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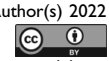

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The affective economy and fast fashion: Materiality, embodied learning and developing a sensibility for sustainable clothing

Joanie Willett[1], Clare Saunders[1], Fiona Hackney[2] and Katie Hill[1]

[1]Environment and Sustainability Institute, University of Exeter, Penryn, UK
[2]Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester, UK

Abstract

Many commentators recognise the need to make clothing more sustainable due to its deleterious environmental and social ramifications. However, it is challenging to change the consumer behaviour that drives fast fashion markets because people have complex relationships with clothing. In this study, we illustrate how the relationships that people have with clothing can be shaped by workshops that immerse them in making, mending, and modifying garments. Such experiential learning can encourage adoption of more sustainable clothing choices, such as reducing consumption of new garments and prolonging the life of already owned items of clothing. We present findings on a strand of work from the Arts and Humanities Research Council funded S4S: Designing a Sensibility for Sustainable Clothing project, which explored the affective economy around clothing, and considered how emotive affects around garments operate as a conduit to self-sustain particular practices. Our significant contribution brings political analysis firmly into the debate about sustainable clothing by merging literatures on behaviour change and affect, through exploration of a novel longitudinal (9-months) qualitative data set. At the start of the project, participants generally thought of clothes as being low-cost (and therefore disposable) items. The workshops, in contrast, presented garments and the materials from which they are made as precious, complex and fluid – in a process of continual possibility. For pro-environmental behavioural change, we find that immersion in the materiality of clothing mobilised affective processes, enabling potentially transformative affective encounters. Further, we found that group learning environments need to do more than simply teach approved normative values and behaviours. Pro-environmental behaviour change initiatives need to provide people with the space to create and situate their own knowledges, enabling affect to be mobilised, activated and supported by appropriate cultural milieu.

Corresponding author:
Joanie Willett, Environment and Sustainability Institute, University of Exeter, Penryn Campus, Treliever Road, Penryn. TR10 9FE, UK.
Email: J.MAWillett@Exeter.ac.uk

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Introduction

Western Society urgently needs to shift towards more environmentally sustainable clothing choices. This is a pressing topic (Von Busch 2018; Horton 2018; Bartlett 2019; Hackney et al., 2020). In February 2019 the Environmental Audit Committee of the UK Parliament produced a report entitled '*Fixing Fashion: Clothing Consumption and Sustainability*'. The report acknowledges that Western clothing and fashion cultures have become increasingly focused on disposability, resulting in a throwaway culture in which garments are made with a deliberately short life span. This matters because, aside from the human costs incorporated in cheap garments (Claudio 2007; Lee 2003), the textile industry is one of the most polluting globally, producing more greenhouse gas emissions than aviation and shipping combined (DEFRA 2012). See also Turley et al., 2009; Claudio 2007). In this context, there is an urgent need for the fashion industry to become more sustainable (Black 2012; Fletcher 2008, 2012).

Consumer behaviour has to be an important part of creating more sustainable fashion practices. Current 'fast fashion' trends pre-suppose selling high volumes of garments to eager consumers, keen to remain 'on trend'. It is expected that such items of clothing will be worn only a handful of times before they are thrown away (Birtwistle et al., 2003; Michon et al., 2015). While this obviously supports expansion of the textiles and clothing industries, it has created a shift in consumer behaviour whereby the cost of a garment bears little relation to the work that it embodies. Partly because of this, garments can be readily discarded not because they have worn out or broken, but because they are no longer in fashion (Morgan and Birtwistle 2009; Binotto and Payne 2016). This imagined disposability means that individuals are less likely to mend a garment (or have the skills to be able to do so) – even if the fix is relatively straightforward such as a tear, button, or zip. Currently, scholarship dealing with the clothing industry comes primarily from studies of fashion and textiles (Saunders et al., 2019). This is despite the significant contribution that the discipline of politics can offer in terms of political analyses, policy studies, and theories of behaviour change. We bring the discipline of politics firmly into this field by specifically addressing the politics of affect and the politics of behaviour change.

