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Fashion Diggers: transgressive making for personal benefit

Introduction

This paper outlines my practice-based PhD project, which investigates the impact of making on fashion well-being in the context of sustainable fashion. Although addressing personal well-being may not seem an obvious route to sustainability, researchers such as Jackson (2005: 19) have recently started to explore the concept of a 'double dividend', in which there is a reciprocity between personal and environmental benefits. Greater activity in amateur fashion making could offer these dual benefits, and this potential is what motivates me as a designer-maker-activist working with amateur knitters. Ultimately my research is intended to inform a model of design activism in which design skills are used to support individuals to take material-based action to improve their fashion well-being. However, I perceive various factors limiting the scope of amateur making. I have created a metaphor which compares fashion with land in order to bring these barriers - and potential means of overcoming them - into focus.

Before we examine the metaphor in more detail, I will explain the use of key terms used in this paper. 'Well-being' has been described as encompassing people's 'experiences, feelings and perceptions of how their lives are going' (NEF 2009). Key aspects of well-being include vitality, competency, autonomy and resilience, along with a sense of connection with others (ibid). I consider 'fashion' to be the way people express themselves and connect with others through clothing, and use the term to refer to both physical objects and fashion culture. While some would make a distinction between fashion and clothing, I argue that the majority of clothing is now engaged with fashion and fashion choices - whether positive, negative, indifferent or unconscious - are an intractable part of dressing. Fashion well-being is an under-researched concept which could be placed within a broader debate around body image and definitions of beauty (Corner 2009); however, I define it more specifically as a positive sense of ownership regarding clothing choices, and a feeling of balance between the self and others in these decisions.

I am using the term 'making' to refer to a broad range of material intervention activities including altering and refashioning, as well as constructing an object from start to finish, and throughout this paper have a particular focus on knitting, as this is my specific area of interest. Because I am primarily interested in the experiences of people who make or alter their own clothes, I refer to them (depending on context) as wearers or makers, using the adjective 'amateur' to distinguish them from professional designer-makers.

Fashion = land

According to Kaiser (2008: 140), 'metaphors suggest analogies that enable us to visualize and understand concepts that might otherwise be difficult to grasp'. Most metaphors for fashion focus on production and consumption in a binary or linear structure; Kaiser suggests that a sustainable fashion system will require circular and weblike metaphors. In my metaphor, I see fashion as land. Comparing a transitory culture such as fashion with the tangible concept of land allows us to consider issues of ownership and access as they have arisen through land, and apply them to fashion. Land is a finite natural resource which can be shared or 'held in common' - but tends to pass gradually into private ownership. Before the process of enclosure in England between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries, much land was held in common, with its use shared between local people (Neeson 1996).

Common rights included gathering fuel, grazing animals, growing crops, fishing, and gathering wild food; these rights gave commoners a means of independence, which they found valuable (ibid). Although common rights were complex and variable in England, for the purposes of this metaphor I take the stance that the ideal state of a commons is equal access for every individual.

If we see fashion as a commons, of what does this resource consist? We could include the huge diversity of archetypal garment styles, shapes and details from different geographical areas and historical periods; fabric types and their associated construction methods; and the massive variety of ways of wearing clothes, and their associated meanings, that make up the world's fashion and clothing cultures. Because fashion reflects preferences at a particular time, areas of the fashion commons are accessed at different times and by different people. The way in which individuals move around the commons depends upon the degree to which they wish to stand out or conform. Activity is not evenly spread; some areas may have enduring appeal while others become popular only for a short time, until the 'erosion' of overexposure drives people away. Particularly fertile areas may return to popularity time after time. Familiar styles can appear new by being freshly combined with unexpected elements, either through styling (within an outfit) or design (within a single item). While the fashion commons is built upon archetypal historical styles, when an area becomes popular, new interpretations of this style are produced accordingly. When the popularity of an area wanes, the physical objects remain to be rediscovered at another time. This natural movement and capacity for rediscovery is what makes fashion able to tangibly express the temporality of culture and be, for some, such an engaging experience.

I propose that this fashion commons should be owned by everyone, though the issue of ownership requires clarification. Neeson (1996) describes how the shared ownership of a commons referred to rights of access, rather than titled ownership of the land. While the land itself didn't belong to the commoners, they had profit à prendre - the right to use the land. Referring to a poem by John Clare about common land, Neeson (1996: 3) says, 'the wheat in the ear and the blossoming bean belonged to [him] because he could see them and touch them and walk through them. He owned this world because it was open to him.' This lyrical explanation bears translation to our fashion commons: no-one should privately own a part of our fashion culture, but everyone should be entitled to gain a sense of ownership through open access to wear, design, and make.

