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STABILIZING SUSTAINABILITY IN THE TEXTILE AND FASHION INDUSTRY

Kirsti Reitan Andersen

# STABILIZING SUSTAINABILITY IN THE TEXTILE AND FASHION INDUSTRY

Doctoral School of Organisation and Management Studies

PhD Series 05.2017

**CBS**  COPENHAGEN BUSINESS SCHOOL  
HANDELSHØJSKOLEN

PhD Series 05-2017

# Stabilizing Sustainability

*in the Textile and Fashion Industry*

**Kirsti Reitan Andersen**

Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen

Ph.D. School of Organisation and Management Studies

Copenhagen Business School

Kirsti Reitan Andersen  
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# Foreword

This thesis is the outcome of a four-year journey into the world of fashion through the lens of sustainability—an ongoing exploration that has proved difficult at times but always fascinating and enlightening. My main motivation for undertaking this challenge was the opportunity to explore in depth some topics that I am passionate about on both a professional and personal level. I have long been an admirer of beautiful and well-made clothing, but for some time I was also starting to become aware of the environmental and social consequences of the clothes we wear. Most of all I was increasingly frustrated by the difficulty, if not outright impossibility, of making informed choices about sustainable choices when buying clothes. While this frustration has not diminished over the last four years, I have acquired a deeper understanding of the industry and how we might begin to help businesses (and consumers) change towards practising sustainability.

In the following papers I share my stories and findings in a call for creating beautiful and innovative but sustainable fashion while bringing about a radical change in the industry towards taking greater account of the environment and of people—especially workers in the textile and fashion industry—throughout the globe.

This thesis would not have been possible without the support and immense patience of my supervisors, Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen and Lisanne Wilken, who guided and supported me throughout the project. As my main supervisor, Esben allowed me an incredible amount of freedom to pursue my interests and my sometimes offbeat ideas, while at the same time judiciously advising me whenever I needed to be more focused. This, I am sure, has not been an easy task. Lisanne continues to be a great inspiration, a critical reader, and a friend. I am also very grateful to Lise Skov, Thomas Binder, Lise Justesen, Bo Pauelle, Eric Guthey, David Swartz and Agnes Rocamora who generously gave of their time to carefully read over my work and who helped me shape and position the thesis. I would also like to thank Agnes Rocamora, for hosting me at the London College of Fashion and for the inspiring talks we have had together about fashion and the work of Pierre Bourdieu.

Most importantly, I owe my deepest gratitude to the InnoTex group who opened their doors to me and allowed me to spend six months with them in their studio. This was my first experience conducting fieldwork over an extensive period of time and InnoTex not only provided support but were also inspiring discussion partners. I would particularly like to thank Marie, InnoTex's Lead Researcher, and Scarlett, the Founder of InnoTex, without whom this thesis would not have been possible.

In addition to the opportunity to work on topics in which I have a passionate interest, the single most amazing thing about the last four years has been the chance it has given me to meet and work with incredibly inspiring people both in Denmark and abroad, some of whom have since become close friends. I am deeply grateful to Ana Diaz, whom I can never thank enough for always being there for me, working with me and inspiring me with her ideas and readiness to discuss any topic under the sun. It is a great honour to call her my friend. I am heavily indebted to Echo, who not only helped me with my fieldwork in China but has also become a dear friend whom I hope to work with again soon. Thanks are also due to Bob Bland, CEO and Co-Founder of Manufacture New York— one of the bravest and most inspiring women I know. Last but not least, I am extremely thankful to Prisca Vilsbøl, with whom I now have the privilege of working. Bridging research and practice to an extent I have rarely encountered, Prisca will change the textile and fashion industry towards practising sustainability.

Throughout my studies, the Department of Intercultural Communication and Management at the Copenhagen Business School helped and encouraged me enormously by creating a supportive and friendly working environment that made my work there a genuine pleasure. I would like to thank Majbritt Vandelbo, Annika Dilling, Lise Søstrøm, and Susanne Sorrentino, all of whom uncomplainingly answered my many questions and helped me navigate the administrative systems. I would like also like to thank Hans Krause Hansen for not losing faith in me and Matt Jones for proofreading the thesis. I would especially like to thank Janni Thusgaard Pedersen, Oana Albu, Else Skjold, Christina Frydensberg, Kerli Kant Hvass, Sarah Netter, Tina Müller, and Wencke Gwozdz for their valuable advice on how to develop an effective approach to my PhD studies—as well as for making me laugh! I am also deeply grateful to Ana Alacovska, who was one of the first people I met when I started at CBS and who offered invaluable criticism and support in completing my thesis. Most of all I would like to thank Frederik Larsen for his invaluable support and wonderful company over the last years—in our office, on numerous

travels, and on our many walks in Frederiksberg Have. I continue looking for opportunities to continue working with him and deepening our friendship. I would like to thank my family and friends for believing in me and for coping with me over the last many months of writing this thesis. Finally, I would like to thank Thomas for his immense patience and support this last year.





# Abstract

The publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 put the topic of sustainable development on the political and corporate agenda. Defining sustainable development as “a development that meets the needs of the future without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 43), the Report also put a positive spin on the issue of sustainability by upholding capitalist beliefs in the possibility of infinite growth in a world of finite resources. While growth has delivered benefits, however, it has done so unequally and unsustainably. This thesis focuses on the textile and fashion industry, one of the world’s most polluting industries and an industry to some degree notorious for leading the ‘race to the bottom’ in global labour standards. Despite being faced with increasing demands to practise sustainability, most textile and fashion companies continue to fail undertake the changes that are necessary to achieve greater sustainability—or at best continue to struggle in a globalized and highly interconnected industry to implement the necessary changes. In light of this failure, this thesis investigates how organizations can change towards practising sustainability, focusing on the potential of taking a design approach to bringing about processes of organizational change. I do this guided by the following research questions:

- For what reasons can organizations within the textile and fashion industry change towards practising sustainability?
- How is design thinking being mobilized within current conversations about organizational change towards practising sustainability?
- What is design thinking in practice when used to facilitate processes of organizational change towards practising sustainability?
- What is the specific role of ‘culture’ in processes of organizational change towards practising sustainability?

I take my theoretical starting point in the practice theory of Bourdieu and the Sociology of Translation. The empirical foundation of the thesis consists for the most part of the following:

- Six months of fieldwork I undertook with Innovation Textiles (InnoTex: a group of textile design researchers based at a recognized Art and Design University in London)

- Participation in a series of lectures and workshops on sustainability that InnoTex conducted for Hennes & Mauritz (H&M), a multinational fast fashion brand
- Five weeks of fieldwork in China in collaboration with InnoTex and an independent designer and film maker

With this theoretical and empirical approach I contribute to two streams of literature: firstly to the literature on organization studies and organizational change and management; and secondly to the literature on sustainability.

The research questions are addressed in this thesis in four papers, as summarised below:

- Paper 1, ‘Sustainability Innovators and Anchor-Draggers: A Global Study on Sustainable Fashion’, presents a global study on obstacles and opportunities to sustainability in the textile and fashion industry
- Paper 2, ‘Unlikely Mediators? The Malleable Concept of Sustainability’, draws on Bourdieu’s theoretical triad of *capital*, *habitus* and *field* to investigate the role of InnoTex as mediators of change to sustainable fashion
- Paper 3, ‘Design Thinking for Organizational Change’, adopts the Sociology of Translation to examine how design thinking is being mobilised as a tool for organizational change in large-scale production
- Paper 4, ‘Capital in Formation: What is at Stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?’, draws on Bourdieu’s practice theory to argue that sustainability may be understood as a ‘capital in formation’, using this as a starting point to investigate what is at stake in the textile and fashion industry.

Based on findings from four years of research into these questions, this thesis reaches the overall conclusion that economic globalization as currently practised throughout the greater part of the textile and fashion industry undermines efforts to bring about organizational change towards practising sustainability. In a situation in which the so-called ‘business case’ for sustainability and corporate social responsibility does not necessarily hold true, this thesis elucidates and emphasizes the need to provide an interrelated understanding of how and why organizations change when they do. On this basis I recommend a broader dialogue about strategies for

bringing about a transition to long-term and integrated sustainability that engages a number of cross-disciplinary and cross-national players—a dialogue that also draws on design thinking as a way to bring about further change.



# Abstrakt

Offentliggørelsen af Brundtland-rapporten i 1987 satte bæredygtig udvikling på både den industrielle og politiske dagsorden. Rapporten definerer bæredygtig udvikling som ”... en udvikling, som opfylder de nuværende behov, uden at bringe fremtidige generationers muligheder for at opfylde deres behov i fare” (WCED, 1987, s. 43). Samtidigt tilslutter den sig kapitalismens tro på muligheden for uendelig økonomisk vækst i en verden af begrænsede ressourcer. Mens troen på uendelig vækst har bragt fordele med sig, så har disse fordele ikke været ligeligt fordelt. Denne afhandling sætter fokus på tekstil- og modeindustrien, som er blandt verdens mest forurenede industrier og i nogen grad kendt for at lede et ”globalt kapløb mod bunden” i forhold til arbejdsrettigheder og arbejdsmiljø. Et stigende antal tekstil- og modevirksomheder oplever et stigende pres i forhold til social- og miljømæssig ansvarlighed, men kæmper med at ændre organisatoriske praksiser derefter. I lyset af dette undersøger denne afhandling, hvordan organisationer ændrer sig med henblik på at udvikle en mere bæredygtig produktion, med specifikt fokus på designs potentielle rolle i organisationers forandringsprocesser. Jeg gør dette med udgangspunkt i følgende forskningsspørgsmål:

- Under hvilke omstændigheder kan organisationer indenfor tekstil- og modebranchen forandre sig og praktisere miljømæssig og social bæredygtighed?
- Hvordan mobiliseres ”design thinking” i italesættelsen af organisatoriske forandringer med henblik på at praktisere miljømæssig og social bæredygtighed?
- Hvad er ”design thinking” i praksis, når det anvendes til at facilitere organisatoriske forandringer med henblik på at praktisere miljømæssig og social bæredygtighed?
- Hvad er ’kulturens’ specifikke rolle i organisatoriske forandringsprocesser med henblik på at praktisere miljømæssig og social bæredygtighed?

Med udgangspunkt i Bourdieus praksisteori og ’Sociology of Translation’ undersøger jeg disse spørgsmål på tværs af i alt fire artikler. Mit empiriske udgangspunkt består af:

- Seks måneders feltarbejde med Innovation Textiles (InnoTex), en gruppe tekstildesignforskere med base på et anerkendte Kunst og Design Universitet i London

- Deltagelse i InnoTexs forelæsninger og workshops for Hennes & Mauritz, en multinationalt fast fashion virksomhed
- Fems ugers feltarbejde i Kina udført i samarbejde med både InnoTex og en uafhængig designer og filmskaber.

Med udgangspunkt i denne teoretiske og empiriske ramme bidrager jeg til litteraturen om ledelse, organisationer og organisatoriske forandringer samt til litteraturen om bæredygtighed.

De fire artikler i denne afhandling er som følger:

- Artikel 1, ‘Sustainability Innovators and Anchor-Draggers: A Global Study on Sustainable Fashion’, præsenterer et globalt studie om barrierer og muligheder for bæredygtighed i tekstil og modeindustrien
- Artikel 2, ‘Unlikely Mediators? The Malleable Concept of Sustainability’, undersøger Innovation Textiles’ rolle som facilitator af bæredygtig mode med udgangspunkt i Bourdieus teoretiske triade bestående af kapital, habitus og felt
- Artikel 3, ‘Design Thinking for Organizational Change’, undersøger med afsæt i ‘Sociology of Translation’, hvordan designtænkning kan bidrage til organisatoriske forandringer der tager hensyn til bæredygtighed i masseproduktion
- Artikel 4, ‘Capital in Formation: What is at Stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?’, foreslår med udgangspunkt i Bourdieus praksisteori at bæredygtighed er en form for ‘kapital som er ved at tage form’ og bruger dette som et udgangspunkt for en undersøgelse af hvilke kapitaler der er på spil i tekstil og modeindustrien.

På grundlag af fire års forskning i de ovenstående forskningsspørgsmål, drager denne afhandling den overordnede konklusion, at den økonomiske globalisering, som den i øjeblikket praktiseres i størstedelen af tekstil- og modeindustrien, underminerer kommende organisatoriske forandringer i retning af miljømæssig og socialt bæredygtig praksis. Denne afhandling gør det klart, at i en situation, hvor den såkaldte business case for ‘corporate social responsibility’ og bæredygtighed ikke holder stik, er det vigtigt, at vi tilvejebringer en indbyrdes forståelse af hvordan og hvorfor organisationer ændrer sig. Baseret på dette anbefaler jeg en bredere dialog på tværs af discipliner og nationaliteter som fokuserer på fremtidige strategier for overgangen til langsigtet

og integreret bæredygtighed, en dialog, der også trækker på designtænkning i forhold til at skabe ændringer.





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# 1. Introduction

Since the publication of the Brundtland Report (‘Our Common Future’) in 1987, sustainability has increasingly been incorporated in government policies and corporate strategies. The Report defined sustainable development as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED, 1987, p. 43). This definition incorporated three dimensions—economic, environmental, and societal—in recognition of the fact that economic development goes hand-in-hand with environmental and social consciousness. While committed to adjustments, the Report put a positive spin on the use of existing mechanisms to facilitate change, proclaiming that, depending on the efficient use of resources, growth could be infinite. Such growth, the authors stated, could be achieved through technological advancements and the reorganization of society to ensure that such advancements were distributed equally (Hopwood, Mellor and O’Brian, 2005; WCED, 1987).

The Brundtland Report arguably helped to put questions of environmental and social responsibility on the corporate and political agenda. But while increasing attention has been paid to this issue over the last three decades, recent research by scientists and other experts show there is little sign of any fundamental shift towards taking greater account of environmental and social responsibility (McNeill and Wilhite, 2015). According to the Global Footprint Network (2014), for example, humanity now uses the equivalent of 1.5 Earths to provide the resources we consume and to absorb our waste. Moderate UN scenarios suggest that by the 2030s we will need the equivalent of two Earths to support ourselves if current population and consumption trends continue. In certain sectors of the economy, child labour and forced labour, together with unsafe working conditions, continue to be the norm rather than the exception (Centre for Sustainable Work and Employment Futures, 2015; Gardetti and Torres, 2013; ILO, 2011 and 2012). Almost thirty years since sustainability was first widely recognized as a critical problem, the vast majority of societies and businesses continue to focus on profit margins at the expense of

environmental and social responsibility. “The growth imperative,” as Richard Smith has argued, “is virtually a law of nature built-into any conceivable form of capitalism,” with corporations having “no choice but to seek to grow” (Smith, 2010, p. 31).

Today the textile and fashion industry not only remains of the most polluting industries (Sweeny, 2015; Deloitte, 2013) but also continues to have major problems with social responsibility (BSR, 2015; University of Leicester and Centre for Sustainable Work and Employment Futures, 2015; Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly, 2014). One of the main reasons for this lack of progress towards sustainability is arguably that of ever-increasing levels of garment consumption. Whereas clothing used to be custom-made, contemporary global fashion houses like Gucci and Prada now make a priority of ensuring that trend-led customers can always find something new in their stores. Today’s fashion houses update their collections four to six times a year, as well as offering diffusion lines. ‘Fast fashion’, i.e. low-cost clothing collections that mimic current luxury fashion trends, now operates with as many as twenty ‘seasons’ per year (Christopher, Lawson, and Peck, 2004). According to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2013), annual sales of clothes amount to some 91 billion pieces, and the quantity continues to increase. Not only is the global population still growing, we are also buying more and more clothes. While the average British woman bought 19 items of clothing per year in 1997, for example, this had increased to an average of 34 items only ten years later (Poulton, Panetta, Burke, Levene, and The Guardian Interactive Team, 2014). Today in Denmark, meanwhile, a person buys on average 6 kilos of new clothes per year (Nielsen, 2013). And this increase in consumption has resulted in a similar increase in disposal: in the United Kingdom, for example, the average citizen now discards 23 items of clothing per year—textiles that mostly end up in landfills. The laundering of clothes itself now accounts for approximately one-quarter of the total carbon footprint of clothing (WRAP, 2012). Despite the fact that some progress has been made in reducing the ecological impacts of supply chains, and despite the advent of more sustainable products and the decisions of some consumers to reduce their consumption, overall levels of consumption continue to rise, with corresponding increases in the ecological impacts of everyday behaviour (Warde and Southerton, 2011).

To maintain and promote this ever-increasing level of garment consumption, moreover, the textile industry currently produces more and more virgin materials, which takes a further toll on the environment and on people. Conventional cotton, for example, the main natural fibre used in clothing, is usually cultivated in large monocultures that are responsible for a decrease in virgin forests and the displacement of local populations. Cotton production also employs very large quantities of pesticides and chemical fertilizers. These not only contaminate soil and water and decrease biodiversity but also have significant impacts on the health of farmers and agricultural workers in developing countries, as well as on consumers worldwide, for example in the form of allergic reactions due to chemical residues (Hansen and Schaltegger, 2013; Greenpeace, 2011). China, which is still the world's largest producer of textiles and clothes, has some of the worst water pollution in the world, with as much as 70% of its rivers, reservoirs and lakes affected by all types of pollutants (Greenpeace, 2011). For while the textile industry is only one of many industries contributing to the discharge of wastewater, it is a large-scale user of chemicals, many of which are hazardous and persistent. And when the pressure to cut costs is overwhelming, investments in measures to protect the environment are often bypassed, with one amongst many results being that industrial wastewater is sent directly into rivers.

This same pressure to cut costs and maximize profits also has a negative impact on the extent to which the textile and fashion industry fulfils its social responsibilities. This was highlighted in 2013 with the deaths of 1,200 garment workers as a result of the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in Bangladesh—the world's worst industrial accident in thirty years—which once again drew attention to the industry's tendency to compromise workers' safety and working environment (Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly, 2014). Despite cracks having been seen to appear in the building's concrete structure the day before the collapse, the factory's garment workers were told their wages would be held back for an entire month if they refused to enter the factory and work. The subsequent difficulties experienced in ascertaining which brands were being produced at the Rana Plaza factory serves to illustrate the complexity of the textile industry's supply chain. The ways in which retailers purchase clothes from factories, often indirectly, creates a chaotic atmosphere in which retailers may not even know where their own products are made (Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly, 2014; Interview: Bonanni, Sourcemap, October

2014). As mentioned above, furthermore, the industry continues to make use of child labour and forced labour (Turker and Altuntas, 2014; United States Department of Labor, 2014). And while the textile and fashion industry is far from being the only industry embroiled by problems related to social responsibility, its continuous ‘race to the bottom’ has been shown to result in constant violations, with companies competing to reduce costs by paying the lowest possible wages and accepting the worst conditions for their workers. The textile industry continues to be relatively labour-intensive, moreover, for while the past two decades have seen some brands and manufacturers achieve a certain degree of success in applying technology to reduce waste and other problems of environmental sustainability, the industry’s constant quest for cheaper production sites, mostly in developing countries, suggests its problems with social responsibility are not likely to be solved by technology.

Given what is perhaps the most widely used definition of fashion—that of fashion as continuously changing styles—the term ‘sustainable fashion’ may seem an oxymoron. Claude Lévi-Strauss (1969) called societies influenced by fashion “hot societies”, meaning societies that accept and even encourage drastic change initiated by human creativity. These alleged hot (or capitalist) societies, he argues, depend on such rapid change for their economic, social, and cultural growth. Consequently, the faster fashion changes the more growth we contribute to society. Levi-Strauss’ definition of fashion was not limited to clothes, but the fashion industry as it is generally known—i.e. the business of making and selling clothes and accessories—captures his definition well. A product of the modern age, this is an industry that is both part of global capitalism and a contributor to increasing globalization. First developed in Europe and the United States, the fashion industry today is a highly globalized industry, with clothing often being designed in one country, manufactured in a second country and sold in a third. Given these characteristics, it is unlikely that any organization within the industry can change towards practicing sustainability without taking into account its relations with stakeholders both upstream and downstream in the value chain. In short, the globalization of the industry limits the options for the individual organization to change.

Drawing on the work of sociologist Immanuel Wallerstein (2013, p. 9) this thesis takes its starting point in an understanding of capitalism that is based on two premises. The

first of these is that capitalism is a system and that all systems have life-spans, i.e. no system is eternal. The second premise is that capitalism, by virtue of being a system, operates by a specific set of rules—albeit rules that can change. In discussing the defining characteristics of capitalism many scholars centre on a single institution that they consider crucial, i.e. wage labour, production for exchange and/or for profit, the ‘free’ market, or a situation in which the ownership and control of the means of production lies in private hands rather than with the state (Wallerstein, 2013; Jackson, 2009). However, none of these defining characteristics hold up to scrutiny. Wage labour, for example, has existed throughout the world for millennia, and while the ‘free’ market has become a mantra of the modern world-system, the markets in this same system have never been—nor could have been—entirely free of government regulation or political considerations. By contrast with such definitions, Wallerstein (2013, p. 10) proposes that for a historical system to be considered a capitalist system, “the dominant or deciding characteristic must be the persistent search for endless accumulation of capital—the accumulation of capital in order to accumulate more capital”. For this characteristic to prevail, there must be mechanisms in place that penalize actors who seek to operate on the basis of other values or other objectives in such a way that these nonconforming agents are sooner or later eliminated from the scene, or at least seriously hampered in their ability to accumulate significant amounts of capital. According to Wallerstein (2013, pp. 10–11): “All the many institutions of the modern world-system operate to promote, or at least are constrained by the pressure to promote, the endless accumulation of capital.” In Wallerstein’s view, then, capitalism is not a given—not something we can do nothing about—but rather a system that people have created and thus also something that people can change. Capitalism, in this view, may eventually cease to exist.

Up till now, the capitalist paradigm of continuous growth has remained paramount in the textile and fashion industry (Amed, 2016; Blackwater, 2014; Jackson, 2009). In recent years, however, we have seen increasing public and political demand for the industry to change towards practising sustainability (Pedersen and Andersen, 2015; Rinaldi and Testa, 2015; Deloitte, 2013; Fletcher, 2011), though bringing about such change has proved to be extremely challenging. For all the literature and research that has been undertaken on the topic of organizational change, effective organizational change is still rare (Pieterse, Caniëls, and Homan, 2012). Recent research reveals that only about one-

third of the efforts invested in bringing about organizational change have been considered successful by their leaders (Meaney and Pung, 2008; Balogun and Hope Hailey, 2004). At best, companies have succeeded in implementing change of an incremental character, for example through investments in more energy-efficient equipment; whereas change of a more radical nature, such as the development of new and sustainable business models, seldom occurs (Norman and Verganti, 2012; Plieth, Bullinger, and Hansen, 2012). In light of this, researchers and managers have been seeking alternative approaches to change. Amongst these alternatives are design and ‘design thinking’ (Dorst, 2015; Brown, 2008, Brown and Martin, 2015; Erichsen and Christensen, 2013; Binder, Michelis, Ehn, Jacucci, Linde and Wagner, 2011). Drawing on multiple design disciplines, design thinking is meant to encompass everything that is good about design (Kimbell, 2011). Advocates argue that it can help organizations change, for example through the use of iterative rapid-cycle prototyping and interaction with ‘users’ (Brown, 2008, Brown and Martin, 2015; Houde and Hill, 1997). Over the last fifteen years we have seen both public and private institutions adopt design thinking as a tool for change and innovation. These institutions include the Danish cross-governmental innovation unit, MindLab, the former Helsinki Design Lab (an initiative by the Finish Innovation Fund), as well as international companies such as IBM and Lego (Gobble, 2014; Bason, 2013; Clark and Smith, 2008). In parallel with this development, much has been written about design thinking. This work, however, has primarily been published within the design research community, while discussions of design thinking within mainstream literature of organizational management remain scarce (Erichsen and Christensen, 2013; Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla and Çetinkaya, 2013). Moreover, scholars such as Kimbell (2011 and 2012) and Naar and Våland (2014) note that there is an overall lack of empirically grounded research on the current practice of design thinking.

In this thesis I contribute to the literature on organization and management studies through an exploration of how organizations might change towards practising sustainability, focusing specifically on the use of design thinking as a tool for change. I do this in four papers, guided by the following research questions:



- For what reasons can organizations within the textile and fashion industry change towards practising sustainability?
- How is design thinking being mobilized within current conversations about organizational change towards practising sustainability?
- What is design thinking in practice when used to facilitate processes of organizational change towards practising sustainability?
- What is the specific role of ‘culture’ in processes of organizational change towards practising sustainability?

To investigate these questions, I take my empirical starting point in a case study of a group of textile design researchers based at a recognized Art and Design university in London. For the purposes of this thesis, I call this research group Innovation Textiles (hereafter InnoTex). The trained textile designers and researchers of InnoTex draw on design thinking in their work with fashion brands to facilitate organizational change towards practising sustainability. My study encompasses six months of fieldwork with InnoTex, supported by participant observation of a series of workshops they delivered for the global fast-fashion brand Hennes and Mauritz (H&M). This research soon confirmed that questions of sustainability are embedded in wider societal and political arrangements as well as local, national and transnational activities. As noted by Sieweke (2014, p. 538), “macro-level (institutions) and micro-level (individuals) are interconnected”. What surprised me, however, was the extent to which InnoTex felt disconnected from and overwhelmed by the industry’s supply chains, and this in spite their having worked on the challenges to practising sustainability for more than a decade. Spending time in the field I was further puzzled by the absence of any deeper conversation about the basic meaning of and drivers of sustainability. This may have been simply because InnoTex and the people with whom I conversed had already worked through such conversations before my arrival, though this was not my impression. This experience then motivated me to undertake six weeks of field research in the Chinese textile and fashion industry, working in collaboration with two researchers from InnoTex, together with an independent design researcher and filmmaker, Ms Ana Diaz. In China we spoke with people from across the industry, including owners and managers of garment factories, design educators, representatives

of fashion brands, and garment workers—though with the latter, it must be noted, only under the observation of their managers. We also participated in the Planet Textiles Conference, an independent conference dedicated to reducing the impact of textiles on the environment, held in Shanghai in October 2013 and the EcoChic Design Award in Hong Kong in January 2014. This empirical research and data was further supported by an online study conducted in collaboration with Professor Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen, the main purpose of which was to explore barriers to and opportunities for sustainability in the textile and fashion industry from the perspective of 36 industry stakeholders located across the world.

Initial literature reviews and field research informed my choice of theoretical framework. Wanting to explore the potential of design thinking as a tool for organizational change towards practising sustainability from the perspective of individual agents who, time and again, made references to ‘the system’, I started looking for a framework that could help me investigate the relationship between individual agents and so-called macro actors such as ‘the system’. Before long I turned towards Pierre Bourdieu’s practice theory (1977/2005), which is concerned with the relationship between individual action and social structure. At the heart of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework are his three key connected concepts of ‘field’, ‘capital’, and ‘habitus’ (Wilken, 2011; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992; Bourdieu, 1977/2005). Bourdieu defines the concept of field as a set of power relations between agents and institutions that struggle for specific forms of domination and monopolization of a valuable type of capital. This field is characterized by alliances among its members who are on a quest to obtain the most benefit and to impose as legitimate that which defines them as a group, e.g. a specific understanding of sustainability. Each group tries to improve its position or to exclude other groups through confrontation. The position of the individual agents and groups depends on the type, volume and legitimacy of the capital and habitus the subjects have acquired over the course of their lives—and on how these vary over time. With his theoretical triad it was Bourdieu’s ambition to create a theory with which he could explore the ways in which agents generate practices, these self-same practices being conditioned by their understanding of the system as well as limited by its objective structures (Wilken, 2011, p. 43).

Having decided to use Bourdieu's practice theory as a starting point for my research, I attended a PhD course on modern sociological theory. This course gave me the opportunity to learn more about Bourdieu's work and also introduced me to other modern sociologies, including the Sociology of Translation, which falls under the larger framework of Actor-Network-Theory (ANT). While I knew of ANT and was aware that this was a theoretical framework created in opposition to the work of Bourdieu and other "specialized scholars called sociologists" (Latour, 2005a, p. 4), learning more about this particular approach made me wonder whether this opposition was as fundamental as presented and—if so—what would happen if I adopted the concept of translation for my analysis.

Whereas Bourdieu aims to bridge micro and macro levels of analysis, ANT intends to dissolve them, instead seeing 'the social' as networks of human and non-human actors. Following ANT, the creation of knowledge becomes a constructivist endeavour. It highlights the collective process that ends up in the form of solid constructs through the mobilization of heterogeneous ingredients, crafts and coordination (Latour, 2002, p. 30). Bruno Latour (2005a, p. 172), one of the founding fathers of ANT, encourages us to become the 'Flat-Earthers' of social theory, arguing that this is the only way to follow how dimensions are generated and maintained. This means, for example, that challenges to sustainability can no longer be explained with reference to 'the system'. This made me wonder what would happen if I adopted ANT, specifically the concept of translation, as a starting point for analysis? Would it fundamentally change my understanding of what design thinking is and how it is being mobilized as a tool for organizational change towards practising sustainability? My curiosity having been awakened by the PhD course, I was also excited to see that the Sociology of Translation, with its focus on the agency of non-humans, seemed to strike a chord with some of InnoTex's textile design researchers. Could this approach help create a shared reference point between our different disciplinary and methodological backgrounds? (Wilken and Tange, 2014).

Starting from Bourdieu's practice theory, which informs the greater part of this thesis, I then also adopted the Sociology of Translation, specifically for my analysis of InnoTex's workshops for H&M. I did this primarily because I was curious to see what could be learnt by switching from one theoretical framework to another in this context, as well as

to see if such an exercise could help me modify or challenge the existing theoretical base (Cornelissen and Durand, 2014).

In the course of my fieldwork I was struck by the feelings of disconnect amongst individual agents within what is a highly interconnected industry. To investigate this alienation, this thesis presents two levels of analysis. First, the level of analysis that focuses on the organization as part of the industry (papers 1–3, chapters 6–8). Second, analysis that focuses on the industry as experienced by the organization. This is the level of analysis of the fourth and last paper of this thesis (Chapter 9). The four papers are as follows:

*Paper 1: Sustainability Innovators and Anchor-Draggers: Results from a Global Expert Study on Sustainable Fashion*

*Paper 2: Unlikely Mediators? The Malleable Concept of Sustainability*

*Paper 3: Design Thinking for Organizational Change*

*Paper 4: Capital in Formation: What is at Stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?*

In the remainder of this chapter I first present a more in-depth introduction to the concept of design thinking. Since this is a term that over the years has become vague and controversial (Buchanan, 2015), it is essential that I clarify what understanding of design thinking I use as a starting point for my investigations and map it in relation to its other meanings (Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla and Çetinkaya, 2013). Next I introduce the field of organizational and management studies, specifically focusing on organizational change and the current state of design thinking within this literature. I then elaborate on the reasons behind my decision to adopt an ethnographic approach to my studies and how this has enabled a more nuanced understanding of design thinking as a tool for organizational change towards practising sustainability while also throwing light on the dynamics of the textile and fashion industry. I complete this chapter by outlining the contributions of this thesis to the field of organization and management studies.

## 1.1. Design Thinking

Much of the recent public presentation of design thinking acknowledged by organization and management research and practice has been tied to IDEO, a design firm from Palo Alto, California. The history of the concept and term is much more complex, however, and builds on tensions within the field of design itself, which, as an integrative discipline, is placed at the intersection of a number of large fields (Friedman, 2003). I begin this introduction to design thinking by looking back to discussions of design originating in the ‘Design Methods Movement’ of the 1960s and 1970s.

Current discussions of design thinking build on the tension between two different concepts of design (Kimbell, 2011). One of these concepts is represented—amongst others—by Herbert Simon (1969/1996), the other by Christopher Alexander (1971). While both scholars focus on the question of how designers design, they do so in very different ways. Simon, as part of the Design Methods Movement, saw design as a rational set of procedures, the aim of which is to change “an existing state of affairs into a more preferred one” (Simon, 1969/1996, p. xii). He advocated the development of a ‘science of design’ and argued that design is a type of knowledge within the domain of professions such as engineering, management, and medicine. These fields, according to Simon, are about ‘what ought to be’, as opposed to sciences concerned with ‘what is’. Alexander, meanwhile, presented a different view of design. Although he proposed a rational method for architecture and planning in the 1960s, he later disassociated himself from the Design Methods Movement. In an interview with the DMG Newsletter, Alexander stated that: “there is so little in what is called ‘design methods’ that has anything useful to say about how to design buildings that I never even read the literature anymore [...] I would say forget it, forget the whole thing.” (Alexander, 1971, p. 3, p. 5). For Alexander, design was about giving form to physical things—an understanding of design that belongs within the tradition of crafts and professional design, fields that create specific kinds of objects, i.e. clothing and furniture. Trying to find common denominators for the various design disciplines, contemporary professor of Design Ken Friedman (2003, p. 507–508) suggests that most understandings of design share three attributes: first, the word design refers to a process; second, the process is goal-oriented; third, the goal of design is solving problems, meeting needs, improving situations, or creating something new and useful. Friedman is also in this way largely aligned with

Simon's (1969/1996) understanding of design as an action that aims to plan a future situation one prefers over a current situation. The contrasting understandings of design represented by Simon and Alexander have made their mark on today's discussions of design thinking. Simon and Alexander and their colleagues, however, were not themselves particularly concerned with 'design thinking'. This is a strand of research and practice that emerged later.

Peter Rowe's 1987 book *Design Thinking* is amongst the earliest discussions of the concept (Kimbell, 2011, p. 291). To Rowe, with a background in architecture and urban planning, design thinking meant reflection on the "interior situational logic and the decision-making process of designers in action" and the "theoretical dimensions that both account for and inform this undertaking" (1987/1998, p. 2). Other key contributors to the discussion on design thinking include the philosopher and professor of urban planning, Donald Schön, and the design researcher and educator Nigel Cross. With the publication of *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action*, Schön (1983) explicitly challenged the positivist doctrine underlying much of the Design Methods Movement. According to Schön, the Design Methods Movement, with its focus on problem-solving, overlooked or even ignored the question of problem-setting. Schön saw design as a reflective conversation with a situation in which the designer frames and reframes the problem, the process spiralling through stages of appreciation, action, and re-appreciation. More so than his positivist predecessors, Schön was prepared to place trust in the abilities displayed by 'reflective practitioners' and to try to explicate those competencies rather than to supplant them, for example with computer programmes (Simon, 1969/1996). Although mostly using the term "designerly ways of knowing", Cross (2006) is also widely recognized for his contributions to discussions about design thinking. Cross sees the ways in designers think about problem solving as solution-focused, since they tackle ill-defined problems. He situates the discussion within a larger argument about design, as a coherent discipline of study that is distinct from the sciences and the humanities, writing that:

Following Schön and others, many researchers in the design world have been realizing that design practice does indeed have its own strong and appropriate intellectual culture, and that we must avoid swamping our design research with

different cultures imported either from the sciences or the arts. (Cross, 2001, p. 55)

While the work of Schön and Cross focuses on designers and what they think and do, other scholars have continued to be more concerned with defining the field of design. These include Richard Buchanan, who, with his *Wicked Problems in Design Thinking* (1992), belongs to the group of scholars aiming to shift design theory away from its craft and industrial production heritage towards a more generalized design thinking (Friedman, 2003; Simon, 1969/1996). Design thinking, according to Buchanan, can be applied to nearly everything, including tangible objects and intangible systems. With reference to Horst W. J. Rittel and Melvin M. Webber's (1973) "wicked problems", Buchanan (1992) argues that design problems are wicked and intermediate problems. What the designer does is to bring a unique way of looking at problems and finding solutions. Turning towards the actual practice of design, Buchanan outlines four orders which categorise the artefacts that designers have worked upon over the last hundred years, illustrating developments in the field. These orders are: signs, things, actions, and thoughts (Buchanan, 1992, 2015). Thus from the evolution of graphic and industrial design in the early twentieth century to interaction design in the mid-twentieth century the concepts and methods of design are now also applied to the design of organizations themselves. Reflecting on current developments in the field of design, Buchanan writes that "the design movement seeks to bring about innovation—sometimes radical innovation—to organizations that have to adapt to new circumstances of economic competition, social expectation, and cultural understanding" (2015, p. 1). Elaborating on the connection between design and management, Buchanan notes that "the new form of system design focused on the largest wholes that human beings create. It focused on the thought that lies behind complex wholes: the organizing idea or principle that operates behind systems, organizations and environments—behind *collective* interactions". (2015, p. 11). Therefore, he argues, it is only natural that management has become a logical extension of the new design thinking, since management is the element of an organization that brings a degree of cohesiveness and unity to human practices within it. In line with Buchanan, Tim Brown and Roger Martin note that although design has throughout most of its history been a process applied to physical objects, it is now used for more and more contexts:

High-tech firms that hired designers to work on hardware (to, say, come up with the shape and layout of a smartphone) began asking them to create the look and feel of user-interface software. Then designers were asked to help improve user experiences. Soon firms were treating corporate strategy making as an exercise in design. Today design is even applied to helping multiple stakeholders and organizations work better as a system (Brown and Martin, 2015, p. 58).

Drawing on discussions of design (e.g. of Simon, 1969/1996; Alexander, 1971), Buchanan (2015, pp. 10–13) proposes four overall meanings of design thinking:

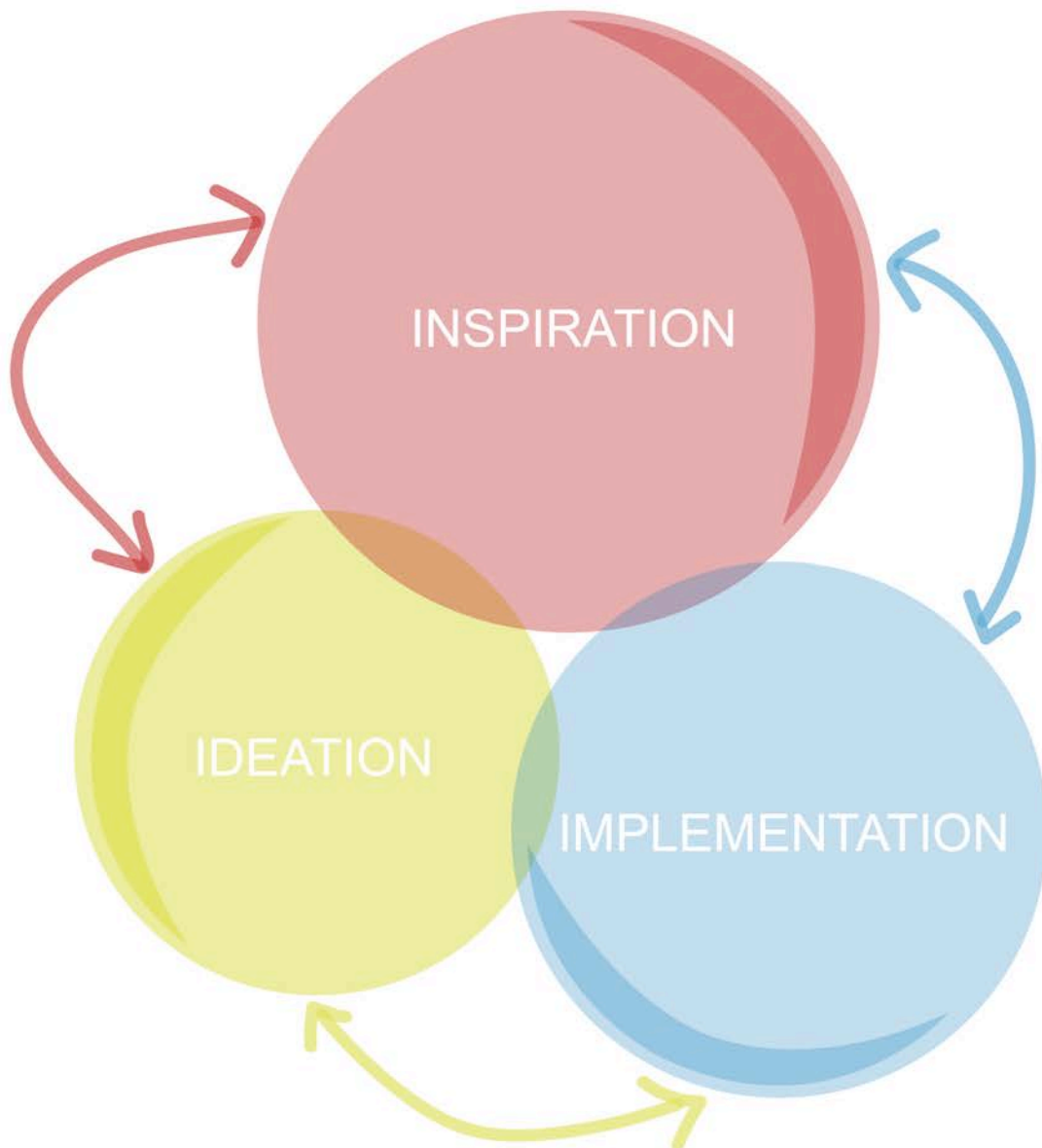
- Design thinking as an *Imaginative Act of the Mind*—an understanding of design thinking that recognizes that imagination and analysis are important to design but that imagination has creative priority.
- Design thinking as the *Cognitive Processes of the Brain of the Designer* which is concerned with the way the human brain gathers, stores, and processes information and how we make decisions based on these activities. This line of thinking is best expressed in the work of Simon (1996/1969).
- Design thinking as a *Spirit of Creativity and Value* that may spread through an entire organization.
- Design thinking as a *Creative Inquiry*, defined as the discipline and practice of an intellectual and practical art which includes two parts, analysis and synthesis.

Keeping the many different understandings of design thinking in mind, this thesis takes its starting point in the definition spearheaded by IDEO. In his 2008 article in *Harvard Business Review*, the CEO of IDEO, Tim Brown, defined design thinking as “a discipline that uses the designer’s sensibility and methods to match people’s needs with what is technically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity” (Brown, 2008, p. 86). This understanding of design thinking largely falls under Buchanan’s *Cognitive Processes of the Brain of the Designer*, and was one of the approaches drawn upon by InnoTex in their



communication and work with H&M and potential future clients. Challenging ‘the myth of the creative genius’, Brown (2008, p. 88) writes that great ideas do not just pop out fully-formed from brilliant minds but are the result of hard work augmented by a creative, human-centred discovery process followed by iterative cycles of prototyping, testing and refinement. According to Brown (2008, pp. 88–89), design thinking consists of three spaces which demarcate different sorts of related activities that together form the continuum of innovation. These three spaces are those of ‘inspiration’, ‘ideation’, and ‘implementation’ (see Figure 1.1). Inspiration is the problem or opportunity that motivates the search for solutions. Ideation is the process of generating, developing, and testing ideas. Implementation is the path that leads from the project stage into people’s lives. Brown highlights the way that projects loop back and forth between these spaces, particularly the first two (inspiration and ideation), as ideas are refined and new directions are taken based on feedback from new insights and prototypes.

**FIGURE 1.1.** Design thinking three spaces



The meaning of design thinking as spearheaded by IDEO extends far beyond what most of us imagine design to be. It is not only a cognitive process or a mindset but has become a toolkit for any innovation process, connecting the creative design approach to traditional business thinking based on planning and rational problem-solving. It is not concerned solely, or even primarily, with the look and feel of a product; rather, design thinking involves a whole range of tools and frameworks, many originating in other disciplines such as ethnography and psychology, reflecting its primary concern with human experience. Design thinkers themselves come from a variety of backgrounds, including interaction design, service design, anthropology, management, and—in the case of InnoTex—textile design (Gobble, 2014). Moreover, design thinking is often carried out in multidisciplinary teams. Within this new context, professional designers increasingly play roles less as makers of form and more as cultural intermediaries (Bourdieu, 1984/1995) and/or as the facilitators of “multidisciplinary” teams (Kelley and Van Patter, 2005).

## **1.2. Change in Organizational Contexts**

Scholars of organization generally agree that the topic of organizational change is important to the field of organization studies. The same scholars, however, disagree as to the meaning of organizational change and how to study it. A fundamental question that influences the way we look at change is whether we view organizations as things or as processes (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005; Tsoukas and Chia, 2002). Promoting the view of organizations as things, organizational theorist David A. Whetten (2006, p. 229) argues that: “organizations are constituted as social artefacts but function as commissioned social actors in modern society.” Along the same lines King, Felin and Whetten write:

When Weick (1995, pp. 1997–1198) called for us to ‘stamp out nouns’ and ‘stamp in verbs,’ to draw attention to processes of organizing, he reflected a fundamental shift in our view of organization. Unfortunately in the course of stamping in verbs, the organization as a distinct sort of entity has become invisible. We have forgotten or ignored the noun-like qualities of organizations. (2010, p. 290)

In contrast, scholars such as Tsoukas (2005) and Tsoukas and Chia (2002) approach organization as a process. Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p. 567) write that: “we set out to offer an account of organizational change on its own terms—to treat change as the normal condition of organizational life.” Promoting a view of organization as process, Weick (2001 and 2003) also understands design more as a process than a thing in itself. Thus, while the latter approach tends to think of design as a structure, the first understands designing as emergent—as a process which, in the words of Naar and Våland, “can be understood and facilitated but not controlled” (2014, p. 3). Van de Ven and Poole (2005) note that Tsoukas and Chia (2002) expound a view of organizational change that takes the process seriously and counterposes it to much current thinking on organizational change. The authors especially highlight Tsoukas and Chia’s (2002) distinction between a ‘weak’ and a ‘strong’ view of organizational change whereby they contrast two versions of the social world: “one, a world made of things in which processes represent change in things; the other, a world of processes in which things are reifications of processes” (Van de Ven and Poole, 2005, p. 1379). Van de Ven and Poole (2005) argue that this is a critical ontological distinction about the essential nature of organizations—one that questions the traditional view of organizations as a noun and examines an alternative representation of ‘organizing’ as a verb in a world marked by ongoing change and flux.

This thesis takes its starting point in the view of organization as process, seeing change as integral to, and a normal condition of, organization. However, taking lessons learnt from my fieldwork into consideration, organization also very much emerges as a noun—existing as a social entity, a collection of people, buildings (sometimes), objects, etc. The ‘thingness’ of an organization comes to the fore, for example, in a designer’s work with materials, in the textiles and clothing discarded in landfills across the world, and in textile factories collapsing and catching fire (Amed, 2015; Labowitz and Baumann-Pauly, 2014). Therefore, in line with Van de Ven and Poole (2005), this thesis aims to combine both dimensions, arguing that this provides a richer understanding of organizational change than either approach can afford by itself.

Theories and analyses of organizational change seek to explain why and how organizations change and also to understand the consequences of change. While organizational change takes place in a wide range of contexts, the literature is dominated by American perspectives and has, as described by Pettigrew, Woodman and Cameron (2001, p. 703), “an unwitting tendency to treat context as undiscussed background”. According to Barnett and Carroll (1995), for example, organizational change can be conceptualized in terms of process and content, where process refers to how change occurs while content describes what actually changes in the organization. Pettigrew (1990), meanwhile, suggests that a comprehensive theory of organizational change must also address the dimension of context. Hempel and Martinssons (2009, p. 460) note that while organizational change research has had a tendency to focus on process and planned change, the wide range of regional and national contexts in which multinational and global organizations operate requires us to develop a better understanding of how organizational change is influenced by context. In a critique of the state of affairs in the field of organizational change, Wentzel and Van Gorp (2014) call for research on organizational change to make use of the diversity of organizational theory and thereby also enable more relevant and diverse research into the topic of organizational change: “The potential richness of theory seems highly restricted on the practitioner’s side. Something is obviously lost in between. One perpetrator of this cutting-back of theoretical diversity is OCR {organizational change research}, as it is the crucial link between basic theory (its input side) and guided action (as its output direction).” (Wentzel and Van Gorp, 2014, p. 117).

While the concept of design has played a role in organizational and management research for more than half a century (see, for example, Thompson, 1967; Galbraith, 1973), in most of this work the understanding of design has largely reflected the organization’s “formal design” (Naar and Våland, 2014; Burton, Eriksen, Håkonsson and Snow, 2006). In the last decade and a half, however, we have seen organizations turn to design-oriented approaches to support organizational change and innovation (Gobble, 2014). Although some designers have always seen themselves as playing important roles socially, politically, and economically, the development of design thinking sets itself apart by its adoption within discourses of managerial and organizational change, in particular within business schools, over the last decade. Design thinking has found its

way, for example, into such places as the Technology, Entertainment and Design (TED) talks (TED 2009 and 2012), a conference series that attracts leading figures from business, technology, and entertainment, and into the *Harvard Business Review* (i.e. Brown and Martin, 2015; Brown, 2008), an influential although not peer-reviewed academic journal. Buchanan (2015) argues that there has been an ‘organizational culture reform’ movement, which he describes less as a single school and more as a variety of individual leaders as diverse as Peter Drucker (1985 and 1995), Tom Peters (1997, 2005 and 2010), Peter Senge (1996), Senge and Sterman (1992) and Edward Deming (2000), all of whom are concerned with reforming the culture of organizations through a better understanding of cultural values and purposes of organizations. These scholars also draw on design, promoting an understanding of design as a means of cultural change. Contributions within this ‘family’ of research that sees design as process also include studies of, for example, organizational practice (Romme, 2003), management (Boland, Collopy, Lyytinen and Yoo, 2008; Yoo, Boland and Lyytinen, 2006; Boland and Collopy, 2004), organizational development and change (Bate, 2007) and change management (Bevan, Robert, Bate, Maher and Wells, 2007). Johansson-Sköldberg et al (2013, p. 127) suggest that the current popularity of design thinking in business is grounded in demands for innovation: “With some experience from design practice, we find it hard to think about innovation without including design.” The understanding of design thinking promoted by IDEO not only captures design practice and the ways in which designers make sense of the task at hand but also captures it as ‘a way of thinking’ that non-designers can use and as a source of inspiration. In this understanding of design thinking, design is no longer limited, as Schön (1983) would have argued, to professional designers.

However, although management scholars have shown an interest in links between business and design since the mid-1980s, the introduction of design thinking into the management of organizations is still at an early stage (Buchanan, 2015; Gruber, de Leon, George, and Thompson, 2015; Christensen and Erichsen, 2013). This is evident, for example, in the limited amount of research on design management and design thinking in mainstream organizational and management journals (Erichsen and Christensen, 2013, p. 119). In a recent article in the high-ranking *Academy of Management Journal*, editors

Gruber, Leon, George, and Thompson encourage research into the potential role of design in organization and management studies:

However, while the role of design in products and services has been explored to a modest extent, scholarly discourse is limited on the role of the overall experience on firm performance. There are now new questions and opportunities for empirical work and theory development, as well as for the development and testing of new conceptual frameworks and methods in terms of the role, impact, and application of design, not only to products and services but also to management science. (2015, p. 5)

Although it is only just making its way into mainstream organizational and management literature, there has also already been some pushback against design thinking. For example, an earlier advocate of design thinking, Bruce Nussbaum, declared it to be “a failed experiment” in his 2011 *Fast Company* article ‘Design Thinking is a Failed Experiment. So What’s Next?’. Nussbaum argues that the widespread adoption of design thinking has turned it into “a linear, gated, by-the-hook methodology that delivered, at best, incremental change and innovation”. In saying this, Nussbaum does not mean to discount the value of design thinking in the past but argues it has outlived its usefulness and has become a “process trick” rather than a truly innovative approach (Nussbaum, 2011). In response to Nussbaum’s critique, Helen Walters (2011) offers a more nuanced view of design thinking in which she maps some of the pitfalls awaiting companies too eager to adopt this approach without fully understanding it.

To fully understand the value of design thinking as a tool for organizational change, we need more empirically grounded studies of its mobilization and practice (Kimbell, 2012). This is precisely what I have aimed to bring to the field of organization and management studies by taking my starting point in an ethnographic study of InnoTex.

### **1.3. The Ethnographic Study of InnoTex**

Meanings of ‘ethnography’ vary (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). In this thesis I start from Jon Van Maanen's (2006) definition of ethnography as a practice concerned with the study and representation of culture through the establishment of close familiarity

with the most mundane aspects of everyday life. Although the field of organizational and management research has been dominated by quantitative research, there is a growing recognition of the potential value of adopting qualitative methods such as ethnography as a means to grapple with the specific and always contextual understandings and explanations given by social actors to provide purpose and meaning to their behaviour (Cunliffe and Locke, 2015).

The conflict between quantitative and qualitative models of social research has often been seen as a clash between two competing philosophical positions, namely ‘positivism’ and ‘naturalism’ (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Llewellyn and Northcott, 2007). Positivism has a long history in philosophy, reaching its high point in the logical positivism of the 1930s and 40s. This movement had a great influence on social scientists, especially in promoting the status of experimental and survey research and the quantitative forms of analysis associated with this type of research. Previously, social science researchers had generally used quantitative and qualitative methods on an equal footing. The relative advantages and uses of the two approaches were often debated, but there was overall agreement on the value of both (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 5). With reference to Cassel and Symon (2006), Cunliffe and Locke note that qualitative types of research also have a long history and tradition in organization and management research: “It is certainly the case that in the early twentieth century, much industrial and organizational research across the emerging sciences was prosecuted through extended fieldwork” (Cunliffe and Locke, 2015, p. 311). The rapid growth of statistical methods and the growing influence of positivist philosophy meant, however, that some of its practitioners came to think of the quantitative approach as a self-sufficient methodological tradition. Briefly summarised, the major principles of positivism include: an appeal to universal laws; giving priority to phenomena that are directly observable or can be logically inferred from what is observable; and standardized procedures of data collection, in the belief that this can facilitate the achievement of measurements that are stable across observers (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, pp. 5–6). Ethnography, like many other kinds of qualitative research, does not match these positivist rules but builds on a different set of values which lie to some extent within the philosophical position of naturalism.