Generating pro-environmental behavioural change is very complex. For example, it is well-recognised that simply educating individuals about the dangers or risks involved in unsustainable practices is inadequate. This is because even when persons take on board and internalise new information, their new knowledge will not necessarily contribute to any lasting or meaningful behaviour change (West et al., 2021). The scholarly literature calls this the 'value-action gap' (Blake 1999; Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002; Lucas et al., 2008; Peattie and Peattie 2009). For Hurth (2010), one way to deal with this level of cognitive dissonance is to transform the pro-environmental choice into the affluent, or status choice. The logic is that the emotional attachments and imagined rewards that the individual acquires through making a choice that signals affluence or status to others has a

stronger attraction than a choice made through ethical principles. Whilst there are problems with Hurth's (2010) approach – not least because connecting status and affluence excludes many people from environmental choices – it does introduce the importance of 'feelings' into the debate. Within the academic discipline of politics, people's feelings about ideas, practices and processes are frequently examined through the concept of affect, which deals with the impacts of things, thoughts and feelings, on other things, thoughts and feelings (Ahmed 2004; Clough 2010; Connolly 2002). Moreover, there is a strong literature relating to the use of affect with regards to creating behaviour change (Burke et al., 2018; O'Donnel 2017; Van Cappellen et al., 2018; Collado et al., 2013; Blanton et al., 2008).

This intersection offers an entry-point into our examination about how to create what we will call a 'sensibility for sustainable clothing'. We ask how affect can be mobilised in order to encourage more environmentally sustainable behaviours. To begin, we examine affect as a concept, and situate it in relation to fast fashion and sustainable clothing. Next, we consider how affect is deployed in pro-environmental behaviour change scholarship, finding that it needs to describe and understand the complex web of socio-cultural ideas, meanings, beliefs and feelings underpinning the affective economy. This brings us to the empirical part of the study, where we immerse participants in making, mending, and modifying clothing, using these experiences to explore the cultural scripts that participants hold about clothing, and the symbolic markers that these rely upon. This helps us consider the cultural meanings embedded within a sensibility for sustainable clothing, and the effects of this immersion on consumer behaviour and environmentally sustainable clothing choices. Our research questions are:

- Does immersion in making, mending, and modifying garments encourage consumers to develop a sensibility for sustainability around clothing choices?
- What do we need to do if we are to facilitate meaningful pro-environmental behavioural change?
- What is the affective economy around clothing, and how can affect be mobilised in order to help to make these changes?

This study makes two significant contributions to the literature. First, it contributes to the literature on using affect to develop pro-environmental behavioural changes around clothing choices. Second, it adds to the scholarship around affect by creating a model not just to analyse the concept's usefulness to citizens in their political understandings, but also illustrate how it can be mobilised to achieve particular goals. We observe from our analysis that, rather than being low cost and immutable objects, clothes and the fibres out of which they are constructed are precious, complex, and fluid. Moreover, through the imaginaries attached to an item of clothing, a garment embodies multiple, complex affective economies and stories that incorporate every stage of its life cycle, from raw materials to re-purposing. Developing a 'sensibility for sustainability' therefore requires a discursive immersion in the materiality of garments, in ways that challenge how in the capitalist system, as Patricia Clough (2010:220) puts it, 'bodily affect is mined for value'. We argue that creating pro-environmental behaviour change

is a matter of having the spaces available to create and situate new, more sustainable, knowledges within an appropriate and supportive cultural milieu.