Enclosure

As Federici (2011) explains, the definition of cultural collective products as commons is not new; open-source software, languages and libraries are other examples of non-land-based commons. However, I am using the metaphor to go further and consider the process which led to the mass decline of land as a commons in England: enclosure. Enclosure ended common right through the transfer of common land to private ownership. The extinction of land rights turned commoners into wage-dependent labourers, entirely subject to the decisions of increasingly powerful employers (Neeson 1996). The process caused important and irreversible changes in the social and economic structure of village communities, contributing to the creation of the working class and the growth of towns and cities (ibid).

What enclosure has taken place in fashion? I suggest that fashion enclosure has occurred through the gradual industrialisation and professionalisation of clothing production, and the increasing separation of the roles of producer and consumer. Unlike land enclosure, which was aggressively promoted by landowners and caused great political debate, the fashion enclosure that I describe has quietly emerged as a seemingly inconsequential by-product of capitalist growth. Today, the vast majority of our clothing production happens overseas and most people have little experience or knowledge of how their clothes are made. I define this lack of making knowledge as one

type of practical enclosure. As I have described above, different areas of the fashion commons become favoured as being fashionable over time. The fashion industry manipulates people into these approved areas by restricting what is available to buy; despite capitalism's promise of unbridled choice, research has shown a homogeneity of styles across high street shops (Woodward 2007). Because designers control which elements of an archetypal style will be interpreted in terms of clothing shapes and details, wearers are further restricted in how they can engage with the commons. Some areas become irretrievably linked with certain brands, meaning that fashion success in that area requires the wearer to purchase accordingly. This manipulation is another example of practical enclosure.

Meanwhile, psychological enclosure is the sense, felt by wearers, that there are external forces and hidden rules affecting their fashion decisions. Up until relatively recently, many fashion cultures were localised; for example, photographs of the London and Manchester punk scenes show that they had distinct fashion cultures despite drawing on similar influences (Colegrave and Sullivan 2001). However, fashion has become so global that, despite a widespread appreciation that contemporary fashion trends emerge from people on the streets, they are of such a scale that only the most powerful designers and trend-setters can feel any sense of ownership or contribution. The popular obsession with trends has the effect of solidifying the barriers around the areas that have been (temporarily) deemed as in fashion, or good taste, and making styles outside these walls unfashionable. Hence, wearers can feel at the mercy of trends, and unable to influence them; as Soper (2001: 27) states, 'you submit to the dictate of a collectivity you have neither willed nor authored'. Additionally, there is a sense among wearers that even within approved areas, there are rules governing what should be worn. The demise of prescriptive fashions in the early twentieth century and the diversity of styles on offer in contemporary fashion has led to postmodernist claims that fashion is a free and playful game, devoid of rules (Lipovetsky 1994). However, recent ethnographic studies by researchers such as Woodward (2007) indicate that women often experience fashion as a burden of expectation, with the uncertainty of the system causing anxiety. It would seem that a diversity of dress options doesn't remove fashion rules, but instead means that they operate within constantly shifting trends, are dependent upon context, and are almost impossible to grasp. It is no surprise that wearers turn to experts such as designers, stylists and fashion journalists - who are judged to have a professional grasp on fashion's rules - for advice and support. Although this support may help wearers to feel successful in fashion terms, the professionalisation of fashion knowledge limits their agency and hampers their ability to make confident and independent decisions. Other wearers instead try to opt out of fashion; however, their claim not to care about fashion's rules often represents just a different type of engagement with them.

The nature of clothing, as a medium that communicates between the self and society, means that the imagined gaze of others is ever-present in fashion decisions (Woodward 2007). However, it is widely agreed that contemporary fashion culture is, more than ever before, obsessed by image. Clark (2008: 442) draws on the work of Parkins and Craig (2000) to describe how fashion now values the visual - a 'sense of distance' - over the 'senses of proximity' such as touch and smell. I would argue that this emphasis on image has given undue prominence to the unknown fashion viewer over the fashion wearer, created an imbalance in fashion decisions and strengthened the psychological enclosure of fashion.