Naturalism, write Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 7), “proposes that, as far as possible, the social world should be studied in its ‘natural’ state, undisturbed by the researcher. [...] The primary aim should be to describe what happens, how the people involved see and talk about their own actions and those of others, the context in which the action takes place, and what follows from it.” In contrast with the positivist tradition that favours the use of experiments and ‘artificial’ settings, naturalism argues that in order to understand people’s behaviour we must use an approach that allows us access to the meanings that guide those behaviours. Based on our capacity as social actors we can gain such access through participant observation, by which we can learn about the cultures and subcultures of the people whom we study (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, Van Maanen, 2015; Dewalt and Dewalt, 2011). The search for universal laws is downplayed in favour of “detailed accounts of the concrete experience of life within a particular culture and of the beliefs and social rules that are used as resources within it” (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 9). The description of culture thus becomes the primary goal of naturalism.

Qualitative research has traditionally been more closely aligned with naturalism than with positivism, though ethnographers have begun to question this commitment over the years. Their doubts centre on the capacity of ethnography to portray the social world in the way that naturalism claims it does. Thus, critics of naturalism reject it on the grounds that it assumes, like positivism, that the primary role of social research is to present the world in some literal, realist fashion (realism). This, however, is at odds with the basic principles of ethnography, which understand people as constructing the social world in which they take part. They do this through their interpretation of it and through actions based on those interpretations. Sometimes these same interpretations reflect different cultures, and this is the reason why people, through their actions, create distinct social worlds (Blumer, 1969, p. 11). What happens then, when we pose the same question about the researchers themselves? According to Hammersley and Atkinson (2007, p. 11): “Once we come to see ethnographers as themselves constructing the social world through their interactions of it, thereby producing incommensurable accounts that reflect differences in their background cultures, there is conflict with the naturalistic realism built into older ethnographic accounts.”

Neither positivism nor naturalism provides an adequate framework for ethnography. While both positions have shortcomings, here I focus on the failure of both to take into account the fact that the researcher is part of the social world that he/she studies. Positivism and naturalism are grounded in a sharp distinction between science and common-sense knowledge, between the activities and knowledge of the researcher and those of the people studied. This is also what leads to their joint concern with eliminating the effects of the researcher on the data (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 15). While positivists try to achieve this through standardization of research procedures, naturalists try to do so through direct contact with the social world. In this way both approaches neglect the fundamental reflexivity of social research. The concept of reflexivity acknowledges that the orientation of researchers will be shaped by their socio-historical locations, including the influence of the values and interests that these locations have upon them (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Bourdieu, 1994/2003). Discussing the distinction between quantitative and qualitative research, Hammersley and Atkinson conclude that:

All social research is founded on the human capacity for participant observation. We act in the social world and yet are able to reflect upon ourselves and our actions as objects in the world. However, rather than leading to doubts about whether social research can produce knowledge or to the desire to transform it into a political enterprise, for us this reflexivity provides the basis for a reconstructed logic of enquiry that shares much with positivism and naturalism but goes beyond them in important respects. By including our own role within the research focus, and perhaps even systematically exploiting our participation in the settings under study as researchers, we can produce accounts of the social world and justify them without placing reliance on futile appeals to empiricism, of either positivist or naturalist varieties. (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007, p. 18)

In embarking on my studies I chose to focus on a single organization rather than a larger sample in order to gain an in-depth understanding of design thinking in practice and the role of ‘culture’ in sustainability issues. In my work I draw on two understandings of the term culture. First, I make use of the broader ‘anthropological’ definition of culture

which tends to emphasize the importance of *meaning*. Proponents of this definition argue that culture:

is not so much a set of things—novels and paintings or TV programs and comics—as a process, a set of practices. Primarily, culture is concerned with the production and the exchange of meanings—the ‘giving and taking of meaning’—between the members of a society or group. To say that two people belong to the same culture is to say that they interpret the world in roughly the same ways and can express themselves, their thoughts and feelings about the world, in ways which will be understood by each other. Thus culture depends on its participants interpreting meaningfully what is happening around them, and ‘making sense’ of the world, in broadly similar ways. (Hall, 1997/2003, p. 2)

Following this line of thought, culture is the ways that members of a group share their common understandings of their world. Different groups of people have different understandings of the world and develop different shared meanings—and therefore different cultures. Hall (1997/2003) highlights how in any culture there is always a great diversity of meanings about any topic, as well as more than one way of interpreting or representing that topic. It is essential to note that these cultural meanings are not only ‘in the heads’ of people; rather, they “organize and regulate social practices, influence our conduct and consequently have real, practical effects” (Hall, 1997/2003, p. 3). In addition to this ‘broad’ definition of culture as a totality of meaningful practices constituting a way of life, I also draw on Bourdieu’s more material approach to culture, conceptualizing culture as a form of capital with “specific laws of accumulation, exchange and exercise” (Swartz, 1997, p. 8). Bourdieu’s is a more traditional understanding of the term culture, whereby culture embodies “the ‘best that has been thought and said’ in a society. It is the sum of the great ideas, as represented in the classic works of literature, painting, music and philosophy—i.e. the ‘high culture’ of an age” (Sulkunen, 1982; Hall, 1997/2003, p. 2).

With its primary focus on a single organization and its attention to national and disciplinary cultures, this thesis to a great extent presents a specific reading of a specific context and thus also a specific understanding of how organizations might change towards practising sustainability. It is, however, exactly from such a situated and local focus that the substantial

and theoretical relevance of an ethnographic case study is derived (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007; Ailon, 2007; Cunliffe and Locke, 2015). Burawoy (2000) notes that one way to make globalization less abstract and opaque is to ground it, and the same is true for questions of design thinking as a tool for organizational change towards practising sustainability.

#### **1.4. Contribution**

While there exists extensive literature on organizational change and sustainability, organizations generally still either struggle to change or simply continue business as usual (Gruber et al., 2015). The central aim of this thesis is twofold: to better understand how and why organizations can change towards taking greater account of sustainability, and to explore empirically the use of design thinking as a tool for organizational change towards practising sustainability in the textile and fashion industry. I explore these questions through an ethnographic study of InnoTex and the workshops they delivered for H&M, putting this work into perspective through a series of interviews with owners and managers of garment factories in China.

The main contribution of this thesis lies in its qualitative approach to research, by which I provide an empirically grounded understanding of design thinking in practice (Kimbell, 2011; Christensen and Erichsen, 2013), making the challenges to organizational change towards practising sustainability less abstract (Burawoy, 2000) and presenting important practical implications for practitioners (Feldman and Orlikowski, 2011). In terms of theory, I contribute to the field of organizational and management studies through a counterfactual approach to my studies that “involves researchers imagining alternatives to existing theoretical assumptions, constructs, and models of causality through contrastive questioning—asking the typical ‘what if’ question—as a way of modifying or challenging the existing theoretical base” (Cornelissen and Durand, 2014, p. 1004). The use of counterfactuals enables imaginative leaps of disciplined imagination and helps us to construct alternative scenarios and even possible worlds in ways that call into question the assumptions that inform established theories and ways of thinking. This thesis is counterfactual in three ways. First, it is counterfactual in bringing design thinking to the field of organizational and management research so as to challenge currently accepted thinking about organizational change (Buchanan, 2015; Gruber, de Leon, George, and Thompson, 2015; Christensen and Erichsen, 2013). Second, it is counterfactual in

adopting Bourdieu's more material understanding of culture to provide an alternative view of cultural impacts on sustainability practices. Third, it is counterfactual in its use of both Bourdieu's practice theory and the Sociology of Translation for analysis.

Realizing the fundamental challenges involved in carrying out such an exercise (and the objections to doing so), I adopt each approach for different but related sets of empirical material (Kale-Lostuvali, 2016; Savage and Silva, 2013). Making use of both approaches has helped me reflect on the shortcomings and strengths of each perspective, and on numerous occasions has made me turn my empirical material upside-down to offer a more rich discussion on the topic of organizational change towards practising sustainability (Wetzel and Van Gorp, 2014).

By adopting Bourdieu's practice theory and the sociology of translation as starting points for investigation, I open up the discussion and argumentation to include a broader set of factors within and beyond organization. This is essential in order to grasp sustainability challenges which, in an increasingly globalized world, cross national, political and disciplinary borders. Playing off the theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu and the Sociology of Translation against my empirical material, I generate new theoretical insights that contribute to our understanding of how and why organizations can change towards practising sustainability and which, in turn, can inform more practice-based research on the topic.

In particular, by drawing on Bourdieu I develop an approach to organizational change towards practising sustainability that bridges micro and macro levels of analysis—an approach that enables us to discuss the challenges of a highly globalized industry with very real local consequences. This framework further helps us understand why and how individuals engage in particular activities, including, for example, why some business managers continue to pursue economic profit at the expense of environmental and social responsibility and sometimes also at the expense of personal values.

Drawing on the Sociology of Translation, this thesis contributes to the existing literature by re-constructing the distinction between micro- and macro- perspectives and thinking instead of only one social world. Applying Callon's (1999) Sociology of Translation (presented in his seminal paper 'Some elements if a sociology of translation:

domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay' first published in 1986) focus is necessarily directed towards interdependencies and networks rather than the decisions and actions of individual sovereign actors that have characterized much of the literature in the field. In addition, this approach stresses the theoretical centrality of non-human actors, such as design templates, design tools, clothes, certifications, and so on, thereby bringing to light a more nuanced understanding of how and why networks are built or collapse.

On the basis of three years of research, this thesis draws the overall conclusion that design thinking as a tool for organizational change towards practising sustainability has its strengths as well as weaknesses. Most importantly, for each situation it is essential to understand how design thinking is being mobilized and practised and for what purposes. This thesis further concludes that economic globalization, as currently practised in the larger part of the textile and fashion industry, undermines the likelihood of progress in achieving organizational change towards practising sustainability. In this way my analysis adds to the growing body of evidence that there is an urgent need to reframe the field of textiles and fashion in terms of questions of economic, environmental and social responsibility. I recommend a broader dialogue on strategies for transition to long-term and integrated sustainability—a dialogue that also draws on design thinking as a way to bring about further change.

## 2. The Empirical Context

In this chapter I present the empirical context that constitutes the foundation of this thesis. With discussions and practices of sustainability at the heart of my empirical research, I begin this chapter with an introduction to the concept of sustainability, its origins and development and its various interpretations. I then introduce InnoTex and the extended context of my fieldwork, including the framework within which this research was conducted. I conclude this chapter by reflecting on ethics in research, including, specifically, the reasons behind my use of pseudonyms in reporting part of my field material.

### **2.1. Sustainability**

Thomas E. Graedel, Paul Reaves Comrie and Janine C. Sekutowski (1995, p. 17) argue that decisions made during the stage of product design profoundly influence the entire life of the product, determining 80 to 90 percent of its total environmental and economic costs and thus also its overall ‘sustainability’. Graedel and his colleagues arrived at this estimation on the basis of research conducted with the multinational telecommunication corporation AT&T, and their work has inspired much research both within and beyond that particular industry. Thus, InnoTex have used Graedel et al.’s estimation as a starting point from which to explore the extent to which this is and could be true in textiles and fashion. During my fieldwork it was evident that there are many different understandings and uses of the term sustainability and its many derivatives, including corporate social responsibility (CSR), social responsibility, sustainable development, environmental sustainability, and sustainable futures. For example, while InnoTex and I might share an overall view of sustainability as related to ‘taking care of the environment and people’, nuances emerged in deeper discussions as regards its meaning and practice. Such differences became even more apparent during our field research in China (Wang and Juslin, 2009). Working with different stakeholders from across the industry on the topic of sustainability, InnoTex were clearly navigating a challenging field.

The concept of sustainability, as it is now generally understood by most people in the Western world, developed in the 1960s in response to growing concerns about environmental degradation. Some saw this degradation as the consequence of industrial development and increasing consumption and population growth, while others saw it as the result of poor resource management, underdevelopment and poverty (Kopnina and Shoreman-Quimet, 2015). Many scholars trace the origin of current problems with social and environmental sustainability to the industrial revolution that took place in Britain in the late eighteenth-century, bringing with it great changes in manufacturing, transportation and consumption. Textile manufacturing was amongst the key drivers of this rapid industrialisation and also amongst the first to make use of modern production methods (Landes, 1969). The industrial revolution had a profound effect on the socioeconomic and cultural conditions of peoples' lives as well as on the capitalist system itself (i.e. Daly, 2008, 1977/1991; Schumacher, 1973/1989; Carson, 1962/2002). While the early development of industrialization was enabled through the exploitation of workers, the rise of mass production also brought with it consumerism and certain long-term social and economic improvements, including scientific and technological progress and better healthcare and living standards. Technological developments in recent years have enabled, for example, cleaner textile production (Natural Resource Defense Council, 2016). Such improvements have encouraged the emergence of ecological modernization theories, an optimistic school of thought which believes that economy and ecology can be favourably combined, trusting that continuous economic development will ensure the development of newer and cleaner technologies able to deal with challenges of un-sustainability. There is, however, little empirical evidence that economically more developed societies have had much success in addressing environmental challenges (Kopnina and Shoreman-Quimet, 2015, p. 8), as can be seen in their overall failure to address carbon emissions and the threat of mass extinction, as well as in their inability to provide alternative and sustainable forms of consumption. With a world population reaching 7.4 billion (Worldometers, 2016), moreover, the capitalist hope of sustainable continuous growth seems ever less likely to be realised.

The publication of the Brundtland Report in 1987 is often cited as the moment when the term 'sustainable development' entered the policy arena (Bebbington, 2001). Early writings on the social responsibility of business, however, date back to the mid-20th



century (Carroll, 1999). Many point to Howard Bowen's book, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (1953), as the starting point for today's research within the field (Carroll and Shabana, 2010; Lee 2008). It was Bowen (1953, p. 6) who presented the first definition of the social responsibility of businessmen, as follows: "It refers to the obligations of businessmen to pursue those policies, to make those decisions, or to follow those lines of action which are desirable in terms of the objectives and values of our society." As the title of Bowen's work suggests, there were not many businesswomen during this period, and Bowen did not give much thought to gender issues. Nonetheless, his book is recognized as the first comprehensive discussion of business ethics and social responsibility. In the 1960s, Keith Davis (1960, p. 70) came up with a new definition of social responsibility to refer to the actions and decisions of businesspeople that go "at least partially beyond the firm's direct economic and technical interest". Davis was the first to posit a relationship between CSR and financial performance, arguing that a company's power will decrease over time if it does not behave in a socially responsible way. Building on the legal argument introduced by Joseph W. McGuire (1963), Davis stated in a later work that "social responsibility begins where the law ends" (1973, p. 313). In line with scholars such as Bowen and Davis, William Frederick (1960) insisted that companies have social duties towards the community.

In contrast to these perspectives, Milton Friedman, winner of the 1976 Nobel Prize in Economics, argued that the foundation of free society would be undermined if management also assumed social responsibilities. In *Capitalism and Freedom*, Friedman wrote:

The view has been gaining widespread acceptance that corporate officials and labor leaders have a 'social responsibility' that goes beyond serving the interest of their stockholders or their members. This view shows a fundamental misconception of the character and nature of a free economy. In such an economy there is one and only one social responsibility of business - to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits so long as it stays within the rules of the game, which is to say,

engages in open and free competition without deception and fraud.  
(Friedman, 1962, p. 112)

According to Friedman, a company's only social responsibility ought to be the maximization of profit and the recovery of investments for shareholders. Although the excerpt above has been much cited and often criticized, there has been a slight tendency to overlook the fact that Friedman did specify "as long as it stays within the rules of the game". Friedman (1970) later elaborated on this view in an article in *The New York Times*: "The responsibility is to conduct the business in accordance with their [the owners'] desires, which generally will be to make as much money as possible while conforming to the basic rules of the society, both those embodied in law and those embodied in ethical custom." In this way Friedman placed social and environmental responsibility on governments (through law and regulations) as opposed to individuals, and stated that if some people think that businesses act irresponsibly it is not the businesses that are to blame but their own failure to persuade a majority of their fellow citizens to be of like mind, and "that they are seeking to attain by undemocratic procedures what they cannot attain by democratic procedures" (Friedman, 1970). This view has become integral to the various forms of capitalism and the majority of strategic CSR literature, at the core of which lies an expectation of continuous growth (McNeill and Wilhite, 2015; Wallerstein, 2013; Smith, 2010).

Since the 1980s and the publication of the Brundtland Commission's report, sustainability has generally been defined as the integration of environmental, social and economic dimensions to inform decision making with a view to ensuring responsible management of natural resources. Elkington (1994) presents this view as "the triple bottom line", or "three Ps", i.e. Profit, People and Planet. Much discussion, both theoretical and practical, has centred on the trade-offs between the three dimensions. There has been a heated debate, in particular, about the relationship between economic and environmental sustainability, reflected for example in the debate concerning 'weak' versus 'strong' sustainability. Weak sustainability involves the view that natural resources can be sustained, at least to some extent, by human-made resources, while strong sustainability takes issue with the substitutability of different types of capital (social, environmental and economic) and demands that minimum amounts of

environmental capital should be independently maintained (McNeill and Wilhite, 2015, pp. 34–35). Building on this distinction, Von Braun (2012) outlines four different concepts of sustainability: very strong (“Deep ecologist”); strong (“Cautious ecologist”); weak (“Ecological touch”); and very weak (“Growth optimism”). Looking at the way different firms interpret and apply of the term sustainability, it emerges as a highly normative concept that has been used to mean different things to different people in different contexts (Bebbington, 2001; Terborgh, 1999). According to Laine (2005, p. 397), it is precisely this elusiveness that has helped the concept gain a predominant position in environmental and social discussions worldwide, “as it has been possible to define the concept to suit one’s own purpose”. In this way the definition of sustainability has also become an object of struggle (Bourdieu, 1993); or, as seen through the lens of the Sociology of Translation (Callon, 1999), as an actor-network in construction.

Critics of the concept of sustainable development used by the Brundtland Commission emphasize that this understanding, with its focus on poverty and wealth, pays little attention to the relationship between humans and nature. The critique concerns the relative nature of the concepts of ‘progress,’ ‘development’ and ‘modernity’ and that the understanding of development which is promoted by the concept actually helps to create social inequality and to exacerbate the imbalance between people and the environment (Kopnina and Shoreman-Quimet, 2015, p. 11). Wang and Juslin (2009) highlight the way that, although CSR has been discussed worldwide, the term first developed in the West. Today, countries such as the UK, the USA and Japan are the leading contributors to CSR thinking and practice, while countries such as China are only now becoming critical players. Some of the people with whom I met during our research in China also touched upon this point, opining that the use of standards and certifications by Western brands is a form of modern-day imperialism, imposing Western values on China. Criticisms of the ‘triple bottom line’ raise the problem of adding up the three separate accounts, arguing that it is difficult to measure the ‘people’ and ‘planet’ accounts in the same terms as profit, i.e. in terms of cash (*The Economist*, 2009). Scholars such as Nemetz (2015) and Washington (2015) argue that the belief in the power of economic development to solve sustainability issues is one of the greatest myths of sustainability, while others are more optimistic about the potential of technological and economic

development (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2012; Braungart and McDonough, 2002; WCED, 1987).

Public awareness of the human costs of cheap clothing was raised in the late 1990s by the sweatshop scandals surrounding Nike Inc. (Doorey, 2011). Since then, the industry's answer to its problems with social and environmental sustainability has largely been in the form of using certifications and standards to measure sustainability and, more recently, in sustainability reporting. Today we see a plethora of standards and labels covering different areas such as eco-labelling, including Oeko-tex, the Global Organic Textile Standard (GOTS) and Soil Association. Initiatives focusing on ethical issues include the Worldwide Responsible Accredited Production (WRAP) programme, which focuses on humane and ethical manufacturing in the apparel, footwear and sewn products sector, the verification initiative Fair Wear Foundation, and the International Organisation for Standardisation (ISO) which, amongst other standards, has initiated the development of ISO 26000, an international standard for social responsibility. In the last few years we have seen the emergence of more collaborative approaches to practising sustainability focusing on the textile and fashion industry, e.g. the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC), a non-profit organization whose members include apparel and footwear brands, retailers, industry affiliates and trade organizations working together to promote sustainable production, and the Ethical Trading Initiative, an alliance of companies, NGOs and trade union organizations that promotes respect for workers' rights around the globe. Social labels, codes of conduct and the like may be more effective in certain situations and countries than others (Kopnina and Shoreman-Quimet, 2015, p. 17; Interview: Bonanni, Sourcemap, October 2014); however, there is also an increasing awareness of the overall 'failure of codes' to transform the textile and fashion industry towards practising sustainability (Chan and Siu, 2010). Fredericks (2015) and Waas, Hugé, Verbruggen and Block (2015) suggest that one of the problems with this approach is the tendency for standards and certifications to address sustainability issues by category compartmentalization, leading to the separation of economic, environmental, social and ethical aspects. It is still the case that many companies treat sustainability as a mere public relations tool—or, in the words of Friedman (1970), “hypocritical window-dressing”—aimed at strengthening their reputations rather than as an expression of core business values.

Current alternatives to ‘mainstream’ sustainability, i.e. the prevalent approach to sustainability that does not seem to be working—as seen for example in recent data published by Met Office, NASA and NOAA confirming record global temperatures in 2015 (Carrington, 2016)—mostly centre on various closed-loop and circular systems (Kopnina and Shoreman-Quimet, 2015). These include Graedel and colleagues’ ‘Industrial Ecology’ (Lifset and Graedel, 2002), William McDonough and Michael Braungart’s (2002) Cradle to Cradle (C2C), and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s Circular Economy, which relies on renewable energy, aiming to minimize, track and eliminate the use of toxic chemicals and reduce waste through careful design (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2012). These approaches take their starting point in a critique of the linear “cradle to grave” process that continues to dominate current processes of production and consumption, instead promoting eco-effectiveness, which supports an endless cycle of materials that mimics the ‘no waste’ nutrient cycles of nature. While circular economy may have an important role to play in sustainable resource management, however, it also seems to justify further “business-as-usual” growth (Washington, 2015). Moreover, the closed-loop and circular economy frameworks so far do not deal with questions of social responsibility, which might be one reason this approach has proved attractive to the labour-intensive textile and fashion industry, i.e. H&M (Kennet, 2014), Marks and Spencer (M&S, 2016) and Levi Strauss & Co (Kobori, 2015).

The relationship between economic, social and environmental sustainability is extremely challenging to resolve, but taking sustainability seriously also brings opportunities. While proponents of the ecological modernization theory argue that economic development will ensure the creation of better technologies to help us manage environmental crises and that growing wealth can solve problems associated with industrial development (Mol and Spaargaren, 2000), this thesis takes its starting point in the view that capitalist paradigms of continuous economic growth are simply incompatible with sustainability and social equality. In the words of McNeill and Wilhite (2015) and Smith (2010), there is no greater hindrance to a sustainable transition than the deeply-held view that economies cannot thrive unless they grow.

In this thesis I define sustainability as a situation in which environmental and social capital are of the same or higher value than economic capital (McNeill and Wilhite, 2015; Smith, 2010; Engleman, 2013; Jackson, 2009; Daly, 1977/1991). This was not necessarily the way in which the people with whom I met during my fieldwork would define sustainability, however, nor how they would approach the question of whether environmental and social sustainability is feasible within the context of capitalist faith in continuous growth. Taking this stance on sustainability—as well as leading to interesting and sometimes slightly heated discussions—has no doubt had an impact on my work, both in terms of my approach to the field and my analysis.

## **2.2. Innovation Textiles**

InnoTex's workshops for H&M, as well as my PhD project, took place within the framework of a Swedish cross-disciplinary research programme with project partners from Sweden, Denmark and the United Kingdom. The aim of this programme was to deliver knowledge and solutions that stakeholders can use to bring about a significant improvement in the fashion industry's social and environmental performance, and thereby also to strengthen the competitiveness of the Swedish fashion industry. Both of our research projects were thus funded by a programme that took its starting point in the business case of CSR—somewhat at odds with the point of departure of this thesis.

I first encountered InnoTex at one of the biannual research seminars within the programme. Listening to the presentations of the project partners, my attention was caught by the talk given by InnoTex's Lead Researcher. Marie was stylishly dressed and her presentation was colourful and full of images of beautiful clothing and textiles. Introducing the research that InnoTex would do within the programme, Marie talked about designing for change, design strategies and system change. I looked around the room and noticed that her words had made most of us look up from our laptop-screens.

Between completing a Masters in European Cultural Studies and starting on my PhD, I had worked for five years as a research and project manager at the Copenhagen Institute of Interaction Design (CIID). During my time with CIID I had been introduced to the terminology of the field of interaction design and its core concepts, including 'design thinking' and 'system change' (Brown, 2008, 2009). It was these same concepts I now

heard being elaborated and drawn upon in Marie's presentation—by far the most inspiring presentation of the day, and also the one with which I felt most familiar (which of course, may also have been one of the reasons I found it the most inspiring).

I soon found myself in conversation with Marie, eager to understand more about InnoTex's work. This initial conversation turned out to have a decisive impact on the direction of my research. When I first embarked upon my PhD, it had been my plan to work inside a fashion brand to explore challenges and opportunities to organizational change towards practising sustainability. However, I soon became aware that working inside a fashion brand would entail considerable restrictions on my research, and this was confirmed by Marie, who informed me that it would be difficult to gain permission to conduct an in-depth study of a fashion brand since they are known to keep their cards close to their chest and would almost certainly require me to sign elaborate non-disclosure agreements (NDAs). Following several subsequent conversations about our respective research interests, in which Marie expressed her own interest in learning more about the methods and theories of the social sciences, the suggestion arose that I might conduct a case study of InnoTex, focusing primarily on the work they would be doing as part of the Swedish research project. Marie assured me I would be granted access to the InnoTex studio and that I would have full permission to use my empirical data. The chance to do fieldwork with a group of designers who were using design thinking as a tool to facilitate organizational change towards practising sustainability was a unique opportunity to combine three of my core interests: fashion, sustainability and the role of designers and design thinking in processes of change. I soon resolved, therefore, to take up this offer and to adapt my research questions accordingly.

InnoTex was established in the mid-1990s. At the time of my research, from 2012-2015, the group comprised eight textile design researchers and project-managers, all of whom were based in a recognized Art and Design University in London. The eight researchers constituting the core group were as follows: Marie, the Lead Researcher; Scarlett, the Founder and Lead Academic; Anika, a PhD student; Rosie, the Senior Research Assistant; Annalisa and Tilly, both Research Assistants; and Gwendolyn and Henrieta, Research and Project Managers. In addition, InnoTex worked with an extensive network of researchers and practitioners. All team members were on part-time contracts. During

the time of my fieldwork, for example, Scarlett was in the process of cutting back on her working hours in preparation for retirement, while Marie was dividing her time between InnoTex and another London-based textiles research centre, and both research assistants were engaged in freelance projects and/or independent art and textile projects. (Table 2.1, below, outlines the team, including titles, nationalities and professional backgrounds.) English was the mother tongue of Marie, Scarlett, Anika, Rosie and Gwendolyn, while it was a second language for myself, Annalisa, Tilly and Henrieta.

**TABLE 2.1.** InnoTex's team

NAME	POSITION	PROFESSIONAL BACKGROUND	AGE
Marie	Lead researcher, woman	Textile Designer	40s
Anika	PhD student, woman	Textile Designer	30s
Rosie	Senior research fellow, woman	Textile Designer	30s
Scarlett	Founder and lead academic, woman	Textile Designer	60s
Annalisa	Research assistant, woman	Designer	20s
Tilly	Research assistant, woman	Textile Designer	20s
Gwendolyn	Research and project manager, woman		30s
Henrieta	Research and project manager, woman		30s

InnoTex was created in response to the frustration felt by Scarlett and her previous colleagues with the practices of the textile and fashion industry, as well as to their own lack of knowledge about how to create more sustainable textiles and fashion. In one conversation with Scarlett, I asked her what had motivated the group to start working with questions of sustainability at a time when sustainability was considered at best as a limitation on designers' creative freedom. Her reply was as follows:

But we couldn't escape the idea that, what was rumored to be true, was that textile production was causing a huge amount of pollution. We could see that in our own set up at the college. The students were pouring dyes down

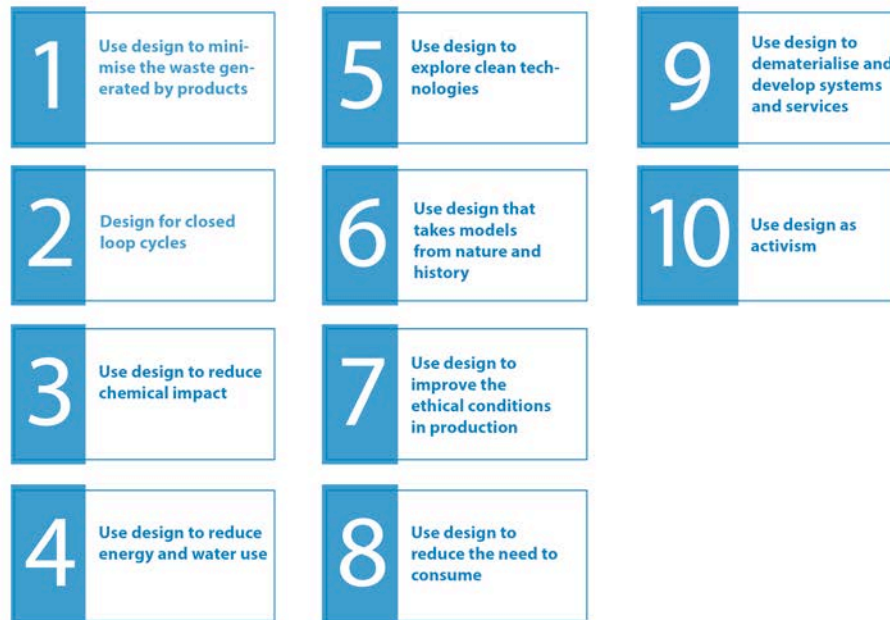


the sink and we knew that that wasn't going into some kind of processing plant but that it was going into waste water - and that was just part of it. So we were aware of the ecological damage potentially. And we kept hearing about it from the industry—the little we knew of the industry at the time. (Interview with Scarlett, July 2013)

Over the years, InnoTex's research has led to the development of a set of ten sustainable design strategies targeted at textile and fashion designers. Rather than purporting to be 'the solution' to achieving sustainability, these ten strategies provide a framework for thinking, and range from approaches that rely on material, process and technological solutions to more conceptual strategies encouraging radical innovation (see Figure 2.1). These design strategies have become InnoTex's starting point for work in education, research and consultancy. The group apply them through what they call 'layered thinking', meaning that you start with one or two strategies and later, once these are in place, you can connect them with others. In this way the strategies are designed both to stimulate immediate inspiration and also to provoke further thought about the subject in the future. Marie explained that the ten strategies reflected InnoTex's definition of sustainability. Taken together they present a quite strong definition, encouraging environmental, social and economic sustainability (Braun, 2012). However, the malleability of the strategies also encourages users to break the concept down into bits and pieces, most often resulting in weaker definitions of sustainability—i.e. compromising issues of social sustainability.

**FIGURE 2.1.** InnoTex's 10 design strategies

InnoTex's workshops with H&M



Being based in London, one of the world's 'Big Four' fashion capitals (Paris, Milan, New York and London), InnoTex is part of a community long recognized for its design schools and cutting-edge fashion—and also a community increasingly known for its explorations into sustainable fashion. Over the last couple of decades the city has seen the establishment of a number of research centres and higher educational programmes focused on sustainable fashion, including the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, Textiles Environment Design, the Textiles Futures Research Centre, and Innovation Textiles. Other initiatives include the development of the 'Sustainable Clothing Roadmap' by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) and Marks & Spencer's setting up of 'Plan A'. In addition to offering unique opportunities for knowledge exchange and collaboration, this is also a competitive environment marked by competition for funding and ongoing struggles concerning the meaning and practice of sustainable fashion. For example, InnoTex's activities in the summer and fall of 2013 were strongly influenced by Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2014, a new system introduced by Britain's four higher education funding bodies to assess the quality of

research in the UK's higher education institutions.<sup>1</sup> Following assessment, the four higher education funding bodies would use REF 2014 to inform the selective allocation of research grants to the institutions they would fund from 2015–2016. The 2014 Framework used “a single framework for assessment across all disciplines, with a common set of data required in all submissions, standard definitions and procedures, and assessment by expert panels against broad generic criteria” (REF 02.2011, p. 4). In the course of my fieldwork with InnoTex it was my experience that the REF brought with it an increased focus on and pressure to publish in recognized, academic journals. As part of the arts and design field that has traditionally communicated research results through physical objects and exhibitions, publishing in academic journals was new to InnoTex and something that put Marie under considerable pressure at this time. For this reason she was eager to take up opportunities to co-author articles.

### **2.3. InnoTex and H&M**

In addition to my fieldwork with InnoTex, I also followed the group's lectures and workshops for H&M, a brand that was also a project partner in the Swedish research project. Based in Stockholm, H&M is ranked the second largest clothing retailer in the world, known for its fast fashion for men, women, teenagers and children. Producing continuously increasing amounts of clothing and accessories, H&M is also recognized for its investments in sustainable fashion, e.g. its ‘Conscious Collection’ and, most recently, its Global Change Award, whereby the H&M Conscious Foundation provided a grant of 1 million EUR to fund pioneering ideas closing the loop for fashion (cf. the circular economy (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2012)). While InnoTex had had previous experience of working for large corporations, including the VF Corporation and the French goods holding company Kering, Marie emphasized that their work with H&M was new to them in that it demanded they apply their framework in a particularly restrictive environment with a specific design team (Interview: Marie, April 2014). Taking part in InnoTex's work for H&M, two things were plain to see: first, that the role of designers within the context of fast fashion was radically different from that of designers within the university's research department; and second, that the challenges to

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<sup>1</sup> The four funding bodies are as follows: the Higher Education Funding Council of England (HEFCE), the Scottish Funding Council (SFC), the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) and the Department for Employment and Learning, Northern Ireland (DEL).

and opportunities for sustainability went well beyond the walls of the Buying Office located in Stockholm. Gaining a better understanding of the relationship between the brand and its overseas manufacturers thus seemed key in order to appraise the most effective approach to achieving change in organizational practices towards sustainability.

#### **2.4. Sustainability in the Chinese Textile and Fashion Industry**

In the course of conversations with Marie regarding this lack of in-depth knowledge about the supply chain and related challenges, I asked if InnoTex might be interested in undertaking field research in China in order to talk to industry stakeholders about the meaning and practices of sustainability in textile and garment production (Robin and Poon, 2009; Wang and Juslin, 2009). Following some discussion, we agreed to conduct a total of five weeks of research in the cities of Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou. All three cities are well known for their major role in the textile and fashion industry, Guangzhou being amongst the largest producers of clothing and textiles in China. Given the limited amount of time available for our research, these cities were also places where we would be more readily able to gain access to factories and brands through our existing network. In embarking upon this research it was my plan to conduct participant observation of InnoTex to understand how ‘design thinkers’ would go about the fieldwork and engaging manufacturing in processes of organizational change. The focus of our trip soon changed, however, in response to Marie and Anika’s schedules turning out to be too busy, meaning they did not have time to plan the research and left this task to me instead. Drawing on my experience working with CIID, as well as my background in cultural studies, I began by setting up interviews and planning visits to factory-sites and opportunities to spend time in the field, including opportunities to walk the streets of Shanghai and to attend whatever social events might provide a chance to speak with local people. Presenting these plans to a group of Chinese scholars and business people visiting London in advance of our trip, some interviewees put forward the point that the majority of Western approaches to sustainability in China do not take into account Chinese reality and culture. The same point is made in studies by Wang and Juslin (2009), Hung Myllyvainio and Virkkala (2006), Hung (2004) and other scholars who highlight the importance of the role of culture in questions of sustainability. From consideration of these comments and studies it became clear that a deeper discussion of

the meaning and value of sustainability in the textile and fashion industry from the perspective of Chinese stakeholders would need to take centre stage in the fieldwork.

## **2.5. Online Study**

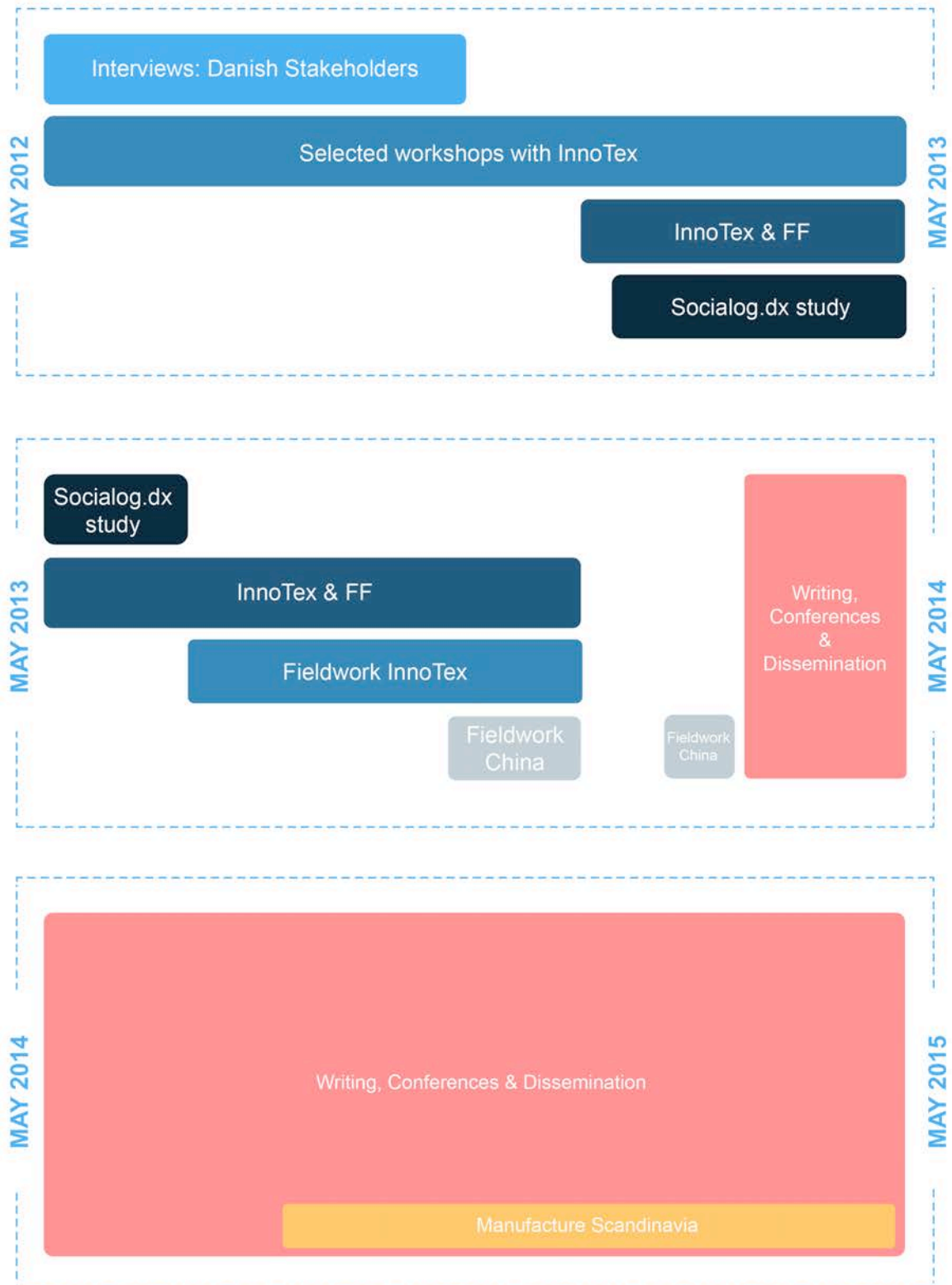
In preparation for my fieldwork, Professor Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen and I conducted an online study using an online qualitative research platform called Sociolog.dx, a platform managed by Germany's largest consumer research institute, Growth for Knowledge (GfK). The aim of this four-day exploratory experience was to discuss and map barriers and opportunities to sustainable fashion from the perspective of thirty-six industry stakeholders from across different parts of the world and industry. These included, primarily, stakeholders from brands and research/academia in the USA, Sweden, the UK and Argentina—and it is important to note that the lack of representation of Asian stakeholders from production and/or industry amongst these stakeholders constitutes a limitation of my research in this part of the fieldwork.

## **2.6. Manufacture**

Finally, as an outcome of my PhD I am also in the process of setting up Manufacture Copenhagen. I do this with the advice and support of Professor Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen, and in collaboration with Prisca Vilsbøl, the co-founder of Manufacture Copenhagen, and Bob Bland and Amanda Parkes, the co-founders of Manufacture New York.

Figure 2.2 presents an overview of the empirical material that forms the core of this thesis.

**FIGURE 2.2.** Overview of fieldwork



The greater part of this thesis was written following the completion of my fieldwork, meaning that the full set of empirical material was fresh in my mind as I wrote all four papers. This proved a challenge in terms of structuring my line of thoughts and argumentation though I believe it has also led to a more nuanced analysis of how and why organizations may change towards practising sustainability and of the role of design thinking as a tool for change. Taking advantage of the paper-based format, each paper draws on selected parts of the empirical material to address specific issues, as summarised below:

Paper 1, entitled ‘Sustainability Innovators and Anchor-Draggers: Results from a Global Study on Sustainable Fashion’, draws on data gathered through Sociolog.dx to map current initiatives on how organizations can change towards practicing sustainability.

Paper 2, ‘Unlikely Mediators? The Malleable Concept of Sustainability’, draws on my fieldwork with InnoTex, including their workshops for H&M, to examine the role of InnoTex and design thinking as facilitators of change.

Paper 3, ‘Design Thinking for Organizational Change’, draws on empirical material gathered through participant observation of InnoTex’s workshops for H&M and adopts the concept of translation (Callon, 1999) to examine design thinking in practice and how it is being mobilized as a tool for change.

Paper 4, ‘Capital in Formation: What is at Stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?’, returns to the overall question of how and why organizations can change towards sustainability. Here I take my starting point in our field research in China to explore the ‘rules of the game’ as experienced by individual stakeholders (Bourdieu, 1977/2005), focusing particularly on the meaning and value of sustainability within this game.

## **2.7. Ethical Considerations**

I am highly grateful to InnoTex for having opened the doors of their studio and for allowing me to learn about their everyday work and their passions. In hindsight I realise I had thought too little about the issues that might arise along the way and how to pre-empt or address these issues at an early stage. In the course of discussions with Marie

about the nature of our collaboration—what Guillemin and Gillam (2004) call ‘procedural ethics’— we agreed that I would share with InnoTex my interview notes and observations from the field, as well as my draft papers. In doing so it was my hope that providing the team with the opportunity to read and correct my notes would help me to gain their trust as well as to solicit their feedback and thus gain further insights (Kaiser, 2009, p. 7). Marie encouraged me to identify InnoTex in my work, hoping that our collaboration would strengthen the group’s research agenda as well as their consultancy. The Swedish cross-disciplinary research programme also welcomed our initiative, especially since part of its remit was to encourage collaboration amongst project partners. Having InnoTex as a case study thus seemed a win-win situation for all concerned.

While procedural ethics for collaboration are effective in promoting researchers to consider ethical issues, they may also be seen, as noted by Guillemin and Gillam (2004), as being largely a mere formality incapable of addressing the specific ethical dilemmas that may arise along the way for the qualitative researcher. Thus, challenges related to confidentiality, defined by Sieber (1992, p. 52) as the researcher’s “agreements with persons about what may be done with their data”, began to arise 3-4 months into my fieldwork, induced by the planning of our research in China and discussions concerning the meaning and practice of design thinking. My five years’ experience of working with CIID had influenced the way in which I thought of design thinking (Brown, 2008), but I soon learned that the understanding of design thinking promoted by IDEO was only one of many definitions of design thinking (Buchanan, 2015; Cross, 2006; Friedman, 2003; Kimbell, 2011; Schön, 1983). Around the same time, Marie, on behalf of the university, asked me to sign a non-disclosure agreement, explaining that signing it in effect meant nothing in terms of our collaboration. But reading the NDA made me concerned. By signing it I would give Marie’s university full permission to hold back my fieldwork material and papers at their convenience, thereby also putting the completion of my PhD in their hands. The NDA went back and forth between the legal departments of our respective universities for months, but following the recommendations of my university I did not sign it and Marie’s university eventually stopped pursuing it. The issue of the NDA, together with some of the reflections I made on my fieldwork, ended up causing a breach in my relationship with InnoTex, and particularly in my relations with Marie.



The process of looking over my empirical material, evaluating the validity of my own observations and considering different ways to present this material was an unsettling process at times (Kaiser, 2009; Goodwin, Pope, Mort and Smith, 2003). In particular, the following two concerns arose:

- What would be the acceptable balance between maintaining and/or regaining the confidentiality of my respondents while at the same time presenting a rich and detailed account of their everyday work and the contexts in which they found themselves? (Berg and Lune, 2014).
- To what extent would my analysis be valid and useful for InnoTex?

In the end it was these concerns that made me turn towards the use of pseudonyms (Lahman, Rodriguez, Moses, Griffin, Mendoza, and Yacoub, 2015; Geest, 2003). One of my aims in doing so was to avoid, as far as possible, giving any grounds for InnoTex to perceive a threat, and further, in the hope that Marie would thereby find my work more useful for her own purposes. Having previously agreed on identification, I later wrote to Marie to ask what she would prefer; however, this query received no response and I therefore made the decision to use pseudonyms. This in turn raised an additional set of questions regarding the protection of my interlocutors, including the extent to which I should include or remove such matters as the size of the organization, the industry, and the gender and nationalities of my respondents. As noted by Kaiser, however:

unlike changing specific names, changing additional details to render data unidentifiable can alter or destroy the original meaning of the data. For example, in a study of work-family policies, removing or altering details of employer size, industry, policies, and family structure might protect individual and employer identities but these changes make the data useless for addressing the research questions at hand. (2009, p. 5)

Accordingly, I use pseudonyms to refer to my primary case organization, to the Chinese brands and factories, etc. and to all respondents except Miss Ana Diaz, who joined us for

our research in China, and our fixer, Echo. With the agreement and acceptance of H&M, I do identify this particular organization. The extent to which I changed additional details was guided by the distinction drawn by Tolich (2004) between external and internal confidentiality, as well as by my own reflections on the target and likely audience of this thesis (Kaiser, 2009). Tolich (2004, p. 101) defines external confidentiality as being like the tip of an iceberg above the surface: “External confidentiality is traditional confidentiality where the researcher acknowledges they know what the person said but promises not to identify them in the final report.” Internal confidentiality concerns what is below the surface: “This is the ability for research subjects involved in the study to identify each other in the final publication of the research.” (Tolich, 2004, p.101) Internal confidentiality, states Tolich (2004), often goes unacknowledged in ethical codes. Yet this too has the potential to scuttle both researchers and their informants. While I was struggling to find a balance between sharing details that I considered to be key to my analysis and a self-imposed use of pseudonyms, what happened was that Marie, for good and bad, seemed to lose interest in my ‘academic writing’. While our discussions and my initial attempts at writing had to some extent made her feel vulnerable on behalf of InnoTex, aiming to publish within the field of organization and management studies and cultural studies my writings took a direction that seemed to make Marie less concerned about my work. In light of this I chose to adopt an approach in which I focus more on the tip of the iceberg and less on what lies beneath the surface.

The use of pseudonyms is an integral part of social science research, albeit one that is often applied with little thought or deep reflection. The process of naming participants itself, however, has an impact on our interpretation of specific situations, since research shows that people will assign characteristics to other people according to their names (Lahman et al., 2015). In this thesis I have chosen pseudonyms that reflect the gender and, for the most part, the nationality of my respondents. Respondents’ names have been created on the basis of lists of ‘popular names’ in the respective countries/regions. This approach has the downside that the name in question does not necessarily indicate age, as names tend to be more popular during some decades than others. My field descriptions, however, should compensate for this by providing an indication of each individual’s age. In creating pseudonyms for the various public and private organizations, I have also tried to create names that represent nationalities and specific

trades, etc. InnoTex have not objected to my choice of pseudonyms and my proofreader accepted the name to the extent that he was surprised it did not show up in his Google search. While it is unlikely that the people to whom we spoke in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Guangzhou—or anyone in their immediate network—will read this thesis or any of the individual papers, I have also chosen here to use pseudonyms to protect them from any harm that could arise as a result of my work.



# 3. Methodology

## 3.1. Epistemological and Ontological Assumptions

In this thesis I adopt an overall subjectivist (relativist) epistemological stance, rejecting the idea of neutral observation that characterizes an objectivist (realist) epistemological stance. This means that I approach my fieldwork and analysis in accordance with the belief that reality is socially constructed and that there is therefore nothing like ‘ultimate true knowledge’ out there, i.e. that whatever we perceive to be true is a result of our intersubjective socio-cultural consensus as to what is understood as ‘reality’ or ‘objectivity’ in terms of knowledge. While epistemology is the study of the criteria by which we can know what does and what does not constitute warranted or scientific knowledge, ontological issues concern the question of whether the phenomenon being studied actually exists independently of our knowing and perceiving it or whether what we see and take to be real is actually only an outcome of our knowing and perceiving it. In this thesis I largely adopt a realist assumption that things exist independently of our perceptual structure, a view summed up by Cassell and Symon (2012, p. 17) as follows: “We might not already know its characteristics, indeed it may be impossible for us ever to know those characteristics, but this reality exists, it is real and it is there potentially awaiting inspection and discovery by us.” In my work this means, for example, that while the meaning and practices of sustainability are up for continuous discussion and co-construction, some of the environmental and social consequences of the industry still present themselves as very real—including, for example, the 217 tonnes of textiles dumped in Hong Kong on average each day in 2011 and the approximately 959 tonnes of clothing sent to landfills in the UK in that same year (according to WRAP statistics, in Dean, 2013). This realness of things imposed itself on several occasions in the course of my fieldwork—as it did, for example, in the mountains of thrown-away garments (Figure 3.1.) we encountered at one of Hong Kong’s recycling centres, despite the location being comparatively empty on the day of our visit.

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**FIGURE 3.1.** Hong Kong recycling center

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### 3.1.1. Interpretivism

Based on the philosophical positions outlined above, I adopted an interpretivist approach to my fieldwork and analysis. There are a variety of definitions of interpretivism, but all of them emerge from a position that takes *human interpretation* as the starting point for developing knowledge about the social world (Prasad, 2005, p. 13). While interpretive traditions uniformly subscribe to the belief that our worlds are socially created, they also maintain that these constructions are possible only because of our ability to attach meanings to events, objects, and interactions. Those who know about the Patagonia brand of clothing, for example, are likely to identify the wearer of a Patagonia jacket as someone who is concerned about the environment and social responsibility and likes the outdoors. In this way objects and actions are not only identified as constituting a particular phenomenon on their own but are also seen to stand for something else. According to Prasad (2005, p. 14), it is this inherent human capacity for meaningful social construction that interpretivists term as being subjective because it departs from the idea of a fixed external reality. Particularly important to interpretivists is a commitment to Weber's notion of *verstehen*, whereby understanding meaning and intentionality is prioritized over causal explication. As a result, the preferred subject matter of interpretive research is the everyday lifeworld of individuals, and it is the researcher's role to describe and explain people's behaviour through an investigation of how they experience, sustain, and talk about these socially constructed everyday realities. In my fieldwork and analysis this has led to many questions and conversations about the meaning of sustainability and the meaning of fashion, as well as to discussions about disciplinary traditions and how these play out in everyday life.

The social dimension of reality construction is what characterizes interpretive traditions. As Prasad (2005, p. 14) writes: "even while we are individually engaged in acts of sense making, these acts are significantly mediated by the cognitive schema and language that we obtain from our wider societies." The goal of social constructionism—or, in Bourdieu's terminology, *constructivist structuralism* (Bourdieu, 1989; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992)—is to explore how social constructions come about. Bourdieu distinguishes his use of structuralism from that of Saussure and Lévi-Strauss, arguing that there exist objective structures independent of the consciousness and will of agents within the social world itself and not only within symbolic systems such as language and myths—objective structures that can guide and constrain practices and actions of agents. By constructivism Bourdieu (1989) means that there is a twofold social genesis: habitus and fields. So while agents do have an active apprehension of the world and do

construct their vision of the world, this construction is carried out under structural constraints. According to Bourdieu (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 127): “Social reality exists, so to speak, twice, in things and in minds, in fields and in habitus, outside and inside of agents.” Actor Network Theory (ANT) represents the second wave of social constructivism and includes in its analysis non-human actors such as technical artefacts, spec sheets and textiles, stating that these can play an active role in construction. That being said, Latour (2005a) only describes himself as a social constructionist on condition that the word ‘social’ is not misunderstood as some sort of macro phenomenon which is already there instead of being created at micro level. It is possible, writes Latour (2005a, p. 5): “to remain faithful to the original institutions of the social sciences by redefining sociology not as the ‘science of the social’, but as the *tracing of associations*. [...] social does not designate a thing among other things, like a black sheep among other white sheep, but a *type of connection* between things that are not themselves social.”