Affect

In this section, we explore fashion and clothing as an affective activity. To do this, we begin with a critical examination of the concept of affect. Although it has roots in Ancient Greece, affect usually is traced to Spinoza's (1992) *Ethics* in which he develops an atomist worldview, positing that all bodies are made up of other bodies. As these bodies interact or collide with each other, they affect each other. Literally, they alter the course or trajectory of each body in some way. This affect might be profound, or it might be minimal and it is not necessarily in proportion to the force of the impact (Connolly 2018). If we translate this to the realm of ideas, whilst some ideas or responses that people encounter might produce only a minor (physical or emotional) affect upon them, others transform people entirely by becoming amplified beyond all proportion (see Connolly 2002). If we extend this to clothing, we notice that the (corporeal) bodies of garments are attached to a set of (non-corporeal) ideas and meanings. These are embedded not just within the clothing, but are dispersed and amplified throughout the industries, practices, and processes that manufacture, fabricate, transport, sell, buy, wear, pass on and disposed of clothing and textiles (see Arnett 2016; Laketa 2016; Lahdesmaki 2017). This complex web of interconnected organisations, objects, ideas, people and practices engaged in clothing production and consumption form a kind of affective 'economy' (Ahmed 2004; Richard and Rudnyckyj 2009; Arnett 2016; Laketa 2016; Boler and Davis 2018) where things, ideas and meanings impact and move from one body to another. This describes the way that affective discourses, practices, and economic processes create a self-sustaining and mutating, flow of information, knowledge, and practice (Richard and Rudnyckyi 2009). For clothing, this mobile and fluid affective economy helps to sustain the *capital* economy.

Temporality (through memory), lies at the heart of the affective economy. Bergson (2004), in *Matter and Memory*, introduces us to the idea that affective impacts rely on perception, or how bodies come to perceive other bodies. In other words, the impact that a particular item of clothing, retail environment, or knowledge about the industry will have, relies on how it is perceived and received. These perceptions are 'coloured' (Connolly 2002) or filled in by our personal and cultural memories. To illustrate, one's attitudes towards clothing, sustainability, and fast fashion, are coloured or over-determined by a symbolic cultural repertoire that one retains in their memory and applies to new stimuli. This might induce one to desire to purchase or consume a particular 'look' to reject certain aspects of the clothing economy (such as certain brands/stores) or be attracted to other garment related products. In this way, memory affects, impacts, or changes how an individual or group perceives an object or thing in the present, leaving a lasting impression that goes on to make other affective impacts that reverberate through time as well as space.

Emotion is a crucial part of this. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* Ahmed (2004) considers how emotion is both used as an affected marker within, and itself affects, political discourse. Emotions are described as sticky markers, which attach to the surfaces of objects and ideas. Transferring feelings between apparently disparate symbols, 'affective

economies' perpetually move ideas, meanings, objects, values and emotions around a given imaginary space. We can relate this back to Clough's (2010) notion of how capitalism 'mines affect for value' – or in other words, how it utilises (emotionally) affective responses in order to generate new market opportunities. In turn, this produces new affective feedback loops (Boler and Davis 2018; Connolly 2008), amplifying and extending particular affective economies. In the empirical parts of this paper, we expand on the affective economy around clothing in general, and sustainable clothing in particular, analysing how emotive affects around garments operate as a conduit to self-sustain particular practices. From this starting point, we are then able to explore how to mobilise affect in order to encourage pro-environmental behaviour change.

As we can see, affect is deeply embedded in cultural knowledges and meaning making, and operates on both the individual and the social level (Feola 2016). First, ideas become embodied, or ideationally incorporated into the objects that they 'stick' to (see Roelvink and Zonos 2015). For example, a garment purchased from a high street fast fashion retailer embodies: a) the societally constructed hopes, dreams, and desires that that the owner places on their possession and the wearer places on their wearing of it; and b) the practices, processes, meanings and understandings underpinning the textile and fast-fashion industries. When other people see someone in this garment, the wearer is helping to disperse the meanings that it embodies (Foucault, 1998) because it has come to symbolise a particular set of affective ideas, which operate as symbolic markers for individuals and societies. These are somatic markers, functioning below the level of human consciousness, before cognition initiates a sequence of events based on conscious thought (see Bergson 2004; Mead 1934; Connolly 2002). Second, affect demands particular scripted and emotional performances of the human subjects who form part of a particular (sub) culture. For example, some women might believe that in order to conform to certain gendered expectations, they need to perform the role of people concerned about their appearance, and for whom buying new clothes is a leisure pursuit. This would mean that through subconscious role-play, embedded in affective, pre-cognitive somatic markers, these women's being comes to embody (certain) aspects of fast-fashion (Roelvink and Zonos 2015; Dragojlovic 2018).

