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## **Designing a Sensibility for Sustainable Clothing (S4S): Affective Activism**

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### **Abstract**

The need to improve the sustainability of fashion has been widely noted by academics (Black 2012, Fletcher 2008, 2016), activist campaigns (Greenpeace, Fashion Revolution) and policy makers (DEFRA, EAC). While there have been creative attempts to provoke sustainable fashion, few studies have explored ways in which making fibre, using ‘waste’ fabric and modifying clothes might change individuals’ behaviour (thoughts, feelings and actions ) in relation to how they dress. This chapter will present, analyse and reflect on work-in-progress research from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)-funded project ‘Designing a Sensibility for Sustainable Clothing (S4S)’, which combines arts with social science methods to investigate how creative activities might shape a ‘sensibility’ for sustainable clothing and promote pro-environmental behaviour change. Drawing on social design thinking, the project works with communities to co-produce knowledge through ‘hands on’ making. It involves community groups in dialogic, reflexive workshops that mimic phases of the lifecycle of clothing (making fibre and fabric, purchasing, mending, modifying and making clothes, and dealing with waste fabric) and has produced a rich array of data including co-generated creative outputs, in-depth interviews, short reflective videos, wardrobe audits, clothing diaries and surveys. In collaboration with partner Fashion Revolution, the project proposes these methods as a mode of quietly affective activism that is embedded in, stems from, and is fuelled by everyday lived experience (Hackney, 2013a).

Fashion industries, cultures and imaginaries are multi-faceted and complex with significant social and environmental consequences. Drawing on theories of affect (Ahmed, 2004), S4S findings suggest that participatory design and crafts practices offer an affective response to the pressing problem of fashion's devastating environmental effects.

Keywords: sustainable fashion, affect, behaviour change, activism, co-production

## **Introduction**

The dangers of ‘fast fashion’: a ‘buy now, throw away tomorrow’ culture (Birtwhistle et al., 2003; Michon et al., 2015) are increasingly known. High street and online retailers, motivated by economic drivers, provide low cost garments often designed to be worn only a few times. Clothes are manufactured to a lower quality than even in the recent past and garments are rarely thrown away because they are worn out. Young women in particular prefer to buy several cheap disposable fashion items rather than one durable piece, while low costs discourage consumers from repairing worn out clothes (Morgan and Birtwhistle, 2009; Binotto and Payne, 2017). While designers such as Katherine Hamnett and Phoebe English, and design researchers such as Professor Dilys Williams and her colleagues at University of the Arts London (UAL) (Black, 2012; Fletcher, 2012; Erhman, 2018), play a crucial role in critiquing and rethinking fashion from the perspective of design, manufacture and textile technologies, less work has been done on how changes in consumer/user behaviour might address this situation. The Arts & Humanities Research Council-funded (AHRC) project *Designing a Sensibility for Sustainable Clothing (S4S)* aims to do this by involving community groups in dialogic reflexive workshops that both mimic and reimagine phases of the lifecycle of clothing by, for instance: making fibre and fabric; making, modifying and mending clothes; up-cycling, repurposing and dealing with waste fabric. The underlying thesis is that engaging in such activities will not only raise consciousness about the appalling effects of the fast fashion industry, but also help to change everyday behaviour through

affectual engagement with dress and textiles communities and processes, skills, materials and methods. As such, S4S proposes a mode of ‘quietly’ affective, everyday activism that is embedded in, stems from and is transmitted through communities (Hackney, 2013a), a lived, embodied equivalent to partner Fashion Revolution’s global activism. Research draws on data from a rich mix of social science and arts methods, including co-generated creative outputs, in-depth interviews, short reflective videos, wardrobe audits, clothing diaries and surveys. For the purposes of this chapter analysis will focus on findings from two areas that demonstrate the benefits of a combined quantitative and qualitative approach: 1) preliminary surveys; 2) film screening workshops.