To sum up, an interpretivist-constructivist perspective is based on the idea that qualitative research should be concerned with a commitment to dialogue and the revealing of multiple realities, as opposed to seeking one objective reality. And since reality is socially constructed, this also means that the researcher is not a neutral player but takes on an active role in construction (Yanow, Ybema, and van Hulst, 2012). Rather than locating the meanings and narratives to be known either in the subjects or the researchers, the process of knowing is intersubjective and social, involving both agents in the co-construction of knowledge. Following this line of thought, I assumed when I entered the field that my previous knowledge of the field would be insufficient for developing a fixed research design due to the complex, multiple and unpredictable nature of what is perceived as reality. This further means that although this thesis aims to examine what design thinking is in practice, in line with Johansson-Sköldberg et al. (2013) I do not believe there to be a unique meaning of ‘design thinking’. Instead of seeking such a meaning, therefore, I look for where and in what ways the concept is used in different situations, i.e. in practice, and for what meaning is given to the concept. My fieldwork and analysis have thus been journeys of ongoing change in response to my fieldwork and in response to discussions with friends and colleagues and in conversation with my theoretical frameworks. This journey has taught me not only about the field of textiles and fashion but also about myself.



### 3.1.2. Ethnography

Ethnography, which has been a major inspiration in my research, is one of many traditions within interpretivism. Building on my introduction to the ethnographic study of InnoTex (Chapter 1), in this section I shall briefly introduce the understanding of ethnography applied in this thesis, before I turn to a presentation of the specific methods used in my fieldwork.

In my research I largely adapted Van Maanen's (1988) view of ethnography as a method that involves extensive fieldwork of various types, including participant observation, formal and informal interviewing, collecting documents, recording and filming. This view of ethnography also includes the study of material artefacts in order to gain an understanding of what they mean to people.

I conducted six months of fieldwork with my primary case organization, InnoTex, from June through November 2013. During these months I was based at the InnoTex studio, observing and taking part in everyday activities in the hope of developing an understanding of the everyday practices, perspectives and tacitly known rules of the members of the group. Van Maanen (1988) notes that ethnographic fieldwork traditionally requires prolonged observation over time. Some scholars, however, and especially those engaged in organizational studies and business anthropology, have questioned both the need for longevity of fieldwork and the forms of field sites (Faubion and Marcus, 2009; Garsten and Nyquist, 2013), proposing instead that these requirements be left more open-ended. The six months I spent in the field and my participation in additional workshops and meetings were arguably not sufficiently extensive according to the traditional anthropological sense of fieldwork; however, these six months do qualify as more than what Yanow, Ybema and van Hulst (2012, p. 332) would describe as merely “flying in and out of the field for a brief, tourist-like visit”. It was my fieldwork with InnoTex, for example, that brought to light the impacts that REF 2014 and internal changes in the structure of the university were having on the everyday work of InnoTex—material that I would not have thought to ask in a survey or isolated interview.

## 3.2. Methods

### 3.2.1. Participant Observation

The majority of my empirical material was gathered through participant observation, which is based on the principle of interaction between actors (Atkinson & Hammersley, 1994; Dewalt &

Dewalt, 2011; Spradley, 1980). This is a method in which a researcher takes part in the everyday activities, interactions, and events of a group of people as a means of learning the explicit and tacit aspects of their life routines and their culture. Explicit aspects of culture are understood here as those which enable people to articulate themselves, whereas tacit aspects of culture largely remain outside of our awareness or consciousness. Philosopher of science Michael Polanyi (1966/2009; 1958/1962) defined tacit knowledge as the intuitive sense, based on experience with natural phenomena, of what to do in research, in contrast to formal or conceptual knowledge based on reasoning from explicit propositions. Tacit knowledge is not talked about in most contexts since it is tacitly understood—as in the case of Bourdieu’s concept of habitus (Mukerji, 2014). In the fields of art and design, however, tacit knowledge is a topic of much discussion and research (Ingold, 2013; Niedderer and Reilly, 2010; Schön, 1983). This was also the case with InnoTex, where what I call ‘verbalised’ tacit knowledge emerged as an integral part of the individual researchers’ creative process and self-image. Such knowledge was associated not only with skills and craftsmanship in the use of materials but also as a knowledge they were not able to pinpoint and/or put into words, but the nature of which they would nevertheless discuss on a regular basis.

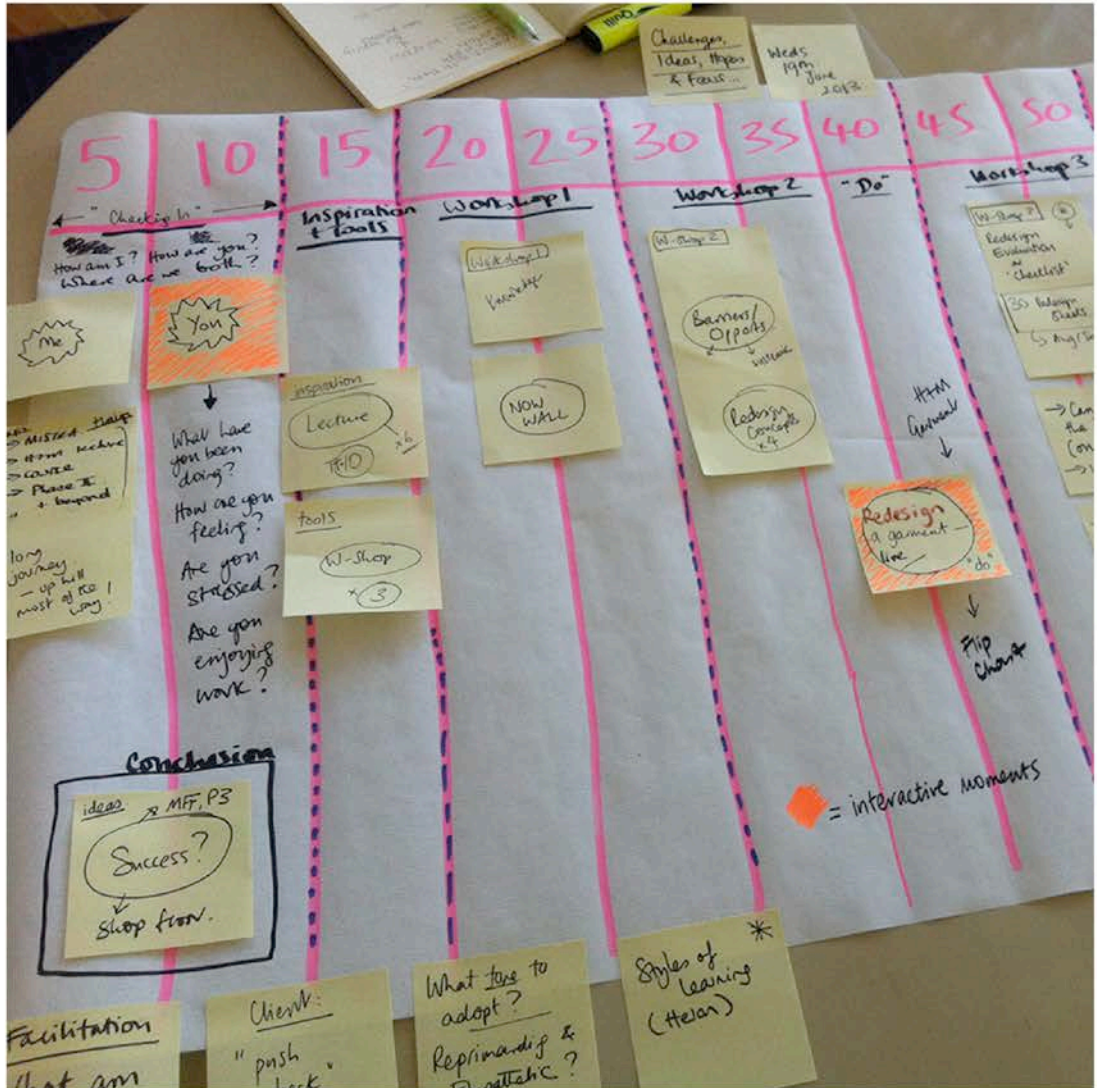
Based on Spradley’s distinction between “degrees of participation” (1980), Dewalt and Dewalt (2011) distinguish between different forms of participant observation. My study is mostly based on a variation of “moderate participation” and “active participation”. Dewalt and Dewalt (2011, p. 23) define moderate participation as occurring when the ethnographer is present at the scene of the action and is identifiable as a researcher but does not actively participate—or only occasionally interacts with people—in it, as opposed to active participation when the researcher does what everybody else does. Being primarily interested in the professional aspects of the lives of the InnoTex researchers, I decided to stay in a flatshare in East London during most of my fieldwork and to commute to work to join InnoTex in their everyday activities. (I was only at the studio during the first three days of the week, however, since on Thursdays and Fridays the InnoTex researchers would be working on other projects under the umbrella of the university or on their own personal projects, and so I learned about this part of their work life mainly through conversation rather than observation.) Sometimes my fieldwork would be more active, and in these cases I had the opportunity to take part in a great deal of what InnoTex was working on and to try to learn what Dewalt and Dewalt (2011, p. 23) would call the cultural rules of behaviour. Such active participation happened, for example, during our visits to H&M to deliver

lectures and workshops. During such trips I would share an Airbnb apartment with InnoTex and take an active part in their work.

**FIGURE 3.2.** Design tools in action



FIGURE 3.3. Workshop planning



At all times there was a limit to the number of activities I was able to join. Looking back, I see now that this was partly a result of my limited experience as a field researcher at that stage. In order to gain access to InnoTex I had been very open about my research interests and trying to facilitate my data collection they invited me along to certain activities they thought would support my research but which also supported their own agenda. Moreover, InnoTex enforced a more or less conscious limitation on my access, depending on what they felt comfortable about sharing with me. My entry to InnoTex having been facilitated by Marie, it was my impression that she was trying to ‘curate’ my access, influencing what stories were to be told and the direction of my research. On the occasions when I shared my field notes and transcripts of interviews with InnoTex researchers, for example, Marie would at times state that I had misunderstood what was ‘really’ going on and that I would have to talk to her to get the real picture. Writing about and encouraging sociable forms of dialogue in social research, Sinha and Black (2014, p. 478), say the following: “Inherent in this process was the partial collapse of the fieldwork or analysis dichotomy that separates fieldwork with participants from the analytical critical reckoning done solely by researchers.” While sharing my field notes and analysis with InnoTex helped to generate interesting discussions and valuable insights, it also led to a strained relationship over several months. In the words of Donnelly, Gabriel and Özkazanc-Pan (2013, p. 5): “In practice, we know that telling our organizational stories is not without its fair share of mess.”

During my fieldwork, InnoTex spent a good deal of their time preparing material for various lectures and workshops and producing communication materials for their website. Due to REF 2014 and ongoing changes in the university’s structure and regulations, moreover, they were now being asked to produce deliverables of a more academic character than they had been used to producing, including publishing in recognized peer-reviewed journals. Often they would voice sadness and/or dissatisfaction about the lack of time they had for actual practice of textile design. The practice they did find time for often had to take place outside of InnoTex. For example, research assistants Annalisa and Tillyt were both engaged in their own art and design projects. While this limited my opportunity to observe and participate in creative processes such as textile and garment printing, it did provide me with a valuable opportunity to observe and participate in the creative processes of planning and delivering lectures and workshops.

The decision as to how much or how little to participate in different activities was not easy. With hindsight it is clear that our undertaking of joint research into manufacturing in China came about in a period of my overly active participation; only too late did I realize that this research was more a matter of my own interest than something InnoTex felt ready to do. In spite of the challenges that arose due to my suggestion to go to China, however, this work did result in some valuable outcomes. These outcomes include, for example, two garments exhibited by InnoTex: one produced jointly by Marie and her colleague and representing their reflections upon the need for the industry to consider the disconnect between the people in the supply chain, and the other produced by Anika and representing her reflections on the process of psychological change that designers go through when they prioritize values in support of change towards practising sustainability. Both pieces of garments make use of recycled material and draw on Chinese traditions. In addition, the fourth paper of this thesis, ‘Capital in Formation: What is at stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?’, is a result of our research in China, together with future plans for research in this context. Our fieldwork in China also led to the development of educational material about sustainable fashion for Danish state schools (grades 7–9), produced in close collaboration with Ms Ana Diaz and with the support of Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen.

The nature of participant observation, which in this case involved establishing long-term and interpersonal relationships with InnoTex, raises significant ethical issues (cf. Chapter 2: ‘2.7. Ethical Considerations’). These issues include the manner in which relationships are formed and managed, the nature of the power balance between the parties involved, and the ways in which these relationships affect the participants psychologically, emotionally and personally (Kaiser, 2009; Hoffman, 2004; Cutliffe and Ramcharan, 2002; Orb, Eisenhauer, and Wynaden, 2001). Although ethnographic research seldom involves the sort of risks that may be involved in, for example, medical experiments, it can have consequences for the people studied as well as for others—for example by creating anxiety or exacerbating already existing anxiety (Hammersley and Atkinson, 2007). These consequences may arise as a result of the actual process of doing research and/or through the publication of findings. Casey (2006) and Streubert Speziale and Carpenter (2007) note that the boundaries of the relationship between the researcher and participants can become blurred as the research progresses and that this confusion of roles can lead to ethical concerns during the process of investigation. With hindsight I realise that when I communicated my research interests to InnoTex I did not pay sufficient attention to the fact that

I was not able to define the exact nature of my research from the very beginning; nor did I take care to think through InnoTex's motives for inviting me to work with them. Writing up this PhD thesis I have tried to alleviate the anxiety that has resulted from my research by creating pseudonyms and making as clear as possible my position in the field, my relationship with InnoTex and the nature of our collaboration.

### 3.2.2. Language in Cross-Cultural Studies

Having been born and raised in Denmark, my first language is Danish. The greater part of my fieldwork and analysis, however, was conducted in English, relying on my own language skills. While I speak English fluently, I do so based on my BA degree in English from Aarhus University, as well as my experience working in international environments and the time I have spent in the United States. Embarking upon my fieldwork, my experience with British culture (in the broad, 'anthropological' understanding of the term) was therefore limited and I had to learn to navigate the subtle differences between Danish and English cultures—differences that are embedded in our language. Language, according to Hall (1997/2003, p. 1): "is the privileged medium in which we 'make sense' of things, in which meaning is produced and exchanged. Meanings can only be shared through our common access to language. So language is central to meaning and culture and has always been regarded as the key repository of cultural values and meanings."

China and the Mandarin language being so obviously different from my own cultural and linguistic background, I was acutely aware that we would need help with translation, both in terms of language and culture. Thus the majority of our interviews conducted in Shanghai were carried out with the help of Echo, our 'fixer' (the colloquial term for a person who not only helps with translation but also facilitates an understanding of the context and culture under investigation). At times, conversations and interviews were conducted in English as a second language of both the interlocutor and myself, with the interlocutor still helping us not only to navigate fundamental matters such as courtesy and Chinese customs (e.g. how to behave in meetings) but also matters directly related to our research, such as the meaning of sustainability from the perspective of the various stakeholders with whom we met. Meetings in Guangzhou were carried out with the help of a young Chinese woman who spoke English but had less experience with the industry and thus also possessed less authority in her role as an interlocutor. Both national and cultural languages were a great challenge in our research on the Chinese



textile and fashion industry, though this was partly overcome with the help of Echo. In addition, Ms Ana Diaz and I met with experts within the field of Chinese history and culture to learn more about the country's history and customs, including a professor of Chinese history and researchers and business people who have been working and living in China over extended periods of time.

Dewalt and Dewalt (2011, p. 58) note that one of the hallmarks of participant observation has been the use of local languages in the research setting. However, they also advocate that all communication should be approached as cross-cultural communication. Having no problems communicating in English and feeling relatively familiar with English culture, I did not take the same precautions in my fieldwork with InnoTex as I did for our field research in China. In retrospect it is clear that I took too many things for granted, and this no doubt had an impact upon my ability to pick up on some subtle cultural differences in the course of my fieldwork with InnoTex.

### 3.2.3. Interviews

I conducted informal and semi-structured interviews to support participant observation during my fieldwork. Following scholars such as Bernard (2006), Dewalt and Dewalt (2011), Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) and Spradley (1980), my approach to interviews was in accordance with the kind of knowledge produced under the interpretivist-constructivist framework. Kvale and Brinkmann (2009, p. 2) highlight the nature of exchange in interviews, stating that “an interview is literally an *inter view*, an inter-change of views between two persons conversing about a theme of mutual interest”. The goal of qualitative research interviews is to understand the world from the point of view of the subjects and to unfold the meaning of their experiences. It is essential, however, to remember that while the stories that my respondents told me were immersed in the cultural norms of their community, so too were the stories that I heard, and this in turn impacted on the ‘reality’ that we co-created (Lillrank, 2012). In my papers I have tried to clarify such impacts and co-constructions through reflexivity and writing (Bourdieu and Waquant, 1992; Potter and Hepburn, 2012).

The type of interviewing conducted in participant observation is usually informal—more like a casual conversation between friends. My fieldwork with InnoTex was characterized not only by discussions about our respective research questions and work but also by much conversation

about everyday topics, including the weather (which in the summer of 2013 was remarkably pleasant). During these everyday conversations I generally tried to follow the lead of my respondents, or, in the words of Bernard (2006), to “get out of the way of the participants or informants and let them talk”. These exchanges were nevertheless distinct from the kinds of conversations that take place in non-research settings: first of all because at the back of my mind I always had my research questions concerning the role of designers and design thinking in processes of organizational change, and this no doubt made me pay particular attention to conversations that were related in one way or another to design and sustainability and less attention to other conversations, for example about the family backgrounds of the individual researchers’ (Spradley, 1980); and secondly because I often wrote notes, both during and following these conversations, in order to capture what had been said, especially anything that informed my research questions. I supported the use of informal conversations with a series of semi-structured interviews that were more directed and which were clearly understood—both by myself and the interviewees—to be interviews. While this form of interviewing made up a small but essential part of my fieldwork with InnoTex, allowing me one-on-one time with individual researchers, semi-structured interviews also comprised the majority of the fieldwork I conducted in connection with the workshops for H&M, and an even greater part of my fieldwork in China. The extent to which I used semi-structured interviews reflects both the time (and money) available for this research and the extent to which I was able to gain access to the field. Using semi-structured interviews allowed me to explore particular topics in depth, and also to gain a better understanding of what was perceived to be sensitive information in a setting that was clearly defined for the people involved. Thus I would always start an interview by presenting the overall framework and aims of my research. I would encourage my respondents to ask me questions in return and always to feel free not to answer any of my questions they found to be inappropriate, too sensitive, or confidential. As noted by Lillrank (2012, p. 287), any avoidance of questions and emotional reactions of the interviewer and interviewee constitute data as important as any other products of the interview, informing further fieldwork and analysis.

My semi-structured interviews were inevitably influenced by the relationships between the interviewees and myself. As noted by Kvale and Brinkmann (2009), the interviewer is cast in a position of power in some situations, openly setting the stage by determining the topic of the interchange. In some situations I would ask questions and the respondent would answer; other interviews were more dynamic, however, with the interviewee encouraging me to contribute

with my opinion. Rather than being a ‘neutral’ questioner in these interviews, I was expected to express my own attitudes and feelings towards the situation and, at times, to confront the respondent’s accounts critically. While these respective situations reflected quite different dynamics, I did my best in all of the interviews not to reduce the richness of the interaction to what Bourdieu (1993/1999, p. 618) calls ‘tape recorder sociologies’, instead trying actively to follow up on my respondents’ answers, seeking to clarify and extend the interview statements (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009, p. 7). My fieldwork presented me with the entire range. Sometimes I would be the one primarily asking questions; sometimes I would ask questions and the respondent would answer different questions; sometimes the interview would feel like an everyday conversation between two people; and on a couple of occasions our conversations almost turned into arguments. In some interviews I did not have much control over whether the interview took one or another direction. For example, one of our meetings in China with a government representative was more like a one-way official talk than an interview, the respondent literally ignoring my questions. At the other end of the range were interviews in which I was expected to contribute as much to the conversation as my respondent—as was often the case with Marie, for example. Reciprocity, in particular, proved essential, not least in the case of our fixer, who became invaluable by establishing rapport (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2011).

#### 3.2.4. Interview Guides

In this section I present the overall process of the development of the questions for interviews. I begin with the questions developed for the Sociolog.dx experience that constituted the empirical foundation of ‘Sustainability Innovators and Anchor-Draggers: Results from a Global Expert Study on Sustainable Fashion’, and then turn to the interview guides developed for my fieldwork, constituting part of the empirical foundation of ‘Unlikely Mediators? The Malleable Concept of Sustainability’, ‘Design Thinking for Organizational Change’ and ‘Capital in Formation: What is at Stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?’

The questions developed by myself and Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen for Sociolog.dx arguably took the form of a survey as much as of an interview. Unlike a survey, however, the questions were generally more open and interactive. The aim of the study was to explore and map the current barriers and opportunities experienced by stakeholders in the field in terms of practising sustainability in the textile and fashion industry. Appendix A of Chapter 6 of this thesis presents an overview of all the stakeholders invited to participate in the study and of the

36 stakeholders who accepted this invitation. To maintain confidentiality, pseudonyms are used to refer to individual respondents, while, to the fullest extent possible, details are provided about the size of the organizations they are from, the sector they are from (academia, brand, designer, factory, etc.), their position in the industry and cultural backgrounds. The specific questions about the stakeholders' experiences of challenges and opportunities for practising sustainability in the textile and fashion industry were developed in collaboration with a representative from GfK, the provider of the Sociolog.dx platform. While the GfK representative could not advise on the theoretical and contextual parts of the questions, she was able to advise on which types of questions tend to work well on the platform. (The questions can be seen in Appendix B of Chapter 6). Participants were also encouraged to upload visual material such as pictures, drawings and webpages to support and visualize the mostly linguistic form of communication in the experiment. Visuality has so far been under-explored and under-theorized in organization and management studies (Bell and Davison, 2013; Stiles, 2014; Styhre, 2010), as such studies have been preoccupied primarily with the 'linguistic turn' (Rorty, 1979). Stiles (2014) points to the differences between types of visuals and their use in social research, e.g. the use of images already 'out there' in social discourse, such as photographs or advertisements, as opposed to the use of 'freehand sketch'. Discussing the use of such drawings, Stiles (2014, p. 239) concludes as follows: "Unlike conventional semiotic approaches, asking people to draw and explain their own images and presenting the resulting discourse through the relay principle decentres the researcher from the role of expert in judging what the drawer is conveying." Warren (2005) discusses the use of photography in social research, arguing that photographic images, through their iconic and quasi-representational nature, can communicate participants' views of their worlds with more primacy than language alone, empowering individuals in research. In our research we did not distinguish between images already 'out there' and/or drawings and photographs produced by participants themselves, but encouraged both forms of visual communication. For this particular study we also mainly used the visual material as a 'hook' to build conversation.

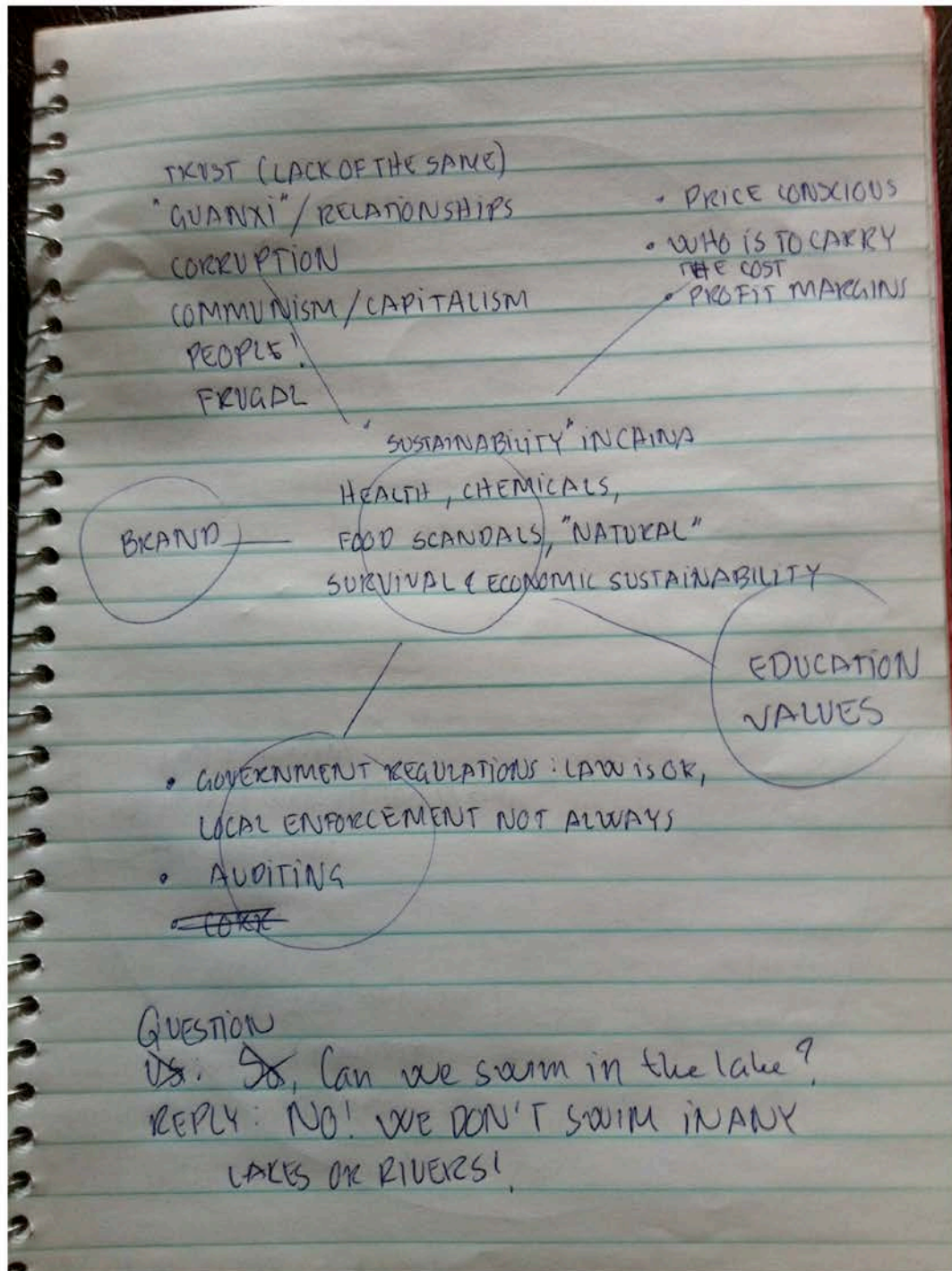
Using Sociolog.dx to collect data has both advantages and disadvantages. The main advantage for our study was the opportunity to engage a larger group of industry stakeholders from across the world in a single discussion. While participants were presented with the overall framework of the four-day event, the forum also allowed them the freedom to contribute whenever they had time. Another advantage is that, as highlighted by James and Busher (2012), people who tend to

be shy in face-to-face contexts may feel freer to ‘speak’ and make extensive contributions to conversations in online forums, including expressing views that are either sensitive or unpopular. However, such forums also make it easier for people to distort and disguise their views and perspectives, and this and other factors can lead to misunderstandings. The forum event not only made use of GfK’s platform but was also managed and moderated by GfK. Moderation by GfK was not optional, due to their owning the platform, and while this had the advantage of there being a neutral moderator it also meant that the discussion was facilitated by a person with no particular expertise in the field of sustainable fashion. On the one hand this contributed to creating an overall relaxed and non-judgmental atmosphere; on the other, it caused discussions to remain at a relatively general level. Not being able to communicate directly with the participants further meant we could not engage with the participants about the pictures, drawings and webpages that they uploaded in the forum (Stiles, 2014, p. 239). Thus, while the moderator would ask participants to elaborate on uploaded visuals, it is my impression that the visuals, because of this particular setup, did not enrich the discussion as much as they could have, not least in a highly visual and aesthetic forum such as the textile and fashion industry. In contrast to the interview guides developed for the fieldwork, the questions for Sociolog.dx did not go through alterations over the course of the event after they had been created. This was mainly due to the need to allow consistency, but also because any such changes would have had to go through GfK and would have added to the already agreed-upon budget.

The Sociolog.dx experience took place just before I embarked upon my fieldwork with InnoTex, and the explorative nature of this experience provided me with a foundation with which to enter the field. On the basis of this research I was able to create an initial map of possible positions on the topic of sustainability in the field of fashion and the relationships between these positions. The development of interview guides to support my semi-structured interviews with InnoTex were thus based on literature, the Sociolog.dx experience, and, most of all, the initial phase of participant observation. The interview guide took the form of a mind-map of themes to be explored rather than a set of questions to be posed one after another. I felt that this visual organization of my questions encouraged me to focus on my respondents instead of the questions in my notebook. It also allowed me to bring up new ideas during the interviews and to use various forms of probing to gain a greater understanding of the context and meaning of the responses (Bernard, 2006). The interview guides developed for the semi-structured interviews I

conducted with InnoTex went through alterations as my research progressed. To begin with, the overall framework consisted of the following themes: 1. background (family and education); 2. the interviewee's journey into sustainable fashion; 3. current work (perceived barriers and opportunities); and 4. hopes for the future. Embedded in all of these themes were the topics of design, design thinking and sustainability. As my fieldwork progressed, the 'background' theme seemed less important, whereas my questions around the theme of 'perceived barriers and opportunities' were further developed over time, becoming more nuanced. Similarly, the interview guides that I developed for my interviews with H&M staff went through alterations both in response to the interviewees' replies and in response to the progress of the workshops. In the course of time these interviews also took on the additional purpose of gathering feedback for InnoTex in order to prepare for the upcoming workshops. This in turn had an impact on some of the questions asked and the replies given, as my respondents came to see me as part of the InnoTex team rather than as a 'neutral' observer. And though this is likely to have inhibited my research with H&M, it did help me to build rapport with InnoTex. The interview guides developed for research in Shanghai and Hong Kong went through numerous alterations, partly due to our limited knowledge of the context prior to going into the field. We had certain basic expectations, of course, including our anticipation that sustainability would mean something different to a Chinese factory owner, a garment worker and a Western fashion designer (Wang and Juslin, 2010); but while some of our ideas about the context turned out to be 'true', many did not. In preparation for the fieldwork we had the opportunity to meet with a group of Chinese scholars, factory owners, and other stakeholders from the industry, allowing us to test our initial interview guide and to gain a better sense of how to approach the context. Over the course of our fieldwork we adapted the interview guide to allow more room for discussions of certifications and standards as well as social responsibility. While we had been warned that Chinese factory owners consider questions about social responsibility to be a very sensitive topic and were advised not to bring up such questions, in many cases, to our surprise, our respondents seemed eager to talk about precisely this topic, though not necessarily thinking about it as an issue of social responsibility but rather in terms of ways to attract workers. The guides we developed took into account the occupations and/or positions of the people whom we would meet. Our fixer also had a significant impact on the development of the interview guides, in many cases also being the one asking the questions and translating the answers. (See Figure 3.4. for an example of an interview guide used in this research.)

FIGURE 3.4. Interview guide



### 3.3. Field Material

This dissertation primarily analyses empirical material gathered through the Sociolog.dx experience and the fieldwork carried out in InnoTex and H&M, Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou. Participant observation was mainly documented through field notes and photographs. I recorded the majority of my semi-structured interviews by sound, using my iPhone, and at InnoTex's initiative some of our interviews in Shanghai were also recorded on video by Ms Ana Diaz. It was Marie's idea to make a small film documenting the research. Depending on the situation, I would take notes during semi-structured interviews and then support these with further note-taking after the interviews. The key interviews have been fully transcribed, while others have only been transcribed in part. My fieldwork with InnoTex largely relied on informal conversations and observations, but was also supported by semi-structured interviews with Scarlett, Marie, Anika, Rosie, Tilly, and Annalisa. Fieldwork with H&M included participant observation of workshops and participation in the mid-way and final evaluation meeting between InnoTex and H&M. In addition, I participated in InnoTex's development and evaluation sessions before and after each workshop. In the course of the project I conducted a total of 12 semi-structured interviews with InnoTex researchers and H&M stakeholders and four semi-structured interviews with groups of workshop participants. (For an overview of interviews, see Figure 8.2 in Chapter 8. The empirical foundation of Chapter 9 includes one month of fieldwork undertaken in October 2013, most of which was conducted in Shanghai and surrounding areas, but also in Hong Kong and Guangzhou. We returned to Hong Kong in January 2014 for a brief visit to carry out additional research. In this period we conducted a total of 33 semi-structured interviews with textile and garment factory owners and managers, designers, government representatives, NGOs, academics, and fashion design students. We also talked with a group of garment factory workers, albeit always under the supervision of a manager. Appendices A–B in Chapter 9 present an overview of the people with whom we met in China, as well as workshop and conference participation. To maintain confidentiality I have created pseudonyms for the individual respondents, while to the greatest extent possible I have provided details about the size and type of organization to which they belong, their position in the industry and their cultural backgrounds.

The primary field material described above was supported by secondary material such as relevant academic and non-academic literature, websites, and photographic and video material. Literature on the history of China—on the Cultural Revolution and the development of the



textile and garment industry, for example—proved particularly valuable in contextualizing the primary data. Finally, as part of my research I participated in conferences relevant to my research questions and co-organized workshops exploring barriers and opportunities for practising sustainability in the textile and garment industry, with a particular focus on the role of designers.

### 3.3.1. Process of Analysis

Throughout my fieldwork I used DEVONthink to manage and support the analysis of the field material. DEVONthink is software used to organize articles, field notes, images and emails, etc. While the analysis and discussion was informed by the full set of empirical material, I have drawn on parts of this material selected on the basis of the importance given to issues by the actors involved (recurrent topics of discussion) and those situations that highlight and contextualize the research questions of the individual papers.

The overall process of analysis involved four steps. First, the process of taking field notes entailed a simultaneous process of gathering empirical material and analysis. Thus while I aimed to create a careful record of observations, conversations, and informal interviews carried out on a day-to-day basis, my field notes are also a product I constructed myself. In the words of Dewalt and Dewalt (2011, p. 159): “The researcher decides what goes into the field notes, the level of detail to include, how much context to include, whether exact conversations are recorded or just summaries, etc.” In effect, therefore, my field notes are at the heart of my analysis.

In the second stage of analysis, I read through notes, marked field notes of particular interest, and selected interviews for full or selective transcription. While I transcribed most of the interviews myself, some transcripts were written by a professional who had not attended the interviews. Transcribing, as noted by Bourdieu (1993/2012, p. 622), is a form of writing in the sense of “rewriting”. Information is lost in transcribing spoken words, including the particular voice, pronunciation and gestures of the interviewee. During the analysis, therefore, I explored the use of photos and short video-recordings from fieldwork to achieve a more ‘accurate’ presentation.

In the third phase of analysis I once again read through the marked field notes and all of my transcripts in conversation with my theoretical framework. In the fourth stage I selected extracts for deeper analysis, again with a particular focus on my research questions. In this way the analysis comprised what Latour (2005a) would term ‘processes of translations’.

### **3.4. Reflexivity and the Construction of ‘Reality’**

Bourdieu rejected scientific positivism and its ideal of value-neutral objectivity, arguing that social scientists cannot themselves escape their own habitus (Swartz, 1997). If this is the case, the question then arises as to what form of objective scientific knowledge is possible.

Bourdieu’s answer to this dilemma was reflexivity, i.e. the process of reflection that takes itself as the object. Such systematic and rigorous self-critical practice of social science, he argued, is an essential aspect of any social research that aims to analyse and unveil social reality (Townley, 2014; Bourdieu, 1993/2012; Swartz, 1997). Following this line of thought, I see reflexivity as a beginning rather than as an end to fieldwork and analysis. Throughout my research I tried to be aware of my scientific habitus, to understand my biases as much as I was able, and to understand and interpret my interactions with the people I was studying. In the remainder of this section, therefore, I explore these concerns and questions in some depth in order to make clear my participation in the information created. I first introduce the discussion of objectivity and reflexivity in research, drawing on what Bourdieu calls participant objectivation (2003). I then turn to a discussion of my role in the fieldwork, presenting my background and the ‘scholarly gaze’ (Wacquant, 1989) that I bring to the field and discussing the contextual and methodological lessons I can draw from this experience as well as the limitations to my research. In the last section I briefly discuss the potential of adopting design tools to support processes of reflexivity—an idea that primarily grew out of our fieldwork in China.

In participant observation, including formal and informal interviews, the researcher is the research tool, which itself leads to certain limits to objectivity. Understanding the point from which any observer is observing is therefore key to understanding the products of research. Throughout his work, Bourdieu emphasized the need for a sociology of sociology. Fundamental to this approach is the researcher’s obligation not only to objectivize the object but also his/her own relation to the object—what Bourdieu calls participant objectivation (Bourdieu, 2003; Wacquant, 1989). In conversation with Wacquant, Bourdieu said:

In my view, one of the chief sources of error in the social sciences resides in an uncontrolled relation to the object which results in the projection of this relation into the object. What distresses me when I read some works by sociologists is that people whose profession it is to objectivize the social world prove so rarely able to objectivize themselves and fail so often to realize that what their apparently scientific discourse talks about is not the object but their relation to the object [...] (Wacquant, 1989, p. 33).

Throughout my research I have attempted to maintain a reflective stance on my own position in the field, without being—as Bourdieu would say—“strikingly superficial” (Wacquant, 1989, p. 33). This entails that the scholar in research and analysis should be attentive as to his/her social origins, position in social space, gender, age, nationality and so on. According to Bourdieu (2003), this includes an acknowledgement of the fact that we are inserted in particular scientific fields, along with their traditions, habits of thought and problematics, as well as of the fact that, as intellectuals, we adopt a theoreticist bias. On this problematic, Bourdieu says:

A genuine reflexive sociology must avoid this ‘ethnocentrism of the scientist’ which consists in ignoring everything that the analyst injects in his perception of the object by virtue of the fact that he is placed outside of the object. [...] the sociologist who studies the American school system, for instance, is motivated by preoccupations and has a ‘use’ of schools that have little in common with those of a father seeking to find a good school for his daughter. (cited in Wacquant, 1989, p. 24).

For Bourdieu, as Townley (2014, p. 49) elaborates, it is important to recognize that agents (like the researcher) are “‘theory generating’, that apparently ‘non-theoretical’, partial, and immediate engagement with the social world, ‘ordinary experience’, is ‘theoretically’ informed by implicit theories of social functioning”. Only when this is recognized does theory become a practical and engaged social activity rather than the province of the ‘objective knower’. In the words of Townley: “In this sense the theorist is a practitioner among other practitioners, of equal status. There is no privileged position” (2014, p. 49). While objectivity is not possible, however, this does not mean that a social *science* is impossible (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2011). What it does mean is that I must know and communicate the limits and limitations of my research (Wacquant,

1989, p. 34). This I try to do in the following, as well as in the individual papers of this dissertation.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, my fieldwork with InnoTex was set up in response to a shared excitement about and interest in each other's work. While I was prepared for my research design to evolve along the way, in hindsight there were too many things I did not look into with enough care and too many things that InnoTex and I did not talk through to make sure we understood each other's positions, including the differences between our respective disciplines and what impact these differences could have, as well as what it means to do a PhD and our individual expectations and needs for outcomes. It was two to three months into my fieldwork before I began to realize the influence that my background in CIID was having on the approach I was taking to my studies, particularly as we began to plan our fieldwork in Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou. One might say that the trip to China 'forced' reflexivity upon me, not only in terms of cultural differences between China and Western Europe but also in terms of disciplinary differences. My background in cultural studies and my time with CIID undoubtedly influenced my choices as to which events to observe, which activities to participate in, and with whom to speak, and this in turn influenced the amount and content of the empirical material I collected (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2011, p. 182). For example, I paid particular attention to the use by InnoTex of methods characteristic of the field of design thinking, while also trying to work out how more traditional textile design practices might inform this work. This further meant I was trying to understand something that was relatively new for InnoTex, i.e. methods and approaches they were still exploring. In the individual papers of this thesis I try to account for the methodological and analytical consequences of this meeting of fields.

While my work has caused some frustration, it has also opened new avenues and potential for collaboration. Writing the majority of this thesis after the completion of my fieldwork has given me the opportunity to visit and revisit notes and writings in an iterative process, aiming to provide a more nuanced understanding of my own role in the research. As highlighted by Riessman (2002, p. 210), it is useful to "revisit the interviewer's representations in their past work, to reveal the historical situatedness of interpretation—the professional, theoretical, political, disciplinary, and yes, autobiographical imperatives that draw us to certain interpretations and not to others". Following Bourdieu (2003, p. 282), therefore, I have tried to take my analysis beyond the "pre-notions" that I engage in the construction of reality, also

taking into consideration the social conditions of the production of these pre-constructions. My experience with InnoTex has taught me about reflexivity, and not least about how difficult it can be to pinpoint and accept one's own biases. Achieving such insight is a necessary foundation for unique research across disciplinary fields.

### **3.5. Design Tools for Reflexivity**

In this section I briefly introduce my initial thoughts on the use of design tools for reflexivity. Rather than design tools as such, I imagine them as tools that can help researchers to learn about their own scholarly gaze and position in the field of cultural production, and also to move beyond merely autobiographical reflection.

Influenced by my time with CIID, I suggested bringing InnoTex's design strategies to our interviews in China in order to use them as a starting point for conversations about the meaning and practices of sustainability. During my fieldwork I had seen InnoTex use their design strategies in workshops with design students and corporate design teams as a tool to inform and inspire change towards taking greater account of sustainability. For this purpose they had developed a set of cards, with each card presenting one specific aspect of sustainability, i.e. water use or energy use. Whereas sustainability is often vague and intangible, InnoTex's design strategies and the set of cards broke the concept down to more accessible bits and pieces, though they also allowed the possibility of the concept being considerably 'watered down'. Having had the strategies translated into traditional Chinese (for use in the Hong Kong area) and Mainland Chinese (for use in Shanghai and surrounding areas), we brought them with us to our meetings with Chinese factory owners and managers, designers, and government representatives. This also meant, however, that I adopted them for a purpose and audience different from those for which they were originally developed. I used them as a tool to learn about the past and present more than as a tool to inspire the future. In spite of this, InnoTex's design strategies proved in many cases to be a useful tool to start conversations about sustainability. Bringing the design strategies with us to the field signalled a more open and conversational approach than the message sent by the usual notepads and tape-recorders. Our experience while conducting semi-structured interviews was that the more visual and sensory form of communication of design tools complemented the largely verbal practice of the interview and created a space for a more collaborative and levelled experience. Comparing the approaches of designers and anthropologists, Kilbourn notes:

While the process of synthesizing and creating meaning from our experience is present in both anthropology and design, it is the latter that draws more often upon other approaches than textual ones to communicate the resulting synthesis. It is odd that we experience the world with a range of perceptual systems and then, when trying to make sense of it, we resort to squeezing it into words. (Kilbourn, 2014, p. 74)

Developing design tools for fieldwork is a dual exercise. Firstly, it asks the researcher to put themselves in the shoes of the respondent and to create tools that are visually enticing and make sense contextually. Secondly, in the process of development the tool comes to constitute a visual, tangible representation of the researcher's interpretation of a situation, and thus also the researcher's own habitus and, perhaps, the 'goals' of the research. For these reasons I suggest that design tools might also help facilitate a process of reflection, since they can help control the relationship between the researcher and the object of inquiry in such a way that their position is not unwittingly projected onto the object of study (Swartz, 1997, p. 272). During our fieldwork in China we noticed how in most cases the design strategies not only helped generate discussions on the topic of sustainability in relation to the past and present, but also how respondents used them as a way to communicate that the strategies represented a Western understanding of sustainability (Wang and Juslin, 2010). They would do this either in words or, tangibly, by dismissing a set of cards. In interviews it is usually the investigator who starts the game and sets up its rules (Bourdieu (1993/2012; Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009). What became clear during the fieldwork was that InnoTex's design strategies represented both our conscious and unconscious habitus (culture, discipline, world view, etc.). While I was prepared for the possibility that the strategies might bear less meaning in a Chinese context, I was surprised by the degree to which the strategies seemingly empowered our respondents to enter into discussion on these issues. It seems that through the creation of design tools for fieldwork we also make tangible our conscious and unconscious position in such a way that it is no longer to the same degree unwittingly projected into the object of study; to the contrary, such tools offer respondents and researchers a better chance to question and reflect upon these issues together, thereby verbalizing the "scientific construction":

The positivist dream of an epistemological state of perfect innocence papers over the fact that the crucial difference is not between a science that effects a

construction and one that does not, but between a science that does this without knowing it and one that, being aware of work of construction, strives to discover and master as completely as possible the nature of its inevitable acts of construction and the equally inevitable effects those acts produce. (Bourdieu, 1993/2012, p. 608)

Taking InnoTex's design strategies to the field helped facilitate a process in which I became more aware of the potential effects of my social origins, my position in social space, gender, age, nationality and so on—including, most importantly, my position within the microcosm of sustainability research and studies inspired by ethnographic methods. To paraphrase Bourdieu (2003), the strategies helped facilitate an acknowledgement of the fact that we are inserted in particular scientific fields with their traditions, habits of thought and problematics. There were also obvious challenges with my far-too-ready adoption of InnoTex's design strategies, both as tools to facilitate discussions on sustainability across cultures and as tools for reflexivity. With regard to the latter function, first and foremost in importance is that I not only did not create the tools myself but that they were also the outcome of a disciplinary habitus different to my own. In light of this, the question arises as to what exactly they taught me about my own position in the field and how they informed reflexivity. Moreover, the strategies were developed within and for a Western context and treated sustainability in Western and "designerly" ways, as was commented upon by a number of our respondents, some of whom said, for example, that "this will only be relevant to China in ten years". Nonetheless, I believe that by building such physical representations of our ideas we reflect unconscious assumptions that are more easily brought out into the open if we take them to the field and use them in conversation.





## 4. Theoretical Framework

This thesis adopts Bourdieu's theory of practice, together with Callon and Latour's actor-network theory (ANT)—and specifically the Sociology of Translation—in exploring different but closely related sets of empirical material. Bourdieu's theoretical framework informs Chapter 7 and Chapter 9, the papers while the Sociology of Translation informs Chapter 8. Chapter 6 primarily draws on the broader literature on sustainability and corporate sustainability introduced in section 2.1. ('Sustainability') of this thesis.

I preface this chapter with an introduction to Bourdieu's main 'thinking tools', consisting of capital, habitus and field, and their links to practice. This is followed by a presentation of some points of criticism regarding Bourdieu's conceptual framework and a short review of the use of his work in organization and management studies. I then provide the rationale for my decision to use Bourdieu's practice theory for the greater part of this thesis. In subsequent pages I present the Sociology of Translation and provide a brief critical review of its application within organization and management studies. I finish this chapter with a discussion of the relationship between Bourdieu's approach and that of the Sociology of Translation and ANT. In this discussion I outline what I see as the main similarities and differences between the two approaches, elucidating the challenges and potential value of using both approaches in this study.

### **4.1. Bourdieu's Sociology of Practice**

The development of Bourdieu's theoretical framework needs to be seen in relation to two dominant modes of thought that informed the French social science field in the late 1950s: the objectivist structuralism of Lévi-Strauss and the subjectivist existentialism of Sartre—modes of thought that Bourdieu was keen to reconcile (Tatli, Özbilgin and Karatas-Özkan, 2015; Townley, 2014; Garnham and Williams, 1980). To Bourdieu these contrasting positions represented a fundamental conflict that influences all intellectual thought and constitutes an obstacle to the development of a genuine social science of practices (Bourdieu, 1980/1990, p. 43). Bourdieu's work can thus be read as an attempt to "escape from the ritual either/or choice

between objectivism and subjectivism” by combining both in a theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1977, p. 4). In the words of Wacquant, it was Bourdieu’s aim:

not simply to combine, articulate or join structure and agency but, more fundamentally, to *dissolve the very distinction* between those two seemingly antinomic viewpoints of social analysis by providing an empirical-cum-theoretical demonstration of the simultaneous *necessity and inseparability* of the ‘structuralist’ and ‘constructivist’ approaches.” (Wacquant, 1993, pp. 3–4).

Bourdieu’s work draws on three dominant bodies of work: Marx’s work on class, reproduction and practical forms of life; Durkheim’s interest in symbolic forms and classifications and their links to social structures; and Weber’s interest in stratification and status (Townley, 2014, p. 40; Bonnewitz, 2005; Brubaker, 2004; Fowler, 2000). Starting from this basis, Bourdieu proposes a sociology that is concerned with the relationship between individual action and social structure. At the centre of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework stand his three main concepts of capital, habitus and field, and it is through the complex interplay of these concepts that he seeks to explain the strategy and/or practice of agents.

Borrowing from Marxist terminology (Tatli et al., 2015), Bourdieu defines capital as “accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its ‘incorporated’, embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enable them appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). Finding economic capital alone to be insufficient for his analysis, however, Bourdieu attempted to expand the concept of capital to encompass something more than only economic capital. It was his argument that it is impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless we reintroduce capital in all its forms and not only in the form recognized by economic theory (Bourdieu, 1986). In Bourdieu’s universe, agents and groups of agents draw on a variety of cultural, social and symbolic resources in order to maintain and/or enhance their position in the social order. He conceptualizes these resources as capital when they function as a social relation of power, or, in the words of Swartz, “when they become objects of struggle as valued resources” (1997, p. 74).

For Bourdieu there exists four fundamental forms of capital, all of which can be sources of social advantage: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital. Economic capital takes the form of assets and property rights and is easily convertible into money. Social capital concerns one's social connections within society and is defined by Bourdieu as follows:

[Social capital is] the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition—or in other words, to membership in a group—which provides each of its members with the backing of the collectivity-owned capital, a ‘credential’ which entitles them to credit, in the various senses of the word. (Bourdieu, 1986, pp. 248–249)

Social capital can be seen in personal economic-symbolic interaction, but can also take on more institutionalized forms, as for example the appeal to a common ‘name’ such as a family name, political party, clothing style, etc. An agent's social capital thus “depends on the size of the network of connections and on the type and volume of the collectively owned capital” (Pilario, 2005, p. 146). Cultural capital, meanwhile, concerns cultural goods and services, including educational credentials, and exists, according to Bourdieu (1986), in several states. First, it exists in an embodied state in the form of long-lasting dispositions (behaviour) that the agent has acquired through the socialization of family and peers and/or through work invested in themselves, such as, for example, their efforts to acquire cultivated habits and tastes, cultural appreciation and understanding. Second, cultural capital exists in an objectified state in the form of culturally valued material objects such as, for example, a pair of stilettos produced by a widely recognized designer and/or fashion house. Finally, cultural capital exists in an institutionalized state such as acquired education, knowledge and qualifications, etc. (In the fashion and textile industry, for example, cultural capital might include a degree from the world-leading centre for art and design education, Central Saint Martins.) All forms of capital have the potential to function as symbolic capital, the most complex form of capital and the form that other capitals take once they are recognized and legitimized within a given field (Bourdieu, 2000/1997, p. 242). Bourdieu describes the formation of symbolic capital as follows:

an ordinary property (physical strength, wealth, warlike valor, etc.) which, perceived by social agents endowed with the categories of perception and

appreciation permitting them to perceive, know and recognize it, becomes symbolically efficient, like a veritable *magical power*: a property which, because it responds to socially constituted ‘collective expectations’ and beliefs, exercises a sort of action from a distance, without physical contact. (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 102)

And Bourdieu then goes on to highlight the way in which symbolic capital is common to all members of a group:

[Symbolic capital is a] being-perceived, which exists in the relations between properties held by agents and categories of perception (high/low, masculine/feminine, large/small, etc.) which constitute and construct social categories (those above/those below, men/women, large/small) based on union (alliance, companionship, marriage) and separation (the taboo of contact, of misalliance, etc.), symbolic capital is attached to groups—or to the names of groups, families, clans, tribes—and is both the instrument and the stakes of collective strategies seeking to acquire or conserve it, by joining groups which possess it (through the exchange of gifts, companionship, marriage, etc.) and by distinguishing themselves from groups which possess little or are destitute (stigmatized ethnic groups). (Bourdieu 1998a, pp. 103–104)

The specific value of each type of capital depends on the field in which it operates, since capital does not exist and function except in relation to a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). Within this field, struggles take place over the relationship among the various forms of capital distinctive to the field. The relative value of the different types of capital, writes Bourdieu, “is continuously being brought into question, reassessed, through struggles aimed at inflating or deflating the value of one of the other types of capital” (1987, p. 10). The position of individual agents in the field thus depends on the different forms of capital at their disposal. To enhance their position within the field, agents will employ a number of strategies to reconfigure the amount of capitals they own (Tatli et al., 2015, p. 5; Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 129), this capital becoming the currency with which agents buy social recognition. In this sense the study of capital is the study of how and under what conditions individuals and groups employ strategies of accumulating, investing and converting various kinds of capital in order to maintain or enhance their positions in the field (Swartz, 1997, p. 75).

Thus, although economic capital is at the root of the other types of capital (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 252), Bourdieu attempts to introduce a broader view of capital as a power resource accumulated through human labour as well as a socially differentiating force that can be translated into economic power under certain circumstances, though not necessarily so and not under all circumstances (Swartz, 1997). From this perspective it becomes possible to ask what types of capital are at stake in the textile and fashion industry and to explore the value of sustainability in this context.

With the concept of capital lying at the heart of his theoretical framework, Bourdieu's work is notably devoid of any specific discussion of systems of capitalism (Adkins, 2011; Guillory, 2000; Calhoun, 1993). As Guillory (2000, p. 22) comments: "it is all the more striking that the concept most resonant with historical implication is also insistently transhistorical in Bourdieu's usage. The forms of 'symbolic capital' are present for him wherever there are social relations, but Bourdieu offers no independent or correlative analysis of capitalism as an economic or social system." Or, as Calhoun notes, "Bourdieu's account of capital lacks 'an idea of capitalism'" (Calhoun, 1993, p. 68). Along the same lines, Swartz (1997, p. 81) points out that Bourdieu's idea of capital lacks an analytical grip on the different types of capitalist societies and the important structural variations between them. I discuss the concept of capital in more detail in Chapter 9, when adopting Bourdieu's concept of capital in my discussion of the value of sustainability in the global textile and fashion industry, with a focus on challenges to practising sustainability as perceived by Chinese factory owners and managers.