Affect, politics, and behaviour change

In this section we find the importance of cultural milieu for creating affective behavioural change. To begin however, although analyses of affect acknowledge the importance of culture, societal understandings, norms, values, and embodied knowledges; they tend to start with the individual and individual responsibility for behaviour, rather than societal structure. Yet, it is the individual who is imagined as having an inaccurate or defective understanding about what is in the best societal interests. Although there was some crossover, the affect and behaviour change literature has tended to fall into three camps. For the first, negative emotions are an important motivator. Therefore Jatinder et al. (2018) find that fear about consequences encourages more ethical decision-making, and Rhodes (2017) claims that the use of fear within public service messaging (in this example, with regards to driving) can be very helpful for promoting changes in

behaviour. The same study also finds that medium intensity fear is more beneficial than maximal intensity. Van der Swaluw et al., (2018) nuance this a little by applying it to the negative emotions experienced when an individual fails to meet their goals. These rely on a straightforward response/stimulus nexus, whereby it is expected that the threat or expectation of something bad will prevent a particular form of action. In contrast, scholars that pursue behavioural change by utilising positive affects are focussing on reinforcing desired behaviours with the expectation that feeling good (from the positive reinforcement) will more likely mean that people will repeat that action (Van Cappellen et al., 2018; Walsh and Kilviniemi 2014). O'Donnel (2017:20) puts it that 'to see the intolerable is not enough. One must see the possibility of something else'.

However, the largest body of literature acknowledges to a greater or lesser extent that behaviour change needs to be situated within factors pertaining to broader lifestyles – or milieu. Consequently, Collado et al., (2013) believe that behaviour changes through increased environmental awareness rely on developing an affinity for nature through frequent contact with nature. This introduces the notion of embeddedness. Skarin et al., (2017) find that changes to eating habits need to be accompanied by changes to lifestyle if they are to become sustainably embedded into an individual's practice. This is because they engender a stronger emotional investment on the behalf of the individual, which helps to initiate and foster longer term changes (Burke et al., 2018) and allows value changes to become internalised (Thweatt and Wrench 2015). However, we also learn that there is a relational element, which refers to interactions with other people. The desire to conform to group norms that is noticed in literature about the politics of affect (Boler and Davis 2018; Kosch 2017; Feola 2016), is very important for changing behaviours – people want to fit in, or, at least, give the appearance of fitting in (Mahler 2018; Blanton et al., 2008).

For developing a sensibility for sustainable clothing therefore, we see that dealing with the value action gap (Blake 1999; Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002; Lucas et al., 2008; Peattie and Peattie 2009) is about much more than attempting to shock or nudge people into transforming their behaviours, or reinforcing desired practices. Although carrot and stick types of measure provide simple policy tools, in this instance they are too simplistic. What we begin to see is that a sensibility for sustainability needs to be situated within the broader context of lifestyles and interactions with peer groups – or milieu. For example, it is more difficult to develop positive personal affects such as pride and enjoyment around a beautifully visibly mended jacket, if the wearer of the jacket is part of a peer group culture that places value on the latest designs, and newness. Finding a peer group that can help to reinforce behaviour change around a sensibility for sustainability is also more difficult when the individual is situated within a broader cultural clothing affective economy that has not yet engaged in a meaningful way with the harmful affects of fast fashion (Claudio 2007; Lee 2003; Turley et al., 2009; Black 2012; Fletcher 2008, 2012). This is particularly important given the way that capitalism 'mines affect for value,' generating affective repertoires privileging consumption. For sustainable clothing choices, the issue might lie in the entire symbolic repertoire that is associated with fashion and textiles.

Consequently, developing a sensibility for sustainable clothing needs to address not only the practices of the individual, but also the societally generated affective meanings, group learning environments, and cultural milieu in which people are situated. However,

the literature about intentionally mobilising societal affective economies is limited to an acknowledgement that affect can be mobilised (Dragojovic 2018), and that resistance politics also needs to learn how to mobilise affectively (Stoehrel 2017; Connolly 2008). The task of this paper is to meet this gap by using clothing as a lens through which to view how affect might be mobilised for pro-environmental behaviour change. After introducing our research methods, the next part of our paper uses a unique longitudinal qualitative dataset to explore how our participants understood the affective economy around clothing and sustainable clothing, analysing how emotive affects around garments operate as conduits allowing people to sustain particular practices.