Extant research reveals the difficulty of reversing fast fashion. Even those aware of fashion’s externalities can get caught in a value-behaviour gap since quality fast-fashion items are more readily available in the marketplace and out-compete eco-fashion (Moon et al., 2015; D’Souza, 2015). To effect change we have to locate clothing behaviour within wider formations of identity, attachment, socially constructed values and psychological drives. Part of the answer lies not only in our intellectual but also our affectual relationship with fashion, its deep connections with individual identities that are themselves rooted in socio-cultural attachments (Cassidy and Bennett, 2012; Kaiser, 2012). Such complexities underpin the project’s focus on the notion of ‘sensibility’. Defined in the Cambridge Dictionary as ‘an understanding of or ability to decide about what is good or valuable, especially in connection with artistic or social activities’ and in the Oxford Dictionary as the ‘quality of being able to appreciate and respond to complex emotional or aesthetic influences’, a sustainable fashion sensibility suggests the ability to identify, develop and practice a new set of clothing qualities, values and behaviours. Thinking about sensibility, moreover, foregrounds emotion as a driver of change in making sustainable fashion choices, as Otto Von Busch argued in his

recent keynote at the Global Fashion conference, LCF, 2018. Finally, the notion of forging a new sensibility for sustainability is valuable because it involves both change in our outer ‘sensible’ lives - from physical sensations to sociability – and our inner thoughts, subjectivities and imaginaries.

Fashion is not solely the preserve of global corporations, it is also about individual experience. As Dilys Williams recently observed on a radio programme about environmental change, fashion makes ‘climate change human in scale because each day each of us makes a decision about what we buy, what we wear, how we value it, how we care for it’ (Fidgen, 2019). Furthermore, we know that buying things does not increase happiness. Psychologist Lorraine Whitmarsh, speaking on the same programme, identified three fundamental psychological human needs that drive our actions and behaviour: 1) Autonomy through experiencing an element of freedom of choice; 2) Competence that comes from feeling good about doing something; and 3) Relatedness, which fulfils our need for social bonds with people. Significantly, all three featured prominently in S4S videos, participant reflection and discussion. Policy makers are more alert than ever to the damaging social and environmental effects of the fashion industry. Recommendations by the All Party Parliamentary Group on Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion and DEFRA’s Sustainable Clothing Roadmap (DEFRA 2011) have recently been supplemented by an intensive interrogation of fast fashion by the cross-party Environmental Audit Committee (EAC). The latter’s report into the Sustainability of the Fashion Industry closes with an urgent call to action: the ‘current exploitative and environmentally damaging model for fashion must change’ (HoC, 2019a). S4S recommendations for reinvigorating the high street with spaces dedicated to skill sharing, making and mending, repurposing, swapping, and clothes rentals are featured in the EAC’s final report, *Fixing Fashion: Clothing Consumption and Sustainability. Fashion: it shouldn’t*

*cost the earth*, (HoC, 2019b), suggesting one way in which the S4S method for promoting more sustainable clothing behaviour might be scaled up, or more properly scaled across, by connecting multiple agencies.

## **Method and Methodology**

S4S is an interdisciplinary collaboration between researchers in the social sciences and the humanities: politics academics at University of Exeter and arts research practitioners at the University of Wolverhampton. The project also involves external partners: community organisations in Cornwall and the West Midlands, sustainable fashion designers Antiform, the campaign and advocacy group Fashion Revolution, and a group of specialist design, fashion, and environmental advisors. Concurrent linked launch events in Cornwall and the West Midlands attracted over a hundred people to listen to sustainable fashion experts, participate in maker workshops and help shape project research questions and themes. The forty people who elected to become involved in the project proper went on to attend between five and twenty workshops and participate in project research methods . Twelve participants attended all twenty workshops in Cornwall while twenty-eight took part in at least five, and in some cases all twenty, workshops held in the West Midlands. All workshops lasted for a full day and they ran over a period of nine months in total. Around twenty people engaged in wardrobe audits, counting, logging and talking about items they own (Fletcher and Grimstad Klepp, 2017).

The project draws from three main strands of research. First, it extends work on social design, co-design, and the relationship between crafts and material affect (Armstrong et al., 2014; Kimbell, 2011; Hackney et al., 2016a and 2016b; Twigger Holroyd, 2017). Second, it