It should be noted that this enclosure has been seen as a positive step in many circles. It has made clothing affordable for those on low incomes and removed the 'drudgery' of making clothes from the long list of women's domestic tasks. Supporters of land enclosure argued that it was needed to make the land more productive, and avoid hardship, in times of population growth (Neeson 1996). Similarly, it could be argued that fashion enclosure serves the collective cultural interests of the population, by enabling more people to freely and inexpensively participate in what has been widely called

democratic fashion. However, I see the enclosure of fashion in a similar way to the loss of the land commons, though this loss is unrecognised and largely unchallenged. While my portrayal of the fashion experience of individuals as dependent, anxiety-ridden and impotent may seem overly dramatic, there is certainly little in the research by Woodward and others to suggest that a positive sense of fashion well-being is engendered by our current fashion system. It would seem that fashion enclosure is adversely affecting individuals' fashion well-being, in terms of those influential factors of vitality, competency, autonomy and resilience, and creating an imbalance as they prioritise the opinions of others over their own. Furthermore, this industrialised fashion system - which is producing ever-increasing volumes of clothing - causes many detrimental social and environmental impacts (Allwood et al 2006). Continuing with the metaphor, we can seek inspiration from historical and contemporary groups that take direct action to gain access to enclosed land, and recreate a more direct relationship with the earth. Examining three different approaches will enable us to consider possible ways of regaining access to enclosed fashion terrain.

Rambling

After enclosure, English landowners were in a strong position regarding their property rights, and ordinary people had very little access to natural areas, even for recreation. In 1930s Manchester, rambling was increasing in popularity as an activity amongst the working class; however, the vast majority of the nearby Peak District was privately owned and there were very few open footpaths (Kinder Trespass 2007). Many ramblers did not recognise the landowners' claim over the land, and a mass trespass of the highest peak in the area, Kinder Scout, was organised to demand the right to roam (ibid). The trespass - which led to several arrests and a huge wave of public sympathy - had a great impact, influencing the creation of the National Parks in 1949 and the Countryside and Right of Way Act in 2000 which increased rights of access to open country and common land (ibid).

Ramblers seek access to land for the simple pleasures of being outdoors, in a wilderness. They temporarily occupy a space, but do not engage materially with the land by growing crops or gathering fuel. A comparable activity within our fashion metaphor would be similarly non-material; 'fashion ramblers' might roam through different styles, but wouldn't materially engage with their clothing. They would wander far from approved areas to find their own styles to adopt and define. A process where consumers re-make the meanings of mass-produced items has been described as 'interpretive consumption' (Melchionne 1999). The most familiar - and most researched - version of this interpretation is the appropriation of particular styles by subcultural groups, in which the meaning and use of objects is subverted. Although subcultures use mass-produced items, 'neither money nor the market could fully dictate what groups used these things to say or signify about themselves' (Hall and Jefferson 1976: 55).

This process seems creative and liberating. Those with the confidence to self-define their own style could bypass the psychological aspect of fashion enclosure, and remove the need to refer to experts for guidance. However, this appropriation is now subject to the fast-paced adoption of subverted meanings by designers and retailers. Today's fashion industry is so expert at spotting and repackaging marginal styles, rapidly shifting the approved areas of the commons, that there is little or no distinction between the mainstream and the alternative. This would seem to curtail the agency of individuals and groups to define desirable styles for themselves. Woodcock (2006:12) quotes a London woman, writing in her zine about this phenomenon: 'This sucks - I feel like my identity has been stolen and I can't figure out how to assert my individuality through dress any more. This is all Topshop's fault.' I argue that the interpretive agency of individuals is also compromised by the limited diversity of mass-produced items available to buy, and the increasing rarity of genuinely archetypal garments which are arguably more open to interpretation.

Even if interpretive consumption manages to be creatively satisfying, it presents a problem for sustainability: any dependence on mass-produced items means a continuing relationship between fashion activity and the purchase of new garments, with the associated negative environmental impacts. Like commoners who were forced by enclosure into waged labour, individuals are forced into an engagement with the market. A more direct method of resistance to enclosure, then, is to bypass this engagement and to produce your own food, or, in our fashion case, clothing.

