

ROUTLEDGE



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Routledge Handbook of Sustainability and Fashion

Edited by Kate Fletcher and Mathilda Tham

ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK OF SUSTAINABILITY AND FASHION

The clothing industry employs 25 million people globally, contributing to many livelihoods and the prosperity of communities, women's independence and the establishment of significant infrastructures in poorer countries. Yet the fashion industry is also a significant contributor to the degradation of natural systems, with the associated environmental footprint of clothing high in comparison with other products.

Routledge Handbook of Sustainability and Fashion recognizes the complexity of aligning fashion with sustainability. It explores fashion and sustainability at the levels of products, processes and paradigms and takes a truly multidisciplinary approach to critically question and suggest creative responses to issues of:

- fashion in a post-growth society;
- fashion, diversity and equity;
- fashion, fluidity and balance across natural, social and economic systems.

This handbook is a unique resource for a wide range of scholars and students, in the social sciences, arts and humanities, interested in sustainability and fashion.

Kate Fletcher is Professor of Sustainability, Design, Fashion at the Centre for Sustainable Fashion, University of the Arts London, UK.

Mathilda Tham is Professor of Design at Linnaeus University, Sweden, and metadesign researcher at Goldsmiths, University of London, UK.

‘Containing the work of leading thinkers and activists, this handbook is a much-needed volume, which broadens and deepens our understanding of the complexities of the conjoining of sustainability and fashion. A truly collaborative initiative, in its content and method, it provides guidance, challenges, but also a positive way forward for sustainability and fashion to coexist, despite what sometimes seem to be overwhelming odds.’ – *Hazel Clark, Parsons The New School for Design, USA*

‘Many books document, describe and perhaps even explain fashion. What this book adds is the desire to change it. No one reading the extraordinarily diverse content is left with any doubt as to the complexity, but also the urgency, of that ambition. Starting with a movement from the study of systems to a concern with consequences.’ – *Daniel Miller, University College London, UK*

‘Fletcher and Tham have gathered together a stellar cast of academics, researchers, practitioners and activists who offer their perspectives on sustainability viewed through the lens of fashion. Through concise essays and case study snapshots the reader is challenged and guided to think more deeply about sustainability as a matter of personal, local and globally interconnected agency.’ – *Sandy Black, University of the Arts London, UK*

‘Fashion and sustainability can be hard to grasp due to its complexity. This seminal handbook offers a wide range of good suggestions and perspectives; from very hands-on propositions to highly abstract theoretical inquiries, each and every chapter provides good examples for action and exploration of issues relevant for both scholars, students, and industry.’ – *Vibeke Riisberg, Kolding School of Design, Denmark*

‘Sustainable fashion has in the past often seemed gestural, borrowing from the discourse of sustainable design to only ever slightly lessen a massive problem. This selection proves that sustainable fashion design is now a conceptually mature field with much to teach other disciplines of design.’ – *Cameron Tonkinwise, Carnegie Mellon University, USA*

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To our kids (J, C, P, RL) and all others

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INTRODUCTION

Dear reader and collaborator of fashion, it is an honour to share with you a body of work that celebrates fashion futures for sustainability.

This edited volume of contributions from over thirty scholars from around the world explores interconnections between sustainability and fashion, a web of relationships that are, at one and the same time, global and also domestic, personal and also industrial, a basic need and also a luxury, essential to the fashion sector and also challenging to its very nature. It does so by bringing together different experiences and perspectives of fashion: some emerging from within fashion itself, and others from the sustainability community. The chapters reflect a wide range of influences as varied as everyday actions, scholarly practice, technological innovation, direct experience, industrial knowledge and creative activity, many of which are different to what has gone before, and some of which are *radical* in the original sense of the word, that is *forming the roots*, back to the bare and essential aspects of ideas and practice of fashion found within a thriving – a sustainability – future.

We believe the contribution of this volume to be new, vibrant and unique in a number of ways, including that:

- it opens up the fashion and sustainability discourse, and hopefully practice, by inviting a range of perspectives from scholars and disciplines hitherto outside this remit;
- it integrates theoretical fashion perspectives, pushing the engagement in understandings of sustainability towards relating with, embracing and even celebrating the complex symbolic rationales that underpin the fashion experience;
- it asks scholars and practitioners to step beyond what they *know* and, from their advanced vantage point, speculate and offer visions for fashion and sustainability, as well as sketching out further territories of research and practice;
- it integrates insights from research and practice, dissolving some boundaries between, and also honours insights coming from the personal realm of the contributors;
- it focuses on solutions and possibilities, seeking to offer agency and a range of ideas;
- it draws on collaborative processes, where each contributor has been invited to shape the ethos and direction of the book.

The contributions to fashion and sustainability offered by this volume are of different types. They range from fresh findings from empirical research, which should prompt new emphases