contributes to the field of sustainable fashion and design (Fletcher 2016). Third, it contributes to research on behaviour change. Dominant approaches to behaviour change, which focus on information and fiscal incentives, have limited efficacy due to the value-behaviour gap. A novel aspect of the project is its use of the concept of ‘affect’, which refers to how socio-political contexts and emotional responses shape how people learn and behave. Affect is particularly relevant to fashion and consumerism, since the current economic system ‘mines affect for value’ by generating emotional responses to sell products and make profit (Clough, 2008). This is most notable in celebrity culture (Morgan and Birtwhistle, 2009), but it also pervades self-identification with clothing (Guy and Banim, 2000) in relation to peer approval (Roper and La Neice, 2009). Clothes generate culturally resonant affective markers of popular aesthetics and symbolic meanings that determine how individuals communicate their identities to others (Schofield and Schmidt, 2005). Integral to understanding ‘affect’ is recognition that emotions can be seen as sticky markers which attach to things and ideas, shaping how they are absorbed into identities. Understanding how to encourage a sensibility for sustainable clothing choices thus requires us to unpick the layers of emotional attachments that underpin human responses to what might otherwise seem to be ‘rational’ choices and transfer them to more sustainable behaviours.

In order to explore this the team developed a range of research methods and tools, including: experiential workshops involving ‘making interventions’ (Hackney et al, 2016a), questionnaires, in-depth wardrobe audits, clothing diaries, interviews and short reflexive video films, to replace standard notions of production and consumption with material, sensory and emotional practices generated within communities (Clay and Bradley Foster, 2007). A conceptual framework around processes of thinking, feeling and doing: ‘think, feel, act’ was devised and embedded in mini-questionnaires, longer interviews, group discussion



and film-making to help participants identify and reflect on and their responses throughout the project. The workshops were designed to mimic and rework the lifecycle of clothing, from production to consumption and disposal, by enabling participants to rethink their relationship with the fashion system through processes of engaged, participatory making (Barthes, 1990/1967/; Kaiser, 2012). They include a range of activities, from spinning fibre, weaving fabric and natural dyeing processes, deconstructing and reconstructing knitted garments and bespoke pattern cutting, to make-do-and-mend, up-cycling and repurposing charity items, embellishment as visible repair, and leather-working (**Figures 1 & 2**). The workshops were conceptualised as spaces ‘in between’ the flow of fast fashion which short-circuited it through creative interventions that foregrounded the quality, skill, labour and environmental impacts conventionally hidden in mainstream discourse. Skype conversations, film viewings, social media, and the reciprocal exchange of collaboratively produced items at the end of each set of workshops, enabled groups in different regions to communicate and learn from one another.



Figure 1 Make-do-and-mend workshop, Chyan Fields, Cornwall



Figure 2 Visible Mending, West Midlands

Our method, which combined quantitative social science method with qualitative practice-based arts research, was underpinned by ‘embodied research’ approach, which invites participants to use their bodies to explore and generate knowledges (Spatz, 2017; Thanem and Knights, 2019; Vachelli, 2018). The principle combines the emphasis on activity and learning as part of the research process found in more action-oriented research with a focus on the physical and emotional use of the body. The benefits of using this kind of methodological tool is that participants are provided with the spaces and opportunity to connect and reflect on the topic matter in depth through engaged social material practices as they make and talk together (Hackney et al 2016a). In this respect, the research is both informative, and transformative (Heras and Tabera, 2014). There were two objects to the activity. Firstly, it was to provide the spaces for conversation so we could understand more about how participants felt about clothes, and the kind of learning journey that they were on. Here, the act of doing and being through the material act of making facilitated a more in-depth understanding of how individuals constructed their phenomenological lifeworlds around clothing (Mead, 1934; Blumer, 1992; Goffman, 1959; Lee 2016). Secondly, the tasks in themselves were designed to enable participants to learn about the journeys that clothing takes (for example, making yarn or fabric from raw materials); the kinds of ethical questions that are raised by fast fashion (eg. The human and environmental costs of mass consumption of cheap clothing); and to learn skills to make, mend, and modify clothing themselves.

Participants in both locations were introduced to four series of workshops, familiarising them with various aspects of the clothes making process. The workshops followed iterative themes that responded to, and built on, one another: 1) Fluff to Fibre: spinning, dyeing and weaving yarn; 2) (De)Constructive/(Re)Constructive Knitting: un-picking and re-making garments; 3)

Towards Zero Waste: learning about the problem of global textiles waste; 4) Vintage Pattern Cutting: making patterns and garments using 1940s techniques and waste materials; 5) Make-Do-And-Mend: learning and applying sewing, darning and repair techniques; 6) (In)Visible Mending: using stitch techniques such as needle weaving and goldwork to embellish stains, rips and tears in clothing; 7) Second-Hand and Ethical: charity shopping, adapting and re-making garments; 8) Re-Make, Re-Purpose, Upcycle: upcycling, repurposing existing garments and making new artefacts from waste leather. A set of colourful leaflets, including workshop summaries, participant quotes, and instructions about skills and techniques, is available in print form and will be downloadable from project website (currently in process <https://www.sites.exeter.ac.uk/s4s>).