Grow your own

There has been a recent dramatic rise in popularity of growing your own fruit and vegetables in the United Kingdom, both in private gardens and rented allotments (Hunter et al 2011). A parallel increase in knitting activity has taken place during the past decade, and the last year in particular; home sewing has also risen in popularity (Lewis 2011). These activities offer many benefits in terms of both process and output. The domestic food producers of today are motivated by factors such as a desire for a healthier lifestyle, the rejection of supermarket dominated food sourcing, and a vibrant home-growing culture (Hunter et al 2011). The personal motivations for home fashion making are broadly similar: amateur makers enjoy the satisfaction of producing something themselves, and find that making gives them a connection to reality in an increasingly digital world (Lewis 2011).

Amateur making destroys the distinction between producer and consumer which is so prevalent in mainstream fashion culture, and would therefore appear to be a most effective means of overcoming fashion enclosure whilst serving the personal needs of the individual. Furthermore, it can be argued that amateur making delivers sustainability benefits by reducing a reliance on mass-produced garments. While home making still consumes materials, because it is a slow and hyper-local method of manufacture, many of the negative environmental and social impacts associated with mass manufacture are avoided. However, while amateur makers have managed to overcome the practical enclosure of fashion making through an engagement with traditional textile crafts, in my experience - gained from conversations at my knitting workshops - they are often still subject to a psychological enclosure, which limits the scope of their making. For some people, the broad choice available when making an item of clothing from scratch only throws the uncertainties of fashion into sharper focus, and amplifies the anxiety they feel over clothing choices. Combine these anxieties with concerns over fit and finish when making an item for the first time, and making can be a risky business. Most amateur knitters stick to accessories, homewares and baby clothes, thus keeping their making separate from their central fashion lives. It is, after all, surely worse for one's self-esteem to labour for months over a fashion 'mistake' than to quickly acquire it from a fast fashion source.

Another element which serves to limit the scope of amateur fashion making is the nature of patterns. The use of a pattern can turn the making of a garment into a very similar process to buying, where the individual wearer is guided by an expert designer, and given a limited number of stylistic options. Dalton (1987) argues that specialist magazines encourage a dependence on patterns, with a standardising effect on amateur craft practice. On the other hand, various researchers have found that makers using kits and patterns are able to make individual changes; Szeless (2002: 859) describes how home dressmakers in the 1950s and 1960s used patterns in an 'unorthodox' manner to create adapted styles, and alter the meanings of those styles. Patterns, therefore, need not be prescriptive; however, makers today often feel unable to make changes to patterns. They can be written in such a complex way that many knitters, for example, are barely able to follow, let alone change them. The ability to deviate depends not only on self-confidence, but also on a firm understanding of the intrinsic rules of the craft. Some contemporary amateur makers lack this understanding, being relatively new to making and perhaps without support from skilled friends or family members.

During the period of land enclosure, landowners were careful to ensure that once commoners were dependent on a wage, they should not be given access to resources that would enable them to return to independence (Neeson 1996). It appears to me that the psychological enclosure of fashion is so dominant that despite growing in popularity, amateur fashion making is contained within a 'safe' and unthreatening area of practice, like an allotment, provided by the mainstream industry. This area offers a sense of autonomy and genuine personal benefits to makers, but is sufficiently limited to allow the prevailing structure of the fashion industry to continue unabated. The sense of a comfortable, non-threatening relationship is reinforced by the occasional offering of sewing and knitting kits and workshops within high street fashion stores. It seems that the very nature of the contemporary fashion industry serves to limit individual access to the fashion commons and absorb attempts to change, or bypass, the system.

Diggers

Another group can provide us with the inspiration for an alternative approach to overcoming enclosure: those who grow food, or even flowers, on private land as a means of symbolically claiming shared ownership. My first such example is the seventeenth century activist Gerrard Winstanley, who led a group named the Diggers. Active for only a short period at the end of the English Civil War, the Diggers condemned trade in land and promoted the mass withdrawal of labour from the enclosed lands of the rich to the commons of the poor (Hazeldine 2011). Instead of obediently abiding by the laws governing access to land, this group occupied and cultivated an area as a way of symbolically demonstrating their view that everyone should have a free allowance to dig, and grow food (ibid). Although they were harassed by the landowner and eventually forced off their settlement, Winstanley's ideas - published in several pamphlets - have been influential in left-wing politics for centuries. A contemporary version of this attitude can be found in the guerrilla gardening movement. Prominent guerrilla gardener Richard Reynolds (2008: 16) defines guerrilla gardening as 'the illicit cultivation of someone else's land', whether a handful of flowers tended on a roadside verge or the conversion of derelict urban plots to unofficial community gardens. Like the Diggers, guerrilla gardeners are motivated to claim the shared use of land, and demand the right to be actors, not simply consumers, within public space (ibid).

