and recovery centre (“ressourcerie” in French) for textiles.

—2022.04.12 / Day trip (Zurich). Meeting with the prosecutor following the October arrest, receipt of the criminal order, opposition.

—2022.05.16 / Cantonal Sustainability Competition, the State Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva (Geneva). Project selected, audition before the competition jury.

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The CCC Master-Thesis 2021/2022 is one part of graduating from the two-year process to study and develop research methodologies crossing theory with practice by the means of art under globalizing conditions. The transdisciplinary and bilingual CCC-Curriculum consists of Writing Research and Situated Art Practices seminars that discuss the students' individual research while Critical Studies, Curatorial/Politics, Theory Fiction seminars and the Reading Group foster the collective formation of new vocabularies.

Le Mémoire de Master CCC 2021/2022 est une part du processus d'obtention du diplôme en deux ans pour étudier et développer des méthodologies de recherche croisant la théorie avec la pratique par le moyen de l'art dans un contexte de mondialisation. Le plan d'étude transdisciplinaire et bilingue du CCC consiste en des séminaires de l'Écriture de la Recherche et de Pratiques Artistiques Situées qui discutent de la recherche individuelle des étudiants, tandis que le Curatorial/Politique, Études Critiques, Théorie Fiction et le Groupe de lecture favorisent la création collective de nouveaux vocabulaires.

Be a counter-master, my friend. Use counter-tools.

Mikhail Rojkov

Tuteur-trice de mémoire/Thesis Advisor

Anne-Julie Raccoursier

**Étudiant-e-x-s diplômé-e-x-s/
Graduating students 2021/20221**

Roman Alonso, Sara Bissen, Garance Bonard,
Vanessa Cimorelli, Basile Collet, Louis Dambrain,
Joséphine Devaud, Phoebe-Lin Elnan, Fig Docher,
Daniela Gutiérrez-González, Yasemin Imre, Emilie Moor,
Cecilia Moya Rivera, Matthias Paulus, Mikhail Rojkov,
Balam Simon, Camille Shirin Zaerpour

**Étudiant-e-x-s
Students**

Carla Alis, Lucrezia Calabro Visconti, Alexandre Boiron,
Inès El Mansouri, David Favre, Sawsane Hema, Orfeo
Aurora Lili, Jazil Santschi, Gemma Sandrine Ushengewe,
Jonas Van Holanda, Ruyun Xiao

**Comité de soutenance orale/
Committee of the oral defense**

External Comittee et/and CCC Faculty

**Session de soutenance orale/
Oral defense**

Juin/June 20-21-22, 2022

Faculté/Faculty 2021/2022

Professeur-e-s/Professors:
Çağla Aykaç, Kodwo Eshun, Doreen Mende,
Anne-Julie Raccoursier, Gene Ray

Professeur invité/Guest-professor:
Tarek Lakhissi

Collaboratrice scientifique:
Julie Marmet

Assistante:
Alexander Gence

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CCC RP – Critical Curatorial Cybernetic Research Practices / CCC RP – pratiques de recherche critiques, curatoriales et cybernétiques
head.hesge.ch/ccc
ccc.head@hesge.ch

HEAD Genève
Haute école d'art et de design – Genève / Geneva University of Art and Design
Département Arts Visuels/Visual Arts
head.hesge.ch
info.head@hesge.ch

Genève/Geneva, mai/May 2022