The Cornwall group was formed in the initial phases of the project, and although there was some attrition, most participants remained involved in some way over the duration of the study. Due to the wider geographic spread, working with partner organisations, West Midlands participants were asked to attend a minimum of four sessions in any of the four workshop series. The majority in fact were present at far more than this, some being involved in all twenty. All the Cornwall participants were female with most aged around or under thirty. The West Midlands group included a more diversity in terms of age and gender, including teenagers and three men. As the workshops progressed people began to invite friends and family along, and a number of parent/child teams developed (**Figure 3**). The workshops were recorded and transcribed, and participants were asked to keep a reflective ‘clothing diary’ recording details about the skills they learned, their participation in the group, the garments they made, and to what extent and how their thoughts, feelings and actions around sustainable clothing changed. All data was inductively thematised following the principles of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Strauss and Corbin 2008) looking



specifically at the ideas and affective emotions (Ahmed 2004) that participants attached to clothes, the various aspects of the clothes making process, the materiality of clothing, and how participants felt about clothing choices. These themes were then coded for further analysis, clustering around: how people feel about clothes; how they shop; clothes and ethics; the process of making, mending, and modifying clothing; creating behaviour change.



Figure 3 Mother-daughter team repurposing maternity wear, Antiform workshop, West Midlands

### **Quantitative Data Analysis, Style and Practice**

A quasi-experimental questionnaire was devised asking participants for self-reported assessments of skills, attitudes and behaviours before and after engaging with the workshops. This enables us to gather a quantitative measure of the effects of the workshops in relation to how people think, feel and act about their clothing. Our approach illustrates the value of survey research for making such assessments and the considerable multi-faceted effects that our workshops have had on our participants.

We asked our participants to provide a list of their top five shops for purchasing clothes. We then characterised these as: high street, charity, online, vintage and reused. The majority of the twenty two participants for whom we have valid pre- and post-participation answers preferred to list high street sources both before (on average 2.8 out of 5) and after (on average 2.2 out of 5) workshop participation, with a very slight shift away from the high street towards charity shops (mean before =0.6, mean after = 0.7).

Most of our participants (16 of 20 valid answers) reported that they would ‘not continue to buy fast fashion’ in general except for essentials, like underwear. This marks a significant change from the claim made by 19 of 23 that they *had* purchased clothes from a fast fashion retailer in the past 2 years. However, a minority would be tempted to purchase fast-fashion in a sale (only 4 of 18 said they would do so). Their overall spending on clothes appeared, on average, to have increased from pre- to post-participation.

Of our 22 participants with valid answers to the question on clothing spend in both the pre- and post- survey, 9 had increased their monthly clothes spend, 8 had remained the same and 5 had reduced it. Of the 12 spending less than £20 per month at the start of the project, four had maintained a low spend, and 7 had increased to £20-50. Of the five participants who spent £20-50 at the start of the project, three had remained the same, one had increased to £100-200 and one had reduced to £5-10. One participant spending £50-100 kept her spending constant, but another had reduced from £50-100 to less than £20 per month. All 3 of our participants who used to spend more than £100 a month on clothes had reduced their spending: one to less than £20 per month, another to £20-50 and the third to £50-100.

That some participants had increased their clothes spend seems to be related to their more discerning tastes post-participation, as they increasingly sought more ethical – and presumably more expensive – fashion items. In Table 2, we show the mean scores (where 1=not at all and 5=very much) for a range of factors that influence decisions to purchase clothes. Despite the low sample size, the mean scores are a good summary of the data given the low variance in responses across our participants. Table 2 also includes the standard deviations of the mean, which give an indication of the high measure of fit of the mean to the majority of participants. After taking part in the workshops, people are markedly more influenced in their buying choices by the quality of the fibre and construction, the brand and locally produced clothing items. They are also slightly less concerned about what their peers think about their clothing choices and, overall, never concerned about being in fashion.