Unlike the broader anthropological understanding of culture as a 'way of life', Bourdieu's concept of cultural capital is also central to his more material approach to culture. As noted by Swartz and Zolberg (2004, p. 6), Bourdieu recognizes that "culture is interested and economics is cultural". Thus although cultural fields claim a distance from economic fields, for Bourdieu they are equally implicated in structured inequalities of power. Critics of Bourdieu's definition of cultural capital (e.g. Desan, 2013; Lamont and Lareau, 1988) point out, amongst other things, the high-culture connotations of the concept. Sulkunen, however, suggests that the difference between Bourdieu's understanding of culture and that of the 'Birmingham school' of cultural sociology "is not a difference of theoretical orientation but a difference in the societies themselves {French vs. British societies}" (Sulkunen, 1982, p. 113).

Access to capital, according to Bourdieu, is extremely influential in terms of one's position in the field. Access to capital is not, however, deterministic; for although capital within one field may in turn give advantage in others, it is not necessarily the case (Townley, 2014, p. 45).

According to Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992):

[J]ust as the relative value of cards change with each game, the hierarchy of different species of capital (economic, social, cultural and symbolic) varies across the various fields [...] there are cards that are valid, efficacious in all fields—these are the fundamental species of capital—but their relative value as trump cards is determined by each field and even by successive states of the same field. (1992, pp. 97–98)

An agent's capacity to deal the hand—i.e. to act in a field—is heavily influenced, however, by his or her habitus.

In an early definition of habitus, Bourdieu (1977/2005, pp. 72, 83) defines it as: “the strategy-generating principles enabling agents to cope with unforeseen and ever-changing situations [...] a system of lasting and transposable dispositions which, integrating past experiences, functions at every moment as a *matrix of perception, appreciations and actions* and makes possible the achievement of infinitely diversified tasks.” A more frequently cited definition of habitus was offered by Bourdieu in 1980:

[Habitus is] a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organize practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu, 1980/1990, p. 53)

Within Bourdieu's universe, habitus informs agents as to how to orient their actions so as to relate to the familiar and to adapt to new situations. In the words of Townley (2014), habitus helps agents 'translate' the structured relations of a field into schemes of perception, thought, and action that enable those agents to function in the field. Habitus is individual as well as collective and social, constituting the crucial link between agency and structure—i.e. between

micro and macro levels of analysis (Tatli et al., 2015). It is individual because it integrates the total sum of an agent's experiences and because each agent has a unique history; it is collective because it is internalized within a particular social environment that is characterized by some form of community and a shared understanding of things; and it is social in the sense that it is affirmed, reproduced and changed through the secondary process of socialization that we experience by taking part in various social institutions (Wilken, 2011, p. 49). The power of habitus is grounded in the fact that agents are not conscious of its existence or of its effects. Practice, in this way, is neither unconscious nor conscious, people's practical mastery drawing upon *doxa* or "doxic experience", by which Bourdieu refers to a taken-for-granted world beyond reflection (Bourdieu, 1977/2005, pp. 164–171). It is this system that supports the reproduction and existence of habitus (Tatli et al., 2015).

Here Bourdieu's theory of practice stands in a line of social science originating from Durkheim (1897/1952, p. 38), who argued that "the individual is dominated by a moral reality greater than himself: namely, collective reality" but who also insisted on the capacity of the individual to resist collective pressures, saying that "in so far as we are solidary with the group and share its life, we are exposed to [the influence of collective tendencies]; but so far as we have a distinct personality of our own we rebel against and try to escape them" (Durkheim, 1897/1952, pp. 318–319). Similarly, Bourdieu's agent is not a passive recipient of the social structure; rather, the agent incorporates the dispositions of the habitus through action while at the same time action is what is structured by the habitus.

The third pillar in Bourdieu's triad of concepts is that of field, i.e. the various social and institutional arenas in which people express and reproduce their dispositions. Directing our attention to the social spaces in which interactions takes place—e.g. education, culture, or fashion—the concept of field represents the space of partly pre-constituted objective historical relations between positions (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 16). Field constitutes a universe or microcosm in which institutions and agents are integrated and interact with each other according to field-specific rules. Thus the concept of field represents one of the more structural aspects of Bourdieu's theory, which is one reason why this particular concept has been adopted by new institutionalism researchers such as DiMaggio and Powell (1983) and Powell and DiMaggio (1991). There are numerous fields within the social world, each field being a relational space on its own and dedicated to a specific type of activity—such as, for example,

the production of textiles and fashion. Bourdieu notes that “to think in terms of field is to think relationally” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 96), highlighting the latent patterns of interest and struggle that shape the existence of these empirical realities. While individually separate and distinct, however, fields remain nested in hierarchical relations, with some fields being more powerful than others, as for example “the subfields of literature, art and photography are dominated by the cultural field, the cultural field by the economic field” (Townley, 2014, p. 42). The rules of the individual fields are not formalized but tacit in nature. For agents to conduct appropriate practices within a field, they need to internalize these field-specific rules.

Fields, according to Bourdieu (1979/1984, p. 114), are defined by “three fundamental dimensions” of capital: its volume or amount; its structure or composition (for example, the comparable weight of economic, cultural and social capital at play in the field); and the change in its volume and structure over time (Townley, 2014, pp. 43–44). The primary differences, i.e. those which distinguish the major classes of conditions of existence, writes Bourdieu (1979/1984, p. 114), “derive from the overall volume of capital, understood as the set of actually usable resources and powers—economic capital, cultural capital and also social capital”. And Bourdieu goes on to highlight the way that:

Once one takes account of the structure of total assets—and not only, as has always been done implicitly, of the dominant kind in a given structure, ‘birth’, ‘fortune’ or ‘talents’, as the nineteenth century put it—one has the means of making more precise divisions and also of observing the specific effects of the structure of distribution between the different kinds of capital. (Bourdieu, 1979/1984, pp. 114–115).

Swartz (1997, p. 121) notes that Bourdieu sees his concept of field as distinct from views that dwell on total domination: “Bourdieu’s fields are *fields of struggle* rather than ‘total institutions’ (Goffman), ‘ideological state apparatus’ (Althusser) or orders of ‘discipline’ (Foucault).” Within this framework, conflict is at the heart of social life as actors struggle for power. Curiously, to enter a field in the first place, an actor must accept the tacit rules of the game in question. This means that while an actor might challenge the rules of the game, he or she has a fundamental interest in preserving the field itself. In the words of Swartz (1997, p. 125): “Every field presupposes and produces a particular type of *illusio*, which Bourdieu defines as a belief or



acceptance of the worth of the game of a field.” In the field of textiles and fashion, for example, there has been an increasingly heated debate about—and criticism of—the industry’s neglect of social and environmental responsibility. In spite of this, all actors taking part in the debate, including those opposed to the industry’s current practices, assume that textiles and fashion is worth talking about. Being the space in which agents compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital, the field is thus also the site of both resistance and domination. However, although Bourdieu understands fields as sites of struggle, some critics argue that the concept of field within Bourdieu’s work captures these struggles within the logic of reproduction to a much higher degree than the logic of social transformation (Swartz, 1997; Jenkins 1992), to the extent of rendering it futile to use Bourdieu’s theory of practice as a starting point to explore processes of change.

Practice then, in Bourdieu’s universe, is understood as the dynamic and evolving relation between the field and habitus. Bourdieu (1979/1984, p. 101) presents this in the equation: {(habitus) (capital)} + field = practice. He does not, however, study practice to elevate the subjectivism of peoples’ lived experience; rather it was his aim to understand the ways in which practice is structured within a field of possibilities (Bourdieu, 1993/2012). In her chapter on Bourdieu and organizational theory, Townley (2014, pp. 47–48) recaps Bourdieu’s approach to practice:

A field is made up of historical, specific practices, and practices that are also the specific actions of agents within it. To understand practice, it is necessary to understand both the evolving field in which practice takes place and the evolving habitus that engages with the field of practice. Practice is thus the consequence of the interplay between both the structures of the field and the structures of the habitus. In this sense, practices are both constraining and organizing: constraining in that the field of practices suggests what is pertinent, organizing in that practices have a tendency to elaboration and refinement.

Townley’s (2014) summary also directs our attention to the fact that Bourdieu’s theory of practice is in essence relational and contextual, since it is only through the mediation of habitus and field that the various forms of capital gain their value. In the words of Swatz (2008, p. 47): “Bourdieu does not offer a theory of fields, a theory of capital, or a theory of habitus, as stand-alone

conceptual perspectives.” Instead, his three key concepts only gain their full analytical potential when used in relation to each other.

#### 4.1.1. Critical Voices

Numerous aspects of Bourdieu’s work have been criticized (e.g. Jenkins, 1992 and 2005; Alexander, 1995; King, 2000; Barnes, 2000; Noble and Watkins, 2003). One criticism takes issue with Bourdieu’s theory as a ‘Grand Theory’—a term which in this context is not meant as a compliment but as a critique of theoretical frameworks that are disconnected from empirical foundations. With reference to Mills (1959), Walther (2014, p. 21) describes Grand Theories as theories that come across as non-concrete, confused verbiages more than as theories that allow any firm connection to social problems. Along the same lines, Latour (2005a, pp. 154–155), in criticising the use by social scientists of concepts such as ‘contexts’ and ‘frameworks’ as a way to explain the social, says the following with direct reference to Bourdieu: “*Bravo, bravissimo!* So an actor for you is some fully determined agent, plus a placeholder for a function, plus a bit of perturbation, plus some consciousness provided by enlightened social scientists? [...] Great job, Student! Bourdieu could not have done better.” Objections are also directed specifically to Bourdieu’s theoretical concepts, with critics pointing to the plurality and indeterminateness of their meanings and their alleged theoretical inadequacy (Nash, 2003; Jenkins, 2005; Segre, 2014). Jenkins (2005, p. 70), for example, one of the most critical interpreters of Bourdieu, writes that habitus as a source of behaviours is “at best not clear, and at worst, mysterious”. Other criticisms of Bourdieu’s work concern its economism and its “homogenisation of fields” (Friedland, 2009; Swartz, 1997; Alexander, 1995), its neglect of materiality (Dominguez Rubio and Silva, 2013; Friedland, 2009; Friedland, Mohr, Roose and Gardinali, 2014; Latour, 2005a), and its emphasis on binary oppositions of cultural and economic capital to the extent that his work neglects other structured relations such as gender (Townley, 2014). Scholars have also commented on the inaccessibility of Bourdieu’s language and writing style. Jenkins (1992, p. 1), for example, describes Bourdieu’s writing as “unnecessarily long-winded, obscure, complex and intimidating”, adding that “He [Bourdieu] does not have to write in this fashion to say what he wants to say”. And while Bourdieu aims to reconcile structuralism and voluntarism (i.e. macro and micro levels of analysis), his critics point out that his work strongly favours a structuralist perspective. Nash (1999), for example, argues that Bourdieu neither defines ‘structure’ nor uses the term in a consistent way. Hillebrandt (1999) states that Bourdieu is first and foremost a macro-sociological structuralist who is particularly interested in the determination of social

agents by macro structures and resulting influences from the social field—a criticism of the alleged determinism in Bourdieu’s theoretical framework and the inability of this framework to allow for change since it leaves no room for individual agency (King, 2000; Bouveresse, 1995; Brubaker, 1985; Jenkins, 1982 and 1992).

While such critics challenge Bourdieu’s theoretical framework, however, it is also abundantly clear that they find it worthwhile engaging with Bourdieu’s work. In the view of Jenkins (1992, p. 2), Bourdieu is “enormously good to think with. His work invites, even demands, argument and reflection”.

In the remainder of this section I elaborate on the alleged determinism of Bourdieu’s conceptual framework and the critique concerning Bourdieu’s homogenisation of fields, since these discussions are particularly relevant and enlightening for my work, especially the two papers ‘Unlikely Mediators? The Malleable Concept of Sustainability’ and ‘Capital in Formation: What is at stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?’, as well as for the conclusion to this thesis.

There has been much debate about the degree of agency within Bourdieu’s theoretical framework. Some critics claim that this framework presents a deterministic conception of social life in which individual agents are passive, pulled and pushed into actions and positions in life by structural forces (Bottero and Crossley, 2011; Jenkins 1982 and 1992; Noble and Watkins, 2003; Mukerji, 2014). According to such readings of Bourdieu’s work, it is difficult to see any room for individual choice or possibilities for individuals to free themselves from circumstances. Although Bourdieu often frames habitus as “regulated improvisations” (Bourdieu, 1980/1990, p. 57), it is, according to Jenkins (1992), the functionalism of habitus as “structured structure” (Bourdieu, 1980/1990, p. 53) that predominates. And indeed it is the case that reproduction, i.e. the means by which systems of domination are reproduced without conscious intention by agents, was a central issue for Bourdieu. Many scholars within the field of organization and management studies have thus employed Bourdieu’s understanding of field and habitus to explain why organizations are isomorphic and reluctant to change (e.g. DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Mutch, 2003; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991).

Mukerji (2014) proposes that the logics of practice in the habitus of Bourdieu are comparable to Michael Polanyi’s understanding of tacit knowledge, suggesting that Polanyi’s descriptions of

the distinctiveness of tacit knowledge can provide us with a new understanding of the concept of habitus. According to Polanyi (1958/1962 and 1966/2009), formal knowledge describes what is in the world and consists of representations that are judged by their accuracy. In contrast, tacit knowledge addresses the question of how to interact with things in the world and concerns sequences, practices and transformation—not stabilized truths but changing logics about what can be done next (Polanyi, 1966/2009). Polanyi thus sees tacit knowledge as a creative rather than a conservative force in science. Mukerji writes:

Scientific researchers doing experiments routinely encounter natural forces and properties that they cannot name, much less theorize precisely. In the face of this, they develop informal conceptions of the patterns in experimental results and use them as guides for designing their next experiments. Over time, they build up an inarticulate understanding of the natural properties or forces that they study. If they can, Polanyi argues, researchers try to articulate these patterns to make them formal knowledge. Thus, in Polanyi's model, tacit knowledge is an engine of creativity in science that works through practices, but can change formal ideas. (Mukerji, 2014, p. 350)

While—as I shall argue—there is abundant potential for change in Bourdieu's theoretical framework, Mukerji's suggested link to tacit knowledge is also relevant to this thesis, especially in light of the importance attributed to tacit knowledge within the field of design (Kimbell, 2012; Mareis, 2012).

Bourdieu himself rejects the alleged determinism of his theoretical framework. Habitus, he says (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 133), as being the product of history, is “an open system of dispositions that is constantly subjected to experiences, and therefore constantly affected by them in a way that either reinforces or modifies its structures. It is durable but not eternal!” Transformation is thus possible through a disconnect between habitus and field. In *Haute Couture and Haute Culture*, Bourdieu wrote as follows:

The established figures have conservation strategies, aimed at deriving profit from progressively accumulated capital. The newcomers have subversion strategies, oriented towards accumulation of specific capital which presupposes a more or

less radical reversal of the tables of values, a more or less revolutionary subversion of the principles of production and appreciation of the products and, by the same token, a devaluation of the capital of established figures. (Bourdieu, 1984/1995, p. 133)

“And those who struggle for dominance,” Bourdieu went on to say, “cause the field to be transformed, perpetually restructured” (1984/1995, p. 135). Discussing Bourdieu’s work and the claims that his theoretical framework is deterministic, Garnham and Williams (1980) introduce a useful distinction between replication and reformation:

In our view it is necessary to distinguish within the process of reproduction between ‘replication’ and ‘reformation’. Reformation points us towards the spaces that are opened up in conjunctural situations in which the dominant class is objectively weakened and which thus offers opportunities for real innovation in the social structure, for shifts in the structure of power in the field of class relations which, falling short of ‘revolution’ in the classical sense, are nonetheless of real and substantial historical importance and are objectively ‘revolutionary’ within a longer historical rhythm. (Garnham and Williams 1980, pp. 222–223)

With regard to the alleged determinism of Bourdieu’s work, it has been suggested that the Anglo-Saxon world’s perception of Bourdieu’s framework as being largely deterministic is related to the sequence in which his work has been translated into English (Townley, 2014). As an increasing amount of Bourdieu’s work has become available in English, more nuanced adaptations and discussions have also come to the fore. The work of scholars such as Kerr and Robinson (2009), Gomez and Bouty (2011) and Eyal (2013), for example, suggests avenues of research to apply Bourdieu’s theory in situations of transition and change. In this thesis, Bourdieu’s theoretical framework has helped me bring to light and discuss processes of reproduction of current practices as well as processes of reformation and change towards practising sustainability.

Another objection to Bourdieu’s theoretical framework focuses on his concept of field. Drawing our attention to the institutional aspects of individual and group action, the field, according to Swartz (1997, p. 120), “represents Bourdieu’s version of institutional analysis”. Scholars such as

Powell and DiMaggio (1991) drew extensively on Bourdieu's concept of field, emphasizing both the relational and cultural aspects of membership, in their development of the branch of new institutionalism that has made its mark on organizational theory. Bourdieu, however, saw 'field' as superior to that of 'institutions'. Firstly, with his concept of field Bourdieu wanted to highlight the conflictual character of social life (struggles) in contrast to the idea of institutions that suggests consensus. In institutional theory, field is generally characterized by stasis and the 'taken for granted' (Townley, 2014). Secondly, Bourdieu wanted to create a concept that could encompass social spaces in which practices are not firmly institutionalized and boundaries are not well established. The 'problem' with institutional theory's adoption of the concept of the field is that it has largely forgotten to adopt the dynamic qualities of the concept that emphasize change and conflict. For Bourdieu, as highlighted by Townley (2014, p. 53): "fields are inherently dynamic, contested, and open to change; not requiring the deus ex machina of the institutional entrepreneur to account for this." Thus, although scholars such as DiMaggio (1988) and Hinings and Tolbert (2008) point to the neglect of agency in institutional analysis in general, Bourdieu's understanding of capital, interest and *illusio*, which are the concepts providing the agency, politics and change that critics lament, have not been followed up on. This failure of Bourdieu's critics to address capital, writes Townley (2014, p. 53): "is to ignore an important element of fields: each field has its own stake, strategic behavior is characterized by the competition for what is 'at stake', and the volume and composition of capital allows agents to gain advantage in a field. Capital, in other words, is central to the dynamics of fields."

While a number of prominent sociologists have urged organizational theorists to adopt Bourdieu's approach to the study of organizational fields (Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008; Savage and Silva, 2013; Swartz, 2008), there are also many critical voices. With reference to Lahire (2001, pp. 34–48), Segre captures some of character of the critique:

Is it perhaps a field perhaps determined by the practices professionally carried out by some actors struggling with one another or with other actors? Or, in a more restricted way, by the practices carried out by prestigious actors, and aimed at bringing a symbolic capital to the field? [...] Finally, the fields that Bourdieu considers are 'disembodied,' in the sense that attention is exclusively focused on more or less dominant positions, the struggles and strategies of actors who act in a particular field, divert the investigation from what characterizes the field in its

practice and conception specifically, and in its independence from other fields. Bourdieu's theory does not permit to show what literature actually is, in the case of the literary field; what law or science actually are, if those are, instead, the investigated fields. (Segre, 2014, pp. 33–34)

Friedland, being less concerned with the alleged cultural autonomy or economic reductionism of Bourdieu's work, sees the problem in Bourdieu's "theorization of the logic of practice as a generic contest for domination in a plurality of homologously organized fields" (Friedland, 2009, p. 888). Bourdieu conceptualizes the relationship between relatively autonomous fields in terms of "structural and functional homologies" (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pp. 105–106). This means, for example, that consumers in subordinate social class positions have a tendency to choose products produced by producers in subordinate positions within the field of cultural production (Swartz, 1997, p. 130). According to Bourdieu, however, this is not the result of agents' rational choices; rather, field analysis proposes that the relation of supply and demand (e.g. in sustainable fashion) is *mediated* by field structures and processes. As Swartz explains:

Producers struggle within the field of cultural production and their cultural products reflect more their respective positions of dominance or subordination in that struggle than they do the demands of consumers. Consumers, in their turn, select from these cultural products according to their own positions of dominance or subordination within the struggle for distinction among the social classes. (Swartz, 1997, p. 131)

Power in this way becomes in Bourdieu's theory both the primary interest of practice and the motor of field dynamics. Bourdieu, argues Friedland (2009, p. 888): "aligns all practices through the logic of domination, which allows him to homologize group relations in every fields. This homologization depends on a homogenization of fields, the sociological effacement of their cultural specificity." In this sense, 'difference' is what makes up the content of Bourdieu's dominant cultural forms, rather than something immanent in them. For Friedland (2009, p. 892): "Both in his studies of cultural consumption and production, Bourdieu makes the politics of culture into a struggle for an empty cell: the transhistorical space of domination." Friedland argues, in contrast, that institutional fields are:

structures of symbolically constituted, iterated powers whose exercise through interlocked congeries of practices—voting and legislation, buying and selling, officiating and participating in religious rites, marrying, cohabitation and love-making, the fighting of wars and signing of treaties, controlled experiments and observation—carried out by collectively recognized subjects—citizens, owners, congregants, families, officials, scientists—which presume and performatively produce values—democracy, property, divinity, love, sovereignty and knowledge. (Friedland, 2009, p. 907)

In opposition to Bourdieu, Friedland argues that these “institutional substances” constitute the central objects of an institutional field and the principle of its unity. Criticising what he sees as Bourdieu’s primary focus on structures of power whose purposes are analytically external to their constitution, Friedland encourages analysis to advance a step further, stating that: “Institutions have a logic because practices and substances are internally co-constitutive. [...] Substances are known through their powers, but are not reducible to them.” (2009, p. 908)

Acknowledging the methodological importance of the idea of structural homology in Bourdieu’s field analysis, Swartz (1997) also raises a number of questions concerning the conceptual power of this particular aspect of Bourdieu’s work. He notes, for example, that there is a high probability that many different groups occupy homologous field positions without necessarily forming alliances. Thus, Swartz notes (1997, p. 136): “What are the processes as well as resources that help us understand why some groups but not others form strategic linkages? Bourdieu’s notion of structural homology unfortunately stops short of shedding light on this important question.”

#### 4.1.2. Bourdieu in Organization and Management Studies

The work of Bourdieu has received increasing attention in organization and management studies over recent years (e.g. Tatli et al., 2015; Townley, 2014; Sieweke, 2014; Swartz, 2008; Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008; Aaken, Splitter and Seidl, 2013; Golshorki, Leca, Lounsbury and Ramirez, 2009; Kamoche, Kannan, and Siebers, 2014; Townley, Beech, and McKinlay, 2009; DiMaggio and Powell, 1983; Powell and DiMaggio, 1991). However, the extent and depth to which the field has put Bourdieu’s work into use, and the value of his work to the field, has been a matter of much discussion.



Recent studies by Townley (2014) and Sieweke (2014) shed light on this debate. Both scholars have conducted a review of the literature on the uptake and impact of Bourdieu's work in organization and management studies. And though on first reading they appear to reach different conclusions, this is more a result of their different methodological approaches than of a difference in opinion. Townley focuses on what she sees as the three main areas that make use of Bourdieu's 'thinking tools': institutional theory and fields; social capital and network studies; and practice studies (2014, p. 52). Sieweke's review is based on a citation context analysis of nine leading management and organization journals between the years 1980 and 2012. Unlike Sieweke, Townley also includes in her analysis works that do not cite Bourdieu directly but which still draw on his conceptual framework. Townley (2014) concludes that although Bourdieu remains little cited in organization studies, his central concepts have underpinned many areas of interest in the field, "serving as an absent 'other' throughout much organization research" (Townley, 2014, p. 39). Sieweke's study shows a steady increase in the ratio of articles citing Bourdieu, as well as a continuous increase in the depth of citations.

According to Sieweke (2014, p. 537), organization and management researchers mostly adopt Bourdieu's theoretical triad, despite his theory being much broader—a finding that contradicts Emirbayer and Johnson's (2008) argument that there is an almost total inattention to habitus amongst management and organization scholars. Emirbayer and Johnson write:

To be sure, certain concepts associated with his [Bourdieu's] thought, such as *field* and *capital*, two of the cornerstones of his sociology, are already widely known in the organizational literature. However, the specific ways in which these terms are being used provide ample evidence that the full significance of his relational mode of thought has yet to be apprehended. Moreover, the almost total inattention to habitus, the third of Bourdieu's major concepts, without which the concepts of field and capital (at least as he deployed them) make no sense, further attest to the misappropriation of his ideas and to the lack of appreciation of their potential usefulness. (2008, p. 2).

This is not the case, however, according to Sieweke, at least not in the nine leading organization and management journals that provided the foundation for his analysis. Sieweke's study rather

highlights the field's current inattention to concepts other than the 'big three'—neglecting other important contributions such as Bourdieu's concepts of the human body, field logics, hysteresis, *illusio* and *doxa*. This omission leaves open a great opportunity, argues Sieweke (2014), to release the full potential of Bourdieu's work.

Townley's review, meanwhile, presents a more in-depth analysis of the specific ways in which Bourdieu's work is put to use. Within the area of practice studies, including strategy as practice, Townley's review shows that while researchers of practice studies generally accept Bourdieu's rejection of the dualism of structure and subjectivist reductionism, they often fail to incorporate other aspects of Bourdieu's explanatory understanding of practice into their analyses, i.e. the concepts of capital, habitus and field (Townley, 2014, p. 58). Swartz (2008, p. 48) notes that "Practices flow from the intersection of habitus with capital and field positions," encouraging organization researchers to be attentive to this dynamic/adaptive character of the concept of habitus (as also noted by Emirbayer and Johnson (2008)). An exception to such inattention to Bourdieu's three key concepts all at once is found, for example, in Gomez and Bouty's (2011) analysis of how habitus can function in helping shape a chef's position in the field of French haute cuisine, illustrating how action may be organizationally effective, guided by the fit between a personal trajectory and the field in which it is enacted.

Townley (2014) also discusses the appropriation of Bourdieu's concept of "social capital" in organization studies. Within this context the concept has broadly been understood as denoting the level of access to and use of resources or assets intrinsic to networks (Lin, 1999). In the work on networks, for example, the appropriation of Bourdieu's political and sociological analysis within a neoclassical economic is often taken to be unproblematic; but this abstracts the concept of social capital from Bourdieu's work on structural domination, reproduction, and inequality—thereby sanitizing and depoliticizing it (Townley, 2014, p. 56). "Network models", according to Townley (2014, p. 56), "operationalize social capital but obviate its meaning". Or, in the words of Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p. 114): "in network analysis the study of underlying structures has been sacrificed to the analysis of particular linkages [...] and flows [...] no doubt because uncovering the structure requires that one puts to work a relational mode of thinking that is more difficult to translate into quantitative and formalized data."

A literature review of the use of Bourdieu's theory of practice in organization and management studies shows that the appropriation and application of Bourdieu's work has been varied—as are past and present forecasts of its potential contributions to the field. In 1979, DiMaggio predicted that Bourdieu's ideas were “likely to be transformed [...] by their entry into American sociology, taken selectively as hypotheses or orienting propositions according to the process of assimilation and productive mis-reading [...] Used in that manner, they promise to provide a potent source of insight and stimulation” (DiMaggio, 1979, p. 1472). In contrast to DiMaggio, Garnham and Williams (1980) called for caution, stating that “the fragmentary and partial appropriation of what is a rich and unified body of theory and related empirical work [...] can lead to a danger of dangerously misreading the theory”. Both are appropriate evaluations. More recently, Tatli et al. (2015, p. 1) have argued that Bourdieu's work on the intrinsically political nature of our scholarly actions lies at the heart of the potential contribution of his sociology to the development of organization and management studies “as a strong discipline of social science with strong theoretical, empirical, and philosophical roots”. Sieweke (2014) sees potential in the novel ways in which Bourdieu's work might contribute to research in organization and management studies, specifically by drawing on concepts beyond his theoretical triad.

#### 4.1.3. Why Bourdieu's Theory of Practice?

Bourdieu's theoretical triad underpins the larger part of this thesis, specifically Chapter 7 and Chapter 9. Chapter 9 further draws on Bourdieu's understanding of time in a discussion of the relationship between capitalism(s) and sustainability practices. In recognition of the interconnected nature of 'sustainability', I see Bourdieu's attempt to bridge macro and micro levels of analysis as a strong starting point for an analysis of sustainable fashion. While I acknowledge that Bourdieu's theoretical framework can come across as deterministic, making change a rare exception, and thus how it may seem odd to choose this framework as a starting point for an analysis of how the textile and fashion industry might change towards practising sustainability, I also see Bourdieu's entire work and personal life story as one long process of change. (In the words of Noble and Watkins (2003): “So, how did Bourdieu learn to play tennis?”) Although his framework is increasingly used by organization and management studies researchers (Sieweke, 2014), relatively few studies within the field have so far managed to combine an analysis of fields, habitus and capital (or symbolic power, *illusio*, *doxa*, hysteresis and symbolic violence), most studies taking only one or two elements of Bourdieu's theoretical

triad (Townley, 2014, p. 59; Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008; Swartz, 2008). There are numerous reasons why this is the case. One is likely to be the fact that a full analysis of capital, habitus and field demands extensive resources in terms of time, budget and qualifications, which are seldom available in current research. For me, at least, this has been one of the challenges to conducting what might be deemed a ‘proper’ Bourdieusian analysis. I see this challenge, however, as an exciting opportunity to contribute to the field of organization and management studies and to explore the use of Bourdieu’s concepts in relatively new territory.

#### **4.2. Actor-Network-Theory**

I now turn to an introduction of ANT and to the Sociology of Translation that falls under the framework of ANT. The Sociology of Translation primarily informs Chapter 8. I begin with a presentation of the methodological and analytical framework of ANT, focusing on the work of Bruno Latour and Michel Callon. I then turn to discuss some of the critical voices in the debate and a short literature review, focusing on organization and management scholars who have adopted ANT and the concept of translation (e.g., Czarniawska and Hernes, 2005; Whittle, Suhomlinova, and Mueller, 2010; Alcadipani and Hassard, 2010; Bapuji, Hora, and Saeed, 2012).

ANT was developed within anthropological science and technology studies in France and the United Kingdom (e.g., Callon, 1999; Latour, 1986 and 2005a; Law and Hassard, 1999). While Bourdieu’s work attempts to overcome the structure-nature dichotomy, the aim of ANT is to overcome the dichotomy between Nature and Society (Latour, 2005a). Inspired by the work of the sociologist Gabriel Tarde and the philosopher Alfred North Whitehead, Latour argues that the separation of Nature and Society leads to two paradoxes. On the one hand there is Nature, which transcends us, while simultaneously there is self-made Society. On other occasions the argument is turned on its head and Nature becomes the artificial creation of laboratories while it is Society that transcends us. According to Latour (2005a, p. 110): “‘Society’ and ‘Nature’ do not describe domains of reality, but are two collectors that were invented together largely for polemical reasons, in the 17th century.” This, separation leads to a blind eye being turned towards the hybrids in between the two concepts. It is these hybrids—the things in the middle—that ANT finds interesting.

ANT drops the concept of the social altogether, instead bringing into view networks of associations made up of multidimensional and evolving entanglements of human, non-human, and/or collective actors (Latour, 2005a). In contrast with most other sociological approaches, ANT understands non-humans as actors and “not simply the hapless bearers of symbolic projection” (Latour, 2005a, p. 10). Building on this attention to non-humans, Latour has also called for ‘*thing* philosophy’ and ‘object-oriented politics’, and in doing so has challenged designers to make public the object of design (Latour, 2005b). Instead of defining theoretical categories *a priori*, e.g., ‘the social’ or ‘society’, ANT demands that researchers follow the actors and their constitution of categories. It is the researcher’s task to keep the social domain completely ‘flat’ and to trace associations amongst elements instead of inducing new concepts. In the words of Latour (2005a, p. 172): “It might seem odd at first, but we have to become the Flat-Earthers of social theory.” Such linking up happens in the process of translation, which can be analytically separated into different moments (Callon, 1999).

The Sociology of Translation (Callon, 1999) understands change as a continuous process of translation. Within this framework the term translation refers to the means by which actors come to employ some authority over the elements of which a network is made. Callon (1999) accounts for the different strategic practices by which network identities are constructed and translation takes place in his seminal paper ‘Some Elements of a Sociology of Translation: Domestication of the Scallops and the Fishermen of St Brieuc Bay’. Aiming to build an actor-network around a particular definition of sustainable fashion, for example, network actors attribute to target entities a set of problems in which that particular sustainable fashion identity is embedded and a set of possibilities to which both parties might be devoted. In the process of translation, therefore, potential allies have to be identified and become interested in involvement. Eventually they need to be enrolled to mobilize support for particular understandings and practices (Callon, 1999). Latour observes that “the spread of time and place of anything—claims, orders, artefacts, goods—is in the hands of people; each of these people may act in many different ways, letting the token drop, or modifying it, or deflecting it, or betraying it or adding to it, or appropriating it” (Latour, 1986, p. 267). Translation thus has to do with the ways in which others’ aspirations are borrowed to support the endeavours of the enrolling actor. To be successful, this process has to reach a point at which what used to be unrelated desires become indistinguishable from one another, the spokesperson effectively speaking on behalf of the actors whom he/she wants to enrol. In the words of Callon (1986, pp. 25–26): “Translation builds an actor-world from

entities. It attaches characteristics to them and establishes more or less stable relationships between them. Translation is a definition of roles [...] and the delineation of a scenario. It speaks for others but in its own language.” The idea of keeping the social flat and studying associations provides a vocabulary for studying transformative practices by paying close attention to the processes by which heterogeneous elements are associated.

Within the framework of ANT, a practice—a grouping, a particular understanding of something—depends on its performance to sustain itself. As there exists no society to begin with, the object of a performative definition disappears when no longer performed. If it stays, this means that other actors have taken over the relay, for example by adopting a particular way of manufacturing and consuming garments. This relay, says Latour (2005a, p. 38), “by definition, cannot be ‘the social world’ since it is that very world which is in dire need of a fresh relay”. In this way ANT considers the production of meaning as an activity of connecting and disconnecting, exploring how actors come to be created through the collaboration of other actors in different contexts. ANT’s analytical commitment to ‘keeping the social flat’, its distribution of agency and lack of interest in the distribution of power, provides an intriguing starting point for a discussion of processes of organizational change.

#### 4.2.1. Critical Voices

Criticisms of ANT proceed along several lines. One such criticism relates to whether ANT is primarily concerned with applying a method or with developing theory—a question to which Latour’s (2005a) statement that ANT is not a theory or a method does not offer much help. This confusion, however, does not seem to have discouraged scholars from interpreting it as one or the other. Thus, within the field of organization and management studies we find the continuing oscillations between ANT as method and ANT as theory (Toennesen, C., Molloy, E., and Jacobs, C. D., 2006).

ANT’s preoccupation with non-humans has also been subject to criticism (as well as a point of attraction). Some critics (e.g. Collins and Yearley, 1992, Fuller, 2000, and Mutch, 2002) argue that ANT’s attention to non-humans is an unfortunate distraction from what really matters—by which they usually mean “questions of power, inequality, critique and emancipation in the human, social world” (Blok and Jensen, 2011, p. 142). As noted by Blok and Jensen (2011), this critique may be somewhat misleading because it is precisely this opposition between humans

and non-humans that Latourian a-humanism rejects. Collins and Yearley (1992) problematize ANT's idea of analytic impartiality for giving a voice to 'things', thereby underplaying the fact that these voices rely upon mediation by human actors. In this view, the appropriate focus for social studies of scientific knowledge should be the study of the 'social', i.e. that which speaks for non-humans. According to Toennesen, C., Molloy, E., and Jacobs, C. D. (2006) this debate raises important questions regarding agency, responsibility and accountability—questions that are likely to surface in similar or other forms within organization and management studies.

McLean and Hassard (2004) present a concern centring on the way in which ANT is used by organization and management scholars. Based on their comprehensive review of ANT literature, they outline five points of controversy that they consider crucial to reflect upon if future scholars deploying an ANT perspective are to formulate writings that are “sophisticated yet robust enough to negate the twin charges of symmetrical absence or symmetrical absurdity” (McLean and Hassard, 2004, p. 516). The five points are: the nature of privileging and status; the handling of agency and structure; and the nature of politics and power in ‘heterogeneous engineering’.” (McLean and Hassard, 2004, p. 493). Acknowledging the potential contributions of ANT, McLean and Hassard's paper also represents an attempt to ‘warn’ management scholars of the potential pitfalls of adopting ANT methods in the context of organization and management studies.

Bourdieu was amongst the chief opponents of ANT, and specifically of Latour (Blok and Jensen, 2011). And while Latour spent considerably more time criticizing Bourdieu than the other way around, in Bourdieu's final book before his death in 2002, ‘Science of Science and Reflexivity’ (2001/2004, pp. 29–30), he devoted some time to accusing Latour of “using scientifically dishonest strategies” and engaging in “a mere literary game”. In order to understand this harsh and uncompromising tone, untypical of Bourdieu, Blok and Jensen (2011) argue that we not only need to consider Latour's manifest observations on science and society and/or Bourdieu's interpretations of these observations, but also “we need to understand the constitutive role played by social categories and criticism in Bourdieu's sociological paradigm—and, paralleling this, we need to reevaluate the implications of the crisis which, according to Latour, is befalling this very same social criticism” (Blok and Jensen, 2011, p. 143).

#### 4.2.2. ANT in Organization and Management Studies

In recent years, organization studies have taken to ANT and the concept of translation (e.g. Czarniawska and Hernes, 2005; Toennesen, Molloy, and Jacobs, 2006; Whittle, Suhomlinova, and Mueller, 2010; Alcadipani and Hassard, 2010; Bapuji, Hora, and Saeed, 2012; Donnelly, Gabriel, and Özkazanç-Pan, 2013; Lambotte and Meunier, 2013; Henriksen and Seabrooke, 2015), as have studies on processes of innovation and change (e.g. Akrich, Callon, and Latour, 2002; Harrison and Laberge, 2002; Quattrone and Hopper, 2001). ANT views organizations as collections of associated networks of interrelated human and non-human elements. It thereby provides a framework that aims to do away with the micro-macro distinction that characterizes much of the work in organization studies (and sociology), instead proposing that attention be paid to the role of non-humans in the creation of networks. Adopting ANT for investigations of organizational change thus precludes the use of references to ‘the system’ to explain barriers to organizational change. In the words of Latour (1990), one should not jump outside of a network to add an explanation—a cause, a factor or a series of factors—but should rather extend the network further.

Some proponents of putting the Sociology of Translation to use in studies of organizational change argue that we, by adopting the concept of translation, have the potential to move beyond a somewhat mechanistic portrayal of how organizational change takes place (Callon, 1999; Czarniawska and Hernes, 2005; Czarniawska and Sevón, 2005). Inspired by the sociology of translation and constructivism, Quattrone and Hopper (2001), for example, examine what change actually means by constructing notions of ‘drift’ and ‘a-centered organizations’ as alternatives to conventional definitions of change and organization. Harrison and Laberge’s (2002) study, in which they adopt ANT to trace the acts of persuasion involved in the spread of innovation as it appears in connection with the design of a new product in a microelectronics firm, argue for a view of innovation as a process of negotiation. Donnelly et al. (2013) set the framework for a special issue on the ‘Untold Stories of the Field and Beyond: Narrating the Chaos’ by drawing on the ‘linguistic turn’ in organization studies and the concept of translation. By making room for “the messy and often untold stories of organization research” (Donnelly et al., 2013, p. 6), the authors shed light on the actor network of organization studies. It is their aim, they declare:



to demonstrate how such narratives are produced, including voicing how the choices that researchers make in promoting certain narratives over others lead to particular stories of the field emerging. [...] Thus, our intent with this special issue is to tell tales of the field and beyond, but all with the serious end of rendering visible the largely invisible. Much translation goes into ordering the mess of the field – following trajectories and associations to create an ordered, structured, and stabilized organizational story. (Donnelly et al., 2013, p. 5)

Having adopted ANT, Toennesen et al. (2006) note that few studies within the field of organization and management studies have examined the actual nature of this ‘translation’. Based on an analysis of 17 top-tier journal publications, the authors explore how and which aspects of ANT have been used, concluding that “ANT has entered new intellectual domains, not least by means of prominent journals—it has travelled well, we might say” (Toennesen et al., 2006, p. 25). However, their study also shows the great diversity in the ways in which organization and management researchers have put ANT into use, “ranging from ‘recipe-ANT’ use, i.e. off-the-shelf applications of its most ‘operationable’ parts, to theoretical contributions that exhibit profound reflexive commitments” (Toennesen et al. 2006, p. 26).

I conclude this review of the use of ANT with a short look to the fields of design and design thinking that have also started adopting ANT. Discussing the work of design, Telier et al. (2013), for example, draw on Latour's (2005b) *thing* philosophy, arguing that:

*Things* are not carved out of human relations, but rather of sociomaterial, ‘collectives of humans and non-humans’, through which the objects of concern are handled. At the same time, a designed artifact is potentially a thing made public, since once it is delivered to its users, it becomes matters of concern to them with its new possibilities of interaction. A turn towards things can [...] be seen as a movement away from ‘projecting’ and toward design processes and strategies of ‘infrastructuring’ and ‘thinging’. So as we approach design [...] our focus is not on the individual designer and the material object in isolation, nor is it on the user as such; rather it is on things, projects, objects, artifacts, devices,

materials, places, infrastructures, designers, users, stakeholders, publics, and so on, in collectives of human and nonhumans performing and transforming the object of design. (Telier et al., 2013, p. 6)

#### 4.2.4. Why the Sociology of Translation?

As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, ANT was introduced to me during a course I attended in the first year of my PhD. Knowing of the controversy between Bourdieu and Latour, though not in detail, I was drawn to the work of Latour and Callon first and foremost because of the principle of generalized symmetry (Callon, 1999). The empirical foundation of my research being a group of designers, their tools and the garments that they produce as part of a global network of human and non-human actors, I was inspired by Callon's statement that "the rule which we must respect is not to change register when we move from the technical to the social aspects of the problem studied" (1999, p. 4). I was also greatly confused, however, as to what it would mean to be a 'Flat-Earther' (Latour, 2005a) and how to conduct this type of research. Thus challenged, I decided to explore what it would mean for my analysis to change from the theoretical framework of Bourdieu to that of the sociology of translation. I specifically draw on the concept of translation in my work with InnoTex's workshops for H&M as a way to illuminate the attempted process of change towards practising sustainability.

#### 4.3. Bourdieu versus Latour: In Search of Truth

The decision to employ both Bourdieu's practice theory and the sociology of translation as starting points for analysis has led on numerous occasions to interesting discussions which, in turn, have led me to modify my approach. Embarking upon ANT, I saw that it was different from Bourdieu's practice theory, but I also saw similarities. For example, the early writings of both Bourdieu and Latour engage with epistemological debates on the link between knowledge and reality. In later writings both also explore the relations between knowledge and society. Both scholars argue that theorizing the social conditioning of science does not necessarily need to lead to relativism (Kale-Lostuvali, 2016). Both Bourdieu and Latour's work comprise a 'bricolage' of various tools, methods and ideas (Savage and Silva, 2013). For example, while Latour urges us to 'follow the actors', Bourdieu emphasizes that the researcher always has to go into the field to identify the objects of dispute and the specific stakes related to these objects and in relation to interests specific to other fields. Only on the basis of such empirical work, argues Bourdieu, can we start talking about the field. In addition, I also saw similarity in the way that

both Bourdieu and ANT provide an opportunity not only to look at context but also to bridge or overcome ‘scales’ of analysis. Bourdieu achieves this through his concept of habitus, with which he attempts to bridge the gap between structure and agency. ANT, more radically, aims to dissolve the self-same scales of analysis, replacing this metaphor with a metaphor of connections:

Instead of having to choose between the local and the global view, the notion of network allows us to think of a global entity - a highly connected one - which remains nevertheless continuously local [...] Instead of opposing the individual level to the mass, or the agency to the structure, we simply follow how a given element becomes strategic through the number of connections it commands and how does it lose its importance when losing its connections. (Latour, 1990, p. 6)

In spite of what I see as their shared research interests and to some extent similar approaches to the field, I have come to realize that Bourdieu and Latour developed fundamentally different sociologies of science—and I see why one might problematize or even object to my initial idea of using both Bourdieu’s practice theory and the sociology of translation in the same analysis. Kale-Lostuvali (2016) lucidly outlines what I have realized to be the main ‘problem’ with using both frameworks in the same analysis:

Bourdieu argues that the scientific world is a field with specificities, which under certain conditions, allow it to produce trans-historical truths. In contrast, Latour argues that scientific truths are produced and upheld by actor-networks. More strikingly, the two theorists stipulate opposite conditions for the production of scientific truths: while Bourdieu emphasizes the need for the relative autonomy of the scientific field, Latour emphasizes the need for associations. My [Kale-Lostuvali] analysis reveals that the two theories are informed by oppositional ontological and epistemological assumptions. To begin with, Bourdieu and Latour work with very different definitions of “sociology.” Bourdieu ([1989] 1996) holds that sociology, like all sciences, should define its object and calls for a sociology that examines the reproduction and transformation of the underlying structures of social worlds. In contrast, Latour (2005) defends a non-objectivist sociology that

refrains from defining a domain called “the social” and that describes the associations through which various outcomes are assembled. Perhaps more importantly, the two theorists work with different epistemological assumptions. From his early work on developing an epistemology for sociology to his final lecture at Collège de France, Bourdieu embraces rationalism. In contrast, Latour’s trajectory is oriented toward problematizing epistemology in general and rationalism in particular. Notably, the two theorists concur in rejecting the idea that the truth of a statement depends on its correspondence to reality. Yet, their contrasting positions on rationalism lead them to oppositional positions on the specificities of science. (Kale-Lostuvali, 2016, pp. 274–275)

My original attraction to ANT was the result of my realization that I have a tendency to see the world through Bourdieu’s eyes. While the idea of going into the field with an open mind is a matter of longstanding discussion in anthropology, I have also learned, as stated by anthropologist Richard Wilk (Personal email: January 2015): “that it is impossible to go to the field without pre-formed questions and specific kinds of knowledge. That is after all what graduate school is supposed to teach you.” Adopting ANT thus directs attention in particular directions, in the same way as does the practice theory of Bourdieu. Basically, Bourdieu and Latour approach the field in different ways and with different interests. According to Latour (2005a), Bourdieu’s agent is just an effect of structure (as in structuralism). Bourdieu, however, differs from structuralism in his insistence that one can take active action through reflexivity, that is, through thorough and scientific description of structural determinism. For Latour it is the other way around. Thus a proper scientific object is well-defined and unpredictable, and much more so than the structure that surrounds it. Following Latour, the object of study is not what is given by structures; rather, the object of study is what makes networks. One might say that whereas Bourdieu is occupied with the question of where his agents derive their power, Latour is more interested in what his actors do with this power. As the structure of this thesis shows, my use of both approaches is not an attempt to bring them together, though I see this as a potentially enlightening exercise for the future (Cornelissen and Durand, 2014). Rather, I have had both approaches at the back of my mind throughout my fieldwork and analysis as an inspiring and at times quite frustrating exercise that time and again has made me turn fieldwork and analysis upside down.

## 5. Outline of the Four Papers

The first paper of this thesis, entitled ‘Sustainability Innovators and Anchor-Draggers: A Global Study on Sustainable Fashion’, discusses the current state of sustainability in the textile and fashion industry as experienced and perceived by 36 experts within the field. This paper moves beyond ‘good practice’ case studies and allows for a broader discussion of micro- and macro-challenges to achieving sustainability in the fashion industry. (Please note that a previous version of this paper was published in the *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* (2015), Vol. 19 (3): 315-327.)

The second paper, ‘Unlikely Mediators? The Malleable Concept of Sustainability’, adopts a Bourdieusian approach in examining processes of change towards taking greater sustainability in the textile and fashion industry. Drawing on Bourdieu’s framework, the paper examines the role of InnoTex as a mediator of sustainable fashion and proposes the existence of ‘restricted fields of mediation’. Drawing on Paul DiMaggio’s notion of brokerage administration, it also discusses the limitations of Bourdieu’s framework as a starting point in analysing processes of change. While in Bourdieu’s universe the emergence of a sustainable textile and fashion industry is possible as a result of a trickle-down effect, for example, the process of change seems much less clear when one looks at what actually takes place in practice. This paper thus concludes that the comparable value of sustainability, despite receiving increasing attention in the textile and fashion industry, remains a capital in formation.

The third paper of this thesis, ‘Design Thinking for Organizational Change’, draws on the Sociology of Translation to inform a discussion of how design thinking is being mobilized to bring about processes of organizational change towards practising sustainability. Based on an analysis of InnoTex’s series of lectures and workshops for H&M, this paper problematizes what emerged as an example of some of the pitfalls of uncritically adopting any key aspect of design thinking. Despite this observation, however, the paper also suggests ways in which design thinking can contribute to organizational change, particularly through its use of design tools and the philosophy of prototyping, which encompasses conscious use of the ‘overlaps’ of translation as moments of learning and inspiration.

The fourth and final paper, ‘Capital in Formation: What is at Stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?’, draws on Bourdieu’s theoretical triad of *capital*, *habitus* and *field*, and, inspired by Adkins (2011), further uses Bourdieu’s understanding of *practice as temporalisation* to discuss the sustainability challenges facing the textile and fashion industry, primarily as experienced by a number of Chinese garment factory owners and managers working with Western fashion brands. This paper concludes that although sustainability has become a matter of concern in the textile and fashion industry, the rules of the game largely remain environmentally and socially unsustainable—governed by various forms of capitalism. It argues that mobilizing Bourdieu’s theoretical framework can enable us to attain a more nuanced understanding of current organizational practices in the industry as well as of the prospects for change.

# 6. Paper 1

## Sustainability Innovators and Anchor-Draggers: Results from a Global Study on Sustainable Fashion

Kirsti Reitan Andersen and Esben Rahbek Gjerdrum Pedersen<sup>2</sup>

### **Abstract**

The purpose of this paper is to identify current barriers to improving sustainability in the fashion industry and to explore opportunities for overcoming these barriers. The paper is based on an online study in which 36 industry stakeholders from academia, industry, and non-governmental organizations were invited to discuss aspects of sustainable fashion such as design, materials, sourcing, consumption, etc. The study approach moved beyond ‘good practice’ case studies to enable a broader discussion of micro- and macro-level challenges to sustainability within the fashion industry. The results of the study indicate that the fashion industry faces immense social and environmental challenges and that the scale and scope of current approaches to sustainability are limited and fail to address more fundamental challenges linked to dominant business models and consumption behavior.

**Keywords:** sustainability, accountability, consumer behavior, partnerships, organizational change, barriers, business models

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<sup>2</sup> A previous version of this paper was published in the *Journal of Fashion Marketing and Management* (2015), Vol. 19(3), pp. 315–327.

## Introduction

The fashion industry is a major contributor to problems of social and environmental sustainability. The environmental impacts of the industry include energy use and the generation of greenhouse gas emissions in production and use, water use, toxicity, hazardous waste and effluent associated with the production stage of pre-treating chemicals, dyes, and finishes. The social impacts of the industry include poor working conditions, the use of sweatshops and child labor, low wages and long hours, violations of workers' rights and risks to health and safety as well as animal welfare (Pedersen & Gwozdz, 2014). All of these impacts, moreover, are exacerbated by the ever-increasing volume of clothing consumption (Goworek, 2011; Moore, 2011, Gam, Cao, Farr, and Kang, 2010; Defra, 2008; Birtwistle and Moore, 2007). More than 80 billion garments per year are produced around the world, while global fiber production (mainly cotton and polyester) set a new global record of 86 billion tons in 2011, reaching nearly 12 kg per capita (Deloitte, 2013).

Sustainability challenges arise throughout the entire life-cycle of a piece of clothing. Researchers, the media and the public alike have discussed the sustainability impacts of each stage of the fashion supply. When it comes to manufacturing processes, the Natural Resource Defense Council (NRDC) has concluded that textile making is one of the most polluting industries in the world (2011). This is due primarily to the production of cotton and synthetic fibers, as well as the typical back-end of production, which is characterized by the use of outdated manufacturing methods in the dyeing and finishing of fabric. When it comes to social aspects, the collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh in 2013, which killed more than 1,100 workers, serves as a tragic reminder of the poor working conditions that prevail among fashion suppliers in developing countries (Burke, 2013). Looking at the demand-side of the fashion industry, however, the social and environmental impacts of fashion consumption have received relatively little attention. The stages of fashion consumption include pre-purchase (i.e. the idea and decision to buy a garment), purchase, usage, maintenance and disposal of clothes (i.e. whether thrown away or recycled, etc.). A qualitative study of UK consumers' perspectives on sustainable clothing consumption, conducted by Goworek, Fisher, Cooper, Woodward, and Hiller (2012), shows that UK consumers believe that the main sustainability issues related to clothing arise at the manufacturing stage. However, research has shown that laundering clothes, which is part of the usage stage, is the aspect of clothing consumption with the single greatest impact upon society (Allwood, Laursen, Rodriguez, and Bocken, 2006; Laitala, Boks, and



Klepp, 2011), in some cases accounting for up to 82 percent of energy use during the life-cycle of a piece of clothing (Fletcher, 2008; Harris, 2010). The disposal of clothing is another key sustainability issue. In Europe and America, an estimated ten million tons of textiles are discarded every year (Wang, 2006). In the UK alone, over one million tons of clothing are thrown away each year, more than half ending up in landfills (Harris, 2010). According to Beck (2013), in Denmark more than 25,000 tons of clothing were donated to NGOs in 2012, which is equivalent to each Dane giving away 7 pairs of jeans or 30 T-shirts. In addition, large amounts of textiles end up incinerated (Laursen, Hansen, Knudsen, Wenzel, Larsen, and Kristensen, 2007).