Jordan (2002) makes a distinction between activist movements that seek change within a current system, and transgressive action that seeks redefined social structures. While the trespassers at Kinder Scout may have harboured transgressive ambitions to change land ownership entirely, the change they influenced - gaining footpath rights across private land - took place within the existing system. Although the local food movement may be fiercely committed in its aim to increase the amount of food grown within domestic gardens and allotments, this initiative does not violate systems of land access

or ownership. Both the Diggers and guerrilla gardeners, however, show a more transgressive attitude towards land. Instead of negotiating access within current laws, they demonstrate their disregard for the ownership - or enclosure - of land by practical action, and gain personal benefits that were previously unavailable to them.

Fashion Diggers

The examples of the Diggers and the guerrilla gardeners suggest that transgression may be the key to overcoming enclosure, and I am intrigued by the idea of translating these ideas to fashion. I want to see making have a greater interaction with individuals' fashion experiences, and feel that the best way to do this is to apply a making practice to the mass-produced clothes that form the majority of our wardrobes. Although it is apparent from the current popularity of fashion making that most amateur makers feel little dissatisfaction with their practice, I want to explore whether amateur making can operate more freely, and be more challenging to the existing fashion system. I explore below an idea for a transgressive making practice, appropriately titled 'Fashion Digging', and discuss whether it has the potential to deliver greater fashion well-being than interpretive consumption or conventional making.

Fashion Digging would draw on elements of both practices, with wearers redirecting their making skills to physically appropriate existing mass-produced garments. To do this, they would need to overcome a silent cultural message: that mass-produced garments are not intended to be altered. 'Tinkering' with garments is transgressive, as it allows the wearer to play with the meaning and materiality of clothing. Through this play they challenge the professionalisation of both fashion making and fashion knowledge. By working with existing mass-produced garments, wearers would release their activity from the sanctioned making allotment and engage more fully with their fashion experience.

This tinkering might include physical processes such as unravelling or laddering and re-knitting; removing labels; replacing buttons; adding or removing decoration; and re-fashioning. Processes may take place many times on a single garment. The practice could extend to the reproduction of a much-loved mass-produced garment, or the adaptation of existing pre-designed knitting and sewing patterns. While many such techniques were commonplace until the mid-twentieth century, their practice in contemporary culture is marginal. Fashion Digging would be different to mending, in that the garments may not be in need of repair; it would also be different to most clothes customisation, which tends to comprise quick and easy embellishments and adapting clothes to fit in with an identified trends. Indeed, some tinkering processes might require greater time and skill than traditional making. This practice could overcome some of the problems of conventional making, as an existing garment offers an engaging starting point and the project can be assessed for fit and aesthetic before and during tinkering. I have started to experiment with methods of material intervention in knitted garments, and developed a technique called stitch-hacking which involves the laddering and reconfiguration of knitted stitches. It enables me to retrospectively add personalised content to an existing knitted garment (fig. 1, fig. 2), changing the garment's appearance and affecting my own relationship with the piece in the process.



Fig. 1: 'Amy 2010' stitch-hacked cardigan by Amy Twigger Holroyd

Fig. 2: detail of 'Amy 2010'

There is an upcycling movement within contemporary sustainable fashion, in which discarded items are re-fashioned into new styles; however, such initiatives are primarily carried out by designers, with wearers often still occupying a traditional customer role. I see Fashion Diggers as amateur makers, who may draw on the support of designer-makers for assistance, for example in making design decisions or helping with tricky making processes. Design skills could help wearers to translate inspiration, such as personally significant references, into the language of clothes. In this scenario, designers would become enablers and facilitators, providing a service to wearers.

It is quite possible that the practices that I propose may be curtailed by the dominant fashion culture; they may increase the fashion anxiety felt by wearers, or fail to deliver the personal benefits of making that are so much appreciated by contemporary makers. The untouchable aura of the manufactured garment may prove too strong to break, or the new making skills required may prove too challenging to acquire. There is undoubtedly a danger that the designers and retailers, who are so adept at hijacking subcultural activities, could imitate this making and co-opt a tinkered aesthetic as another high street trend. However, the activities of Fashion Diggers could potentially be so diverse as to defy being pigeonholed into one recognisable aesthetic. Given that each garment would be different, the process would be heuristic and individual, and interventions would vary according to the project. The finished piece need not be visually outlandish, if such an aesthetic were not to the taste of the wearer, and the intervention may even be invisible to a casual viewer.