**Table 1: Factors that influence clothes purchasing choice before and after our workshops**

<b>Factors that influence purchasing choice (n=26)</b>	<b>Mean score before (1-5)</b>	<b>Mean score after (1-5)</b>
Quality of fibre	3.6 (SD 1.18)	4.6 (SD 0.80)
Country of origin	2.0 (SD 1.16)	4.1 (1.22)
Quality of construction / manufacture	3.9 (SD 0.95)	4.4 (0.95)
Price	4.3 (SD 0.95)	4.0 (0.76)
Brand	2.6 (SD 1.31)	4.1 (0.95)
Locally produced	2.6 (SD 1.20)	4.1 (0.84)
Being in fashion	2.1 (SD 1.26)	2.0 (2.03)
What peers think	2.0 (SD 1.16)	1.6 (1.62)

Notes: SD refers to the standard deviation of the mean, which indicates that the majority of cases in the sample fall just a small distance from the mean.

A battery of agree-disagree (5-point likert scale) questions further reveals the impacts that our workshops had upon our participants in relation to thinking carefully about what they buy, learning new skills, buying fewer items, finding new meaning, sourcing clothes ethically, thinking differently about how they dress and being more likely to fix their clothes (Table 2). Strikingly, few reported that they have changed their style, suggesting an enduring emotive connection with style, despite shifting preferences towards more ethical attitudes to clothing. Less than half acquired new equipment, such as a sewing machine. The effects of the workshop series might be compromised because the ‘things’ that facilitate behaviour change are no longer readily available.

**Table 2: Thinking, feeling and acting impacts of our workshops**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Impact (n=26)</b>	<b>Number agreeing or strongly agreeing</b>
Think	I think more carefully about the clothes I buy	23
Feel	I feel more empathy for the people who make my clothes	22
Act	I am more likely to fix my broken clothes	22
Act	I have learned new skills	22
Feel	I feel I have made new friends	21
Act	I buy fewer new items of clothing	20
Act	I try to find out who made my clothes	19
Act	I increasingly source my clothes ethically	19
Feel	I find different meaning in the clothes I wear	16
Think	I think differently about how I dress	15
Act	I have acquired new equipment	12
Act/feel	I have changed my style	8

### **Feeling Film, Aesthetic Affect**

Short video films were made iteratively throughout the workshops and from the outset this was envisaged as integral to research activities. The film-makers: Nina Constable in Cornwall ([www.ninaconstable.co.uk](http://www.ninaconstable.co.uk)) and R & A Collaborations in the West Midlands ([www.racollaborations.co.uk](http://www.racollaborations.co.uk)) operated as co-researchers, sometimes participating in discussion and making activities (**Figure 4**). Over thirty short films have are available on the S4S You tube channel along with ‘Resolution’ a twenty-minute summary of the project and its findings (S4S Films, 2019). Academic work on community film is growing (Malik et al, 2017) and S4S builds on earlier research by team members who used film as a reflexive device for community craft groups (Hackney, 2014; Rana and Hackney, 2018). The films were intended to operate as a discursive device helping participants to better understand their own and others’ experience of the workshops, to what extent and how their ideas, attitudes to and feelings about clothes, their clothing habits and behaviours, might change.



Figure 4 Nina Constable filming while the Cornwall Group spin



As the project progressed the film makers began to identify themes that underpinned an emerging sustainable fashion sensibility. These include: identity (Jack's Jumper), changing values (Value), time (The Gift of Time), economy (Being Thrifty), affective connection (The Ripple Effect), community and communication (Group Chats), science and environment (Detergent Test), family (Family Influences), abilities and asset-building (Hidden Potential), media (Unravel: The True Cost), heritage (Reclaiming the 1940s), facilitation and learning (Hanny's Workshops), skill-building (Upcycle), and material practice (Make-Do-And-Mend). Screening workshops gathered feedback about participant responses. The degree to which the films prompted an emotional connection with the project was immediately apparent. West Midlands participants felt that they rekindled 'the feeling ... from doing the workshops together and then the feeling can come back through the films'. Watching them in chronological order, moreover, they noticed how they communicate a journey: '[T]hat very first opening sort of session I don't think we really were aware of what kind of journey we were really going to step onto ... You can start to see the change happening ... It's changing, it's changing your habit pattern isn't it'.