Fashion is not the only industry struggling with social and environmental problems; however, the specific sustainability challenges depend to a large extent on the characteristics of different sectors. Based on a comparative analysis of branded confectionary, clothes/footwear, and forest products, for example, Sarah Roberts (2003) concludes that the nature of the supply chain in each case imposes particular limitations on the ability to address issues of corporate social responsibility (CSR). Supply chain power, reputation, length, and diffusion are all key factors in understanding how CSR is implemented in different sectors (Ibid.). In a study comparing barriers to sustainability and opportunities for sustainability in the chemical, textile, and construction sectors (Martinuzzi, 2011; Martinuzzi, Gisch-Boie, and Wiman, 2010), André Martinuzzi and colleagues found that one of the differences between these sectors is that competition in the chemical industry is centered in Europe, whereas European textile manufactures are faced with global competition, especially from Asia (Ibid.). Thomas Laudal (2010) argues that the structure of the global clothing sector (with high labor-intensity, lack of transparency, etc.) results in a higher risk of violating social and environmental norms. In addition to sectoral differences, evidence also indicates that sustainability challenges vary across countries (Abreu, Castro, Soares, and Filho, 2012; Akyildiz, 2012; Cosmic Project, 2009; Thauer, 2014).

The objective of this research is to discuss sustainability within the fashion industry and to share concrete ideas for the future development of sustainable fashion, whether through the adoption of new materials, new partnerships, new consumption patterns, or new policy options. This study applies a novel approach to provide a broader overview of the barriers that obstruct systemic changes to improve sustainability in the fashion industry and possible opportunities for overcoming these barriers. Much research on sustainable fashion focuses on a single issue (e.g.

codes of conduct) or agent (e.g. designers), even though it is generally acknowledged that a more holistic and systemic perspective is needed to address the global and interrelated sustainability challenges in the supply chain of the fashion industry. The literature on CSR is likewise dominated by case studies of single companies, whereas there is little knowledge about the broader tendencies and trends within the field of sustainable fashion.

The paper begins with a description of the online research method used in this study of sustainable fashion, including reflections on the anonymisation of the participants who supplied our empirical material. The methodology section is followed by an analysis in which the main results from the online study are presented. The analysis will focus on a limited number of themes that were also used to structure the discussions in the data collection phase. The analysis leads to a broader discussion of the need for collective action to attain sustainability within the fashion industry. The conclusion wraps up the main findings from the analysis and reflects on the limitations of the study.

## **Method**

Existing research on sustainable fashion is mainly based on evidence from surveys (e.g. Pedersen and Gwozdz, 2014; Kozar and Connell, 2013; Langhelle, Blindheim, Laudal, Blomgren, and Fitjar, 2009), and especially on analyses of case studies (interviews, participant observation, secondary sources) (e.g. Arrigo, 2013; Curwen, Park, and Sarkar, 2013; Dickson, Waters, and López-Gydoosh, 2012; Goworek, 2011; Hvass, 2014; Perry, 2012; Plieth, Bullinger, and Hansen, 2012). Existing research also tends to select individual organizations, or a limited part of the fashion lifecycle, as the locus of analysis. Few studies provide a broader analysis of the multiple stakeholder groups related to the fashion industry, all of whom have a role to play in bringing about changes towards sustainability (e.g. design students, NGOs, governmental bodies, industry associations, technology providers, consultants, research institutions, etc.).

This study adopts a slightly different and more relational approach by including the voices of more stakeholder groups in the analysis. The study was conducted as a Sociolog.dx, a digital qualitative research tool provided by the data provider GfK (Growth from Knowledge). Sociolog.dx is an online forum with restricted access, where a selected group of participants answer questions, solve tasks and share various materials (pictures, links, drawings, etc.). The main advantage of Sociolog.dx is that the method is flexible and allows participants from around the world to decide when to contribute. Moreover, contrary to traditional interviews and

questionnaires, the industry stakeholders participating in Sociolog.dx can gain insights about the contributions of the other participants and are able to comment on each other's answers. Finally, the platform also enables participants to communicate through visuals as a way of complementing and/or broadening the written discussion (Bell and Davison, 2013; Stiles, 2014). It was our hope that this latter feature would stimulate and enrich conversation between the participants. The language used in the discussion was English, which meant that most participants communicated in their second language.

For this study the data provider recruited 51 participants for the Sociolog.dx forum from a contact list with information about 200+ industry stakeholders identified by the researchers. The initial list of industry stakeholders in sustainable fashion was developed over a long period of time from various sources (existing networks, literature review, speaker documents from conferences/workshops, newspaper articles). Thirty-six stakeholders ended up taking part in the actual data collection, which took place from May 6–10, 2013. The participants in the Sociolog.dx forum included independent designers, business representatives, faculty members, and civil society organizations from 13 different countries. Some of the participating stakeholders from the industry hold multiple roles within the fashion industry (see Appendix 6.A. for an overview of the 51 industry stakeholders recruited for the discussion, and the 36 who participated). Curiously, 11 of the 15 industry stakeholders who signed up for the experience but did not eventually participate were representatives of large established brands.

The discussions on the Sociolog.dx forum were structured around a limited number of activities/questions within the field of sustainable fashion, including training/education, consumer behavior, policymaking, etc. The questions and activities were developed in close collaboration with GfK, drawing on their expertise in how to use the tool (see Appendix 6.B. for an outline of activities and questions). All participants in this study were given the opportunity to remain anonymous during the experiment to protect the confidentiality of the participants (Kaiser, 2009; Lahman, Rodriguez, Moses, Griffin, Mendoza and Yacoub, 2015; Sieber, 1992). Anonymisation was also introduced as a preventive step to overcome potential barriers to participation arising from participants' internal confidentiality issues and in response to voiced reservations about identification. However, the majority of participants expressed no such concerns and identified themselves during the experiment. The use of pseudonyms in this study proved a challenge due to the fact that the professional, organizational and national backgrounds of the participants are important to our analysis. Lahman et al. (2015, p. 449) also point to the

power of naming, highlighting that “... practical experience and research has shown people will assign characteristics to other people according to their name.” To overcome this specific challenge, we have chosen to refer to participants by their title/position and type of organization. We specify the countries in which the participants are based, though in some cases this does not reflect their personal nationality (cf. Appendix 6.A.). As such we have not created pseudonyms for individual participants and use only generic names for the organizations they represent, i.e. ‘University’ or ‘Online Platform for Eco-Fashion’. In this way we are able to share the information we consider essential to the analysis while also maintaining the confidentiality of our participants, as promised.

An external moderator from the data provider helped facilitate the discussions. This was a requirement of GfK as a condition for using the Sociolog.dx platform. The researchers were able to observe the activity during the experience but did not interfere in the discussions between the participants. The moderator had a background in business administration and marketing and considerable experience with the use of the platform. However, she had no in-depth knowledge or experience of the textile and fashion industry or the specific topic of sustainable fashion. Having a ‘neutral’ moderator helped to create a relaxed and welcoming atmosphere, though it also meant that the moderator was not able to ask participants to provide more in-depth elaborations, and occasionally missed what for an ‘insider’ would have been obvious opportunities to do so. In this way the moderator’s lack of expertise in the area of sustainable fashion was found to be a challenge in terms of engaging and probing participants. Together with our decision not to participate actively in the discussion, this also meant that the use of visuals in this study remained more of a ‘hook’ for the moderator to encourage participants to elaborate on their contributions to the discussion than a means of generating in-depth analysis of the contents of the visuals. Only four participants made use of this opportunity, and in the end the interactions between participants were rather limited.

In spite of these challenges, Sociolog.dx offers good opportunities to conduct online discussions over an extended period of time and to engage participants across different continents and time zones. After the closure of the forum, we received full transcripts of the discussions under each of the activities/questions, providing us with a rich set of data.

The data were analyzed using open-ended coding and were subsequently grouped into higher-level categories and organized in various typologies inspired by the existing literature (Lewins

and Silver, 2007). As an example, the analysis of a question related to policymaking for sustainable fashion was organized and inspired by an existing continuum between soft and hard regulation (Lozano, Albareda, Ysa, Roscher, and Marcuccio, 2008). Quotations, links, and pictures were selected to illustrate the categories identified during the previous stages of analysis.

## **Analysis**

The participants in the online study were requested to visualize the fashion industry by uploading photos, drawings, videos or other material that best represented their view of the industry, and subsequently to reflect on the rationale for their choices. The participants were further asked to articulate what they considered to be the main barriers to change towards sustainability. While only a few participants made use of the opportunity to upload images, both these visuals and the transcripts of the discussion clearly indicate that the fashion industry is experiencing a serious image problem, since most participating industry stakeholders portrayed the sector as superficial, irresponsible, unsustainable and unethical. Upstream, the participants repeatedly highlighted the problem of lack of visibility and transparency in the fashion supply chain. As an example, one of the participants, a university lecturer based in Scotland, chose a retail window to illustrate the way that the fashion industry looks glamorous but provides little information about the journey of individual garments. Downstream, overconsumption and a throwaway culture are seen as a significant barrier to sustainability in the fashion industry. In the words of a Swedish textile entrepreneur:

We certainly don't need all the clothes and fashion that is produced today. We produce and consume in excess. All these clothes, all these resources, when the charm of novelty fades, are soon thrown on the dump. We are very much involved in luxury production and consumption, for the sheer enjoyment of creating and buying something new, again and again. But this has implications. The textile industry exerts a heavy toll on the environment and on the people involved in production, and after the textiles are discarded they create a lot of waste and a further burden on the environment.

Overall, the results from the online study indicate that the sustainability challenges in the fashion industry are deeply rooted in current 'fast fashion' business models and consumption

patterns. Moreover, there is an element of skepticism towards current sustainability efforts within the fashion industry, which are considered insufficient to address the more fundamental social and environmental challenges. For example, a designer and CEO of a Finnish clothing company that focuses on transparency argued that the sustainability initiatives of big fashion companies are more often about being ‘Less Bad’ within a limited number of areas than about making more fundamental changes in the organization:

[T]hey change a small portion of some material to be a bit less bad, but don't think of the production process as a whole. We should think of the life cycle of a product and its impact on the environment and people. We cannot be just a bit less bad - we should change the fashion industry to be truly good.

The industry stakeholders participating in the online study were also asked to provide examples, pictures and links, etc., of innovative sustainability initiatives within the fashion industry. The results indicate that, in spite of the challenges and barriers to change in the fashion industry, a number of companies are in fact experimenting with new products, processes and business models that hold promises for a more sustainable fashion future. The participants highlighted, for instance, various recycling/upcycling initiatives that represent first steps towards breaking with the linear system prevalent within the fashion industry (e.g. Marks & Spencer’s Shwop Coat). Other examples include the designers From Somewhere and Goodone, which make upcycled products from pre-consumer and post-consumer waste, i.e. cuts and leftovers fabrics and stuff that is thrown out. The participants also pointed out the trend of transforming products into services (shwopping, leasing, repairing, hiring, reusing, etc.). As one of the participants argued: “We all have plenty to wear! We need to be offered more support and encouragement in looking for the alternative 'new'.” Examples include ‘Rent the Runway’, which promotes reuse through renting, and ‘Stylish Girl’, which enables consumers to organize a wardrobe and thereby extend the life of garments. The participants also mentioned a number of new systems, tools and technologies that support the development of sustainable fashion, including, for example: 1) new technologies for reducing the social and environmental footprint of manufacturing processes, packaging and transportation; 2) new tools for promoting transparency and traceability in the supply chain; and 3) new systems for managing and measuring the social and environmental footprint of various garments.

A number of innovations highlighted by the participants have a partnership-like character, involving participants from a variety of organizations (design schools, NGOs, local communities, etc.). For instance, the participants mentioned a number of collaborative projects that have been introduced to benefit vulnerable groups, e.g. immigrants, people with disabilities, and HIV-patients. Moreover, companies have developed special collections in collaboration with local artisans, thereby contributing to local economic development and perhaps also to greater understanding among people across cultures. Companies are also working together with universities/design schools on teaching and research related to sustainability. As noted by a researcher from an American arts and design university: “Universities and (their) design schools are in a very strong position to work with fashion companies—to develop good practice, but also to be involved in exploration, research, 'thinking outside of the box'.” While the partnerships highlighted by the industry stakeholders often have a project-like character, involving a limited number of actors for a limited period of time, there are also examples of collaborative efforts with multiple partners and a longer-term perspective. These include, for example, multi-stakeholder initiatives such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) and the Sustainable Clothing Action Plan (SCAP).

Just as there are a number of upstream challenges in the fashion supply chain, there is also a need to address the downstream challenges caused by unsustainable consumer culture. The participating industry stakeholders highlighted a number of consumer campaigns aimed at challenging dominant fashion consumption patterns, for example through avoiding certain products such as fur, lowering the environmental footprint in the usage phase (e.g. by washing at lower temperatures), and extending the lifetime of products through repair, recycling, reuse, etc. The last category received a great deal of attention in the discussions, perhaps reflecting a broader trend in sustainable fashion. As noted by a researcher based at a university in Switzerland: “People have really become much more aware of exchanging, borrowing and re-using clothing as well as up-cycling, customizing and repairing what they have.” However, it is also acknowledged that consumers often have no or very little knowledge of the social and environmental impact of their purchases. The industry is characterized by scant information and lack of transparency, which means that consumers have to make a great effort to find better alternatives. As noted by a Swedish textile entrepreneur: “Most consumers think that an organic cotton label is enough to safeguard that the garment is ‘green,’ when in fact the ensuing dyeing process drenches the textile in lots of hazardous dyes and chemicals [...]” It is also

acknowledged that there are limitations to the sacrifices consumers are willing to make in relation to sustainable fashion. In the words of a UK-based textile design researcher: “[...] you can't just dissuade certain purchasing behaviors, without offering some better alternatives. We have to promote sustainable consumer behavior by offering better choices.” There is also a need to look at the price structure whereby consumers today have to pay a price premium for sustainable alternatives. To quote a Canadian PhD student researching sustainable fashion who took part in the experience:

It is also important to introduce consumers to a pricing scheme that is representative of what clothing actually costs to produce - unlike the dominant global supply chain that externalizes costs [in the form of environmental and social impacts] promoting misleading pricing/costing mindset to consumers.

A transformation of the fashion industry also necessitates fundamental changes in the structure as well as the organization and management of individual fashion companies. Accordingly, the participants were asked to offer recommendations regarding the practical implementation of sustainability in a non-specified organization. Overall, the results indicate that there is no one-size-fits-all model for the successful adoption of sustainable fashion. A thorough understanding of unique organizational characteristics is thus required prior to the implementation process. However, management commitment is always an important precondition for a successful implementation process, since it is the upper echelons in the organization who set the direction, allocate resources, and reward performance. Moreover, it will be important to identify internal change agents who can play a key role in the transformation process, as well as local anchor-draggers who will defend the *status quo* at all costs. Thus the founder of an online platform for Eco-Fashion argues that: “Finding early adopters and championing them is as important as is identifying the obstructers of change.” With regards to the implementation of internal changes, multiple approaches were suggested. Some participants favored a cross-departmental strategy involving everyone in the organization (and sometimes the entire supply chain), whereas others preferred to begin the company's sustainability journey in a single department (e.g. sourcing or design). Still others emphasized a differentiated strategy combining a broad information strategy with deep involvement in selected departments. A UK-based textile design researcher referred to



this strategy as a T-shaped approach that combines “[...] a lecture format to reach lots of people [...] and a deeper learning experience with a smaller group, over a longer period of time”. There was also some disagreement with regard to the involvement of outside experts (consultants, designers, researchers, etc.). On the one hand, external parties can bring important expertise to an organization; on the other hand, it is the internal organizational members who need to take ownership for the transformation. In the words of one of the participants:

I think that external consultants can be extremely valuable in re-evaluating corporate current practices, as it often needs a fresh set of eyes to view processes that have become automatic, and evaluate them from a sustainability perspective. That said, consultants do not always take the time to consult and work with existing staff effectively, who quite often are very aware of their own shortcomings and poor practices

The participants in the online study also reflected upon the role of public policies in promoting sustainable fashion. Overall, their suggestions fell into two categories: punishments and rewards. With regards to the former, some participants expressed the view that companies should be financially sanctioned for non-compliance with social and environmental standards and that current externalities should be dealt with through taxation on certain materials (e.g. virgin polyester), resources (e.g. water), and business practices (e.g. violations of workers’ rights). With regards to rewards, participants expressed the view that organizations promoting sustainability should pay lower taxes and that sustainable fashion should be cheaper for consumers than conventional fashion. Overall, the findings indicate a need to ‘fix the prices’ in the fashion industry, which today provides no incentives for companies and consumers to produce and buy fashion that is socially and environmentally friendly. As noted by an American arts and design researcher and consultant: “It should not be the case that brands that choose to produce their garments ethically should pay a premium for those choices, whether through the cost of materials or production. Unethical and polluting processes are what should be taxed, while ethical production should be financially incentivized.” Other policy recommendations mentioned by the participants included requirements for companies to promote transparency (reporting, certifications, labels, etc.), the banning of environmentally harmful materials, and the introduction of compulsory teaching of sustainability in educational institutions.

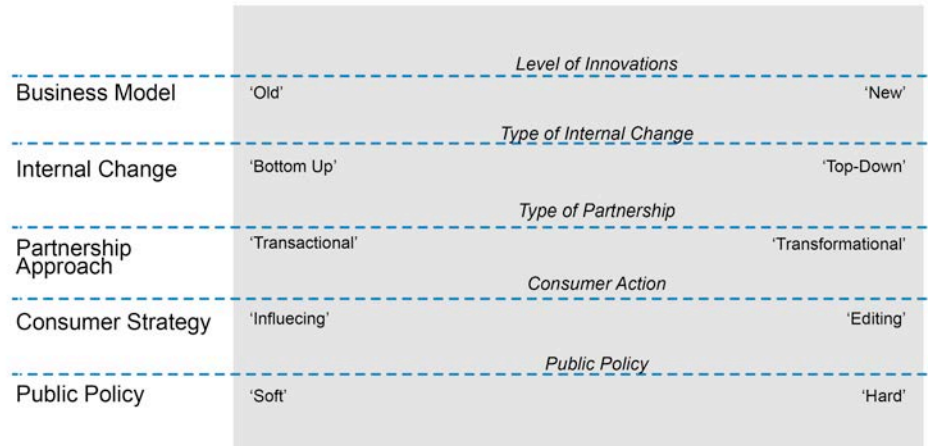
While there was an sense of disillusionment amongst the participants when it comes to the current state of affairs in the fashion industry, the participants were hopeful that the fashion industry will make progress on all fronts: in the exploration of new materials, in downcycling, recycling and upcycling, in clothes sharing, slow fashion, and sustainable consumption. A co-director of a Spanish / Italian fashion design consultancy made the following comment: “Many good things are happening everywhere: the fast mainstream fashion system is slowly but steadily improving, led by a few leaders. Platforms for interchanging experiences, best practices and solutions are being created, as well as practical tools to be used by designers to make more informed decisions when choosing materials and processes.” As an example of such progress, systems for transparency and traceability in the fashion supply chain are perceived as becoming gradually more sophisticated and advanced. A more transparent supply chain is needed to allow companies, retailers and consumers to know what takes place at each stage of the supply chain. As one of the participants argues, it is difficult for only one organization to bring about change, when changes are required in the entire industry. A coordinator from a Dutch consultancy on sustainability in supply chains wrote the following:

I feel that one of the main barriers to sustainability in fashion is the complexity of the fashion supply chain. It is really difficult to start with sustainability as just one company or organization. For sustainability to work, all the actors in the supply chain have to work together and link their activities, expectations and wishes in terms of sustainability to each other.

### **Discussion: Reflections on the Journey towards Sustainable Fashion**

The results from the online study point in a number of different directions. In general, the participants echoed the view that current approaches to sustainability often lack scale and scope (Visser, 2010). The discussions between the participants also highlighted the complexity and interconnectedness of the challenges of sustainability in the fashion industry. In order to better understand the findings from the analysis, the results need to be related to the broader literature on sustainability and CSR. A number of continuums were therefore developed, inspired by the existing literature, and these were used to structure the discussions about progress towards sustainability in the fashion industry (See Figure 6.1.).

**FIGURE 6.1.** Continuums of change



In terms of innovation, a continuum exists between incremental processes and product improvements within the existing ('old') business layout and the development of more innovative ('new') business models that break with predominant approaches to value creation, delivery, and capture value (Davenport, Leibold, and Voelpel, 2006; Schaltegger, Lüdeke-Freund, and Hansen, 2011; Smeds, 1994). For instance, Puma's Clever Little Bag is an example of an incremental process of innovation that attempts to minimize the use of materials for packaging. Examples of more innovative business models include From Somewhere, which uses pre-consumer waste (i.e. cuts and leftover fabrics from designers) in creating clothes. Other examples of more radical innovations include new types of sustainable services that reduce the need for buying new products. It is often new small-scale businesses rooted in ideas of sustainability that experiment with radical innovations, whereas major fashion brands rarely depart from the predominant manufacturing and consumption patterns. As noted by the holder of a research chair at a recognized American art and design college, new business models will be met with reluctance by well-established brands that have based their business on the fast production of quick commodity goods: "I would agree with the importance of developing new business models, e.g. models based around service rather than production/commodity models. It is likely, however, that such models will have to come from outside/beyond those already invested [literally and figuratively] in the fashion status quo." The quotation resonates with the

business model literature, which also highlights the difficulties of changing an existing business model that has proven successful in the past and has become institutionalized within the existing organizational infrastructure (Chesbrough, 2010).

Internal change within organizations can be implemented from top-down or bottom-up, or a combination of both (Paton and Boddy, 2007). The participants in this study seemed to agree that an element of top-down implementation is needed for change to happen within an organization. For instance, it was recognized that management commitment is an important precondition for a successful implementation process, since it is the top management who set the direction of the company and allocate resources to different agendas and priorities. To quote a Scottish university lecturer participating in the study: "...without senior management buy-in, the exercise would be futile". Moreover, it was argued that "Motivation only lasts so long unless there is a major shift in the company's strategy and core structure." Nevertheless, the participants also argued that changes are unlikely to take place without the ownership of staff from across the organization. A Swiss post-doctoral researcher said: "The whole process of change should be co-created, co-designed with the core team consisting of representatives (natural leaders) from different departments." Overall, the results seem to indicate that the success of internal changes towards sustainability will depend on leadership from the top as well as involvement from the bottom of the organization.

Partnerships can be divided between (a) transactional partnerships with limited commitment, communication and mutual learning between the parties, and (b) transformational partnerships that are characterized by frequent interactions, high levels of trust, and joint management (Bowen, Newenham-Hahindi, and Herremans, 2010). While it is generally acknowledged that collective action is needed to bring about systemic change in the fashion industry, the majority of partnerships highlighted by the participants are small-scale, with a project-like character, and cannot be said to be fully integrated within the fashion supply chain. One-off partnerships between major fashion brands and selected NGOs or community groups, for example, can hardly be seen as transformational engagements. However, a few smaller fashion brands (for example, Indigenous and Gudrun & Gudrun) seem to have adopted a more transformational approach by partnering with local artisans who manufacture their core products.

When it comes to the demand-side of sustainable fashion, it is possible to influence consumers using a variety of means, including information, education, campaigns, incentives, engagement,

etc. (Bocken and Allwood, 2012). Here a distinction is drawn between ‘influence’ strategies aimed at encouraging consumers to act more sustainably, and ‘editing’ strategies in which actors decide to remove or add to the number of options available to consumers. The participants mentioned that it is possible to challenge consumption behavior through campaigns and information-sharing, e.g. PETA’s anti-fur activities and the work of the Clean Clothes Campaign. Another suggestion made by participants is that consumers could be provided with new options for reusing clothes, for example through renting and swapping initiatives offering consumers the ability to use designer clothes without having to buy them and then throw them away later after limited use. This would also extend the life-cycle of garments, as they would be taken care of and shared for a longer period of time than they are likely to be in private ownership. The participants in the online study provided little evidence of any editing strategies undertaken by major fashion brands to remove unsustainable fashion or to make sustainable fashion the default option.

A continuum exists between ‘soft’ public policies, such as awareness-raising measures and facilitation, and ‘hard’ public policies such as taxation and legislation (Lozano, Albareda, Ysa, Roscher, and Marcuccio 2008; Albareda, Lozano, and Ysa, 2007). The recommendations offered by the participants typically fall into the category of ‘hard’ public policies. Even though there is a need for consumer information, for example, efforts to increase information cannot fix the more fundamental flaws in a system that makes sustainable alternatives more expensive than conventional fashion. An American art and design researcher and consultant participating in the study said the following: “Unethical and polluting processes are what should be taxed, while ethical production should be financially incentivized.” Most participants agreed that governments should play an important role in the future of sustainable fashion. However, the participants said they did not feel that governments are currently investing enough in the future of the industry. An American art and design researcher and consultant further stated:

Governmental legislation does not currently support brands producing ethically and sustainably, and does not hold brands directly accountable for the production of their own goods. The old excuse of lack of control and thereby responsibility due to contracted and subcontracted labor, no longer holds water. I believe that governments must hold brands responsible, and that consumers should exert their power through social media and purchasing choices.

Overall, the participants highlighted a long list of barriers, ranging from organizational impediments to broader societal tendencies. Together, the voices of the industry stakeholders paint a portrait of an industry in which everyone is trapped within a system, making it difficult and costly to develop less socially and environmentally harmful ways of supplying and consuming fashion. In this system, consumers and companies receive little or no rewards for pursuing new approaches to fashion. Even people trying to do things differently often have to adhere to the existing, unsustainable logics of the system. In the words of one art and design researcher and consultant:

The traditional systems of sampling materials, making sample lines, engaging sales agencies or agents, across the country, each of whom require a sample set, showcasing the collection during fashion week through fashion shows or trade shows, wholesaling the collection and delivering months prior to actual consumer use, then turning around and repeating the process for 2, 4 or more drops per year, is in itself inherently wasteful and unsustainable, and requires a major rethink. We need alternative models to deal with alternative products.

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper has been to map the current challenges to achieving sustainability in the fashion industry and to identify opportunities for sustainable fashion by conducting an online study gathering the opinions of industry stakeholders from different sectors and locations. The online discussions held among the participants served to document the inadequacies of the current fashion supply chain, from the extraction of raw materials to end-consumption, and the surrounding institutional environment. However, the emergence of new and more sustainable alternatives to conventional fashion manufacturing and consumption also offers potentially interesting opportunities for lowering the social and environmental footprint of the fashion industry. The systemic nature of the barriers and challenges to sustainability in the fashion industry highlights the need for concerted action from all stakeholder groups (businesses, designers, policy makers, consumers, researchers, NGOs, etc.).

With its relational approach, the results of this study could inspire and inform businesses as well as educationalists in the area of sustainability in the fashion industry. By highlighting the systemic character of sustainability challenges, the study calls for a re-thinking existing practices and business models. In particular, there appears to be a need for knowledge-sharing and collaboration in-between and across companies and sectors (partnerships). This study could lay the foundation for the development of teaching cases, targeting businesses and design students as well as industry. The study has also brought to light a number of new and more sustainable ways of doing business that might inspire further explorations in education and in practice. The Sociolog.dx method in itself might provide interesting opportunities for knowledge-exchange and learning, since it can serve as an online meeting-point where stakeholder groups (design students, fashion brands, supplier brands, NGOs) can engage in debates on specific themes related to sustainable fashion (closed loop systems, collaborative consumption, slow fashion, etc.).

The paper has a number of limitations. It is based on the insights of a limited number of industry stakeholders selected by the researchers and is thus in no way representative of the voices of all stakeholders throughout the fashion supply chain. Businesses, consultants, designers and academics predominated in the Sociolog.dx study, whereas there were no representatives of upstream supplier factories or downstream consumer groups. In addition, industry stakeholders based in Western Europe and the US were highly overrepresented in this study, especially given that China is the world's largest producer of textiles and fashion, closely followed by other Asian countries. A broader study that included the perspectives of more stakeholders with different professional backgrounds could have improved the breadth and depth of the analysis, though in such an event the use of the online forum as well as the language of participation (English) might have proved a hindrance for some. As a final limitation, by participating solely as an observer in the online forum, with the discussion being facilitated by GfK's moderator, we did not have the opportunity to probe participants and request further elaboration on issues and comments relevant to the discussion.

In the future it would be highly relevant to conduct a more thorough analysis of the perception and practice gaps within and between stakeholder groups so as to provide a more holistic view of sustainability challenges and opportunities. Whereas the aim of this paper has been to map challenges and opportunities for practicing sustainability as perceived by a group of industry stakeholders, there is also a great need for an in-depth examination of the impact of national and

disciplinary backgrounds on issues of sustainability in the global fashion industry. One might also explore further why 15 of the 51 industry stakeholders who signed up for the experience ended up not contributing to the discussion. Was it not what they expected it to be? Was it not relevant? Could they not relate to the questions asked? Moreover, it would be relevant to look more closely at how consumers perceive any of the sustainability innovations that have been introduced, thus enabling a better evaluation of their potential for bringing about systemic change in the fashion industry. In the absence of efficient public policies and industry initiatives, the future of sustainable fashion continues to depend upon the behavior of individual consumers. Finally, there is the opportunity to explore the use of the Sociolog.dx platform in more depth, experimenting with different approaches and formats.



**APPENDIX 6.A.** Overview of the 51 industry stakeholders recruited for the Sociolog.dx. In blue the 36 who participated. (1)

GROUP	Gender	Title/Position	Institution	Country
Faculty	Female	President	International University of Art for Fashion	Germany
Faculty	Female	PHD student	Public Research University	Canada
Faculty	Female	Professor & Chair	University, Department of Fashion and Apparel Studies	USA
Organisation	Male	Founder & CEO	Foundation	India
Faculty	Male	Senior-lecturer & Researcher	University of Applied Sciences, Sustainable International Business	the Netherlands
Faculty	Male	Assistant Professor	University of Applied Sciences - Institute of Management	Italy
Faculty	Female	Associate Professor	University, Institute for Industrial Environmental Economics	Sweden
Organisation	Female	Co-director	Fashion Design Consultancy	Spain and Italy
Faculty	Female	Assistant Professor	University, Department of Fiber Science & Apparel Design	USA
Design	Female	Owner & designer	Ethical Contemporary Womenswear Brand	United States
Faculty	Female	Assistant Dean, Researcher & Consultant Eco Fashion	College for Design, Fashion, Art, Communications and Business	USA
Faculty	Female	Professor	International University	Monaco
Organisation	Female	Founder, Editor-in-Chief	Online Platform for Eco-Fashion	USA
Design	Female	CEO & Founder	Manufacturing and Innovation Center	United States
Design	Female	Research Chair of Fashion	Art & Design College	USA
Company	Female	COO	Design Company, Ecological Design	Finland
Design	Female	Designer & Entrepreneur	Sustainable Ready-to-wear Label & Design Studio	Finland
Faculty	Female	Phd student	University, Department of Marketing	USA
Faculty	Male	CEO	Consultancy, Responsible Business	India
Faculty	Male	Post-doctoral researcher	University of Applied Sciences	Switzerland
Faculty	Female	Assistant Professor of Fashion Studies	Art & Design College	USA
Design	Female	Designer, CEO	Transparent Clothing Company	Finland
Company	Female	Project Manager	Furniture Fabrics	Denmark
Company	Female	Quality Support	Retailer	Denmark
Faculty	Female	PHD student	University, School of Earth and Environment	UK
Organisation	Female	Managing Director	Foundation	Germany
Design	Female	Sustainable Knitwear Designer	Brand	United States
Faculty	Male	Co-Director	Sustainable Research Center	Argentina
Organisation	Female	Fashion programme coordinator	International Network Organization, Supply Chains	Netherlands
Faculty	Female	Lecturer in Management	University, International Fashion Marketing	Scotland
Company	Male	Sustainability Innovation Responsible	Fast Fashion	Sweden
Company	Male	Dir. of Sustainability	Outdoor brand	Sweden

**Appendix 6.A.** Overview of the 51 industry stakeholders recruited for the Sociolog.dx. In blue the 36 who participated. (2)

Company	Female	CSR Manager	Home Textiles	Sweden
Company	Female	Head of Strategy and Development	Multinational Textile Manufacturing Company	Hongkong
Company	Female	Purchase Developer	Fashion Chain	Sweden
Company	Female	Entrepreneur	Design Company, Home Accessories	Denmark
Company	Male	Corporate CR Manager	Apparel Company	Denmark
Company	Female	Sustainability Responsible	Manufacturer, Design Textiles	Denmark
Company	Female	CSR Manager	Fast Fashion	Sweden
Company	Male	Corporate Sustainability	Clothing and Accessories Company	Denmark
Company	Female	Sustainability Project Manager	Fashion Brand	Denmark
Design	Female	Faculty	College of Art, Business & Design	United States
Company	Female	Textile Entrepreneur & Environmentalist	Design Studio, Accessories	Sweden
Company	Female	Director of Strategy	Women's Clothing and Accessories	Denmark
Organisation	Male	Advisor	Consultancy	Denmark
Design	Female	Textile Design Researcher	University, Arts and Design	UK
Design	Female	Lecturer in Sustainable Fashion BA	Higher Education, Design	Denmark
Faculty	Female	Senior Lecturer in Marketing	University, Business & Management	UK
Company	Female	Manager	Retail Group	Sweden
Company	Female	Global Head of Environmental and Social Affairs	Workwear	Sweden
Company	Female	In-house Sales Manager	Sportswear	Italy
Company	Female	Senior Project Manager/Innovation & Sustainability	Sportswear	Germany

### Today's Fashion Industry

**The purpose of this chapter is to get an overview of the current state of affairs regarding sustainability in the fashion industry. The chapter will begin with a general description followed by an analysis of the following questions/tasks:**

OPEN QUESTION: Please upload a photo, drawing, video or other material that best reflect your view of today's fashion industry. Please explain the reason for your choice.

OPEN QUESTION: Please describe what you see as the main barrier(s) for addressing sustainability in the fashion industry? In general, sustainable fashion is about maximizing positive and minimizing negative environmental, social and economic impacts throughout the entire supply/value chain (design, sourcing, production, manufacturing, transport, retail, end of life management etc.) (Source: Sustainable Clothing Action Plan, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, February 2010, p. 5).

### Solutions to the Sustainability Crisis in the Fashion industry

**The purpose of this chapter is to present innovative solutions and concrete recommendations for sustainable fashion.**

OPEN QUESTION: Please provide example(s), pictures, links etc. of innovative sustainability initiatives within the fashion industry. Please explain the rationale behind your choice.

QUESTION WITH FIXED ALTERNATIVES: Overall, what sustainability areas deserve the most attention by the fashion industry (1=Irrelevant, 5=Very important):

- Minimise waste
- Reduce chemical impacts
- Recycling/upcycling
- Reduce energy and water use
- Explore cleaner and better technologies
- Get inspiration from nature & history
- Ethical/responsible production in supply chain
- Make products that are designed to Last
- Develop new systems & services (lease, share, repair etc.)
- Promote sustainability thinking among consumers and society at large (e.g. education, training, etc.)
- Other area, please describe:

Source: Based on InnoTex's

## Teaching Sustainability

**Today the fashion industry is largely characterized by mechanisms and systems that reproduce essentially unsustainable practices. While standards and systems are one way to address the sustainability challenges another option is to teach sustainability in a much broader sense, aiming to transform both mindset and practices. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss different approaches to and ways of teaching sustainability in large and middle sized corporations.**

OPEN QUESTION: Imagine you would have to manage the transformation of a corporation towards sustainability. While the corporation in question is already engaged in energy saving programs and is a member of the UN Global Compact, you have been asked to manage a process towards a basic shift in mindset and practices.

What would be your approach? I.e. would you rely on internal staff or hire consultants to support the transformation? What competences would you draw on to facilitate and support this transformation? What "tools" would you use (workshops, internal awareness campaigns, inspirational lectures)? Would you start working with a particular department and then across the organization, or work with the entire organization from the beginning? And so on. Feel free to point to relevant examples of teaching sustainability and please explain the rationale behind your choices.

## Accounting for Sustainability: New Systems and Approaches

**Over the years, there has been a mushrooming of standards and systems to address the sustainability challenges in the fashion industry, yet the impact of these initiatives have been debated. The purpose of this chapter is to reflect on the pros and cons of solving today's sustainability challenges through self-regulatory sustainability systems.**

OPEN QUESTION: A number of new management systems, labeling schemes, multi-stakeholder initiatives etc. have been developed to address sustainable fashion (Blue Sign, the EU Flower, Higgs index etc.). Please explain why – or why not- these systems are useful tools for promoting sustainability in the fashion industry.

## Partnerships for sustainable fashion?

**Realising the boundary-less nature of sustainability and the fact that no single actor can solve all problems by themselves, various types of partnerships have been highlighted in the literature as potential solutions to the sustainability challenges in industry. However, the partnership potentials have not been explored in great detail within the fashion industry. The purpose of this chapter is to get expert input on successful partnerships between business and society on sustainability.**

OPEN QUESTION: Please provide example(s) of how collaboration between fashion companies and other organisations (universities, design schools, NGOs, standard setters, local artisans etc.) have been successful in tackling a social and/or environmental problem? Please explain the rationale of your choice.

### New Consumer Behaviour

Lack of consumer demand is often highlighted as a key barrier to sustainability. Therefore, a transformation of consumer values, attitudes, and behavior is required to stimulate a tipping point for sustainable fashion. However, at present it is questionable if the industry is very active in promoting sustainable consumerism. At least, a recent report on sustainability in the fashion industry concludes that “9 out of 10 companies in the fashion industry are not putting a high degree of effort into engaging with consumers with regards to sustainability” (Deloitte, 2013, p. 3). Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to get inspiration as to how consumers can be more active in promoting sustainability in the fashion industry.

OPEN QUESTION: Please provide example(s) of initiatives that have been successful in order to promote sustainable consumer behavior within the fashion industry? Please explain the rationale for your choice.

### The Role of Policy Making

Public policy makers can have a strong influence on corporate sustainability policies and practices. For instance, regulatory requirements have historically had a direct impact on corporate social and environmental reporting practices. On the other hand, national regulation has been said to lose power in the wake of globalization that enable companies to flee to countries with relaxed social and environmental regulation. The purpose of this chapter is to discuss how national regulation can best be used to stimulate changes in the fashion industry that will benefit both people and planet.

OPEN QUESTION: Assume that you single-handedly decide national public policies regarding the fashion industry. Please suggest concrete policy instruments that are likely to promote sustainable fashion (awareness-raising campaigns, tax incentives, audit systems etc.). Please explain why your recommendation(s) are likely to have an impact?

### The Future

OPEN QUESTION: What do you think will be the next big trend within the field of sustainable fashion (living wages, new materials, extended producer responsibility etc.)? Please explain the rationale for your choice.

OPEN QUESTION: Please take a look at the contributions of the other participants. Please select 1-3 contributions that are best in line with your own views.

# 7. Paper 2

## Unlikely Mediators? The Malleable Concept of Sustainability

Kirsti Reitan Andersen

### **Abstract**

This paper adopts a Bourdieusian approach in an examination of processes of change that would lead to the textile and fashion industry taking greater account of sustainability, discussing in particular the dynamics between the field of restricted production and the field of large-scale production as drivers of change. The empirical foundation of this study comprised six months of fieldwork with InnoTex, a group of textile design researchers who have developed a set of design strategies to assist textile and fashion designers in creating more sustainable products. Applying Bourdieu's framework, the paper examines the role of InnoTex as a mediator of sustainable fashion and proposes the existence of 'restricted fields of mediation'. Drawing on Paul DiMaggio's notion of brokerage administration, this paper also discusses the limitations of Bourdieu's framework as a starting point for an analysis of processes of change. The paper concludes that while sustainability is receiving increasing attention in the textile and fashion industry, in practice it remains a type of capital still in the process of formation.

**Keywords:** brokers, cultural intermediaries, mediators, Pierre Bourdieu, symbolic capital, statist capital, sustainability, organizational change

## Introduction

Three textile design researchers are setting up a room for the second in a series of three workshops they are delivering for Hennes & Mauritz (H&M), a large multinational clothing retail company known for its fast fashion for men and women. The researchers are hanging carefully prepared templates on the walls for the purpose of brainstorming and discussion, and placing inspirational sustainable fashion-cases on the floor, easy to reach and move around. Within an hour they have turned the plain white room into a creative and inspiring space. The three researchers are part of a group of textile design researchers who have developed a set of practice-based sustainable design strategies to assist textile and fashion designers in creating textiles and garments that have a reduced impact on the environment and which take social responsibility into account. For the purposes of this paper I call this group of textile design researchers Innovation Textiles (InnoTex).<sup>3</sup> Using their design strategies as a starting point from which to frame discussion, the aim of InnoTex in holding the workshops is to explore the potential role of textile and fashion designers in changing the industry towards taking greater account of sustainability.

It has been one month since the delivery of the first workshop and, just a few days before the delivery of the second, InnoTex's lead researcher, Marie, received a message from the project manager at H&M to inform her that participation in the second workshop might be lower than the initially anticipated total of 30 people, explaining that this was due to the New Development Team who are taking part in the project being caught up in internal deadlines. The space having been set up in time to start the workshop, a few designers, buyers and patternmakers from the New Development Team show up, followed shortly after by a few more. Five minutes into the session, about 12 people have turned up and it is clear that no more will come. Marie kicks off the workshop.

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<sup>3</sup> To balance the aim of maintaining the confidentiality of my respondents while also presenting rich and detailed accounts of their everyday work and the context in which they found themselves (Berg and Lune, 2014), I use pseudonyms for my case organization (InnoTex) and its researchers, but include details about their nationality, gender, position, etc. With the agreement of H&M I identify this organization but have created pseudonyms for individual members of the company's staff (Kaiser, 2009; Tolich, 2004). In recognition of the fact that the participant-naming process influences our interpretation of specific situations, I have created pseudonyms that represent the gender and, in most cases, the nationality of my respondents (Lahman et al., 2015).

Based on six months of fieldwork with InnoTex (Atkinson and Hammersley, 1994; Dewalt and Dewalt, 2011; Spradley, 1980), this paper explores current practices and future prospects of integrating sustainability within the textile and fashion industry. My fieldwork, as well as InnoTex's workshops for H&M, were both funded by and part of a Swedish international research project that aims to deliver knowledge and solutions that can be used to improve the fashion industry's environmental and social performance. Given the industry's reputation for use of cheap labour and chemicals, to many people, the term 'sustainable fashion' is an oxymoron. However, the last two decades have seen the textile and fashion industry come under increasing pressure from regulations and stakeholders to focus not only on economic success but also to address environmental and social issues in its production and products. Such improvements as there have been so far have largely been achieved through the introduction of new technologies, including more effective water treatment systems and the use of more sustainable materials such as organic cotton (Rinaldi and Testa, 2015). Meanwhile, more radical explorations are also being undertaken on a small scale, often developed within research environments and/or small organizations (Plieth, Bullinger, and Hansen, 2012). Looking at the ever-increasing number of sustainability reports and initiatives, including H&M's Conscious Collection, Levi's® Water<Less™, and Nike's Making App (an app aimed at helping designers and product creators make informed decisions about the environmental impacts of the materials they choose), it is arguable that sustainability has become a matter of concern within the textile and fashion industry. Nevertheless, the industry's use of cheap labour and its ever-increasing use of natural resources show little sign of abating, thus negating any claim of a fundamental shift having taken place in the industry towards practising sustainability (Pedersen and Andersen, 2015; Plieth et al., 2012).

The key questions that arise in aiming to bring about a system-wide change in the textile and fashion industry towards practising sustainability are those of how organizations can change and whether there exist opportunities to mediate sustainable practices between different types of organizations. In this paper I draw on Bourdieu's notion of capital to examine the dynamics of the industry (Bourdieu, 1989 and 1993/2012). Adapting Bourdieu's concept of cultural intermediaries (1979/1984), I discuss processes of mediation between the fields of restricted and large-scale production, proposing the existence of restricted fields of mediation. In doing so I also introduce Paul DiMaggio's (1977) notion of brokerage administration, defined by the author as the negotiated administration of production common to all cultural-production

industries, in order to examine in more detail the possibilities for sustainability mediation between restricted and large-scale production. With this study I contribute to two streams of literature: firstly to the literature on organizational change by offering a more nuanced understanding of change agency; and, secondly, to the literature on sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR) by calling for more nuanced and contextual understandings of challenges to sustainability (Aaken, Splitter and Seidl, 2013; Fuller and Tian, 2006). To date, research in the field of organizational change towards practising sustainability has taken a more instrumental and managerial approach, largely presenting sustainability as a win-win scenario or an exercise in CSR (Aaken et al., 2013; Carrol and Shabana, 2010; Matten and Moon, 2008; Wittneben, Chukwumerije, Banerjee, and Levy, 2012).

I begin with an introduction to Bourdieu's theoretical framework, focusing on his work on cultural production before going on to present some of the most relevant criticisms of his work. I then proceed to introduce InnoTex and its context of work, which context corresponds to Bourdieu's field of restricted production. Next I present the work of InnoTex with H&M, discussing the attempted application of their design strategies within the field of large-scale production, which is found to constitute a field of restricted mediation. Based on this finding I discuss sustainability mediation between the fields of restricted and large-scale production, drawing on DiMaggio's notion of brokerage administration as well as the shortcomings involved in applying Bourdieu's framework for analysis. I end this paper with a discussion of the ways in which fields can change from within, before summing up the findings in my conclusion.

### **Theoretical Framework**

There exist a plethora of definitions of sustainability (Carroll, 1999), adopted to varying degrees and performed in various ways by individuals, organizations, and institutions. This is no less the case in the textile and fashion industry, where the term is defined and practised in a multitude of ways, with people and organizations often pointing fingers at each other for not being sufficiently sustainable. Generally speaking, while a few fashion companies work hard to be sustainable, most are waiting and watching to see what everyone else does first—a stance quite out of character for an industry otherwise known for its creativity and innovation. Nevertheless, the sheer number of published sustainability reports and increasing investments in sustainability initiatives and communications merits addressing the question as to whether sustainability has



come to constitute some form of capital in the textile and fashion industry (Bourdieu, 1986). Growing awareness of the massive social and environmental costs of the textile and fashion industry has encouraged research into the ways in which thought, experience, and the institutional and mental realities of culture impact on other social processes, including sustainable practices (Aaken et al., 2013; Fuller and Tian, 2006; Warde and Southerton, 2012). To understand such processes, we need a way of getting inside ‘culture’, deconstructing it as a set of social, material, and semiotic practices.

Establishing such a framework is one of Bourdieu’s major theoretical contributions (Bourdieu, 1979/1984 and 1993/2012; Savage and Silva, 2013; Swartz, 1997). Starting from his three key concepts of capital, habitus and field, Bourdieu provides a theoretical framework that allows us to treat ‘culture’ as an object of study and as something that has an influence on other sociological processes. Borrowing from Marx’s terminology (Tatli et al., 2015), Bourdieu defines capital as “accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its ‘incorporated’, embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enable them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor” (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 241). Finding economic capital to be insufficient for his analysis, however, Bourdieu expanded the concept to include more than the merely economic. Within Bourdieu’s universe, therefore, agents draw on a number of resources in order to maintain and/or enhance their position in the social space, i.e. cultural, social and symbolic capital. He conceptualizes these resources at the point at which they function as a social relation of power—i.e. when they become objects of struggle within a field (Swartz, 1997, p. 74). In this paper I specifically draw on Bourdieu’s concept of symbolic capital and statist capital. Symbolic capital is defined by Bourdieu as follows (1998a, p. 47): “Any property (any form of capital, whether physical, economic, cultural or social) when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception, which cause them to know it and to recognize it, to give it value.” Bourdieu developed his concept of statist capital in relation to his work on the state. The state, he writes,

is the *culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital* [...] Concentration of the different species of capital (which proceeds hand in hand with the construction of the corresponding fields) leads indeed to the emergence of a specific, properly statist capital (capital étatique) which enables the state to exercise power over the different fields and over the different particular species of

capital, and especially over the rates of conversion between them (and thereby over the relations of force between their respective holders). (Bourdieu, Wacquant and Farage, 1994, p. 4)

Statist capital functions as a form of “meta-capital” (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 4) exercising power over other forms of capital—particularly over their exchange rate (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 4; Swartz, 1997, p. 138). Statist capital thus emerges as a regulatory power. In a much-cited quote Bourdieu defines habitus, the second of his three key concepts, as:

a system of durable, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to function as structuring structures, that is, as principles which generate and organise practices and representations that can be objectively adapted to their outcomes without presupposing a conscious aiming at ends or an express mastery of the operations necessary in order to attain them. (Bourdieu, 1980/1990, p. 53)

As such, habitus is a key construct in bridging agency and structure, overcoming the gap between micro and macro levels of analysis. To use a term from Townley (2014), habitus helps agents “translate” the structured relations of a field into schemes of perception, thought, and action that enable him or her to function in the field. In the Bourdieusian universe, fields are social microcosms, i.e. separate and autonomous spaces structured by their own histories and internal logics (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). A field may depict a broad field (e.g. textiles and fashion), a specific field (e.g. a discipline such as design), or the social agents within a field (e.g. a department within a design school) (Townley, 2014). Fields are defined by the “three fundamental dimensions” of capital: by the volume or amount of capital; by its structure or composition (for example, the comparable weight of economic, cultural and social capital at play in the field); and by the changes that take place in the volume and structure of capital over time (Bourdieu, 1979/1984, p. 114). Bourdieu’s use of field thus also conveys the sense of a space of action, or, in the words of Townley (2014, p. 42), “a field of forces; a field of play; a field of struggle; a battlefield”.

The interdependence and ‘relationality’ between structural and agentic aspects of social phenomena lies at the centre of Bourdieu’s theory of practice. This means that the idea of cultural production and its products, such as fashion, for example, are situated and constituted in

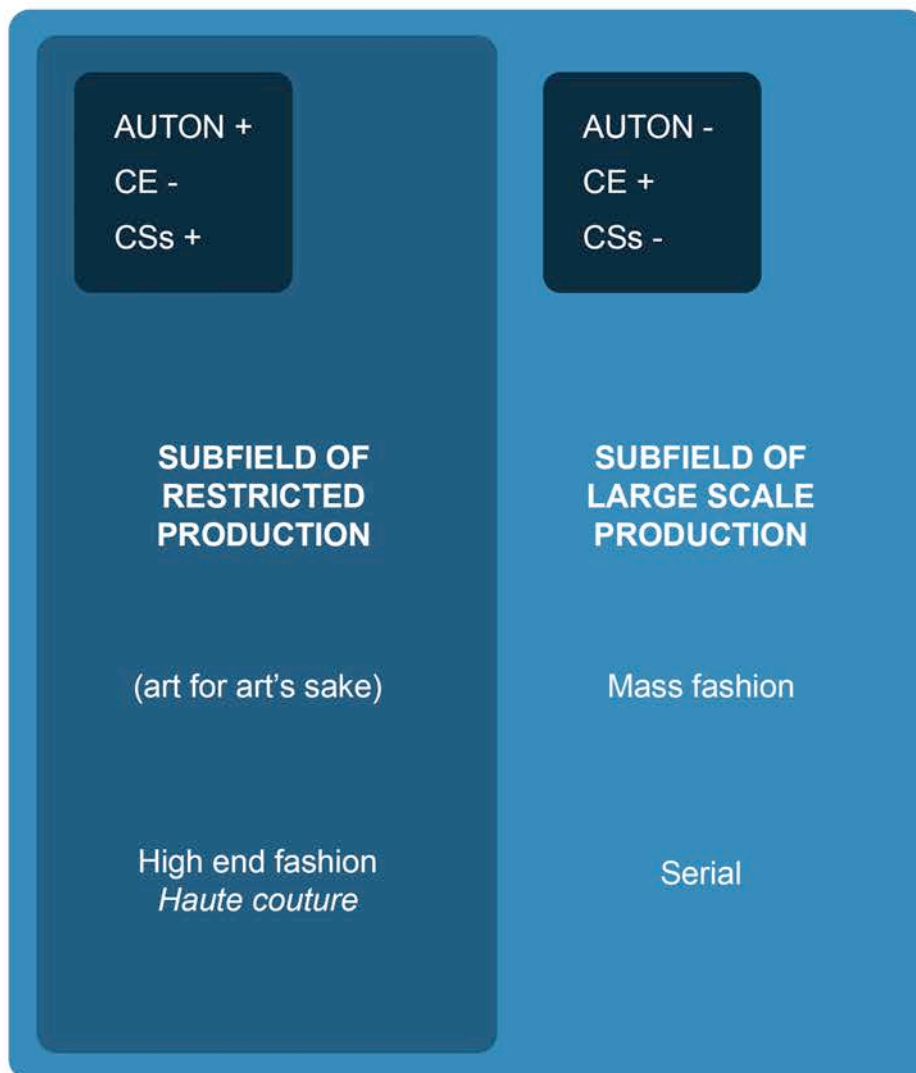
terms of a number of processes and social realities, i.e., they are situated within a field. Bourdieu (1993) describes the dynamics of the field of cultural production as a field of forces and a field of struggles. In *Haute Couture and Haute Culture*, Bourdieu writes:

The established figures have conservation strategies, aimed at deriving profit from progressively accumulated capital. The newcomers have subversion strategies, oriented towards an accumulation of specific capital which presupposes a more or less radical reversal of the table of values, a more or less revolutionary subversion of principles of production and appreciation of the products and, by the same token, a devaluation of the capital of established figures. (Bourdieu, 1984/1995, p. 133)

Modern capitalist societies, according to Bourdieu, are characterized by the existence of two main arenas of cultural production: the field of restricted production and the field of large-scale production. Both fields are aimed at the production of cultural goods, but while the creations of the field of restricted production are “objectively destined for a public of producers of cultural goods” (Bourdieu, 1993/2012, p. 115), the creations of the field of large-scale production are “destined for non-producers of cultural goods, ‘the public at large’” (Bourdieu, 1993/2012, p. 115). The opposition between the two sub-fields serves to structure the field of cultural production (see Figure 7.1. for an adaption of Bourdieu’s model for the purposes of this thesis.). The extent to which the restricted field of cultural production can claim relative autonomy from the universally accessible fields of cultural production depends on its unconventionality and idiosyncrasy as compared to the conventionality of large-scale production. A relatively autonomous field is a relationally constructed social arena that can assert its existence by virtue of its own logic of functioning. Its autonomy, according to Bourdieu (1993/2012, p. 15), “can be measured by its power to define its own criteria for the production and evaluation of its products”.