Overcoming enclosure

Fashion Diggers overcome practical enclosure in a straightforward manner, gaining knowledge about the construction of mass-produced clothes and applying that knowledge in their physical tinkering. Because they have the ability to make and adapt clothing, they are not manipulated into purchasing certain styles; furthermore, they have the ability to change the interpretation of an archetypal style specified by the original designer. They can also use their making skills to engage emotionally with the fashion commons and overcome psychological enclosure.

When a home-made or tinkered garment becomes a genuine part of a maker's fashion experience, a strong and enduring emotional bond can develop. Clark (2008) suggests that a subject-object relationship will only be substantial and long-lasting if it is based on more than just visual appeal; a deeper understanding and memory of the making of an item would surely offer this. The rigour of making (such as the the inescapable reality of a knitted stitch being correctly formed, or a stripe matching neatly at a seam), and the connection with tradition often felt by knitters and sewers, represent alternative sources of authority to identified fashion trends. Making or altering an item also gives you the opportunity to include content with personal or cultural significance, whether text, colour, symbol, pattern, detail or shape, which similarly can create a bond that challenges the movement of fleeting trends. Fletcher (2011) describes how 'alternative dress codes' can build a more personal rationale for clothing choices; I believe this could potentially lessen the priority wearers give to fashion rules, and the opinions of experts. Furthermore, I wonder whether the physical action of stitching into a mass-produced item - which carries an intrinsic message of the authority of the designer - would invite the maker to reflect upon fashion enclosure, in a way that would not be the case with conventional making. In this way, tinkering could serve as a means of consciousness-raising; reflecting on the situation may liberate the maker from the rules.

Whether through a strong relationship between wearer and garment, the inclusion of a name painstakingly stitched into a garment, or the symbolic action of altering a perfect, mass-produced item, the experience of the maker challenges the conventional emphasis on image as the essence of fashion. Since it is this emphasis on the visual which feeds a worry about the gaze of others and gives power to perceived fashion rules, it is logical to assume that these makers would feel less anxiety over those rules. They would reach a healthier balance between their own internal experience (founded on the senses of proximity) and the views of others, and begin to see fashion as 'an individual creative choice rather than a group mandate' (Clark 2008: 444). The wearer is then free to wander through the full expanse of the fashion commons and author their own fashion experience. They can contribute to more localised fashion cultures, and influence the fashion decisions of others by wearing tinkered garments that, through their altered materiality, quietly disrupt the status quo.

Conclusion

It appears that Fashion Digging may offer the double dividend of increased fashion well-being and consequent environmental benefits, related to a reduced reliance on new, mass-manufactured clothing. Exploring the fashion = land metaphor enables me to take an activist stance towards fashion, much like that taken by the Diggers towards land. I am keen to explore ways to break down fashion enclosure, and re-orientate my designer-maker practice to enable wearers to embrace making. However, designers can only enable users to act if they fully understand the motivations for and barriers to action as perceived by the individual, and these issues form the basis of my research.

In my project, I will try to identify both the benefits of material intervention in one's own clothing, and the barriers to such activity, by working with a small group of amateur female knitters in a series of day-long workshops. Using a loose experimental structure, I will guide the participants through a staged sequence of experiences. Working with

sample fabrics and the participants' own knitted garments, the group will try out a range of intervention techniques - such as stitch-hacking - and discuss their feelings towards making; data will be gathered via recording of group discussions, and individual diaries. The research will also give me an understanding of which material intervention methods have the greatest potential to improve fashion well-being, and an appreciation of the ways in which a designer-maker could usefully provide support to amateur makers undertaking such activity.

Despite being often dismissed as trivial, fashion is central to our social and cultural lives, and should surely be recognised as a key element of well-being. My activism may seem at once over-ambitious and naïve, aiming to change the central business model of a huge and successful industry and break down fashion culture's obsession with image, all through the re-orienting of home fashion making practice. However, I take inspiration from Gerrard Winstanley, who saw no contradiction in proclaiming his heretical ideas for changing English society while starting a settlement on a single hill. I aim to propose and explore an alternative type of fashion which, while tiny in scale, could have big implications in terms of identifying a more sustainable - and personally beneficial - fashion future.

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