These perceptions of filmic affect as an emotional conduit and memetic device can be linked to the films' aesthetic qualities, whereby colour, texture, detail, light, close-ups, personal narratives, and temporal slowness convey values of trust, intimacy and honesty, and a sense of emotional closeness and pleasure, something that may be equally available to wider audiences (Hackney, 2013b). Cornwall participants noted that the film narratives felt true to their experience of the workshops, communicating a sense of authenticity that would appeal to others. One West Midlands' participant saw the films as connecting people with the experience of working in a community even when working alone. Another talked about how they communicate the ethos of the project and the pleasure of participation: '[A]s a body of

work it's a lovely, a lovely portfolio to look at and just kind of keep remembering some of the ethos ... it's reminding that actually when we do things together we're probably more productive as well [and] by doing things together it becomes a pleasurable thing rather than a weight on your shoulders you know'. A third, projecting into the future, thought that the films will help to keep feelings and habits formed during the workshops alive for her:

It's been a nice reminder of the journey actually and I think I probably will watch them to keep my momentum going myself. I think the changes have been made up here so when I go and buy new clothes or, you know, I'm looking at where they're from I'm not necessarily going to go to those cheap chains anymore. So that's kind of, that's integrally changed. But I think it's too easy to get wrapped up in so once you move away from the project ... if I sustain it I'm going to get the feeling back again.

(West Midland's participant, 2018)

The films helped her 'get the feeling back' of embodied affective participation becoming, not only a prompt but also the emotional glue forging a felt sensibility for sustainable clothing by attaching experiences, things and ideas to identities.

## **Conclusions**

While the shock effect of films such as *The True Cost* (Morgan, 2015) and Stacey Dooley's documentary *Fashion's Dirty Secrets* (2018) raise awareness about problems in the industry, they are less helpful in providing strategies for change. Designing a sensibility for sustainable clothing, in contrast, approaches the problem from the ground up, affectively and experientially including: point of purchase, the context of use, the social milieu in which clothes are worn, cared for, appreciated and become socially meaningful, and the mentality through which they become markers of identification on a deeper psychological level. The combination of social science and arts research methods provide quantitative and qualitative

insights into this process helping us to better understand and assess, not only the changes that are taking place when participants engage in this kind of work but also the context, conditions and motivations for change. They also suggest the ways in which a sensibility for sustainable clothing might disseminate, as participants take ownership of the research methods and techniques (workshops, films, diaries, design, stitch skills) and embed them in their lives as tools for behaviour change.

An affectual economy of making emerged as participants connected with their clothes in new embodied ways. Inductive analysis of project data uncovered the ideas and affective emotions that were attached to clothes, the making process, the materiality of clothing, and how people felt about their clothing choices with a focus on: feelings about clothes, shopping and ethics, processes of making, mending and modifying clothing, and creating behaviour change. The films prompted group discussion about the social and environmental impacts of fast fashion, but this was framed within a context of lived experience and personal connection. They reconnected people with the ‘feelings’ experienced during participation, something identified as a motivator for future behaviour change. Continuity, meanwhile, thrived alongside change. The questionnaires reveal that as clothing thinking and practice became more ethical, an individual’s perceived sense of style, and identity, remained unchanged. The workshop materials (booklets) and accompanying films show how participants adapted project learning and methods to reinforce/develop style/identities by making and reshaping their garments as the tyranny of fast fashion loosened its hold, at least to some degree.

The questionnaires and films evidence behaviour change in related and complementary ways. Many participants have restricted their shopping, buying from charity shops or swapping, repairing and upcycling clothing. A number have not bought any new clothes, taking a pledge to buy second-hand or swap with friends and family, accepting new clothes only as gifts. Fast

fashion began to be judged as unacceptably poor in quality and not worth the social and environmental ‘cost’. As their affectual relationship with clothing shifted, several remarked that buying new clothes just didn’t ‘feel right’. The Cornwall group emphasised the importance of developing a self-reflective mentality: to slow down and ‘pause’ before buying, asking oneself, ‘do I really need this item? How and where was it made? How can I look after it?’. A West Midlands participant declared that the workshops made change seem achievable because ‘they weren’t about saving the world, they were about darning’. Both groups agreed that change had occurred gradually through a ‘process of doing things with the group’ rather than any prescriptive demands ‘directly stopping you buying things’. They also described how they might deploy their learning, repopulating the high street with making spaces, running classes in schools, or adapting workshop methods to challenges for Girl Guides, for instance, signalling the power of an affectual activism that is ‘quietly’ enacted and embedded in everyday life.

(4,800 w)

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