**FIGURE 7.1.** Fields of cultural production

Adapted from: Bourdieu (1993/2012)



AUTON +: High degree of autonomy  
AUTON -: Low degree of autonomy  
E: Capital-Economic  
CSs: Capital-Symbolic, specific.

Within the field of restricted production, creativeness and independence from the economy is celebrated. We see this, for example, in the ‘art for art’s sake’ movement. In contrast, the field of large-scale production primarily obeys the imperatives of conquering the market, and its dominant principle of hierarchization is that of economic capital or ‘the bottom line’. This also means that the degrees of creative freedom available to creators within these two subfields are distinct. Within the field of restricted production, freedom for creativeness is broad or ‘large-scale’, whereas the field of large-scale production allows only limited creativeness. The relationship between restricted production and large-scale production, according to Bourdieu, is characterized by a trickle-down effect, with large-scale production copying or borrowing techniques and themes originally introduced in restricted production. This is seen, for example, in the way fast-fashion brands copy high fashion creations presented on the catwalk, sometimes doing so faster than high fashion producers can deliver their garments to their own stores. In this way, middlebrow art often borrows from older avant-garde techniques, leaving middlebrow culture in a situation whereby it is objectively condemned to define itself in relation to legitimate culture (Bourdieu, 1993/2012, p. 129). In spite of this tendency for styles and thoughts to trickle down, however, any attempt to mediate between the fields of restricted and large-scale production is doomed to fail. Thus, a creator based within the field of large-scale production who tries to undertake original experimentation, for example, will almost always encounter a breakdown in communication due to the mismatch between his/her codes and the codes of the receiver (Bourdieu, 1993/2012 p. 129). In *Haute Couture and Haute Culture*, Bourdieu (1984/1995) shows the same dynamic to be at play in fashion. Rocamora (2002), however, argues that Bourdieu’s analysis in this respect fails to recognize the influence that mass fashion is now having on high fashion. Discussing the consumption of fashion, Rocamora (2002, p. 341) writes that Bourdieu “fails to reflect on the significance of mass fashion—whether symbolic or sensual—and the influence it has had on the field of high fashion, hence ignoring the theoretical implications of such influence”.

While increasingly adopted within the field of organization and management studies (Sieweke, 2014; Townley, 2014), several aspects of Bourdieu’s work have been subject to criticism (e.g. by Friedland, 2009; Jenkins, 1992 and 2005; Latour, 2005a; and Noble and Watkins, 2003). One central aspect of this criticism concerns the alleged determinism of Bourdieu’s theoretical framework (Bottero and Crossley, 2011; Jenkins 1982 and 1992; Mukerji, 2014; Noble and

Watkins, 2003). Focusing on Bourdieu's concept of habitus, Jenkins (1982, p. 273) writes as follows:

Thus the habitus is the source of 'objective' practices but is itself a set of 'subjective' generative principles, produced by the 'objective' structures which frame social life. In essence it must be recognized that such a model constitutes no more than another form of determinism in the last instance.

Another strand of criticism narrows in on Bourdieu's concept of field. Friedland (2009, p. 888), for example, argues that: "Bourdieu aligns all practices through the logic of domination, which allows him to homologize group relations in every field. This homologization depends on a homogenization of fields, the sociological effacement of their cultural specificity." Friedland's point is that with this conceptual move Bourdieu empties the concept of all specific content and richness. If accepted, this criticism implies that adopting Bourdieu's framework for an analysis of change towards practising sustainability would lead us to lose sight of the field's "substance" (Friedland, 2009), including the emotional lives and commitments of the agents, due to the framework's being too preoccupied with struggles for power. Engaging with the alleged determinism of Bourdieu's concept of field, a special issue in *Cultural Sociology* (2013, Vol. 7, No. 2) analyses a number of examples to explore how field analysis might be radicalized and made more dynamic (Savage and Silva, 2013).

While acknowledging some of the criticisms made of Bourdieu's work, I see ample opportunity for change in his theoretical framework (Bourdieu, 1984/1995; Garnham and Williams, 1980; Savage and Silva, 2013). With regard to questions of sustainability, moreover, Bourdieu provides a conceptual framework that can facilitate a discussion on the interconnectedness of sustainability challenges and opportunities, "refusing to isolate the 'environment' from the 'internal' structures and processes of the organization" (Swartz, 1997, p. 121). Adopting Bourdieu's theoretical framework for my analysis, I use his notion of capital, and in particular symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1977/2005) and statist capital (Bourdieu et al., 1994), to explore the role(s) of sustainability in the field of textiles and fashion as exemplified through InnoTex's workshops for H&M. Focusing on the role of InnoTex as a sustainable fashion mediator, I first explore current practices of sustainability within the context of an art and design university, a context that constitutes a restricted field of production in Bourdieu's sense. Based on InnoTex's

work with H&M, I then examine the potential to mediate between sustainable practices—as developed within the context of the university—and everyday practices within fast fashion.

### **Capital in Formation**

InnoTex was established in the mid-1990s when the textile and fashion industry was only just beginning to think about social and environmental responsibility. Based at a recognized art and design research university in London, the group currently consists of six female researchers, two female project managers, and an extended network of experts comprised primarily of people within textile and fashion design research and education. Inspired by the statement of Graedel, Comrie and Sekutowski (1995) that decisions made at the design stage are responsible for 80–90 per cent of a product’s environmental and economic costs, InnoTex’s overall purpose is to explore the role that textile and fashion designers can play in creating textiles and garments that have a reduced impact on the environment and seeking to do so by providing a toolbox of designer-centered solutions. Elaborating on the background and motivation behind the setting up of the research center, InnoTex’s founder, Scarlett, said the following:

But we couldn’t escape the idea that, what was rumored to be true, was that textile production was causing a huge amount of pollution. We could see that in our own setup at the college. The students were pouring dyes into the sink and we knew that that wasn’t going into some kind of processing plant but that it was going into waste water—and that was just part of it. So we were aware of the ecological damage potentially. And we kept hearing about it from the industry. The little we knew of industry. [...] People were thinking about it [‘sustainability’]. We weren’t unusual in that sense. [...] Others were focused on being free. Being creative. Just to make something wonderful. Which is of course always the creative urge. And they didn’t really want to hear of the creative compromises that might have to happen. Because everything sounded like a restriction at that point. If you were gonna take account of anything that was gonna change the situation, it was clearly gonna be stopping you from doing things you were doing.

(Interview: Scarlett, July, 2013)

In the 1990s, textile and fashion designers viewed sustainability (insofar as they thought about sustainability at all) as a restriction on their creative freedom. As noted by Negus (2002) in his discussion of cultural intermediaries, the celebration of the ‘creative’ impulse often carries with

it a certain distaste for, or denial of, the day-to-day realities of factory workers and warehouse work. In the sense of Bourdieu's creative genius (Bourdieu, 1993/2012, p. 114), the journey taken into sustainable fashion by Marie, InnoTex's Lead Researcher, is also a story of creativeness rather than sustainability. Having graduated from a recognized design school in 1994, Marie set out to build her own brand. Telling me about her first studio, she said the following (Interview: Marie, November 2013): "We were in this tiny, hot heat space, we would do everything by hand. It was crazy. There was no health and safety in my studio, and the dust from the fleece and scarves all over, black dust up my nostrils." While her designs were successful, Marie was soon mentally and physically exhausted from the production of so many hand-printed scarves. Beginning as a Sunday afternoon activity and motivated by an urge to experiment with the idea of adding value to waste fashion, Marie thus started collecting second-hand polyester shirts to explore new ways of printing. Only when she had started working with InnoTex, after having found it too difficult to sustain herself economically with her own brand, did this part-time work turn into a research project in sustainable fashion. Marie explains how back then it had nothing to do with sustainability: "I barely knew of the concept. It was an opportunity to explore new techniques and create something unique out of cheap, available shirts." (Interview: Marie, November 2013). And Marie's story is not unique. For while some early adopters did start working with sustainability because of a growing awareness of some of the negative impacts of the industry, many only later realized that their creative explorations were in fact also more sustainable solutions. In this way, sustainable fashion was, in Bourdieu's term, "a position to be made":

Rather than a ready-made position which only has to be taken up [...] 'art for art's sake' is a *position to be made*, devoid of any equivalent in the field of power and which might not or wasn't necessarily supposed to exist. Even though it is inscribed in a potential state in the very space of positions already in existence, and even though certain of the romantic poets had already foreshadowed the need for it, those who would take up that position cannot make it exist except by making the field in which a place could be found for it, that is, by revolutionizing an art world that excluded it, in fact and in law.  
(Bourdieu, 1992/1996, p. 76)

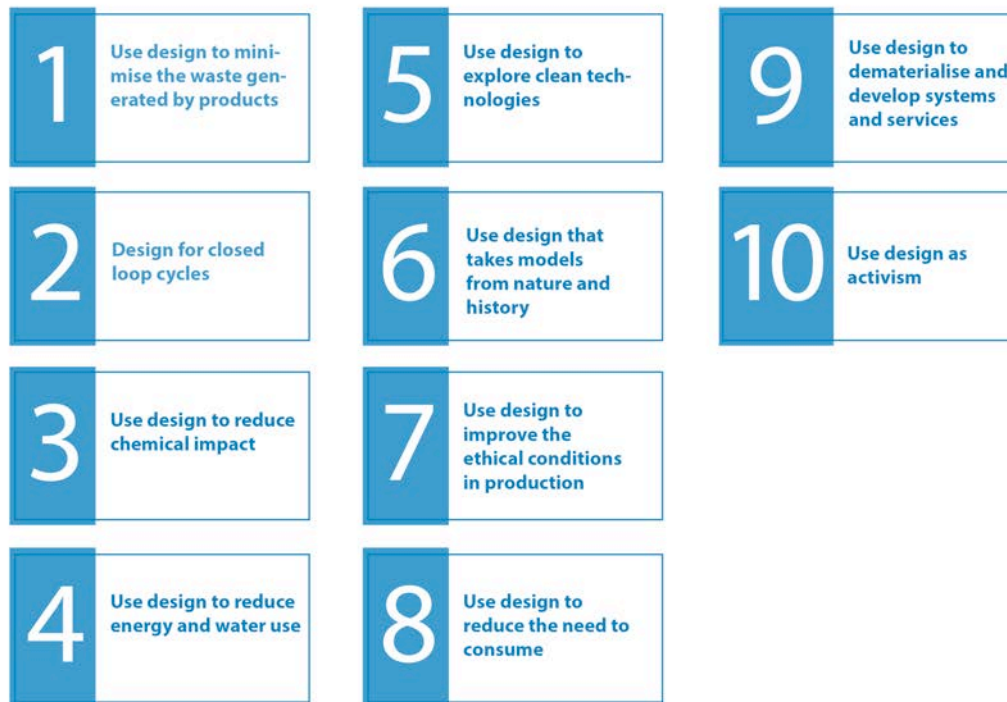
Over the past 10 to 15 years, designers' perceptions of sustainability have changed. Although still in its early stages, sustainability is being introduced into an increasing amount of



educational programmes, including the Laboratory for Sustainability at Design School Kolding, the AP programme focusing on sustainable fashion at the Copenhagen School of Design and Technology, and the course on sustainable fashion at Central Saint Martin's School of Art. In the Asian context, the NGO Redress is introducing sustainability teaching into design schools as part of the EcoChic Design Award. Initially having to invite themselves to design schools in China, the same design schools and others are now reaching out to Redress asking for information and knowledge about sustainable fashion. In conducting the fieldwork for this thesis I learned that more and more designers within the fields of both restricted and large-scale production are expressing a desire to create sustainable fashion, some even seeing sustainability as a source of inspiration rather than as a restriction.

Based within an art and design university in London, InnoTex's explorations into sustainable fashion have taken place in an environment that is relatively autonomous and open to innovation, providing them with the means of sustainability (time, budgets, materials, etc.). Their work has resulted in the development of a set of ten practice-based sustainable design strategies which span from approaches that rely on material, process and technological solutions to more conceptual strategies encouraging radical innovation (see Figure 7.2.). The ten design strategies thus represent a highly malleable definition of sustainability. On several occasions during my fieldwork I met people who knew of InnoTex's strategies, some of whom were already adopting these strategies in their own work. However, these people were mainly textile and fashion designers based within the field of restricted production. According to Bourdieu, the relationship between positions and position-takings is mediated by the dispositions of individual agents—their “feel for the game”. He also talks about this as the “structural and functional homologies” of fields, which he defines as “a resemblance within a difference” (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, pp. 105–106). Creators situated within the field of restricted production who work with sustainable fashion can thus more easily grasp and implement the value of InnoTex's work and strategies, and communication does not break down because ideas are mediated and received by a similar habitus and capital: “the absolute autonomy of the ‘creator’ is affirmed, as is his claim to recognize as recipient of his art none but an *alter ego*—another ‘creator’—whose understanding of works of art presupposes an identical ‘creative’ disposition” (Bourdieu, 1993/2012, p. 114).

**FIGURE 7.2.** InnoTex's 10 design strategies



According to Bourdieu (1993/2012, p. 67), the tendency for ‘high art’ creators to move towards the economically most risky positions depends to a large extent on the possession of substantial economic and social capital. The art and design university has so far provided InnoTex with such relative economic freedom, which in turn supports the formation of sustainability as a form of symbolic capital through the creation of fashion that is both aesthetically pleasing and more environmentally and socially sustainable. According to Bourdieu, the field of restricted production conserves itself through two different types of institutions: on the one hand, institutions such as museums that conserve the capital of symbolic goods; and, on the other hand, institutions, including the education system, that ensure the reproduction of agents imbued with the categories of action, expression, perception, etc., (habitus) specific to “cultivated dispositions” (Bourdieu, 1993/2012, p. 121). InnoTex is deeply involved in both types of institutions, their work having a record of being included in museum exhibitions and in teaching courses at the university—further indicating that sustainability is becoming a stake in the game. Lately, however, the rules of the game have been changing. Thus the members of InnoTex, like their colleagues, have experienced increasing pressure from the university to secure part of their own budgets, for example through consultancy work. At the same time, with the publication of

their design strategies and investment in online visibility (homepage, Facebook, blogs, etc.), InnoTex has also started receiving attention from large fashion brands looking for solutions and ways to change towards practising sustainability.

According to Bourdieu, the positions of individual agents in the field depend on the different forms of capital at their disposal. However, the capital that InnoTex has accumulated in the field of restricted production through their explorations into sustainable fashion does not have the same value in the field of large-scale production. Nevertheless, the InnoTex team see opportunities. Firstly, they recognize that even small changes in large-scale production can lead to considerable environmental and social improvements. Secondly, they see working with large-scale production as a means of securing their budgets and making economic profit. Thirdly, InnoTex also sees such work with large-scale production as a unique, albeit risky, opportunity to enhance their position and thus expand their consultancy (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992, p. 129). As Marie says, however, working with fast fashion is often looked down upon by InnoTex's peers: "It's like sleeping with the enemy," she says. The network of objective relations between positions in this way supports and orients the strategies that the occupants of the different positions implement in their struggles to defend or improve their positions (Bourdieu, 1993/2012, p. 30).

### **Sustainable fashion in large-scale production**

InnoTex was invited to take part in the Swedish international research project in 2012. The considerable financial investment made by the foundation in the project signals that the Swedish textile and fashion industry, headed by H&M, is eager to position itself within the debate on sustainable fashion and that sustainability is becoming a matter of concern beyond the subfield of restricted production (as represented here by InnoTex). What constitutes sustainable fashion (definition, practices, and products) is now at the heart of the struggle. The question also arises, however, as to whether sustainability is a creative force and a form of symbolic capital, or whether it constitutes statist capital in the form of a set of regulations to be implemented throughout the value chain.

As a partner in the Swedish research project, InnoTex had the opportunity to work with H&M. This was an exciting chance for InnoTex to test and develop their strategies for a context very different from that of the university—a different context whose primary driver is the 'bottom

line'. In recent years we have seen an increasing number of (fast-) fashion brands invest in sustainability (Rinaldi and Testa, 2015), publishing sustainability reports and producing collections of more sustainable materials, for example, and dedicating parts of their homepages to statements on sustainability. Amongst the world's largest producers of fashion, H&M is also known for its commitment to improving the industry's environmental and social footprint, often through collaborative and cross-disciplinary projects. H&M's sustainability initiatives have been questioned, however, not least by practitioners and fashion writers based within the field of restricted production. Critics question, for example, how H&M can claim sustainability when it keeps pushing more and more products on consumers. (For example, see Miller's (2016) article in *Esquire*: 'Don't let M.I.A. and H&M fool you into thinking fast fashion is sustainable: disposable clothes don't help the planet'.) All the same, the company has successfully established itself as a powerful player in the field of large-scale textile and fashion production in terms of mediating interpretations and practices of sustainability.

Starting from InnoTex's design strategies, the overall aim of the collaboration with H&M was to explore ways in which H&M's design teams could achieve an impact in improving the sustainability of the company's products. In effect, this would entail a change in the role of designers with regards to questions of sustainability as well as a change in the way in which H&M approaches sustainability. After several meetings, InnoTex and H&M agreed that the project would include six inspirational lectures targeting the Buying Office as a whole, followed by three workshops targeting the company's New Development Team, a group consisting of about 30 designers. Initially the ambition was for the lectures and workshops to centre on all ten of InnoTex's design strategies. However, it was soon announced that, as far as the workshops were concerned, H&M was only prepared to work with those InnoTex strategies that rely on material, process, and technological solutions, and not with the more conceptual strategies that encourage radical innovation. The Head of H&M's New Development Team, Jacob, explained this position as follows:

But the way we product develop within the company is very structured today. There is a certain method that we use. We are so dependent on this method and how things work from sales to production. If we then start to say that we want to change this method, everyone gets pretty scared and we couldn't really get through with this. So therefore we had to put the whole direction of this course, lectures and workshops, towards a more

inspirational angle, saying that this is about sustainable design inspiration rather than changing the method, how we work (Interview: Jacob, May, 2013).

The decision to focus on an “inspirational angle” influenced the choice of design tools that InnoTex developed for the lectures and workshops. Based on months of research, InnoTex had already created a collection of case studies on sustainable fashion to illustrate and communicate their design strategies. Starting from this collection, they then created a bespoke collection for H&M, taking into account what they thought would fit the context of fast fashion. The representatives from H&M were very interested in this collection of cases, but also insisted on looking over them in advance of the lectures and workshops in order to deselect those studies that were not within H&M’s current understanding of and approach to sustainability. Following Bourdieu, we can understand such discourse about the ‘sustainability’ of the individual cases as one of the conditions of the production of sustainable fashion:

Every critical affirmation contains, on the one hand, a recognition of the value of the work which occasions it, which is thus designated as a worthy object of legitimate discourse [...] and on the other hand an affirmation of its own legitimacy. All critics declare not only their judgement of the work but also their claim to the right to talk about it. In short, they take part in a struggle for the monopoly of legitimate discourse about the work of art, and consequently in the production of the value of the work of art.

(Bourdieu, 1993/2012, p. 36)

In H&M the design task is carried out by the fashion designer, the patternmaker, and the buyer who manages procurement and production planning. One of the designers of the New Development Team described in an interview the steps the team goes through in the development of a collection. Each team consists of a designer, a patternmaker, a buyer, and a number of assistants. A typical process starts with an inspirational trip to define the purpose of the collection. This part of the process usually takes 1–4 weeks and involves collecting pictures and conducting a trend analysis. The team then goes through a process of fittings and samples, with new samples coming in on a daily basis, sketches changing accordingly, and the patternmaker working with the sketches. One of the designers with whom I talked emphasized that collections are made through teamwork. (In the words of Ferdows, Machuca and Lewis (2002), there are no design “prima donnas” in fast fashion.) For the New Development Team it

takes 6–12 months from the initiation of a collection until it is in the shops. As one of the buyers described the process to me: “with our collections there are so many people involved. It’s the marketing department, it’s the press department, it’s external people. Within our own department it’s our small team, and then it’s the section head and the design head. [...] So there are so many people who need to take the decision.” She further explained that the most sustainable solution is often lost in negotiations: “but when we don’t have it settled from the start that it needs to be sustainable, then it goes from everything should be in organic cotton to maybe one or two products in organic cotton. And then in the end it takes longer time with organic cotton and the conventional cotton is 50 cents cheaper and then in the end we end up with nothing in sustainable materials.” The contemporary fashion industry is highly competitive, not only in terms of price but also in terms of companies’ ability to deliver newness and ‘refreshed’ products. Once organized around only two seasons per year, part of the fashion industry now creates smaller but more frequent collections, resulting in as many as 20 ‘seasons’ per year (Barnes and Greenwood, 2010, p. 261). H&M offers two main collections each year, one in spring and one in autumn. In addition, there are several sub-collections within each season, enabling the company to continually refresh its inventory (Petro, 2012). In order to offer cutting-edge fashion at affordable prices, H&M exerts a strong influence over all stages of the design, production, distribution, and retailing of clothes. The New Development Team’s budgets and time frames are larger and more flexible than those of other H&M departments. Nonetheless, many of the designers, patternmakers and buyers with whom I spoke stated that they continually have tight deadlines and that “time is too short to explore more sustainable solutions”. This may explain the low attendance at the second workshop, as mentioned at the beginning of this paper, as well as the need to postpone the third and last workshop by three months. Moreover, decisions regarding sustainability are mainly made in particular departments. The Sustainability Department is responsible for the company’s overall sustainability agenda and goals, for example, while the White Room advises design-teams on sustainable materials. In this setting there is no need and little room for the designer to explore sustainability. Thus sustainability emerges, if at all, more in the form of Bourdieu’s statist capital—i.e. a regulatory power—than as symbolic capital.

During the development and delivery of the lectures and workshops, InnoTex was in continuous dialogue with Jacob, the Head of the New Development Team, and Ida, a representative from the White Room. However, InnoTex did not seek to gain an in-depth understanding of the

organization or the everyday work of the New Development Team; instead they worked on the assumption that the designers in the New Development Team are limited in what they can do but that they really would like to do more. However, the role of InnoTex as mediators of sustainable fashion turned out to be a challenge in a context marked by a habitus and capital at odds with those of the restricted field of production more conducive to formal experimentation and innovation. Representing the epitome of large-scale production, H&M emerged as what we might call a *restricted field of mediation*, a context in which InnoTex was lacking the type and level of expertise required to effectuate change and thereby come closer to reducing the environmental impact of H&M's products (Graedel et al., 1995; Graedel and Allenby, 1995). Building on Bourdieu's (1979/1984) original concept of cultural intermediaries, Matthews and Maguire write:

In the struggle to influence others' perception and attachments, cultural intermediaries are defined by their claims to professional expertise in taste and value within specific cultural fields (and vis-à-vis the actors and stages of cultural production they negotiate with and between, and the goods that they mediate), and by the autonomy, authority, and arsenal of devices and resources that they deploy in negotiating cultural structural and objective constraints to accomplishing their agenda. (Matthews and Smith Maguire, 2014, p. 4)

The goal of InnoTex's series of lectures was to inspire H&M's Buying Office. However, although the participants did leave the room inspired, they were also unsure as to how to implement the thinking they had been introduced to through the lectures within their everyday work, since sustainability in their work context emerged as a matter of rules concerning such matters as what kinds of textiles they are able to choose from, the number and kind of buttons available, and price targets. Being a textile designer herself, and speaking the language (verbally and visually) of designers, Lead Researcher Marie was recognized for her professional expertise, possessing the capital and power to inspire a sustainable fashion agenda. The purpose of the workshops, however, was to explore InnoTex's design strategies with the New Development Team *in practice*. In order to document the project's impact, the team needed a 'measurable' goal by which InnoTex could strengthen their consultancy and enable Jacob to share the success with H&M's management. The team agreed that the goal of the workshops should be to come up with a product, or ideas for products, to come through to the shop floor.

As the workshops progressed, however, it transpired that InnoTex did not have the access or expertise required to win legitimacy in this particular context. As Marie stated towards the end of the project: “H&M are way more experts on many of these details than we are.” With a habitus and capital in conflict with the habitus and capital of large-scale production, the workshops amounted to little more than “ticking the box” (Marie, October, 2013). As a representative from the Textile Room commented: “At the moment, the lecture and workshop series are inspirational only, not in line with any of the goals we have to achieve.” It is for these reasons, above all, that InnoTex’s workshops failed to have any direct impact.

### **Mediation between the fields of restricted and large-scale production**

The last two or three decades have seen a growing awareness of the potentially major role that designers might play in determining the resources we consume (Fletcher and Grose, 2012; Graedel et al., 1995). Through its explorations of the potential role of designers as a force for sustainability, InnoTex has been one of the players pushing the formation of sustainability as symbolic capital within the field of textiles and fashion. However, by moving into the field of large-scale production, working with particular design teams, InnoTex also moves into a restricted field of mediation that demands particular kinds of capital and habitus. The question that thus arises is whether creators based in the field of restricted production are likely to be effective mediators within the field of large-scale production and how organizations within the textile and fashion industry might change towards practising sustainability.

In Bourdieu’s account (1992/1996, p. 124), social space is structured in two dimensions according to overall capital volume and dominant/dominated capital. This, he argues, allows two types of movement. One possibility is that of vertical movement, upwards or downwards but within the same field—for example, a designer becoming a head designer. The other possibility is that of transverse movement from one field to another or between different levels—for example, InnoTex’s engagement with H&M. According to Bourdieu (1979/1984, p. 132), vertical movements are the most frequent type of movement. Transverse movements, meanwhile, “entail a shift from one field into another field and the reversion of one type of capital into another or of one sub-type into another sub-type [...] and therefore a transformation of asset structure which protects overall capital volume and maintains position in the vertical dimension.” (ibid). InnoTex thus appears to be caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, being based in the field of restricted production and struggling to establish sustainability as a source of



creativity as well as a form of symbolic capital, InnoTex's engagement with large-scale production is "like sleeping with the enemy". On the other hand, InnoTex is also excited about the opportunity to have its ideas adopted by the industry, and, importantly, the chance to win legitimacy and secure its budgets. For this purpose, Marie has taken on a mentor with years of experience in coaching leaders, moderating large meetings and developing teams. In this way she aims to increase the capacity of InnoTex to facilitate change towards practising sustainability. In preparing workshops for H&M and other companies, as well as in follow-ups to these workshops, Marie would often consult her mentor, bringing his methods and approaches to the table. When talking about their work with H&M, the researchers from InnoTex were initially enthusiastic but grew increasingly frustrated as the project progressed and as they came up against what they perceived to be barriers to innovation and change:

**Marie:** There is this other cultural discourse. Designer in residence, no management allowed to come in. We would like to reinvent their garments. The other challenges, which are management consultant challenges, they're not my skill set or interest.

**Rosie** (Senior Research Assistant): We get excited, cause through our design process we can see the problems.

**Scarlett:** Maybe it's a two-person thing.

**Rosie:** It's also been to do with the size of the company.

**Marie:** I would love to work with a middle-sized company producing higher quality clothes. At H&M it almost became something like 'ticking the box of what you have to do'. There was no willingness amongst the participants to get into the subtlety.

The experience with H&M has made InnoTex reflect upon what they might need to do to legitimize their role within the field of large-scale production (and the restricted field of mediation). Thus in a conference paper presented by Marie at a design conference in spring 2015, Marie and her co-authors note, with reference to Ehrenfeld (2008), that they perceive sustainability to be a change process that requires transformation at multiple levels, including at material, technical and financial levels as well as at a personal level. Marie and her co-authors go on to state that efforts to achieve design-led environmental improvements at product level need to be supported by change at organizational level, concluding that InnoTex—in order to introduce sustainable design thinking to designers within a context like H&M, is in need of

particular skills and capabilities, Hence Marie's engagement of a leadership coach for an upskilling programme.

Here it might be helpful to draw on DiMaggio's (1977) discussion of "brokers" to provide us with a more nuanced view of the potential roles of mediators in cultural production and also to explore what seem to be transverse movements on the part of both InnoTex and H&M. In his discussion, DiMaggio (1977) focuses on popular culture, not including 'high' art. Similar to some of Bourdieu's diverse cultural intermediary occupations (1979/1984), brokers link the creative process, representing the goals of management, to creators of popular culture, sometimes championing the creators themselves (DiMaggio, 1977, p. 442). DiMaggio's discussion of three types of brokerage systems—the pure, the entrepreneurial, and the centralized broker—suggests that the role of the broker can be more or less restricted. Thus the pure broker serves both management and creators, acting as mediator and advocate for both, though with ultimate loyalty to the management. In the entrepreneurial brokerage system, the manager delegates control over acquisitions and production decisions to the broker, while in the centralized brokerage system the broker represents the management's views to creators (DiMaggio, 1977, p. 443). If InnoTex continues its work within the field of large-scale production, thereby making a transverse movement, we can usefully problematize and examine their change agency within DiMaggio's distinction between different types of brokers. However, following Bourdieu, by making this movement they also risk losing the capital and habitus (the 'edge') that make large-scale production seek them out. In other words, for InnoTex to have an impact they must continue creating 'art for art's sake', using sustainability as a creative force.

In Bourdieu's work on fashion (1984/1995), the relationship between high fashion and mass fashion is one-way, with the latter copying the former; and, as noted by Rocamora (2002, p. 345), nowhere does Bourdieu fully investigate what happens when this clear-cut distinction between subfields is blurred. As we see in the development of InnoTex's tools for H&M, however, the relationship between the two is everything but one-way. Rather it is a conversation, and one in which in this case H&M has a great impact upon the definition of sustainability—a definition that then becomes InnoTex's starting point for their work with the New Development Team. Clearly the battle is not only about change but also about reproduction. Though Marie talks about "selling out", InnoTex's engagement with the field of large-scale production is not unusual in the field of fashion. Designers today often cross the line

between high fashion and mass fashion, as for example in Stella McCartney's collection for Nike and in the collection by Comme des Garçons for H&M. According to Rocamora (2002, p. 348), designers "are not ascribed one specific position or role, but participate in many simultaneous games whose rules might be different, though not necessarily incompatible". Today we also see the establishment of an increasing number of innovation centres and hubs that centre on collaboration traversing the field, i.e. the engagement of IKEA—the fast fashion of the furnishing industry—with Space 10, "a space for exploration and inspiration rooted in the idea that together we can co-create a better everyday life for the many people" (Space 10), and initiatives such as H&M's Global Challenge, which H&M (2015) describes as follows: "one of the world's biggest challenges for early stage innovation and the first such initiative in the fashion industry. By catalysing green, truly ground-breaking ideas the aim of the challenge is to protect the earth's natural resources by closing the loop for fashion." According to Bourdieu's line of thought, the emergence of a sustainable textile and fashion industry would most probably come about as the result of a trickle-down effect. Looking at what actually takes place, however, things seem much more blurred (Beer, 2013; Bennett, Savage, Silva, Warde, Gayo-Cal and Wright, 2009; Rocamora, 2002; Savage and Silva, 2013; Wilson, 1988). The question is whether a model that allows for such blurred borders and that draws on DiMaggio's (1977) brokerage administration can inform new research into change towards taking greater account of sustainability.

### **Conclusion: Mediating sustainability**

The starting point for this article was twofold: first, to examine how organizations change; second, to ascertain whether there is an opportunity to mediate sustainable practices between the field of restricted production and the field of large-scale production. Adopting a Bourdieusian approach in the study of fashion tells us something about the field and its dynamics and thus also how organizations might change towards practising sustainability. As we have seen, a field is an area of activity in which there are creators who are intent on creating a certain kind of cultural product. The product, however, is not simply defined by the creator but also in part by the expectations and values of the audience. Such audiences exist in multiple forms, from connoisseurs, such as other players in the field of restricted production, to the mass public. The product produced is supported and filtered by a range of overlapping social institutions, including galleries, academies, journals, newspapers, universities, sources of funding, and, in this case, the market for sustainable fashion.

Based on an examination of practices and definitions of sustainable fashion in the fields of restricted production and large-scale production, I propose that the concept of sustainability is a type of capital still in formation. On the one hand it is forming as a type of symbolic capital; on the other, it is taking shape as statist capital. Adopting such conceptualization facilitates a more nuanced understanding of the context in which mediators operate and of the processes of mediation. While acknowledging that Bourdieu's framework directs our attention to struggles in the field, I do not find that his framework leaves the field without substance (Friedland, 2009). Rather, the conceptualization of capital in its many different—and at times confusing—forms can be applied in such a way as to open up a discussion of the specific content and richness of the field. In this study this has involved highlighting the diverse meanings and practices of sustainability as well as the personal and at times quite emotional reasons for engaging in sustainability. Notably, what emerges from the analysis of InnoTex's workshops for H&M is a field of restricted mediation located within the field of large-scale production. According to Bourdieu, active mediation is unlikely between the fields of restricted and large-scale production due to their different sets of capital and habitus. While this would explain InnoTex's failure to influence practices in H&M, it does not explain the number of designers who actually do migrate between the two subfields (Rocamora, 2002).<sup>4</sup> Focusing on popular culture, DiMaggio's concept of brokers allow for more nuances in mediation than does Bourdieu's notion of cultural intermediaries. Drawing on this concept, I open up a broader discussion of the possibilities for change agency, as well as a discussion of who drives change. In this way this paper contributes to the literature on organizational change by offering an empirical response to questions of mediation. Further, I also point to some of the advantages—as well as limitations—of adopting Bourdieu's theoretical framework for analysis, especially in understanding the relationship between agents and the field.

Further research needs to be undertaken in various directions. First, drawing on Bourdieu's framework, this study has not taken into consideration the materiality of fashion (Rocamora, 2002). This is not only at odds with the importance that textile and fashion designers place on the feel, behaviour, quality, etc., of textiles and fashion; it is also at odds with the fact that the materiality of fashion itself is at the core of challenges to sustainability (waste, lack of resources,

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<sup>4</sup> It should be noted that InnoTex has continued to work with H&M following the completion of this study, though not in the form of workshops.

etc.). Second, due to limited access to H&M, this study does not contain much information about what happened in the period between InnoTex's lectures and workshops for H&M. Further research could usefully examine dynamics from a perspective of movements back and forth between subfields.



# 7. Paper 3

## Design Thinking for Organizational Change

Kirsti Reitan Andersen

### **Abstract**

Although organizations are increasingly adopting ‘design thinking’ as a tool for organizational change, there is a lack of empirically based knowledge about its actual use. Based on six months of fieldwork with InnoTex, including observer participation in a series of workshops on sustainability held by InnoTex for Hennes & Mauritz (H&M), this paper presents the findings of an investigation into the use of design thinking as a tool for organizational change towards practising sustainability. This paper finds that a design thinking approach can generate important opportunities for change, amongst many other potential practical and theoretical affordances. The case study on which this paper is based, however, also indicates the negative consequences of an uncritical uptake of design thinking. In light of these findings, this paper concludes that it is vital to gain a more nuanced understanding of design thinking in order to realise the full potential of this approach to bring about change. The role of ‘overlaps’ (Callon, 1999) as moments of learning in processes of change is also highlighted in this paper.

**Keywords:** Design Thinking, Sociology of Translation, Organizational Change, Management, Sustainability

## **Introduction**

Recent years have seen an increase in public and private demand for corporations to act with greater concern for sustainability, including not only economic sustainability but also environmental and social sustainability (Dobers, 2010; Pedersen, 2015). At the same time it is increasingly widely recognized that achieving such a transition towards greater sustainability will require both incremental and radical changes in our concepts of production and consumption, as well as in our overall understanding of what it means for a business to succeed (Ryan, Mitchell & Daskou, 2012; World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987). Despite the accumulation of a considerable body of research on ways to facilitate organizational change, however, (for example: Drucker, 1985; Heywood, Smet, & Webb, 2014; Hodgkinson, Whittington, Johnson & Schwarz, 2006; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015; Markard, Raven, & Truffer, 2012; Porter, 2008; and Senge, 1990), there is little evidence of many companies changing their behaviour to ensure greater sustainability in practice (Balogun & Hope Hailey, 2008; Hughes, 2011).

Organizational change towards practising sustainability necessitates large-scale systemic change in markets and organizational systems (McNeill & Wilhite, 2015; Ballard, 2005; Kilbourne, McDonagh & Prothero, 1997). Within this context, organisations have emerged as a key unit of analysis, in addition to governments and consumers (Andersson & Bateman, 2000; Ryan et al., 2012; Pinget, Bocquet & Mothe, 2015; Aaken, Splitter & Seidl, 2013). Building on the work by such scholars as Nidumolu, Prahalad and Rangaswami (2009), Ryan et al. (2012), Senge, Smith, Kruschwitz, Laur and Schley, (2008), and Våland and Georg (2014), this paper proceeds from the premise that organizational change towards practising sustainability cannot occur in isolation but must happen through interaction with the broader social and environmental context.

To answer the call for organizational change, managers and researchers have been looking for more effective alternatives to such familiar organizational tools as Porter's 'Five Forces' (Porter, 2008), Kotter's '8-Step Process for Leading Change' (Kotter, 1995), SWOT analysis and strategy workshops (Hodgkinson et al., 2006; Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). One alternative tool is that of design and design thinking. Those advocating this alternative argue that adopting design thinking for processes of change can help organizations to change through more empathetic, experimental and collaborative approaches (Buchanan, 2015; Brown, 2008). Recent years have seen organisations in both the public and private sectors adopt design thinking for



change and innovation (Bason, 2013; Boyer, Cook & Steinberg, 2011; Clark & Smith, 2008; Heskett, 2005; Lohr, 2015).

While more and more designers have moved from conventional design professions into the field of organizational management, there is very little empirical literature on the ways in which design and design thinking is being used as a tool for management and change (Kimbell, 2011; Naar & Våland, 2014). Most of what has been written about this approach has only been published in design management journals, while journals outside this specific field still tend to neglect design thinking. Based on a review of five widely recognized management and marketing journals,<sup>5</sup> Erichsen and Christensen write that “it seems rather straightforward that the impact on mainstream management and marketing studies is almost non-existent [...] Thus, the cross-fertilization is still awaiting to be activated, especially in the fields of management and marketing” (2013: 117). To attain a more nuanced understanding of design thinking, including the ways in which it is being mobilized in practice and its potential strengths and weaknesses as a tool for organizational change, it is crucial that we begin to study its use in practice.

The study on which this paper is based set out with the aim of critically addressing the questions of what design thinking is and how it is being mobilized in practice. Here I will first present a case study of a series of workshops conducted by Innovation Textiles (InnoTex) for Hennes & Mauritz (H&M), examining how InnoTex mobilizes design thinking to facilitate organizational change in H&M towards practising sustainability. I then adopt the concept of translation from Actor-Network Theory (Callon & Latour, 1981; Callon, 1999) and Kimbell’s (2012) notion of design-as-practice to examine actors using design thinking and the multiplicity of potential outcomes of this approach, as well as the social processes involved in producing these outcomes. By looking at what actors do in practice I bridge the notions of how design thinking ‘should be’ used and how practitioners actually use design thinking as a tool for change (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015). Finally, I examine how this study of design thinking might help unfold Callon’s (1999) notion of “overlaps” in processes of translation, a concept that Callon introduced but did not elaborate upon in any great depth in his seminal study of the scallops and the fishermen of St Brieuc Bay in Brittany, France, first published in 1986.

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<sup>5</sup> The *Journal of Marketing Management*, the *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, the *Academy of Management Review*, the *Strategic Management Review* and the *Journal of Marketing*.

As a single case, this ethnographic study is a specific reading of a specific context; and it is precisely from this specific situation and local focus that the relevance and contribution of the study stems (Ailon, 2007), aiming to make the concept and application of design thinking less abstract and opaque. With this study I aim to help organizational managers and design thinkers understand the affordances (possibilities and constraints) that design thinking creates. At the same time I problematize what emerges in this case as the uncritical use of design thinking, highlighting the fact that it cannot be conceptualized or applied in isolation from other organizational functions and realities.

The remainder of this paper is divided into six sections, beginning with a brief introduction to design<sup>6</sup> and an outline of different understandings of design thinking, identifying the understanding applied in this paper. I then introduce the theoretical framework used for the analysis, namely the concept of ‘translation’ from Actor-Network-Theory (ANT) (Latour, 1994; Callon, 1999) and Kimbell’s (2012) notion of ‘design-as-practice’. The methods used in the fieldwork and the context of the research are summarised before I move on to an analysis of InnoTex’s workshops for H&M and a reflection on my findings. The paper concludes by summarizing the main findings, attending to the limitations of this study and offering recommendations for future research.

## **Design Thinking**

Theoretical and practical discussions of design can be divided into two overall approaches (Kimbell, 2011). Scholars such as Herbert Simon (1969/1996, 1973) and Christopher Alexander (1964) represent an approach that understands design as a problem-solving activity, though with very different findings. The second of these approaches is represented by, amongst others, Donald Schön (1983) and Nigel Cross (2001, 2006), who explore how individual designers design. Widely recognized for their contributions to the discussion of design, each of these writers have staked out positions that are quite distinct and sometimes even conflicting. Schön (1983), for example, focuses his thesis on the role that tacit knowledge plays in the work and training of professional designers. This understanding of design stands in contrast to the

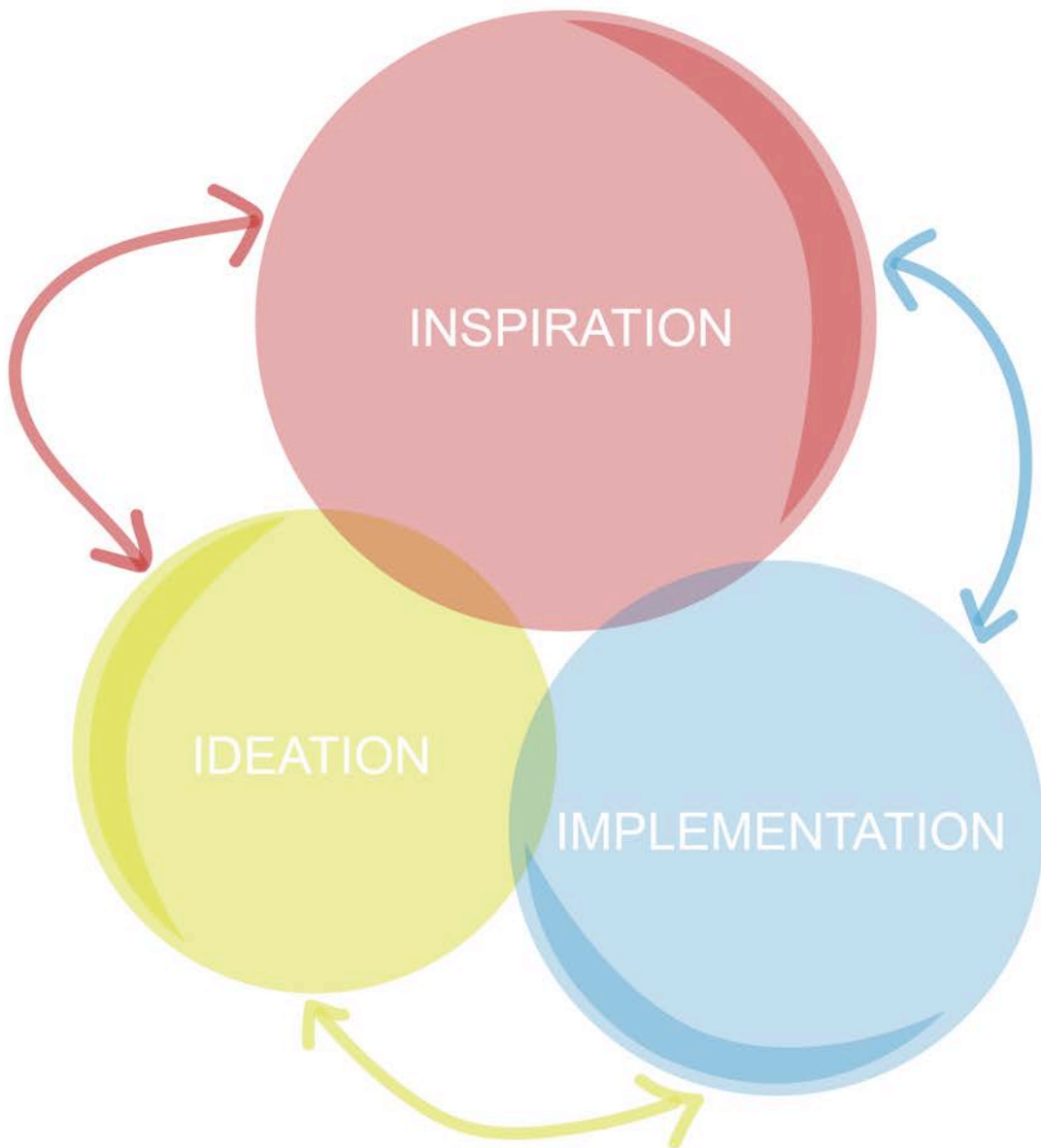
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<sup>6</sup> For a more detailed account, see, for example, Kimbell (2011; 2012), Buchanan (2015) and Koh et al. (2015). For an introduction to the historical evolution of design, see Heskett (2005).

technical rationality attributed to it by writers such as Simon (1996/1969) who see design as a logical search to create satisfactory criteria that fulfil a specific goal. According to Simon, design is about changing “an existing state of affairs into a more preferred one” (1996/1969: xii). By reducing design to problem-solving, designers can augment their limited computational capacities by using computer programmes to find the optimal solution. Simon’s logic of optimization promises greater predictability and profit while stripping judgment, intuition and experience from the activity of designing. In spite of their differences, both Schön and Simon shared a determination to highlight the importance of design in the major professions and to place design on a rigorous intellectual footing (Koh et al., 2015).

Various definitions of design thinking have arisen from discussions of design and it is difficult to offer an explicit answer to the question of what design thinking is (Buchanan, 2015). The definition that is perhaps best known today, at least within the broader field of organizational and management studies, is that given by the international design consultancy IDEO (Boland & Collopy, 2004; Erichsen & Christensen, 2013; Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla & Çetinkaya, 2013; Peltonen, 2011). According to the CEO of IDEO, Tim Brown, design thinking “is a discipline that uses the designer’s sensibility and methods to match people’s needs with what is technologically feasible and what a viable business strategy can convert into customer value and market opportunity” (2008: 86). Herbert Simon’s (1996/1969) promise of greater control has proven popular in this version of design thinking as a formal and explicit method for practically and creatively resolving challenges and issues with the intention of creating an improved result (Brown, 2008; Clark & Smith, 2008; Kelley & Kelley, 2013). Brown (2008) outlines design thinking as a system consisting of three spaces: 1) ‘inspiration’, i.e. the circumstances that motivate the search for solutions; 2) ‘ideation’, i.e. the process of generating, developing and testing ideas that may lead to solutions; and 3) ‘implementation’, i.e. mapping the path to the market. Projects loop back and forth through these spaces, particularly those of inspiration and ideation, as ideas are refined and new directions are taken (See Figure 8.1.). This system, especially the phase of ideation, relies on iterative cycles of prototyping. A prototype is a model of a product or service built to test a concept or process or to function as something from which to learn and use to explore options. In this way prototypes provide the means for examining design problems and evaluating solutions (Heskett, 2005; Houde & Hill, 1997).

**FIGURE 8.1.** Design thinking three spaces



Organizations today appropriate design thinking to serve a wide array of purposes, including organizational change towards practising sustainability (Brown & Martin, 2015; Schmiedgen, 2015). To help navigate the different interpretations of design thinking, I draw on the work of Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla and Çetinkaya (2013) who outline the different ‘managerial’ and ‘designerly’ discourses on the topic (See Table 8.1.).

**TABLE 8.1.** The different design thinking discourses

Adapted from: Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla and Çetinkaya (2013) and Schmiedgen (2015)

	Originator	Discourse Character & Academic Perspective	Relation to Practice Epistemology Core Concept	Audience
Management discourses	IDEO & other industry leaders	Showcase success cases → experiences, some connections to innovation research	How we do design thinking (Kelley and Littman, 2001, 2005) and how anyone can use it (Brown, 2009, Kelley and Kelley, 2013).	Company managers (potential customers)
	Roger Martin(2009), (2006) and (2009)	Use success cases to illustrate theory development » cognitive/ management science/ planning theories	How successful production companies use design thinking and how 'any' organization can do it	Company managers & educators (academics, consultants)
	Boland & Collopy(2004)	Scholars apply their theoretical perspectives to the design area » different perspectives	Design thinking as analogy and alternative	Academic researchers & educators
Design discourses of »Designery thinking«	Simon (1996)	Economic & political science	Rationalism: The science of the artificial	Academic researchers & educators in the design field
	Schön (1983)	Philosophy & music	Pragmatism: Reflection in action	
	Buchanan(1992)	Art history	Postmodernism: Wicked problems	
	Lawson & Cross (2006),(2007)	Design & architecture	Practice perspective: Designery ways of knowing	
	Krippendorf(2006)	Philosophy & semantics	Hermeneutics: Creating meaning	

## **Theoretical Context**

The field of organizational and management studies has been inspired in recent decades by a body of work known as the ‘sociology of translation’, or Actor-Network Theory (ANT) (Callon, 1999; Latour, 2005a; Law, 1992), particularly in the research of Czarniawska and colleagues (including Czarniawska & Hernes, 2005; Czarniawska & Joerges, 1996; and Czarniawska & Sevón, 2005). Translation, according to ANT, is about enrolling more and more micro-actors in a powerful network with the aim of building support for a specific claim and possibly making this claim a taken-for-granted fact in another network, thereby bringing about substantial transformations in those networks (Callon & Latour, 1981). This can be done by the use of “devices of interressement” (Callon, 1999), constructed so as to interest actors in a new agenda and then make this agenda durable through materials, e.g., in Callon’s (1999) analysis, the towline and its collectors. Within the context of a fashion brand this could be, for example, the creation of new spec sheets for clothing that support a change in thinking and everyday practices. Czarniawska & Joerges (1996) emphasize that in order for an idea to enter a new context and gain support it needs to be presented as an abstract model such as a prototype or text stripped of its original local context and other time- and space-bound features. The idea is then translated to fit the new context, materialized in practice, and, if successful, mobilized in a new actor-network. The concept of translation thus moves beyond a mechanistic understanding of how organizations change, referring to the movement and transformation of linguistic and material objects across time and space. In contrast to diffusion (Rogers, 1986), which rests on the idea that all adopters adopt the same thing for the same reason and that innovation remains relatively unvarying, the concept of translation implies that actors modify innovations to fit their own contexts and purposes and that these innovations are transformed in the process (Abrahamson, 2006; Whittle, Suhomlinova & Mueller, 2010).

Callon noted that individual moments of translation can “overlap” (1999: 68): “This endeavour consists of four moments which can in reality overlap. These moments constitute the different phases of a general process called translation, during which the identity of actors, the possibility of interaction and the margins of manoeuvre are negotiated and delimited.” However, Callon did not go into much detail about this particular aspect of overlaps. Inspired by my fieldwork, I explore how we might unfold this notion of overlaps so as to attain a more nuanced understanding of processes of translation and thereby also contribute to the practice of and

literature on organizational change and management. Seen through the lens of design thinking, Callon's overlaps are somewhat similar to the iterations that characterize processes of design, with iterations being seen as key moments of learning (See Figure 8.1.).

In addition to the concept of translation, I also draw on Lucy Kimbell's pair of concepts of 'design-as-practice' and 'designs-in-practice', specifically the concept of design-as-practice which "mobilizes a way of thinking about the work of designing that acknowledges that design practices are habitual, possibly rule-governed, often routinized, conscious or unconscious, and that they are embodied and situated" (Kimbell, 2012: 135). In proposing this pair of concepts, Kimbell (2012) draws on theories of practice developed by, amongst others, Bourdieu (1977/2013) Giddens (1984), Reckwitz (2002) Schatzki, Knorr Cetina and Savigny (2001) Shove and Pantzar (2005) and Warde (2005), including ANT – especially in the attention ANT pays to material artefacts. Kimbell's ambition is to shift the level of analysis in her research away from individual designers to practices, understood as a nexus of minds, bodies and things, as well as the institutional arrangements within which designers and their users are constituted (Reckwitz, 2002). Design-as-practice, according to Kimbell (2012), cannot envisage designing (the verb) without the artefacts that are created and used by the bodies and minds of the people doing the designing. What designers do, know, and say is constituted by, and co-constitutes, what is possible for designers to do, know, and say—and also what is not possible for designers in particular places and at particular times. Drawing on Kimbell's concept of design-as-practice thus enables me to discuss what does *not* happen – something which Graham Harman argues, in an interview with Lucy Kimbell (2013), is difficult to do with ANT.

## **The Context and Research Methods**

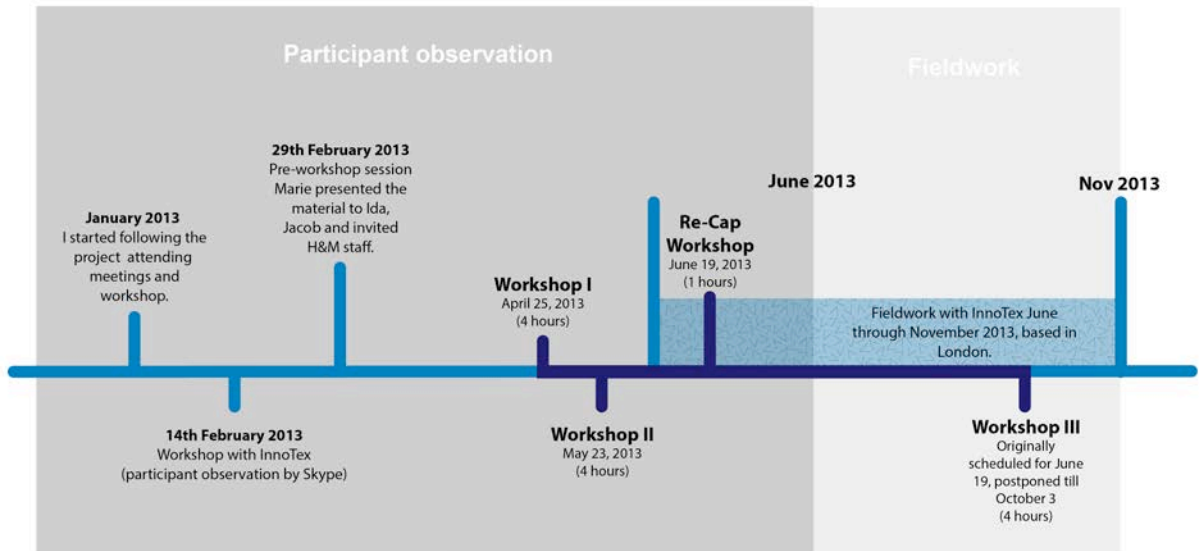
### **The Context**

This study was conducted under the umbrella of a Swedish, cross-disciplinary research programme aimed at facilitating change towards sustainability in the textile and fashion industry. The empirical foundation of my study consists of participant observation of InnoTex's workshops for H&M, supported by six months of fieldwork with InnoTex in the period from June through November 2013. The series of workshops included a total of three workshops and a recap session, all of which were conducted in 2013. The planning of the workshops started in spring 2012. I did not embark upon my research until a few months into the project and I



therefore rely on respondents' accounts of these initial discussions (See Figure 8.2. for a detailed overview of the fieldwork).

**FIGURE 8.2.** Timeline of fieldwork  
Initial discussion between Marie and Jacob, spring 2012



At the time of my fieldwork, InnoTex consisted of a team of eight textile designers and project managers based at a recognized art and design university in London. At the centre of their work was a set of ten practice-based sustainable design strategies they had developed over the previous decade. Following recent cuts in budgets for research in the UK, InnoTex now had to secure part of their funding through externally-financed research projects and through consultancy (Universities UK, 2015; Batty, 2011). Taking on this challenge, InnoTex began to draw actively on the methods and vocabulary of design thinking to complement their expertise within textile design. InnoTex's Lead Researcher, Marie, was in charge of the development and delivery of the workshops for H&M. The aim of the project was twofold: first, to use InnoTex's approach and design strategies to explore the potential role of H&M design teams in creating more sustainable products; and, second, to empower designers to tackle questions of sustainability.

In 2013, H&M's Buying Office was located in Stockholm, employing approximately 1,200 people. Globally the brand employed about 81,000 people and was located in 55 markets

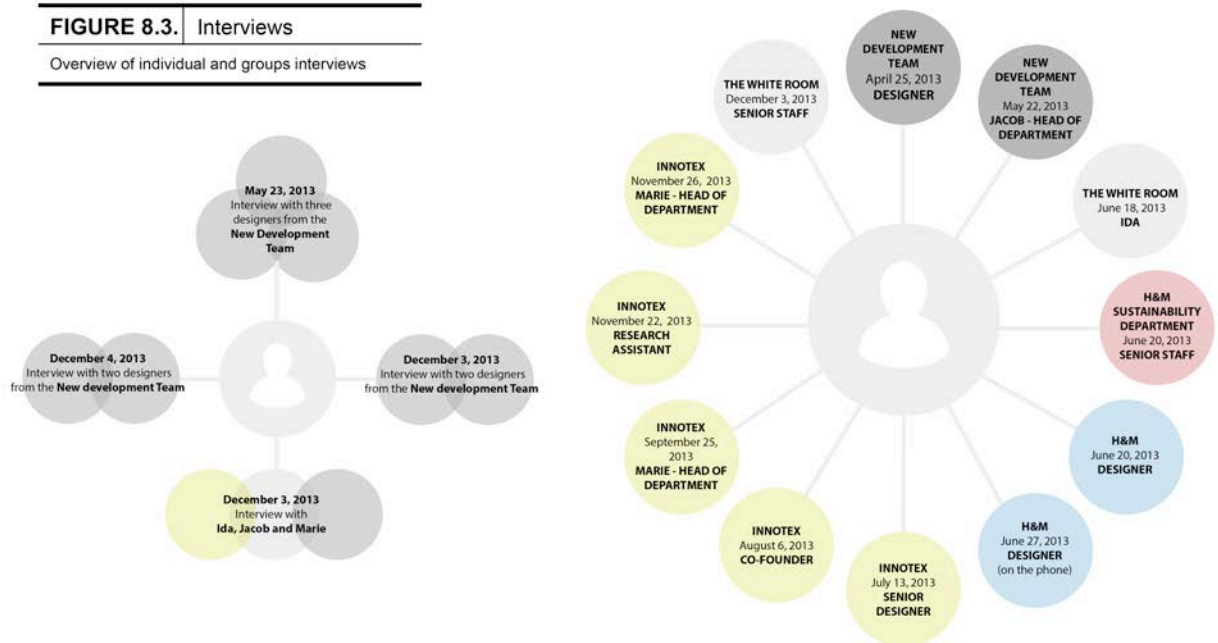
(H&M, 2015; Statista, 2015), producing an estimated 550 million garments per year. The main actors involved from H&M were Jacob, the Head of the New Development Team, Ida, a representative from The White Room, and the New Development Team, all of whom were based in H&M's Buying Office. The New Development Team consisted of about 40 people, mainly fashion designers, buyers, and pattern makers. The main function of the White Room was to support the design teams with colour, fabric, trim, design expertise and questions regarding sustainability – for example by advising on the use of more sustainable materials. The workshops were designed for a total of about 30 participants, primarily staff from the New Development Team. H&M's collaboration with InnoTex was only one of a number of the company's projects on and approaches concerned with transformation towards practising sustainability (H&M, 2015; Kennet, 2014; Miller, 2016).

### Research Methods

I used participant observation and informal and semi-structured interviews to gather material (Bernard, 2006; Dewalt & Dewalt, 2011; Kvale, 1996). The extent of my participation varied between 'moderate' and 'active', depending on the situation and context (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2011). In preparation for the interviews, I created a framework of themes to explore. I kept the conversation open so as to allow new ideas to be brought up, seeking to gain a greater understanding of the context and meaning of responses through various forms of probing (Bernard, 2006). I conducted a total of 12 semi-structured interviews with InnoTex researchers and H&M stakeholders, as well as 4 semi-structured interviews with groups of workshop participants (Figure 8.3. summarizes the interviews). The interviews typically lasted between 30 and 90 minutes.

**FIGURE 8.3.** Interviews

Overview of individual and groups interviews



For the purposes of this paper I have removed the ‘direct identifiers’ (i.e. names and exact locations) from parts of my fieldwork material. ‘InnoTex’, for example, is a pseudonym, as are the names of the individual members of the group. H&M agreed to be identified as a company, though I use pseudonyms for the employees. It is increasingly recognized that the removal of identifying information from fieldwork material raises numerous methodological, ethical, and theoretical issues, not least in qualitative studies like this that focus on peoples’ practices in very particular situated contexts (Lahman et al., 2015; Nespore, 2000; Thomsen, Bzdel, Golden-Biddle, Reay & Estabrooks, 2005). To balance the need for external confidentiality and the nature of my research, I use pseudonyms but retain contextual information such as gender and national origin (Tolich, 2004).

I used a software platform called DEVONthink to manage and support the analysis of field material. In the first stage of analysis I selected interviews and meetings for transcription. In addition to my general field notes, InnoTex’s reflection sheets, photos, and short video recordings from fieldwork all supported this process. In the second phase of my research I read through all the transcriptions, focusing on moments where the topic of sustainability and the role of designers and design tools were negotiated in discussions and in practice. In particular I explored when and how design thinking was taken up and put into use. In the third stage I

selected extracts for deeper analysis, again with a particular focus on design tools and InnoTex's role as facilitators of rethinking and re-shaping organizational practices through design thinking.

### **Design Thinking for Organizational Change: A Case Study**

In this section I present incidents from my fieldwork, focusing on the development, selection, application and outcomes of InnoTex's tools in use and the iterations they went through.

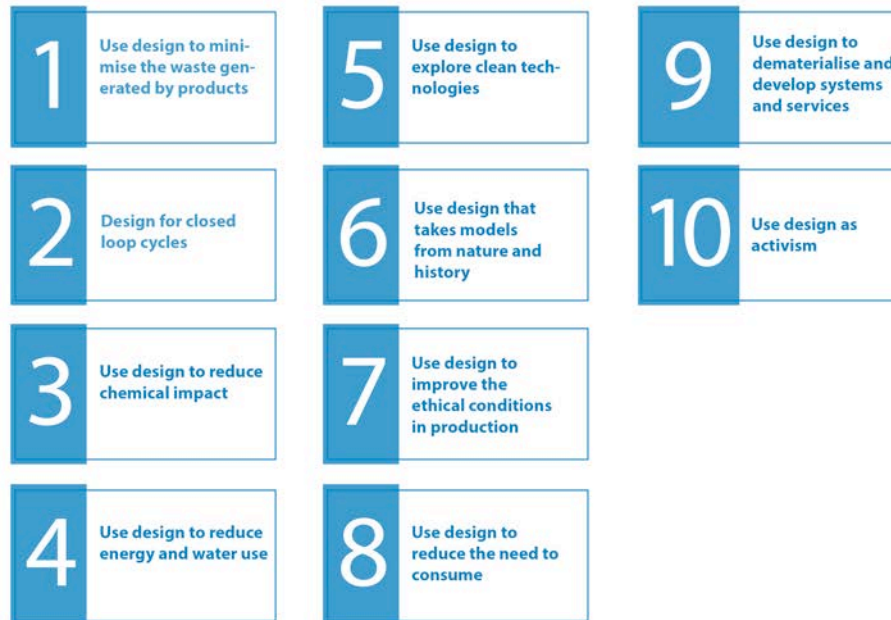
Drawing on my theoretical framework, each subsection is followed by a brief evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of the tools employed and an examination of the agency of the actors involved.

#### **Mobilizing Design Thinking: Introducing the Tools**

Embarking upon the project, Jacob and Marie planned to use InnoTex's ten sustainable design strategies as a starting point for the workshop. Altogether, the ten strategies were largely aligned with the 'triple bottom line' understanding of sustainability, i.e. taking into account the effects of textile production on People, Planet, and Profit (Elkington, 1994). The first five design strategies relied primarily on material, process, and technological solutions such as the use and application of new and more sustainable materials and chemicals. The last five strategies were more conceptual, encouraging design activism and radical innovation through, for example, rethinking business models (See Figure 8.4.).

**FIGURE 8.4.** InnoTex's 10 design strategies

InnoTex's workshops with H&M



InnoTex used their ten strategies as a toolbox, encouraging people to pick and choose from them depending on the challenge and context at hand. (Marie called this approach “layered thinking”.) Initially, both Jacob and Marie were eager to explore the ten strategies within the context of H&M. Just a few weeks into the project, however, Jacob requested that only design strategies 1-5 be used for the workshops. Jacob explained this decision to me in a subsequent interview (May 2013) as follows: “Design strategies 1-5 are the ones most relevant to the Buying Office. We wanted to take away those that we cannot really effect, because we were afraid that this was just going to frustrate people.” He further elaborated that H&M were concerned that design strategies 6-10 would be in conflict with the brand’s existing approach to sustainability, as implemented through ‘H&M Conscious’ and the company’s seven commitments to sustainability. (See Figure 8.5.). These strategies should not be included, Jacob explained, in case they might initiate demands for radical change.

**FIGURE 8.5.** H&M Conscious Seven Commitments

Source: H&M, Our Seven Commitments.

Retrieved from: <http://about.hm.com/en/About/sustainability/commitments/our-seven-commitments.html>



Following H&M's decision to use only the first five design strategies, it was these strategies that came to inform the creation of the Red Box. The Red Box was a red cardboard box created by InnoTex that contained a collection of industry innovations collected by their research assistant over months of desk research. Each industry innovation was categorized according to design strategies 1-5 and presented on a beautifully designed card with an image of the case and basic information about the case. InnoTex had paid great attention to the look and feel of the box and the individual cases. For an industry innovation to make it into the box it had needed to be checked with Ida for approval to ensure the workshops did not veer from alignment with H&M's current sustainability strategy. Preparing for the first workshop, Marie said (February 2013): "My vision for the box is that one day H&M will use it and the ten design strategies for the company, or their own edited version of it, from the very beginning of any product's design, so that sustainability issues are considered as an embedded part of the design process."

Seen through the lens of translation, the tailorability of InnoTex's design strategies was both its strength and its weakness as a "device of interessement" and a tool for change (Callon, 1999). Taking the form of a prototype emptied of specific contextual characteristics, the design strategies successfully facilitated entry into the organizational context (Czarniawska & Joerges,

1996). For the same reason, however, InnoTex's design strategies were also susceptible to being used as a means of confirming already existing approaches to sustainability (Våland & Georg, 2014). While InnoTex saw H&M's decision to use design strategies 1-5 instead of all 10 strategies as a stumbling block in terms of their ambition to change H&M's organizational practices towards sustainability, this decision was not at odds with their 'layered thinking' approach. At the centre of this approach lie opportunities to pick and choose between strategies and in this way also to edit the definition of sustainability to fit local contexts.

Although Callon noted that the four moments of translation may overlap he did not give this particular aspect of translation much attention. At this early stage in the collaboration, however, InnoTex's design tools brought overlaps to life, indicating some of their analytical potential. Thus, although Jacob was curious to explore the potential role of designers and design thinking in addressing issues of sustainability, Jacob and Marie encountered resistance as soon as they set out to gain the interest of H&M's senior management, including some of Jacob's colleagues. InnoTex's collection of case studies, for example, teased out information about H&M's understanding of sustainability to the extent that they had to remove some of their case studies. While this may be seen as a set back in the process of change, H&M's feedback, however, was also what inspired the development of the Red Box. Through this initial development of InnoTex's tools, InnoTex and H&M could negotiate their interests and concerns with each other and begin to develop what they considered feasible ways to approach the topic of organizational change towards practising sustainability. In this way InnoTex uses the continuous overlaps, in the form of comments on and demands made of their tools, as moments of learning (Brown, 2008) about H&M and about their tools.

#### Mobilizing Design Thinking: Working with the Tools

Approximately 30 people attended the first workshop, including designers, buyers, and pattern makers from the New Development Team, Jacob and Ida, and several senior staff from other departments. Anika, InnoTex's PhD student, accompanied Marie for the delivery of the workshop. Following a short introduction and warm-up exercise, Marie presented the Red Box to the participants. Their task was to time-code the innovation cases with the words 'now', 'near' or 'far' depending on how applicable they perceived each case to be within the context of H&M. Marie asked the participants to create five groups, i.e. one group for each of the five strategies. During the exercise I sat in on two different groups. The first group, working with

Design Strategy No. 1: *Design to Minimize Waste*, got into discussion right away. They would take a card, look at the image, read the explanation aloud and then consider the case within the context of H&M. They stamped it ‘now’, ‘near’ or ‘far’ and moved on to the next (See Figure 8.6.). In the second group the discussion was less lively. This was the group working with Design Strategy No. 3: *Design to Reduce Chemical Impacts* (i.e. new methods of dyeing and coating). The participants were clearly struggling to code the individual cases. Ida, who supported the group, later told me that some of the cases were inappropriate within the context of H&M and had proved much too difficult for the design teams because they knew nothing about chemicals. This was a task, she said, that belonged in the White Room.



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**FIGURE 8.6.** Design tools in action

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As the exercise rolled out Marie realized that any cases returned to the box would never be taken out again. Therefore she asked the participants to display their ‘now’ cases on the wall in the workshop space, creating a ‘Now Wall’, while the cases stamped ‘near’ and ‘far’ went back into the Red Box. In an interview with Marie, I asked about her reasoning behind the jump from the Red Box to the Now Wall. She explained as follows:

But we made a very quick jump, we went from case studies to, ooh, tool box, let's see if this works, very quickly. It didn't work. It actually didn't work because nobody could own it and it would take more time to use it. And it was never meant to happen that there was a Now Wall. The Now Wall got invented in the moment as it worked better as a wall than it did as a box, and that immediately led to the insight that things need to be digitized in this company. (December 2013)

The group presentations generated a somewhat heated debate between some of the participants, primarily between senior staff arguing for and against various cases. As a result, some of the cases initially coded 'now' were subsequently deemed 'far' and put back in the Red Box. The exercise also brought forth information about different parts of the organization. For example, the group working with Design Strategy No 1 argued that a policy of zero waste was not possible within H&M for a number of reasons, including production being located overseas, the size of orders and the large number of split orders. Presenting the case, the group representatives asked the question "With large productions, how do you make this happen?" and continued voicing a key concern, saying "We don't want to do something that looks like zero waste." (April 25, 2015).

From the above description we can see how InnoTex's design tools triggered internal discussions about H&M's sustainability strategy. The workshop discussions call attention to the numerous actors involved in the process of designing, as for example in the role of production offices located overseas and the designers' design templates, all of which demonstrate the collaborative and situated effort of designing (Kimbell, 2012). Curiously, what emerged was that there was a feeling of disconnect amongst the participants, despite their working in a highly interconnected industry. When talking about sustainability challenges, the designers from both InnoTex and H&M would make references to 'the system' and to the multitude of factories located overseas, thereby putting the problem as well as the potential solution at a distance. By doing this, however, InnoTex also put into question the effectiveness of their role as facilitators of change.

In the workshop the attempted translation towards greater sustainability went through yet another overlap (some of the 'now' cases going back in the box), as did the proposed solutions for change (the Red Box becoming the Now Wall). InnoTex's design tools were not unique in

bringing out into the open internal organizational discussions and conflicts over the issue of sustainability; this has been done by using strategy tools and/or strategy workshops, for example (Jarzabkowski and Kaplan, 2015; Hodgkinson et al., 2006). The potential value of InnoTex's use of design thinking lies in the approach's innate engagement of actors across organizational levels (Brown, 2008), in contrast to strategy workshops that are typically top management events led by top management (Hodgkinson, 2006). In the light of increasing evidence that innovative capacity in organisations arises from diversity, often from the periphery of organisations (Hodgkinson, 2006), InnoTex's workshops offered a relatively risk-free (low-cost) way of exploring alternatives through early prototyping (Houde & Hill, 1997). At the same time, the fact that case studies deemed inappropriate for the context of H&M did not find their way to the Now Wall also shows that InnoTex was not in a position to act upon this potential of their approach, further underlining the fact that H&M was not ready to radically question the company's existing approach to sustainability.

#### Mobilizing Design Thinking: Reflecting on the Tools

Immediately after the first workshop, Marie asked her team to complete a reflection form that was intended to inform the structure and the final development of the tools for the second workshop. The questions encouraged the team members to reflect on their performance and feelings as individuals and teams (See Appendix A.). For example, in reply to the question: "Evaluation - what went well, what didn't go so well?" Marie wrote:

At times I felt a little unsure about how it was going – so I tried not to worry about it – but there are always some participants that don't feel relaxed in workshop situations, and I tend to pick up on their 'fear'.

...

I think the 'now wall' and that task worked brilliantly! It was clear when the task [time coding the cards] worked well for people – the participants had had good design/product ideas and insight, and were visibly stimulated by the workshop – and seemed to enjoy being 'empowered' by the tasks they performed.

...

The small room, and the malfunctioning screen were the biggest upsets for me. After that, it was the participants who brought a certain amount of limited thinking – instead of an open, creative 'design' mind – to the session!

Marie was interested in the ways the participants engaged with the Red Box and in whether they found the individual cases inspiring. She was attentive to things that did not go well, such as the way some participants struggled with the cases, the small size of the workshop room, and the fact that some of the participants brought “a certain amount of limited thinking”. Further reflecting on her work with H&M, Marie told me:

“I mean the thing which just strikes me so much about this whole process is just how much negotiation there is. So little is about the content and the materials, those things we do so easily and naturally and quickly, it’s all in the negotiation and the clearing up of politics and the contracts. As design researchers that’s not what we want to do, not me at least.” (September 2013)

In addition to the great attention both Marie and Anika paid throughout my fieldwork to the effect of their design tools, they repeatedly engaged in conversations about the ways in which tacit knowledge affected their work. While they struggled to account for this particular aspect of their work with H&M, they continued to emphasize its value.

The understanding of design thinking manifested in this account of the case study draws on two streams in the literature: one that sees design as problem-solving (e.g. Simon, 1969/1996) and one that sees the design process as special due to tacit knowledge and instinctive processes (e.g. Schön, 1983) (See Table 8.1.). While Marie and Anika drew on methods and vocabulary characteristic of IDEO’s understanding of design thinking, this case study shows that they are deeply embedded in a design culture that is traditionally more aligned with Schön’s reflective practitioner. Here we can use Kimbell’s concept of ‘design-as-practice’ to examine what is happening. With this concept it becomes possible to discuss both what is and what is not possible for InnoTex to imagine and do. Thus while Marie and Anika’s reflections illustrate the great attention they pay to their design tools and their own performance and feelings, they also show that less attention is paid to the information about organizational practices which their tools draw out – perhaps because Marie and Anika have limited experience in this area or perhaps because they have little interest in this particular field of expertise.

## Mobilizing Design Thinking: Failure of the Tools

At the second workshop run by InnoTex, only 12 of the anticipated 30 participants showed up. Apart from Jacob, no members of senior staff attended this time. (Ida informed Marie that most of the New Development Team were too busy due to internal deadlines.) The designers who did show attend had not completed the assignments they had been given in the first workshop. One of the designers told me: “It feels like we need more time. Because you have your daily work and then to put in another thing. You should actually take the time, but it is so hard.” (May 2013). Despite this, some of the workshop participants repeatedly expressed their excitement about the workshops, one of them saying: “That’s what I felt was so good about this workshop. It was more focused, I mean, it was about the big picture, but also about here and now. What you can do in your daily work.” (May 2013).

A one-hour recap session was organized as a result of the poor turnout for the second workshop, while the third and final workshop planned for June was postponed until October in an attempt to find time in peoples’ calendars (See Figure 8.2). The Red Box containing the cases that had been marked ‘near’ or ‘far’ ended its days on a remote shelf in a corner of the New Development Team’s studio. The Now Wall was left without an owner:

Researcher: So I know the Now Wall was hung in the kitchen space in the New Development Team’s studio. Is it still there or has it been taken down?

Jacob: I haven't been there for a couple of weeks so I have to say I don't know.

Ida: I don't think they're up, to be honest, because we took them down for the last workshop and then I don't think we put it up.

Jacob: [to Ida] You were supposed to be the ones owning them, right? We discussed that the most relevant spot to keep them would be with you and ...”  
(December 2013)

From the perspective of translation as defined by Latour (1994, p. 32) as “displacement, drift, invention, mediation, the creation of a link that did not exist before and that to some degree modifies two elements or agents”, the faith InnoTex placed in the Red Box and the Now Wall proved unfounded and the project did not achieve a successful translation. Thus, while many aspects of a design (organizationally and architecturally) go through a number of iterations in the process of adaption the level of organizational control exercised over InnoTex’s engagement

with the New Development Team, combined with H&M management's loss of interest in the project (a level of control made tangible in the very restricted access afforded to the organization, and a loss of interest made tangible in the New Development Team's lack of time to do their homework and in the absence of senior staff at the workshops) conflicted with the tenets of design thinking and suggests that H&M's approach to this project, far from being open and explorative, was political from the outset. The fieldwork material further reports a situation in which InnoTex lacked the tools and experience to facilitate translation, with the outcome that their project achieved little more than its integration within H&M's efforts to produce more of the same while appearing slightly greener.

### **Reflections on the Findings**

When first embarking upon their workshops for H&M, the designers at InnoTex aimed to empower the New Development Team in questions of sustainability, ultimately with the aim of facilitating organizational change towards practising sustainability. As trained textile designers, Marie and her team set out to use some of the methods and terms of design thinking to facilitate this change. Design thinking is an approach which, in contrast to tools such as Porter's Five Forces and Kotter's 8-Step Process for Leading Change, has a reputation for engaging 'users' at all levels in processes of innovation. In this case, however, the attempted translation failed. The Red Box, which in the words of Marie had become the epitome of the project, was left on a shelf at the back of the studio, while the Now Wall was 'lost in translation'. Given the promise of design thinking as a practical approach that can help people and organizations change practices (Brown, 2008), the question arises as to why InnoTex's workshops for H&M did not succeed in creating a new actor-network within H&M. My analysis of InnoTex's workshops for H&M offers answers to this question as well as raising new ones.

Drawing on the methods and vocabulary of IDEO's design thinking, InnoTex tapped into a tradition that positions designers as key interpreters of what end-users 'need'. Designers are expected to do this by working in cross-disciplinary teams (Brown, 2008) using ethnographically-inspired techniques to understand user's perspectives and everyday actions (Kimbell, 2011: 295). In the case of InnoTex, however, this approach proved problematic. While user research is central to design thinking as defined by IDEO, InnoTex showed no particular interest, for example, in H&M's organizational set-up, which proved central to the ways in which H&M's design teams can effect the sustainability of H&M products. In the words

of Marie: “As design researchers that’s not what we want to do, not me at least.” Although InnoTex actively mobilized design thinking in their work with H&M, they only did so partially and the project’s goal to empower the New Development Team in questions of sustainability proved much too vague as a starting point for change.

While the concepts of translation and design-as-practice can help us understand some of the reasons for the failure of attempted translations, these concepts also shift the conversation about tools away from characterizations of good or poor use and towards a more nuanced understanding of how tools are used and the extent to which they can be useful (Jarzabkowski & Kaplan, 2015, p. 551). In this way we can begin to understand that it was not InnoTex’s tools that caused the participants in the workshop to make right or wrong decisions. Instead these tools had the potential to engage participants in discussions on the topic of sustainability across the organization. On several occasions the tools were able to tease out valuable information about H&M and the everyday work of the New Development Team. Marie and her team, however, had no experience or training on how to reflect on these organizational findings and thereby missed opportunities to gain insight into the context into which they were intervening (Kimbell, 2011). Their failure to gain an in-depth understanding of H&M and lack of sufficient experience to facilitate change was reflected in the disconnection of their workshops from daily organizational life.

Translation is an ongoing process – never a completed accomplishment (Callon, 1999). Adopting the notion of translation for analysis throws light on InnoTex’s workshops for H&M. Firstly, it shows that the aim of initiating radical change in H&M’s organizational practices through the delivery of three four-hour workshops was overambitious at best. Secondly, however, and more optimistically, understanding translation as a process suggests it is possible that some of InnoTex’s ideas may have been absorbed by the organization and may, over time, infiltrate organizational practices and thereby create long-term change.<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, while seeing organization as process is not new in the field of organizational and management studies, the openness of design thinking to experiment, to learn-by-doing and to prototype could contribute to the field by leading to the adoption of a much more ‘operational’ approach to our

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<sup>7</sup> For example, since the termination of this project, InnoTex has continued their engagement with H&M, though not in the form of workshops.

understanding of how to facilitate organizational change towards practising sustainability. We see this, for example, in the attention given by design thinking to the overlaps—or iterations—characterizing processes of change. As noted by Tsoukas and Chia (2002: 578): “It [change] must first be experienced before the possibilities it opens up are appreciated and taken up (if they are taken up).”

## **Conclusion**

The purpose of this paper is to contribute to the fields of organizational management and change by examining what design thinking is and how it is being mobilized as a practical tool for change within organizational contexts. My practical aim has been to provide a more nuanced understanding of the affordances that design thinking creates as an approach to organizational change towards practising sustainability. My theoretical aim has been to contribute to the literature by unfolding Callon’s concept of overlaps to explore in more detail what we might learn from this particular aspect of translation. I have sought to achieve these research aims on the basis of an empirical study of InnoTex’s workshops for H&M, demonstrating some of the strengths of design thinking but also raising questions about its acclaimed merits.

In summary, the study shows the value of using design tools and/or prototypes to draw out information about the hidden practices of an organization. The paper further indicates the way in which prototyping may be used by organizations as a relatively risk-free tool for trying out new ideas and tools integral to a new agenda. At the same time, this study also illustrates that InnoTex did not make full use of these tools, perhaps because of “what they [InnoTex and their tools] cannot do” (Kimbell, 2012). While the failure of InnoTex’s attempt at translation might be seen as the result of an incomplete adoption of design thinking, the case study nonetheless provides an excellent empirical example of how design thinking is being mobilized for organizational change in practice and, in this case, as a means to open doors and legitimize textile design which may otherwise be considered a too ‘designerly’ approach to organizational change—and thus as a means for designers to expand their own business. As we begin to conduct more empirical studies of design thinking we may see a variety of ways and reasons for employing this particular term and its methodology

Adopting the concepts of translation and design-as-practice directs our attention to the wide variety of actors involved in processes of change – both those actors who work inside



organizations and those, including InnoTex, who work outside. Rather than evaluating the correct or incorrect use of design thinking, this analytical approach encourages investigation into what actually happens. By unfolding Callon's (1999) notion of overlaps I have sought both to highlight the iterative character of processes of change and point to their analytical potential as moments of learning.

A major limitation of this study is that of my limited access to H&M, especially in the periods between the workshops. Because of this I was not able to explore the extent to which the 'Now Wall' and InnoTex's other design tools were or were not engaged with between workshops. This further reduced my ability to gain a deeper understanding of everyday practices in H&M. Future empirical studies on the use of design thinking to bring about organizational change should therefore set out to gain greater access to the organizational contexts in question. Such studies might also usefully explore Kimbell's pair of concepts for analysis.

## SUSTAINABLE DESIGN INSPIRATION for

### REFLECTIONS ON THE FIRST WORKSHOP >>

Date: 25<sup>th</sup> April 2013

Time: 9am – 1pm

Venue: H&M HQ, Stockholm

With: InnoTex & H&M

Your name:

**1. Introduction** – What was this workshop?

**2.** Your short description of what **happened** -

**3. Analysis** – what was I thinking and feeling?

**4. Evaluation** – what went well, what didn't go so well?

**5.** What **surprised** me about the workshop?

**6.** What would have **improved** the workshop?

**7. Action Plan** – What to do to improve and include in the workshop for next time?

# 9. Paper 4

## Sustainability Capital:

### What is at stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?

Kirsti Reitan Andersen

#### **Abstract**

This paper adopts a Bourdieusian approach to the study of organizational change towards practising sustainability in the textile and fashion industry. Empirically, I take my starting point in five weeks of fieldwork carried out in the Chinese textile and fashion industry and put this material into perspective through fieldwork undertaken with a group of textile design researchers based in a recognized Art and Design University in London. For the analysis I use Bourdieu's theoretical triad of capital, habitus and field, and further support this discussion by drawing on Bourdieu's understanding of practice as temporalisation. My analysis shows that although sustainability has become a matter of concern in the textile and fashion industry, the rules of the game largely remain environmentally and socially unsustainable—governed by various forms of capitalism. I argue that by mobilizing Bourdieu's theoretical framework we can gain a more nuanced understanding of current organizational practices in the industry as well as of the prospects for change.

**Keywords:** Pierre Bourdieu, field, capital, sustainability, fashion industry, practice as temporalisation, capitalism, organizational change

*You invest in sustainability because it is the right thing to do, but you wrap it up in some financial argument to get buy-in from management.* (Interview: Representative from the organisation Business for Social Responsibility (BSR))

## **Introduction**

The textile and fashion industry is one of the world's most polluting industries (Deloitte (2013)). Moreover, the industry continues to have problems with fulfilling its social responsibility, as seen for example in the collapse of the Rana Plaza factory in 2013 that resulted in the deaths of almost 1,200 garment workers (Burke, 2014). The industry's primary approach to sustainability has been the use of voluntary certifications and standards—the so-called compliance system. This system is generally communicated as a set of rules and requests implemented through a checklist approach. This approach has begun to be subjected to criticism, however, to the extent that even mass circulation magazines have started to note the 'failure of the codes' (Crook, 2005; Power, 2008). In an interview we conducted with Professor Yuk of East China Normal University in October 2013, she explained that the problem with the compliance system and its related costly audits is that they require companies to invest considerable sums of money and that few companies can afford this outlay. "And then you have the factories that get audited," she added, "but then their sub-factories will still be dumping lots of chemicals in the rivers." For the compliance system to work, she argued, there has to be trust in the system, and in China there is no such trust in the system; instead you trust your network—your *guanxi*. This view was repeated by John, an American in his early 40s who has lived and worked in China for the last 15 years. In recent years he has worked in trade, facilitating contacts between Western companies and Chinese manufacturers. Walking with John around some of Shanghai's older neighbourhoods, we asked him about his experience with the compliance system, to which he laughed and replied: "It is massively corrupt. Everyone working with these systems knows. But no one does anything about it. Meanwhile, the firms issuing the certifications and standards make heap loads of money."

Based on five weeks of field research in China, mainly involving visits to garment manufacturers located in and around Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Guangzhou, this paper explores how organizational change might be brought about in the textile and fashion

industry towards practising sustainability. Specifically, I examine how managers and owners of Chinese garment factories producing large quantities of clothes for Western brands invest in sustainability. In order to put this material into perspective and examine the overall ‘value’ assigned to sustainability in this context, I support the discussion with material gathered during my six months of fieldwork with a group of textile design researchers working with ‘sustainable fashion’ and based at a recognized Art and Design University in London. Within this context I examine how Bourdieu’s key concepts of capital, habitus and field might be operationalized to investigate attitudes towards and practices of sustainability from the perspective of Chinese factory owners and managers, as well as to explore processes of change at the intersection of Western and Chinese cultures and forms of capitalism (Gay and Morgan, 2013; Morgan and Kristensen, 2013). Inspired by the work of Adkins (2011), I also draw on Bourdieu’s understanding of *practice as temporalisation* in order to examine these questions in more detail.

My analysis shows that environmental and social sustainability continues to be undervalued in current organizational practices. At best, sustainability constitutes a type of capital *in formation*, oscillating between symbolic capital (Bourdieu, 1998a) and statist capital (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1994). Based on an analysis of my field material, I argue that Bourdieu’s theoretical triad, and his notion of capital in particular, can serve to enlighten our understanding of how organizational change towards practising sustainability might be brought about in the global textile and fashion industry by changing the discourse from matters of cultural differences (in the anthropological meaning of the word) to Bourdieu’s much more material approach to culture. Moreover, I argue that Bourdieu’s notion of time inspires new ways of thinking about challenges to practising sustainability across national borders.

I continue this paper with an overview of approaches to organizational change, focusing on questions of sustainability. I then present Bourdieu’s theory of practice, focusing on the concepts of capital and field. I introduce some of the relevant criticisms of his theoretical framework and give a brief introduction to Bourdieu’s view of practices as temporalisation. After introducing the empirical context and methods used in the fieldwork and analysis, I turn to an investigation of current practices of sustainability as experienced and practised by the Chinese garment factory owners and managers whom

we met during the fieldwork—using the findings of this investigation as a starting point for a discussion of what is at stake in the game. I draw on these findings for a final exploration of how and why field changes come about, as well as of what constitutes change. In the conclusion I sum up my main findings and the limitations of the study, offering suggestions for future research in the field.

### **Organizational Change and Sustainability**

While most scholars agree that organizational change is a topic that is central and important to organization studies, they often disagree as to the meaning of such change and how it should be approached. Van de Ven and Poole (2005) point to a fundamental ontological difference in the way we view organizations either as consisting of things or of processes, which in turn influences the way we look at change. This difference is deeply embedded in the current literature. In a call for a return to an understanding of the organization as consisting of things, for example, King, Felin, and Whetten write:

When Weick (1995, pp. 197–198) called for us to ‘stamp out nouns’ and ‘stamp in verbs,’ to draw attention to processes of organizing, he reflected a fundamental shift in our view of organization. Unfortunately in the course of stamping in verbs, the organization as a distinct sort of entity has become invisible. We have forgotten or ignored the noun-like qualities of organizations. (King et al., 2010, p. 290)

In contrast, scholars such as Weick (1995), Tsoukas (2005), and Tsoukas and Chia (2002) approach organization as a process—i.e. understanding ‘organizing’ as a verb. For example, Tsoukas and Chia (2002, p. 567) declare that “we set out to offer an account of organizational change on its own terms—to treat change as the normal condition of organizational life”. Similar to this tendency of scholars to view organizations as either a noun or a verb, much research on the emergence of practices has been divided between a micro (practice-based) perspective and a macro (institutional) perspective. On both sides, however, there have been calls for approaches that bridge the gap between the two. One such call is made in Emirbayer’s (1997) ‘Manifesto for Relational Sociology’, in which he identifies a movement for a “relational sociology” aiming to bridge the either-or approach. In contrast to substantialist accounts

that start from the notion that it is substances of various kinds (beings, things, essences) that constitute the fundamental units of investigation, relational sociology sees “relations between terms or units as pre-eminently dynamic in nature, as unfolding ongoing processes rather than as static ties among inert substances” (Emirbayer, 1997, p. 289).

The topic of sustainability and corporate social responsibility has a long history within the broader framework of organization studies (Carroll, 1999, 2008; Frederick, 1978/1994; Goodland, 1995). Most previous research, however, has been instrumental and managerialist, presenting sustainability as a win-win opportunity for businesses, or, in the words of Wittneben, Chukwumerije, Banerjee, and Levy (2012), merely another exercise in corporate social responsibility. The records of failure to address sustainability (Centre for Sustainable Work and Employment Futures, 2015; Greenpeace, 2011; IPCC, 2014; SOMO, 2014; World Bank, 2014) demonstrate a need for new approaches in both theory and practice. In this paper I define sustainability as a situation in which environmental and social capital are of the same or a higher value than that of economic capital (Daly, 1977/1991; Engleman, 2013; Jackson, 2009; McNeill and Wilhite, 2015; Smith, 2010). From this starting point I find the current capitalist paradigm of continuous economic growth to be incompatible with sustainability and social equality. This, as we shall see, was not necessarily the way in which the people with whom we met during our fieldwork would define sustainability and/or the question of whether environmental and social sustainability is feasible within contemporary understandings of capitalism.

Taking my starting point in Bourdieu’s practice theory, I contribute to the literature on organizational change and sustainability with a more nuanced understanding of how and under what circumstances fields can change, bridging aspects that span micro and macro perspectives of analysis (Emirbayer, 1997; Huault, Perret, and Spicer, 2014; Kuhn, 2012; McKinley and Mone, 2005). The use of Bourdieu’s conceptual framework for organization and management studies has been debated by a number of scholars within the field (e.g. Emirbayer and Johnson, 2008; Friedland, 2009; Jenkins, 2005; Sieweke, 2014; Swatz, 2008; Tatli, Özbilgin and Karatas-Özkan, 2015; Townley, 2014). Despite the existence of a wide range of objections to Bourdieu’s work, studies conducted by Sieweke (2014) and Townley (2014) both identify an increase in the use of Bourdieu’s concepts in organization and management studies, at the same time showing that the full

potential of his work has hardly been realized to date. Amongst the few exceptions is a study by Gomez and Bouty (2011) in which the authors employ all of Bourdieu's three key concepts for an analysis of how habitus can function in helping shape a chef's position in the field of French haute cuisine. Highlighting the potential value of Bourdieu's work to the study of organizations and change, Gomez and Bouty (2011, p. 924) write: "Bourdieu proposes a 'neither [...] nor' (Bourdieu 1990: 50)<sup>8</sup> model of interactions between agents and the field, in which the word 'practice' refers to concrete human action, always taking place in the social world." Studies by scholars such as Aaken, Splitter, and Seidl (2013) and Fuller and Tian (2006) explore how Bourdieu's theoretical framework might help us understand the emergence of sustainable practices. Thus, Aaken et al. (2013, p. 349) note that a Bourdieusian approach "highlights the interplay between the economic and non-economic motivations that underlie CSR, acknowledging influences both on the micro- and the macro-level, as well as deterministic and voluntaristic aspects of human behaviour".

### **Bourdieu's Theory of Practice**

To clarify the analytical concepts used in this paper, I now turn to an introduction and critical discussion of Bourdieu's three key concepts of capital, habitus, and field. Drawing on Calhoun (1993) and Adkins' (2011) discussions of Bourdieu's inattention to 'capitalism', I also introduce Bourdieu's understanding of practice as temporalisation (Bourdieu, 1997/2000, p. 206) in order to explore in more detail how we might use his theoretical framework for discussions of organizational change towards practising sustainability within Western and Chinese forms of capitalism.

Bourdieu's understanding of capital refers to the resources and sources of power that agents struggle to access and control (Bourdieu, 1986). While economic capital is at the core of the concept, Bourdieu attempted to expand the idea to something more than only economic. Hence his framework includes four fundamental forms of capital: economic, social, cultural, and symbolic—all of which can be sources of social advantage. Drawing

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<sup>8</sup> Bourdieu (1990, p. 50) writes: "There is an economy of practices, a reason immanent in practices, whose 'origin' lies neither in the 'decisions' of reason understood as rational calculation nor in the determinations of mechanisms external to and superior to agents."



on Marxist terminology, Bourdieu argued that it is impossible to account for the structure and functioning of the social world unless we reintroduce capital in all its forms and not only in the form recognized by economic theory (Bourdieu, 1986, Tatli et al., 2015, Townley, 2014).

While capital is the currency with which we buy social recognition, Bourdieu emphasizes that capital does not exist or function except in relation to a field (Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992, p. 101). In this paper I specifically mobilize Bourdieu's notion of symbolic capital and statist capital. According to Bourdieu (1998a, p. 47), symbolic capital is: "Any property (any form of capital, whether physical, economic, cultural or social) when it is perceived by social agents endowed with categories of perception, which cause them to know it and to recognize it, to give it value." Notably, the importance of symbolic capital lies in its apparent negation of economic power. In the words of Swartz (1997, p. 90): "Symbolic capital is a form of power that is not perceived as power but as legitimate demands for recognition, deference, obedience, or the services of others." Statist capital, meanwhile, is related to Bourdieu's attempt to "think the state" (Bourdieu, Wacquant and Farage, 1994). The state, he argued, is:

*the culmination of a process of concentration of different species of capital: capital of physical force or instruments of coercion (army, police), economic capital, cultural or (better) informational capital, and symbolic capital. It is this concentration as such which constitutes the state as the holder of a sort of meta-capital granting power over other species of capital and over their holders. Concentration of the different species of capital [...] leads indeed to the emergence of a specific, properly statist capital (capital étatique) which enables the state to exercise power over the different fields and over the different particular species of capital, and especially the rate of conversion between them (and thereby over the relations of force between their respective holders). (Bourdieu et al., 1994, p. 4)*

Statist capital thus emerges as a form of regulatory power that functions within national borders. With his idea of habitus, Bourdieu addresses the relationship between action and structure. In doing so he attempts to create a framework that can help us account for

the reality and force of social structures and at the same time grant some “agency”—some decision-making power—to individuals. Bourdieu understands habitus as a practical sense of what is to be done in a given situation, a “feel for the game” (Bourdieu, 1998a, p. 25). Habitus is thus a set of deeply “internalized master dispositions” (Swartz, 1997, p. 101) that give rise to a sense of which actions are possible and which are impossible. This also means that if one moves beyond or finds oneself at the border of a field one’s habitus may lead to disconnect and/or rupture, like a handball player in a soccer match or a fashion designer in a garment factory.

The third of Bourdieu’s key concepts is that of field, which concerns the various social and institutional arenas in which people express and reproduce their dispositions. It is also the space in which agents compete for the distribution of different kinds of capital (Bourdieu, 1993/2012; 1992/1996). While fields are relatively enduring, change does happen within this framework, although it happens, according to Bourdieu, based on an overall acceptance of the rules of the game and the exploring of a “*finite space of possible choices*” (Bourdieu, 1992/1996, p. 119). Discussing processes of change and reproduction in fashion, Bourdieu explained:

The established figures have conservation strategies, aimed at deriving profit from progressively accumulated capital. The newcomers have subversion strategies, oriented towards an accumulation of specific capital which presupposes a more or less radical reversal of the table of values, a more or less revolutionary subversion of the principles of production and appreciation of the products and, by the same token, a devaluation of the capital of the established figures. (Bourdieu, 1984/1995, p. 133)

In ‘The Forms of Capital’ (1986), Bourdieu outlines a formulation of his theory of the different forms of capital. Here he underlines the importance of the concept of capital for his general theory of practice (Bourdieu, 1986, p. 3): “A general science of the economy of practices [...] must endeavour to grasp capital and profit in all their forms and to establish the laws whereby the different types of capital (or power, which amounts to the same thing) change into one another.” In the section on ‘Conversions’ (1986, p. 14), he states that: “economic capital is at the root of all the other types of capital and that these

transformed, disguised forms of economic capital, never entirely reducible to that definition, produce their most specific effects only to the extent that they conceal (not least from their possessors) the fact that economic capital is at their root.” It is this convertibility of the different types of capital, according to Bourdieu, that is the basis of strategies aimed at ensuring the reproduction of capital and, with this, the position occupied in the field.

Key to my analysis is also the fact that the concept of capital is central to Bourdieu’s understanding of culture—an understanding which, by comparison with the broader anthropological understanding of culture as a ‘way of life’ (Hall, 2003/1997), constitutes a much more material approach. In Bourdieu’s universe, culture embodies (Sulkunen, 1982; Hall, 1997/2003, p. 2): “the ‘best that has been thought and said’ in society. It is the sum of the great ideas, as represented in the classic works of literature, painting, music and philosophy—the ‘high culture’ of an age.” Bourdieu recognizes that “culture is interested and economics is cultural” (Swartz and Zolberg (2004, p. 6). Thus, although cultural fields claim distance from economic fields, for Bourdieu they are equally implicated in structured inequalities of power.

Criticisms of Bourdieu’s theory of practice run along several lines. Here I focus on some of the objections towards field and capital, as well as on the discussion concerning Bourdieu’s somewhat mysterious inattention to capitalism (Adkins, 2011; Calhoun, 1993).

One major objection to Bourdieu’s concept of field (and his conceptual framework in general) concerns what is seen as its determinism and inability to allow for change, leaving no room for individual agency (Bouveresse, 1995; Brubaker, 1985; Jenkins, 1982 and 1992; King, 2000). Bourdieu himself rejects this allegation of determinism, arguing that transformation is possible through a disconnect between habitus and field (Bourdieu, 1984/1995). Less concerned with the alleged determinism of Bourdieu’s work, Friedland (2009) sees the problem to be his “theorization of the logic of practice as a generic contest for domination in a plurality of homologously organized fields”. According to Friedland (2009), ‘difference’ is what makes up the content of Bourdieu’s dominant cultural forms rather than being something immanent within them. Thus,

Friedland (2009, p. 892) writes: “Both in his studies of cultural consumption and production, Bourdieu makes the politics of culture into a struggle for an empty cell: the transhistorical space of domination.” Another objection to Bourdieu’s concept of field that is relevant for our discussion is Bourdieu’s implicit concern with the national frame of reference. Thus, in a large part of his work Bourdieu equates the spatial reach of a country to that of a field, seeing national boundaries as defining the spatial limits of field processes (which to some extent contradicts Friedland's argument that Bourdieu’s fields are empty cells). Bourdieu defends this stance, for example, in his critique of neoliberal globalization (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992); but his merging of fields with national, social and cultural spaces has nonetheless left his approach open to the accusation of methodological nationalism (Beck, 2005; Friedman and Kuipers, 2013; Savage and Silva, 2013). While acknowledging this criticism, Savage and Silva (2013) see it differently, highlighting the value of the field concept “in allowing for a more flexible approach to the analysis of social relationships, which does not depend on fixed national boundaries but which can instead reflect upon the formation of boundaries as part of its concern” (Savage and Silva, 2013, p. 121). Such a flexible adoption of the concept of field has been exemplified, for instance, by Fligstein (2008), Fligstein and McAdam (2012) and Friedman and Kuipers (2013).

Given that Bourdieu was a famous campaigner against the imposition of the neoliberal model of globalization, and given that the concept of capital lies at the core of his theoretical framework, it is somewhat curious that his explanation of the different forms of capital did not include any account of capitalism as a distinctive, historically specific system of production and distribution (Calhoun, 1993). And this is the case, notes Adkins (2011, p. 347), even in spite of the fact that Bourdieu dedicated a whole volume to the social structure of the economy (2000/2005) and that in his later work he directly engaged with the political economy of neoliberalism (Bourdieu, 1998b; 1993/1999; 2001/2003). Discussing how we might adopt a Bourdieusian approach to an analysis of the global financial crisis, Adkins (2011) makes an interesting move by turning away from Bourdieu’s concept of capital and mobilizing instead his understanding of ‘time’. In doing so she sees both strengths and weaknesses. For Bourdieu, she notes, practices do not only take place *in* time, they also *make* time (Adkins, 2011, p. 355). The future is thus neither separate from practice nor an external horizon to practice; however, to the extent that agents are endowed with a habitus adjusted to the field, the future is routinely constituted in practice. Bourdieu’s

(1997/2000) notion of practice as temporalisation therefore “alerts us to the fact that traded, contracted and mortgaged futures are made in the present, that is, that they are in fact made in and through the very practices of trading, contracting and mortgaging” (Adkins, 2011, 355). Within Bourdieu’s universe, therefore, global warming, for example, is not just a matter of concern for our grandchildren; it is a matter of concern for ourselves here and now. Building on the work of Calhoun (1993) and Beasley-Murray (2000), Adkins (2011, pp. 357–358) also argues that Bourdieu’s understanding of time is at the heart of his failure to deal with industrialist capitalist production, where ‘time is money’, thus sidestepping the issue of clock time and its hegemonic status in industrial capitalism. As Adkins argues, however, this failure to account for industrialist capitalist production suggests that Bourdieu’s work on practice and temporalisation might in fact help us think through the global economic crisis, insofar as post-Fordist economic practice has contributed to the decline of the hegemony of clock time and the emergence of practices that are increasingly temporalised and temporary (Adkins, 2011, p. 361).

In spite of the objections that could be raised to the endeavour to think about organizational change towards practising sustainability with and through the theoretical resources of Bourdieu, I find there to be important resources in his work with which to carry out this task. Based on our empirical material, moreover, I find great opportunities to explore his work further. Drawing on Bourdieu’s work has provided me with a framework with which to examine the role of actors (inside firms) responding to the institutional context and contributing to institutional change. Specifically, I draw on the concepts of field and capital to discuss what is at stake in the textile and fashion industry, and, inspired by Adkins (2011), I further put this discussion into perspective by mobilizing Bourdieu’s notion of practices as temporalisation.

## **The Textile and Fashion Industry**

### **The Sites**

In the following section I introduce the field sites of this research. Firstly I introduce the field site of the global textile and fashion industry, with a primary focus on large-scale manufacturing in China—a field that corresponds with what Bourdieu (1993; 1992/1996) calls the field of large-scale production. Secondly I introduce the field site of InnoTex, constituting what Bourdieu (1993/2012, 1992/1996) calls a restricted field of

production. Following this introduction I turn to a presentation of the methods used for fieldwork and analysis.

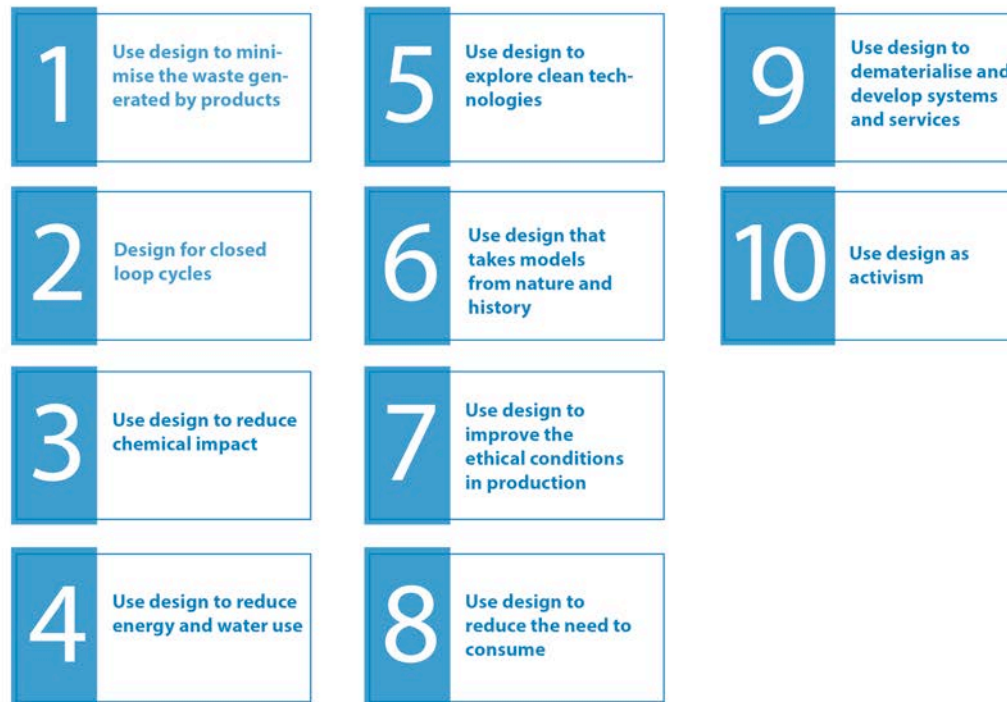
The textile and fashion industry is among the world's largest industries. According to Fashion United, in 2012 the global apparel market was valued at USD 1.7 trillion and employed approximately 75 million people. Some 91 billion garments are sold annually, according to the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2013). Americans alone generate almost 13 million tons of textile waste per year, while the British generate some 1.2 million tons per year (USAgain, 2012). To sustain such a large industry requires vast amounts of natural and human resources. In search of cheaper production the western textile and fashion industry began outsourcing most of its production in the 1980s. This means that most strategic decisions and designs are now performed by brands located in the US and Europe, while textile and garment production generally takes place in factories far removed from design studios. The industry is also characterized by long supply-chains: to make a pair of jeans, for example, may involve as many as 70 separate operations (Poulton, Panetta, Burke, Levene, and the Guardian Interactive Team, 2014). Although China has lost much of its textile and fashion production to cheaper countries since the financial crisis, China remains the largest producer, supplying between a quarter and one-third of all the garments sold globally (CNGA, 2013; Zhao, 2013). In the words of Sinkovics, Yamin, Nadvi, and Zhang (2014), China is the manufacturing heart of the world, and by many it is also held responsible for the 'race to the bottom' in global labour standards (Chan and Siu, 2010).

The majority of the world's garments are thus produced in a system that is often referred to as capitalism with Chinese characteristics (Huang, 2008). The reference to Chinese characteristics not only points to a 'different' economic and social system but also indicates specific cultural understandings of sustainability. Studies by scholars such as Hung (2004), Myllyvainio and Virkkala (2006), Kolk, Hong and van Dolen (2010), Marquis and Qian (2014), Peng and Luo (2000) and Wang and Juslin (2009) point to the role of culture in questions of sustainability. Kolk et al.'s (2010) study, for example, considers the notion of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in China through an exploration of a sample of large retailers in China, both Chinese and non-Chinese, comparing different approaches to CSR against the backdrop of national culture.

Proposing a “Harmony Approach to CSR”, Wang and Juslin (2009) state that while some of the core principles of the Western understanding of CSR are not new to traditional Chinese culture, CSR has not adapted well to the Chinese market because Western CSR concepts have rarely succeeded in defining the primary reason for CSR. Moreover, the authors argue, ethical approach to CSR concepts “does not take the Chinese reality and culture into consideration” (Wang and Juslin, 2009, p. 433).

InnoTex is based in a European Art and Design University, and as such exemplifies Bourdieu’s field of restricted production. Inspired by the statement of Graedel, Reaves Comrie, and Sekutowski (1995) that decisions made in design account for 80 to 90 per cent of a product’s environmental and economic costs, InnoTex’s overall aim is to explore the role that textile and fashion designers can play in creating sustainable textiles and garments. Over the last ten years, InnoTex has developed a set of practice-based sustainable design strategies to assist designers in creating textiles and garments that have a reduced impact on the environment and that take social responsibility into account. These strategies range from approaches that rely on material, process, and technological solutions to more conceptual strategies encouraging radical innovation, thus presenting a malleable, normative concept of sustainability (See Figure 9.1.). The team conducting the field research in China consisted of an independent designer and filmmaker, two researchers from InnoTex and myself—with a background in cultural studies. The research took place in the course of my extended period of fieldwork with InnoTex.

**FIGURE 9.1.** InnoTex's 10 design strategies



To maintain confidentiality (Berg and Lune, 2014; Geest, 2003; Kaiser, 2009) I use pseudonyms for the majority of my individual respondents, while, to the fullest extent possible, I provide details about the size of the organizations to which they belong, the sectors in which they work (academia, brand, designer, factory etc.), their position in the industry and their cultural backgrounds. The use of pseudonyms is an integral part of social science research, albeit one that has often been applied with little thought or deep reflection. The participant-naming process itself, however, influences our interpretation of specific situations, research showing that people assign characteristics to other people on the basis of their names (Lahman, Rodriguez, Moses, Griffin, Mendoza and Yacoub, 2015). In this thesis I have chosen pseudonyms that represent the gender and, in most cases, the nationality of my respondents. Respondents' names have been created based on lists of 'popular names' in the respondents' countries/regions of origin. This approach has the downside that the names in question do not necessarily indicate age, since certain names tend to be more popular in some decades than others. My field descriptions should go some way to compensate for this shortcoming, however, by providing some indication of the individuals' ages. In creating pseudonyms for various public and private



organizations I have also tried to create names that represent nationality, trade, etc. While there is very little chance that this paper will be read by the people to whom we spoke in Shanghai, Hong Kong and Guangzhou, or anyone in their immediate network, I have nonetheless chosen to use pseudonyms in order to protect them from any harm that might otherwise arise as a result of my work.

## Methods

In preparation for our field research I approached a number of actors within the Chinese textile and fashion industry for interviews. Focusing on the topic of sustainability, these preparations and initial studies took us well beyond textiles and fashion and into questions of politics, class (mobility), history, and nation. As noted by Swartz (2008, p. 49): “Not fields of organizations per se but fields of specific types of struggle over particular types of capitals, which may or may not be limited to organizational bodies, should be the constructed object of research.” We conducted a total of 33 semi-structured interviews (Bernard, 2006; Kvale, 1996), primarily with owners and managers of garment factories, but also with designers, government representatives, NGOs, academics, fashion design students, and factory workers (although it should be noted that interviews with factory workers were always conducted under the supervision of a manager). We also attended the Planet Textiles conference held in Shanghai in October 2013, as well as the Redress Forum held in Hong Kong in January 2014 (see Appendices 9.A. and 9.B. for details). This material was supported by non-participant observations and informal conversations held, for example, over lunch and dinner (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2011). Our research in and around Shanghai, which constitutes the main part of our empirical material, was assisted by Echo, a Chinese woman with ten years of experience as a trade agent in the textile and fashion industry. The colloquial term for this type of assistant is ‘fixer.’ Echo availed us the privilege of drawing on her *guanxi*, or network, defined at its most basic level as a personal connection between two people in which one can prevail upon another to perform a favour or a service (Liu, Wang, and Wu, 2011; Peng and Luo, 2000). Echo not only helped us with translation but also introduced us to the Chinese ‘way of life’ and put us in touch with a large part of her network.

I drew on three different contacts to access separate networks in China, hoping thereby to gain a broader perspective on the industry. They were: a Swizz woman with years of experience working with the textile and fashion industry in China, a Chinese woman based at Central Saint Martins in London and Echo, our fixer. In preparation for the trip I prepared a set of key questioning themes, including questions about everyday activities, working hours, pollution, collaboration with clients, and challenges and opportunities in attaining sustainability. As a way of initiating conversations on sustainability, I brought InnoTex's design strategies to the meetings. Presented on a set of beautifully designed cards and translated into Traditional and Mainland Chinese, these strategies have been aimed at designers as a tool to inspire their everyday work with textiles and fashion. In our fieldwork, however, we used them primarily as a tool to prompt discussion (Gunn, Otto, and Smith, 2013), hoping they would help us to get beyond the stock responses that a contact had warned we might receive ("They'll just tell you whatever you want to hear."). While our being foreign no doubt inhibited access to most contexts and information, the set of strategy-cards, together with Echo's assistance, did help to break down some barriers.

The interviews and informal conversations conducted for this study were recorded and/or filmed whenever approved and feasible. Each interview lasted 1–2 hours, and in most cases our interviews with factory owners and managers were followed by a tour of the factory. The gathered data was organized in DEVONthink, an app for organising articles, field notes, images and emails, etc. While the full dataset informed the analysis and discussion, I drew on selected parts on the basis of the importance assigned to each issue by the actors involved (e.g. recurrent topics of discussion) and on situations that serve to highlight and contextualize our research questions (e.g. questions vaguely answered and visits to factory floors). The process of analysis involved four stages. The first stage was the process of taking notes in the field, which in itself constitutes a simultaneous process of data collection and analysis (Dewalt and Dewalt, 2011). In the second stage of analysis, I read through my notes, marked field notes of particular interest, and selected interviews for full or partial transcription. While I wrote most of the transcripts myself, some were written by a professional who had not attended the interviews. I also explored the use of photos and short video recordings from fieldwork as a way of supporting the analysis. In the third stage of analysis I once again read through the marked field notes

and all of the transcripts with reference to my theoretical framework. In the fourth and final stage I selected extracts for deeper analysis, again with a particular focus on my research questions.

### **Practising Sustainability**

I begin with an account of our visit to Dragon Textiles and Garments (DTG), a corporation located outside of Shanghai.

Having taken the bullet train from Shanghai, myself, Ana (the filmmaker), Anika (the PhD student attached to InnoTex), and Echo (the fixer) were met at the train station by the middle manager of one of DTG's many garment production facilities, Mr. Dishi, with whom we were to spend the morning. Mr. Dishi took us to DTG by car, a 20-minute drive from the station. On the way there he pointed out a water-treatment plant and a power station, explaining that both belong to DTG, serving their factories as well as the city. Like many factories in China, DTG offers accommodation to its workers, the majority of whom are migrant women from the predominantly agricultural countryside. The workers' apartment buildings are located within the factory compounds, and Mr. Dishi took us on a tour around the compounds in his car, pointing out different buildings such as dyeing facilities and garment factories. Apart from a couple of people passing by on their mopeds, the streets were empty of people. We then visited the garment factory that Mr. Dishi manages, a factory producing exclusively for western markets. According to Mr. Dishi, the domestic market accounts for 90 per cent of DTG's garment production; due to different regulations and requirements, however, these factories for domestic production are located in other buildings. In Mr. Dishi's department there were about 150 employees, mostly women, at work by the sewing machines. Next to each worker was a stack of garment parts, such as sleeves, necklines, or pockets. Each worker produces the same parts all day. According to Mr. Dishi, this increases productivity. He proudly pointed out their latest installation, a row of automatically moving boxes placed in-between the working tables. The workers put the finished pieces in these boxes, which then move on. By some of the tables hung big yellow 'smiley faces' made of cardboard (Figure 9.2.). These are part of the incentive system that DTG has created, which includes giving workers the opportunity to collect stars and join the lottery. The lottery prize is one of three free places available each year to study at DTG's university. At the

end of the room, which was full of people and sewing-machines and garment pieces, was Mr. Dishi's office, and a large blackboard—displayed so as to be visible to all—keeping track of productivity.

**FIGURE 9.2.** Smiley faces



Mr. Dishu invited us for lunch at the newly built DTG hotel. Apart from a receptionist and a few waiters, the hotel was as empty of people as the factory compounds. During our tour we had tried to get a picture of DTG's understanding of 'sustainability' through asking informal questions about everyday activities, working hours, dyeing facilities, etc., but with little success. Over lunch we tried again to bring up the topic of sustainability. In response, Mr. Dishu turned to certifications and standards: "The factories producing for the European and US markets have the 'basic' standard. The factories producing for the Chinese market apply to the Chinese government standard. [...] An auditing firm hires locals to conduct the auditing required to be certified." On DTG's homepage it is stated that DTG is certified ISO 9001, which is a recognized quality management system developed to help businesses manage quality more effectively across all operations and thus become more competitive (BSI, 2014). According to Mr. Dishu, DTG has invested heavily over the last two years in acquiring European certificates, aiming to get more European and US customers and to grow the business. The biggest challenge for the company Mr Dishu explained is to fulfil its requirements to provide workers with social insurance:

Some of the audits require 100 per cent of the workers to be covered by social insurance. But that's just not possible. Today 30 per cent of the workers—the locals—are covered, because this is required by Chinese law. But to get the certification we need to cover 50 per cent of our workers within the next year, and this is too much of a burden for DTG. [...] At the moment, every year material and labor costs are increasing. Companies have to close one after the other. (Interview with Mr. Dishu, October 13, 2014.)

In an attempt to delve deeper into the question of the meanings and practices of sustainability at DTG we showed Mr. Dishu the set of strategy cards designed by InnoTex, using them as a starting point for further conversation. We invited him to select the three cards that he found most relevant and the one he deemed least relevant, and then to elaborate upon his choices. This prompted Mr. Dishu to give his clearest definition so far of what sustainability means in the context of DTG:

First, we want to continue the company's expansion of production in poorer countries, and second, do more 'Order Design Made' [ODM]. We have just finished the construction of a factory town in Cambodia where we only have to pay the workers one sixth of the price that we have to here. This factory is working very well. This is sustainability.

Still looking at the cards, Mr. Dishì continued: "Social and environmental sustainability, that's not something the individual is interested in. The Government decides on regulations, and clients." Another big challenge for DTG, according to Mr. Dishì, is that of low margins: "Buyers want to lower the price. If we offer our workers higher salaries to make them stay, we can't make a profit. The only way we can make money is through increased productivity." Mr. Dishì informed us that whereas workers used to stay for many years, today most only stay 2–3 years before they move on in search of better opportunities and more money: "Today young people don't want to work hard. Workers aren't educated so well, but they want to make big money."

DTG was the largest company that we visited and our experience there captures well how most of our visits proceeded. We would start by being given a formal introduction to the factory, covering, for example, the volume and types of garments produced. Then, when the conversation turned to sustainability, the factory managers and owners would start discussing certifications and standards. We were greeted, it seemed, like potential Western clients. The majority of our respondents were corporations and individuals who work with 'Westerners' and who have invested in the required certifications and standards. This also means that my study does not include the voices of the many stakeholders who are not part of the compliance system. While those outside the system are not necessarily involved in unsustainable business practices, their non-inclusion in this study does constitute a major limitation in our research, and thus further investigation into the topic is vital. Our visit to DTG also illustrates well what Adkins (2011, p. 356) describes as industrial capitalism, which is characterized by a system in which "rates of profit relate to rates of speed in production (where doing things faster and more efficiently produces increases in profits)". These rates, Adkins emphasises, are measured in and as units of clock time, i.e. in abstract, quantitative, homogenized and reversible units of the clock (2011, p. 356). At DTG this is a system facilitated by

machines to check in and out of work, ‘smiley faces’ incentives, Mr. Dishu’s blackboard for keeping track of productivity, and rows upon rows of workers sitting sewing the same seams over and over again.

The fact that some 70 per cent of the people whom I approached agreed to meet with us would appear to indicate that sustainability has become a stake in the game, although it remains unclear in what way it has become so. While Mr. Dishu stated that environmental and social responsibility was a question of regulations, others also saw it as a way to gain competitive advantage. One corporation even turned down our invitation to meet on the grounds that their sustainability strategy was part of their business plan and therefore confidential. However, as noted by Ms. Hua, the owner-manager of a medium-sized garment factory on the outskirts of Shanghai: “While waste and chemicals have become a concern amongst many people in China, the main interpretation of sustainability continues to be financial. Maybe in ten years the individual business owner can afford to think about environmental and social responsibility.” Ms. Hua was one of many who articulated this opinion, including several of the Government representatives we interviewed.

Our conversations with Chinese factory-owners and managers revealed a multitude of different actors who, for different reasons, have an interest in changing towards more sustainable large-scale textile and fashion production, including the Government, auditors, institutions issuing certifications and standards, NGOs, designers, and brands. These meetings brought to light struggles over the relative value of sustainability, struggles which in reality are also struggles over power—over what sustainability is, and, by implication, over who is powerful. What holds this web of relations together is *doxa* (Bourdieu, 1984), a tacit fundamental agreement upon the stakes of the struggle between both those aiming to conserve the field and those aiming to subvert the field—an agreement and acceptance that the field of struggle is worth pursuing in the first place. In the words of Swartz (1997, p. 125), challengers and incumbents alike “share a common interest in preserving the field itself, even if they are sharply divided on how it is to be controlled.”



### **What is at Stake in the Textile and Fashion Industry?**

In this section I discuss how sustainability plays out as a type of capital in formation within the textile and fashion industry. I examine what is at stake and how people make their investments. Further on, inspired by Bourdieu's (1992/1996, p. 124) model of the field of cultural production in the field of power and in social space, I present a model illustrating current positions in the industry.

Both the Chinese manufacturers and InnoTex are players within what Bourdieu calls the field of cultural production, despite each being located within different subfields. Based in a university, InnoTex is part of what Bourdieu calls the field of restricted production. This field concerns what we normally think of as 'high' art, encompassing what could be called 'serious' literature and, within fashion, what could be called, for example, haute couture. Here the stakes of the game are largely symbolic, involving prestige and artistic celebrity. This, according to Bourdieu (1979/1984, 1993), is production for producers. The other subfield is that of large-scale production, which involves 'mass' culture, including mass-produced literature and fast fashion. The dominant principle of hierarchization in this subfield involves economic capital, or 'the bottom line', wherein symbolic capital is generally of very limited value (Bourdieu, 1979/1984, 1993/2012). Although ranged across the two subfields, the stakeholders I met during our fieldwork demonstrated their acceptance of the rules of the game, meaning that certain specific forms of struggles are legitimate while others are not.

Within the field of restricted production, sustainability seems, at least at first sight, to be forming as symbolic capital. Scarlett, the founder of InnoTex, told us that sustainability was hardly considered at all twenty years ago, and that when it was considered it was seen as a restriction on a designer's creative freedom (interview, July 2013). Continuous and increasing investment in sustainability, together with an increasing number of regulations on the industrial use of chemicals as a result of their harmful impact on our everyday lives (e.g. in Europe in the 1980s—acid rain and polluted rivers due to heavy industry), has since led to a change in the value and composition of capitals, however, with sustainability increasingly recognized as a stake in the game. InnoTex's investment in sustainability, for example, shows through their commitment to Graedel et al.'s (1995) statement that decisions made in the design phase account for 80 to 90 per cent of a

product's environmental impact (although they know that this is far from the everyday considerations of most textile and fashion designers (Barnes and Greenwood, 2006; Ferdows, Machuca, and, Lewis, 2002)).

Sustainability has also become a stake in the game within large-scale textile and fashion production, though in a very different form than in the restricted field of production. Here sustainability capital is played out in the compliance system, as shown in DTG's investment in obtaining the ISO standard, for example, and in the investments made by Western brands in sustainability reports and public sustainability communications. In some ways, sustainability thus appears as a form of Bourdieu's statist capital, albeit one lacking an overall regulatory institution.

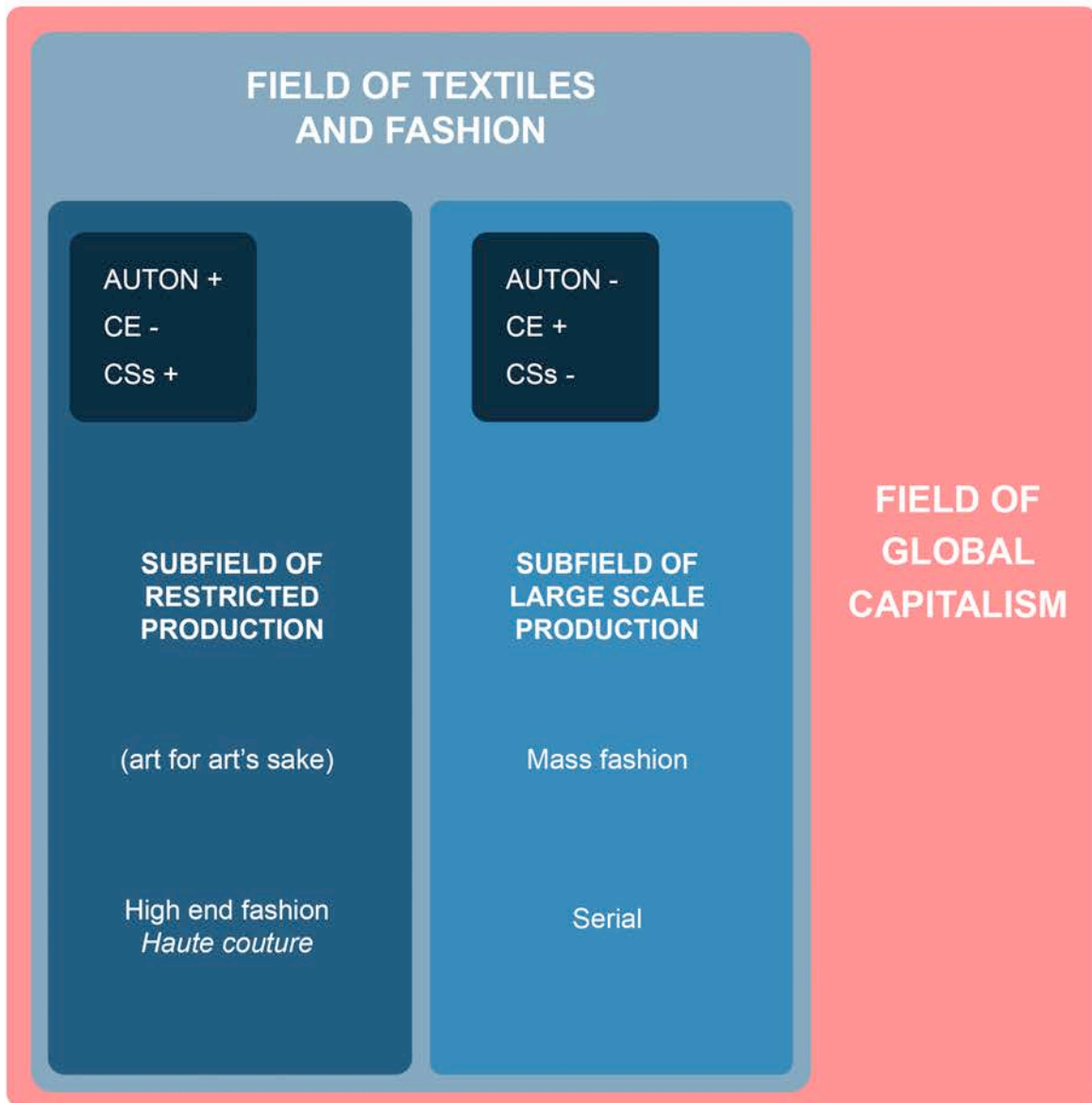
More recently, social responsibility has also been taking alternative shapes, for example in Mr. Dishu's use of smiley faces and rewards to incentivize productivity and a general increase in concern for workers. All of the factory owners and managers we interviewed told us that they find it increasingly difficult to attract and keep workers. Ms. Ah Lam, the manager of a garment factory located outside of Shanghai, told us, for example: "Young people don't want to do this kind of job anymore. While the financial crisis brought on less orders, also less people want to work in the textile industry. One of the reasons is the repetitive work." Following this comment, our conversation with Ms. Ah Lam took a different turn. While employers are increasingly having to take into consideration such matters as social insurance, improved accommodation and higher monthly pay as a means of attracting and retaining productive workers, Ms. Ah Lam also pointed out another challenge related to the rather isolated life led by workers (mostly female) on factory floors, including the problem of finding a boyfriend: "These young women want to get married," she told us, "but there are very few men here, and very little free time for social life." The same problems was identified by a Chinese-British artist who has completed a project on factory girls: "Really what they miss is a social life outside of the context of the factory floor. Opportunities to meet with young men. This can be a challenge both due to the location of some of these factories, and because of Chinese traditions." Our discussion with Ms. Ah Lam brought the topic of sustainability to a different level, beyond the sustainability of compliance systems. The problem faced by Chinese factory owners in securing a skilled workforce, however, is also an indication

of the increasing power of factory workers who, as a result of changes in society, are themselves turning into capital. This, it seems, more so than the compliance system, is starting to have a real impact on the industry in terms of social responsibility.

As shown in Figure 9.3., fields present themselves like Russian nesting dolls, with restricted and large-scale textile and fashion production existing as subfields within the larger field of textiles and fashion. Each subfield distinguishes itself from other subfields in terms of its particular amount and combination of economic, cultural, and symbolic capital. Within and between these subfields, moreover, we see struggles to define the meaning and practices of sustainability. The field of textile and fashion itself is nested within what Calhoun (2002) refers to as “global capitalism”, the strength of which lies in part in its ability to control the terms of discourse, and in particular, to present the specific emerging forms of globalization as both inevitable and progressive. Against this view, perceiving a specific pattern of international or domestic relations as the result of the exercise of power, as Bourdieu so perceived them, is to open up the game by removing the illusion of necessity (Calhoun, 2002). Adopting Bourdieu’s model therefore also makes it possible to question current practices of sustainability.

**FIGURE 9.3.** Fields of textiles and fashion

Adapted from: Bourdieu (1993/2012)



AUTON +: High degree of autonomy  
AUTON -: Low degree of autonomy  
E: Capital-Economic  
CSs: Capital-Symbolic, specific.

## **Conversions of Capital**

According to Bourdieu, in order for fields to work there must be agents with the appropriate habitus to make them both willing and capable of investing in particular fields. Thus newcomers must also pay the price of an initial investment to enter the field in question, for example by acquiring the ISO or Oeko-Tex standards. This initial investment also involves recognition of the value of the game and a certain degree of knowledge of how to play it (Swartz, 1997, p. 126). At the centre of this game are the conversions of capital that constitute the foundation for reproducing or transforming the field (Bourdieu, 1986).

Sustainability, then, is expressed in different ways in the respective fields of restricted and large-scale production. Established in the mid-1990s, InnoTex has played the game of restricted production, fighting both for the cause of sustainability and for its own name as a recognized research body. Today, sustainability is becoming something worth fighting for and thus seems to be beginning to take the shape of symbolic capital. Designers located in this subfield invest in the game through the creation of beautiful and/or artistic sustainable garments which in turn are consecrated by the community, for example through museums exhibiting sustainable creations alongside the creations of famous haute couture designers as sustainable design moves out of science museums and into art museums. Consecration in this part of the field happens through publications, nominations, and the education of new designers. However, although generally ‘misrecognized’, the ultimate stake of the game is also a question of securing budgets. Thus, while engaging with mass fashion may seem “like sleeping with the enemy” (in the words of Marie, InnoTex’s Lead Researcher), it is nonetheless an opportunity to accumulate capital in the field of large-scale production and, not unimportantly, a way to pay the bills.

In the field of large-scale production, sustainability mainly is largely a matter of certifications and standards, a form of statist capital (albeit one lacking global regulatory power). Acting in accordance with these regulations can subsequently be converted into economic capital. All of the factory managers and owners with whom we met primarily saw certifications and standards as a way of winning more Western clients and becoming more competitive. Sustainability, following this logic, is economic sustainability

through—or even at the expense of—environmental and social sustainability. The compliance system has arguably facilitated sustainability in mass fashion; but its impact on actual everyday practices is questionable, not only with regard to factory practices, as seen in the collapse of the Rana Plaza building, but perhaps even more so with regard to Western brands. Thus all of the factory owners and managers we spoke to explained that a significant number of their clients had moved their production to cheaper countries such as Bangladesh and Cambodia in the wake of the 2008 financial crisis. In spite of their recent investments in the required certifications and standards, they had all had to make many workers redundant, some laying off up to 70 per cent of their employees and many left with empty factory buildings. Most of the people we interviewed concluded that the overall goal of Chinese brands and manufacturers is to produce what consumers want. However, as Professor Yuk’s colleague asked rhetorically: “That’s how it is all over the world, isn’t it?” While investment in sustainability can be motivated by economic as well as non-economic considerations (Aaken et al., 2013), economic capital clearly continues to overrule the value of sustainability in mass fashion, sometimes in conflict with personal values. When we asked owner-manager Ms. Hua about her personal relationship to clothing, for example, she replied: “Personally, I like a simple life. Not too many things. I don’t have many garments and I always mend to make them last as long as possible. When it concerns my business, however, reducing consumption is not realistic. For us [the company] I prefer more orders and more production. The more people consume, the better for my company.”

Ms. Hua’s reference to living a simple life is amongst an example of what Wang and Juslin (2009) refer to as traditional Chinese values—culture as a ‘way of life’. We experienced references to such values and practices on several occasions throughout our fieldwork. The question that thus arises is that of why, if such values, e.g. Ms. Hua’s thrift values—mending her garments to make them last as long as possible, lie at the core of Chinese culture, do they not translate into efforts aimed at bringing about change towards practising environmental and social sustainability in business. Here our discussion might be enlightened by adopting Bourdieu’s more material approach to culture, one in which fields impose specific types of struggle on their actors and in which these struggles for power are what motivate the more or less unconscious practices of the agents within those fields. Seen from this perspective, the practices of the Chinese

factory owners and managers are strongly influenced by the particular dynamics of the spirit of Chinese capitalism (Redding, 1990)—what is also called China’s socialist market economy—and the intervention of the state. Over the last thirty years, China has achieved miraculous economic growth through ‘Chinese capitalism’, rising to become the world’s second largest single-country economy. However, the way in which the country has achieved this spectacular growth in GDP at any cost has created a series of social and environmental problems (Zhang, 2008). Hence Mr. Dishi’s view that it is up to the state to set the rules concerning sustainability, thereby giving business people a level playing field. One crucial consequence of the competitive logic of fields and their *doxa* is that they help create the foundation for the ‘misrecognition’ of power relations, contributing thereby to maintaining the social order. As Swartz (1997, p. 126) emphasises: “An unintentional consequence of engaging in field competition is that actors, though they may contest the legitimacy of rewards given by fields, nonetheless reproduce the structure of fields.” This is what we see, for example, in DTG’s investment in the construction of a factory town in Cambodia, as well as in InnoTex’s entry into large-scale production.

As our fieldwork confirms, while the compliance system has helped put sustainability on the agenda in both Western and Chinese national contexts and in the fields of both restricted and large-scale production, this shift in agenda has so far yet to led to any fundamental change in practices. The rules of the game largely remain the same, meaning the industry mostly continues business as usual and whatever transformation is taking place is only doing so because it is perceived as a means to facilitate economic growth—the so-called ‘business case of CSR’.

Employing Bourdieu’s notion of statist capital further highlights and problematizes the role of the state in questions of sustainability. For while Bourdieu has been criticized for his methodological nationalism, his approach seems highly pertinent when it comes to questions of sustainability, calling attention to the lack of any international regulatory framework.

### **The Rules of the Game: For what reasons do they change?**

Bourdieu proposes three different types of field strategies: strategies of conservation, succession, and subversion. Conservation strategies are mostly adopted by those in power in their endeavour to remain powerful and thus in a position to define the rules of the game. Succession strategies are mostly pursued by newcomers to the field who wish to gain access to dominant positions. Subversion strategies, meanwhile, are adopted by those who expect to gain little from the dominant groups. Revolution, according to Bourdieu, is thus most likely to happen in the clash between established figures and newcomers. In *Haute Couture and Haute Culture* (Bourdieu, 1984/1995, p. 136), Bourdieu argues that: “The principle of change within it is the struggle for the monopoly of distinction, that is, the monopolistic power to impose the latest legitimate difference, the latest fashion, and this struggle ends with the progressive fall of the defeated into the past.” In *The Rules of Art*, Bourdieu adds to this that revolution depends on external changes moving in the same direction:

If the permanent struggles between possessors of specific capital and those who are still deprived of it constitute the motor of an incessant transformation of the supply of symbolic products, it remains true that they can only lead to deep transformations of the symbolic relations of force that result in the overthrowing of the hierarchy of genres, schools and authors when these struggles can draw support from external changes moving in the same direction. (Bourdieu, 1992/1996, p. 127)

Bourdieu (1992/1996, p. 51) further suggests that the foundation for such revolution might develop in what he calls ‘bastard institutions’, by which he means places where conversations take place across fields in the process of making new fields. Thus, following Bourdieu, one can speak of different levels of change. On the one hand, for example, there is the continuous change of fashions (styles), while on the other hand there are deep structural changes that depend on changes cutting across fields.

In the light of the ‘failure of codes’, we are beginning to see actors engage in more collaborative approaches to sustainability, such as the Sustainable Apparel Coalition (SAC) and BSR’s HERproject. In such forums, stakeholders from across the industry



engage in conversation, potentially challenging current positions of power, or simply reflecting the fact that these positions are already changing. Azmeh and Nadvi (2014) note that the relationship between actors in the industry's global value chains is reforming because of the growing role of first-tier suppliers who provide items directly to the brands, mainly through full-package apparel production that can include everything from start to finish (e.g. patterns, fabric and trim sourcing, marking and grading, fabric cutting, sewing, screen printing, finishing, quality control and trimming, team and press, tagging, labels, bar codes etc., fold, bag and pack). The authors also note that:

we still know surprisingly little about the potentially transformative role that other (non-lead firm) actors within the chain can have in defining the characteristics and dynamics of the value chain. [...] We still do not fully understand how such suppliers function. Who are they? Where do they come from? Where do they operate? (Azmeh and Nadvi, 2014, p. 710)

In this situation, large Asian manufacturers are taking on roles as co-leaders in global value chains in the apparel industry. They are strategic players in coordinating and exploiting geographically dispersed production linkages. The question arises, however, as to whether these forums merely represent a strategy of succession or in fact have the potential to subvert the rules of the game. At a recent meeting in SAC, for example, manufacturers proposed a reverse compliance system, allowing them to impose additional demands of sustainability on their clients. While such a system would involve changes in positions of power, it would not necessarily result in any fundamental change to the rules of the game.

What may have an influence in effecting change, however, is if we were to appreciate Bourdieu's notion of practices as temporalisation (Adkins, 2011; Bourdieu, 1997/2000). An example of the extent to which we continue to put off change for the future could be seen at the recent signing ceremony of the Paris agreement on climate change in New York. There the US Secretary of State John Kerry carried his two-year-old granddaughter, Isabel, in his arms as he walked up to sign the agreement on behalf of the United States. According to *USA Today*, Mr. Kerry's granddaughter was one of 197

children attending the event to represent the countries that adopted the agreement (Rice, 2016). In his speech, UN secretary-General Ban Ki-moon said (Konstantinides, 2016): “These young children are our future [...] Today is a day for our children and grandchildren and all generations to come.” While wishing to secure a better world for one’s children and grandchildren is admirable, the fact that Mr. Kerry brought his granddaughter to the signing agreement also demonstrates the way in which we continue to see the consequences of our unsustainable practices as having an effect mainly in the future as opposed to the ‘here and now’. This also means that we can keep delaying change. Things look different, however, if we adopt Bourdieu’s notion of practices as temporalisation. The results of unsustainable business behaviours have immediate consequences and we have to take responsibility here and now—not ‘only’ in the future. Could such a view influence our everyday practices towards sustainability in a more fundamental way?

To change current systems, Bourdieu (1998a, p. 40) suggests, there is no more potent tool than to bring back into view the conflicts and confrontations of the early beginnings, and therefore all the discarded possibilities: “it retrieves the possibility that things could have been (and still could be) otherwise”. Certainly, a review of the literature on CSR and sustainability is a journey through different interpretations and definitions of sustainability and the responsibilities of corporations (Carroll, 1999, 2008). Moreover, the increasing criticism of capitalist systems, even from within the field of economics (Piketty, 2014; Jackson, 2009), might prove the very foundation for fundamental change in the field of textiles and fashion. While forums such as SAC may be a step on the way, Bourdieu’s work suggests that for fundamental change to happen these ‘bastard institutions’ should be rooted in a deeper engagement between different stakeholders, since the form of expertise needed to support this process is not a property of an individual or even an organized group (a profession) but a network connecting individuals in different positions and with different skills, as well as connecting them with arguments, devices, resources, and models.

## **Conclusion**

In light of the increasing pressure on corporations to take account not only of economic but also environmental and social sustainability in their business operations, the main

question addressed in this paper is that of how and why organizations will either continue reproducing unsustainable practices or change towards practising sustainability. Specifically, I adopt Bourdieu's concepts of field and capital to investigate current dynamics and practices of sustainability as expressed in the fields of restricted and large-scale production through the eyes of Western and Chinese stakeholders. Adopting a Bourdieusian approach to the study of change towards sustainability provides a framework with which to discuss the relational challenges that characterize the problematic challenges that span micro and macro perspectives. As noted by Aaken et al. (2013), focusing on a single level of analysis is not sufficient to achieve a more realistic understanding of sustainability challenges, many of which cut across organizational, national, and global levels.

Based on the number of published sustainability reports, the increasing use of organic cotton, and investments by factories in certifications and standards, it might seem at first sight as though sustainability has come to constitute a form of symbolic capital in the textile and fashion industry. However, while the compliance system might have helped put sustainability on the agenda, our analysis shows that it has not effected a fundamental change in the rules of the game. On the contrary, 'sustainability' in the field of large-scale production continues to exist in a subordinate or dominated position, while the move to legitimacy continues to be based on the possession of economic capital amongst brands and amongst manufacturers. At best, sustainability is taking the form of statist capital; but this is so far undermined by the lack of any transnational regulatory framework to direct the practices of both Western brands and Chinese manufacturers. Thus it seems appropriate to ask the question: Where, then, is the real "mega-capital"? (Bourdieu, Wacquant and Farage, 1994). In other words, the nature of capitalism in its different forms is so deeply grounded in the textile and fashion industry, including in a new economy like China, as to need no justification. It imposes itself as self-evident and universal. How and why, then, do we change the rules of the game? Starting from Bourdieu, and reflecting upon the SAC initiative, I suggest that for the industry to change it is necessary to encourage broader conversations across a number of cross-disciplinary and cross-national players, also involving our current understandings of capitalism. Here Bourdieu's more material approach to culture can enlighten the

discussion. Further investigation is needed, however, to better understand the potential role of such initiatives, both in reproducing and subverting the rules of the game.

Due to our limited experience and lack of networks in China, this study is based on only a particular part of the textile and fashion industry. Further research focusing on a wider set of stakeholders is also critical.

**APPENDIX 9.A. | Overview of China contacts (1)**

Name	Position	Organisation	Location
Mr. Jian	Retired factory manager	State owned garment factory	Nanxun in Huzhou
Mr. Mu	Owner	Small garment factory	Nanxun in Huzhou
Ms. Brigitte	Professor	East China Normal University	Shanghai
Ms. Yuk	Professor	East China Normal University	Shanghai
Ms. Ushi	Creator and Branding Queen	Communication	Shanghai
Mr. David	Manager	Production office	Shanghai
Ms. Xingjuan	Retired manager	International business/trade	Shanghai
Ms. Hua	Owner-manager	Garment factory middle sized	Shanghai
Mr. Dewai	Manager	Garment factory middle sized	Shanghai
Mr. John	Co-founder	International business/trade	Shanghai
Mr. Dishi	Manager	Large textile and garment factory	Hongquiao
Mr. Quon and Ms. Fenfang	Head Designers	Fast fashion brand	Shanghai
Ms. Ju, Ms. Meizhen and Mr. Shan	Retired factory workers	State owned garment factory	Shanghai
Ms. Sheu-füh	Trade	International business/trade	Shanghai
Mr. James	Professor, Chinese History	Cambridge University	Cambridge
Mr. Ben	Co-Founders	Textile recycling	London
Ms. Bao	Artist		London/China

## APPENDIX 9.A. Overview of China contacts (2)

Name	Position	Organisation	Location
Mr. Bao-Zhi		Textile association	Shanghai
Ms. Julie and Ms. Kyra	Co-founders	Small fashion brand	Shanghai
Ms. Josefin	Manager	Production office	Shanghai
Mr. Enlai	Project manager	Steel industry	Shanghai
	Workers (workshop)	Middle sized garment factory	Shanghai
Ms. Ah Lam	Manager/Sales	Middle sized garment factory	Hangzhou.
Mr. Yao and group of students	Professor	Donghua University	Shanghai
Mr. Yun and Ms. Tao	Owner and Designer	Clothing brand	Hong Kong
Mr. Jing, Ms. Song and Ms. Wenling	Vice President, Representative, and Manager	Economic and Information Council, Clothing Culture Promotion, Garment Association	Guangzhou
Julie and Cindy	PA and Travel Agent		Guangzhou
Mr. Alex & Mrs. Alli		BSR	Hong Kong
Ms. Tu	Teacher	Hong Kong Design Institute	Hong Kong
Ms. Sofia	Founder	NGO	Hong Kong
Sustainability Working Group			Hong Kong

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**APPENDIX 9.B.** | Overview workshop and conference participation

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Event	Location
Planet Textiles Conference	Shanghai
Redress Forum	Hong Kong





## 10. Conclusion

Personally, I like a simple life. Not too many things. I don't have many garments and I always mend to make them last as long as possible. When it concerns my business, however, reducing consumption is not realistic. For us [the company] I prefer more orders and more production. The more people consume, the better for my company. (Interview: owner-manager Ms. Hua, October 2013).

The goal of this thesis has been to investigate how and for what reasons organizations in the textile and fashion industry might change towards practising sustainability, with a focus on the potential of taking a design attitude towards addressing this challenge and on the influence of cultural and contextual issues on peoples' everyday practices. Starting with an ethnographic study of InnoTex, the interconnectedness of fashion production and challenges to sustainability soon prompted me to undertake a series of interviews with Chinese garment factory owners and managers. It is the adoption of such a qualitative approach that constitutes the main contribution of this thesis to the field of organizational and management studies, offering an empirically grounded investigation of design thinking in practice, thereby rendering challenges to organizational change towards practising sustainability less opaque and abstract, and, based on an analysis of my empirical material, offering practical implications for practitioners. The main theoretical contribution of this thesis, meanwhile, rests on a counterfactual approach to analysis (Cornelissen and Durand, 2014) that draws on design thinking as well as Bourdieu's practice theory and the Sociology of Translation. In this section I present the overall conclusions of this thesis and discuss potential criticisms of the theoretical and methodological approach taken in my studies.

The above-cited utterance by Ms. Hua serves as a good illustration of the catch-22 situation that pertains with regard to the challenge of bringing about organizational change towards practising sustainability in the textile and fashion industry. For while more and more textile and fashion organizations are putting sustainability on their agenda, and while some actors in these organisations are even personally motivated to do so, their practices remain embedded in systems of capitalism in which economic capital continues to be the main stake motivating business practices, typically at the expense of environmental and social responsibility, and

sometimes at the expense of personal values. Thus, while the Brundtland Report put the topic of sustainability on the public and corporate agenda, it did so by investing in current understandings of capitalism, stating a fundamental belief in the possibility and benefit of continuous economic growth. Taking Bourdieu's view, it is unlikely that such attention and importance would have been paid to this report if it had not put this positive spin on growth. In doing so, the report played the game of the field; or, in the terms of the Sociology of Translation, the Brundtland Commission took over the relay and thereby helped ensure the reproduction of certain practices instead of others.

This thesis contributes to the growing criticism of systems of capitalism by demonstrating some of the organizational, environmental and social consequences of current global economic practices (Gay and Morgan, 2013; Wallerstein, 2013; Wallerstein, Collins, Mann, Derluguian and Calhoun, 2013). As noted by Bourdieu, every field is characterized by the value it attributes to particular types and compositions of capital. Thus although sustainability is arguably in the process of formation as symbolic capital in the field of restricted production, and as statist capital in the field of large-scale production, the textile and fashion industry as a whole continues to be caught up in the belief that infinite growth is possible in a world of finite resources, churning out more and more products to a seemingly insatiable and growing consumer base. Such continuous uptake of the relay (Latour, 2005a) has resulted in a situation whereby the world's rich countries, despite increasing awareness of the environmental and social damage involved, have levels and patterns of consumption well in excess of what our planet can sustain. As the four papers of this thesis have shown, current economic growth in the textile and fashion industry is largely fuelled by the relocation of production to poorer countries where there are little or no regulations, thereby depleting these countries' non-renewable resources and generating the high levels of pollution that accompany industrial production. This is clearly an unsustainable path to follow. At the moment, however, there are no examples of any adequate response to this highly interconnected global challenge—a challenge marked by a widespread experience of disconnectedness on the part of individual agents.

Adopting a qualitative approach to research, this thesis attempts to explore a possible foundation for alternative responses to the challenge of sustainability by examining the potential of taking a design attitude to organizational change towards practising sustainability and by adopting the methodological and theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu and the Sociology of Translation.

On the basis of my fieldwork I argue that design thinking has the potential to address the challenge at hand by offering a more explorative and solution-oriented approach than the managerial and win-win approaches that have characterized much of the work produced so far in the literature on organizational change and sustainability. Whereas the social sciences primarily focus on the past and present, design thinking has the potential to envision systems that do not yet exist, whether these be completely new systems (radical innovations) or new states of existing systems (incremental innovations) (Simon, 1969). In other words, whereas science asks the question of whether this proposition is valid or true, design asks if it can be made to work better (Jelinek, Romme and Boland, 2008). This having been said, my analysis also demonstrates that, instead of blindly adopting design thinking as a tool to facilitate processes of organizational change, it is all-important to understand in detail for each case the reasons why design thinking is being mobilized, how it is being practised and for what purposes. InnoTex's workshops for H&M, for example, did not lead to a radical change of H&M's organizational practices. Nonetheless, it is noteworthy that InnoTex have continued their work with H&M since the completion of my fieldwork. This gives rise to the following theoretical and practical questions: What can Bourdieu's theoretical framework tell us about InnoTex's work with H&M? What does InnoTex's work with H&M tell us about Bourdieu's theoretical framework, in which transverse movements are, at best, extremely rare? Did H&M in fact enrol InnoTex in their network and understanding of sustainability rather than vice versa (Callon, 1999)?

Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Bourdieu and ANT, this thesis shows that the current norms guiding and justifying business practices at the expense of environmental and social sustainability are not 'natural' and inevitable, but human constructs. Taking a Bourdieusian perspective, one can see Western and Chinese systems of capitalism as being only some amongst numerous possibilities, while according to Callon and Latour such systems constitute networks of associations that will fall apart once actors stop investing in them. As Wallerstein (2013) notes, capitalism is not a given, i.e. something we can do nothing about; rather, it is a system that we (humans) have created and thus also something that we can change. Capitalism, in this view, could even go out of existence.

By reconceptualising sustainability as capital in formation, this thesis demonstrates not only how and why the textile and fashion industry continues to reproduce unsustainable practices but also shows the continuous struggles to change the field and the composition and definition of different forms of capital. InnoTex's work with H&M, for example, shows how sustainability is becoming a stake in the game, though only on condition that it can be converted into economic capital (cf. Chapter 7), while our Sociolog.dx study of sustainable fashion (Chapter 6) also presents more radical attempts to create sustainable fashion, with businesses trying to fundamentally re-think existing practices and business models (Bocken, Short, Rana and Evans, 2013). Adopting Bourdieu's material approach to culture also enables us to move beyond cultural (as a 'way of life') barriers to organizational change towards practising sustainability and to account for the apparent discrepancy between traditional Chinese values and the everyday practices of business owners and managers, as well as enabling us to introduce a discussion of the role of the state in facilitating a shift in organizational practices towards sustainability. Thus, although Bourdieu's theoretical framework has been much criticized for its determinism, conceptualizing sustainability as capital in formation may also function as a source of empowerment, indicating possible paths for organizational change.

Adopting Bourdieu's practice theory and the Sociology of Translation to conceptualize organizational change involves a number of challenges. This is partly due to the fact that although organizational researchers since Weick (1995) have increasingly been investigating action and process, much of this work remains largely focused on entities. In the words of Feldman and Orlikowski (2011, p. 1248): "In the box-and-arrow figures so prevalent in organization theory, the boxes are always labelled, whereas the arrows are often unadorned by any text, as if they speak for themselves." Bourdieu's practice theory and the Sociology of Translation, by contrast, spur a focus on the consequentiality of everyday actions and the relationality of phenomena, turning our attention to the arrows of the box-and arrow figures and thus to the relationships and practices that produce outcomes in the world. This means, for example, that when viewing the everyday work of H&M's design teams through the lens of the Sociology of Translation, the specific outcomes of stability or change (actor-networks) are seen as consequential only in the context of the dynamic relations and performances through which such stability and change are achieved in particular instances of practice.

In the majority of this thesis I conceptualize sustainability as capital in formation in order to explore the ways in which such re-conceptualization might help bring about change in textile and fashion organizations and in the field of textiles and fashion more generally. Doing so carries with it potential criticisms. One such criticism might be grounded in Friedland's (2009) argument that power is both the primary interest of practice and the motor of field dynamics in Bourdieu's theory. Bourdieu's logic of practice functions as a sort of generic contest for domination in a plurality of homologously organized fields, leaving the field (e.g. the field of textile and fashion production) empty of cultural specificity (Friedland, 2009, p. 888). In his article *The Endless Fields of Pierre Bourdieu*, Friedland writes:

Agents who engage in different practices do struggle for legitimacy, for authority, for recognition whether by publishing houses, universities or the state. However, when Bourdieu reduces the logic of the cultural field to the struggle for cultural legitimacy, he replicates the moves of those American institutionalists who emphasize the process by which new forms are made real, legitimate, accountable and general. The meaning of the cultural production, its hermeneutic content, slips from view, in much the same way that production studies in culture tend to make the meanings of what is produced incidental to the analysis. The specific properties of the production and the product are sociologically inert. The logic of an institutional field is given by struggles for trans-institutional operators: domination, legitimacy, universality. Culture has a political content; power lacks a cultural content. Habitus is a here an embodied relation to means, class a crass struggle for distinction. (Friedland, 2009, p. 894)

Swartz (1997, p. 121) notes that Bourdieu sees his concept of field as distinct from views that dwell on total domination: "Bourdieu's fields are *fields of struggle* rather than 'total institutions' (Goffman), 'ideological state apparatus' (Althusser) or orders of 'discipline' (Foucault)." Within this framework, conflict is clearly at the heart of social life as actors struggle for power. Wanting to give real "substance" to the logic of practices, Friedland (2009, p. 905) argues that: "capitals, if we can use that term, are purposes before they are powers; indeed they are only powers because they are purposes, purposes constituted not only externally through difference, but internally through enactment and practical belief." Taking Friedland's critique of Bourdieu's work seriously would seem to imply that by mobilizing sustainability as capital in formation I

take away the cultural specificity of sustainability practices, specificity which elsewhere I argue is key to our understanding of how to change organizations towards practising sustainability. ‘Sustainability’ thus becomes just another tool for domination. Acknowledging Friedland’s point and acknowledging the risk of ending up with “endless fields” empty of content, I have started from the belief that we can build a broader approach to the analysis of field—one which extends the Bourdieusian frame to address a wide range of current issues (Savage and Silva, 2013). This thesis, I believe, shows that the concept of capital has the potential to help tease out ‘substance’—“whether love, justice, popular sovereignty, God, property, beauty or truth” (Friedland, 2009, p. 912)—that is key to my analysis, while also showing that capital can direct our attention, constructively, to the struggles taking place in the field of textiles and fashion concerning meanings and practices of sustainability.

By adopting Bourdieu’s practice theory and the Sociology of Translation in the study of organizational change towards practising sustainability, I ‘rebuild connections’ to the wider society. Informed by oppositional ontological and epistemological assumptions (Kale-Lostuvali, 2016), both Bourdieu’s practice theory and the Sociology of Translation help me re-establish the link between individual agents and the larger field of textile and fashion production, thus operationalizing personal feelings of disconnect in a highly interconnected industry. This not only informs a more nuanced understanding of the past and present but also, when combined with design thinking, suggests how and under what circumstances organizations can change towards practising sustainability. InnoTex’s development of design tools for H&M, for example, help reveal the extent to which current unsustainable business practices are integrated into the objects we work with in our everyday practices, such as design templates and buildings. These objects become carriers of black-boxed practices, but also opportunities to establish new associations; for if we change the tools then we potentially change the practices. Taking an organizational perspective, this thesis thus presents a call for collaboration across disciplines, nations, and cultures. While much can be achieved within organizations, fundamental change towards practising sustainability depends on a multitude of stakeholders investing in sustainability to an extent that it is either compatible with or overrules economic capital.

### **Future Research Directions**

On the basis of my last three years of research, I see an urgent need to explore how to facilitate cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural collaboration towards taking greater account of

sustainability. As touched upon in Chapters 6 and 9, we already see attempts to change industry practices through work across disciplines and cultures in spaces reminiscent of Bourdieu's 'bastard institutions'. Indeed my own fieldwork can be seen as an attempt at such cross-disciplinary collaboration for change. Further in-depth research is essential, however, in order to understand if and how such collaboration can foster fundamental change, and particularly how to facilitate such collaboration more effectively. Moreover, there is an urgent need to gain a better understanding of the potential power of organizations operating at the very borders of the textile and fashion industry and the role these organizations might play in transforming the field. Some of the experts participating in our online study directed our attention to examples of such 'borderline' operations. Perhaps with the growing criticism of capitalism, including criticism from within the field of economics, such organizations can play a key role in subverting the composition and value of different types of capital. While change is urgently needed, it might be useful to draw on Garnham and William's (1980) distinction between replication and reformation in processes of reproduction. Finally, this thesis lays the foundation for more practice-based research into the question of how and under what circumstances organizations can change towards practising sustainability. The key question, therefore, is how we can bring the insights of this thesis to help bring about change in future practices.





# 11. Reference List

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