Methods

We wanted to understand how participants thought, felt, and acted with regards to clothing, exploring how (or if) these feelings, thoughts and actions developed throughout the course of a series of workshops that offered immersive interaction with the materiality of clothing. To deliver this programme of research, an interdisciplinary team of academics with specialisms in sustainable clothing, activism, behaviour change, cultural theory, fashion theory, political theory and social design (from Exeter and Wolverhampton Universities) partnered with community venues, consultants who delivered workshops, videographers and the NGO, Fashion Revolution.

The workshops took place in Cornwall and the West Midlands. The West Midlands has a strong cultural memory of garment making, generating temporally layered and textured affective histories (see Bergson 2004; Ahmed 2004; Connolly 2002) around clothing. This provided us with an opportunity to examine the affective perceptions around clothing to a rich, deep level. Due to the recent economic history of the West Midlands, many of our participants had previously worked in the garment-making industry. This was reflected in the depth of their engagement with the ideas explored in the project. Cornwall, by contrast, has no such history, offering – through our participants – a more *ab initio* affective repertoire perhaps more in keeping with a wider section of the population in the UK. Although both groups followed a similar type of learning journey, the actual workshops were delivered differently, to reflect the different levels and types of skills available within the communities. The Cornwall group of 12 persons was formed in the initial phases of the project, and although there was some attrition (2 participants), most remained involved in some way over the duration of the study. In contrast, the Wolverhampton workshops followed a more 'drop-in' method, regularly attracting 20 persons with 5 participants joining multiple workshop strands.

We began with opening symposia in Cornwall and the West Midlands at which interested persons were invited to complete a questionnaire. On the basis of this, we selected workshop candidates from a range of ages, cultural and class backgrounds, previous experience of garment making and modification, and attitudes to clothing. We hoped that participants with higher levels of skills would share their learning with less experienced persons. We struggled to recruit males, and of our regular participants in the West Midlands, two were male. In Cornwall, the group was exclusively female but spanned a wide range of ages and levels of experience. The 40 one-day workshops illustrated an

alternative, slower and more sustainable fashion cycle. They took place alternately between Cornwall and the West Midlands, and artefacts were shared between the groups to build a sense of solidarity across the two areas. We began in Cornwall by looking at how 'fluff' is turned into dyed yarn and woven fabric. Next, the West Midlands group used some of the Cornwall group's yarn and woven fabric in their deconstructive and reconstructive knitting sessions. The Cornwall group then learned about zero waste and learned to knit using wool from unravelled old knitted garments. Vintage pattern cutting in the West Midlands turned old men's shirts into aprons that the Cornwall group embellished in their make-do-and-mend workshops. The West Midlands group engaged in visible mending, which inspired the Cornwall group to upcycle and reinvent otherwise useless charity shop discards. Conversations over the course of the workshops were recorded, and further discussion was facilitated by the research team, both individually and in groups (Hackney et al., 2021). Participants also kept reflective diaries and participated in short reflective videos.

We followed the principles of embodied research, which invites participants to use a physical, tactile activity in order to explore and generate knowledges (Spatz, 2017a; Spatz, 2017b; Thanem and Knights 2019; Vachelli 2018). The benefits of using this kind of methodological tool is that participants are provided with the spaces and opportunity to reflect on the topic matter in-depth and in conversation with each other, whilst undertaking a relevant activity that could also act as an affective resonator to generate further discussion. In this respect and through the collaborative encounter of stitching (Twigger-Holroyd and Shercliff 2020) our research methods had the capacity to be both informative, and transformative (Heras and Tabara 2014).

There were two objects to the activity. First, it was to provide spaces for conversation so we could understand more about how participants felt about clothes and the kind of learning journeys that they were on. Here, the act of doing enabled conversation to flow. Engagement in workshops enabled participants to reflect more deeply on the environmental and ethical implications of clothing and allowed the research team to generate an in-depth understanding of how individuals constructed their phenomenological life-worlds around clothing (Mead 1934; Blumer 1992; Goffman 1959). Second, the tasks in themselves were designed to enable participants to learn: a) about the journeys that clothes, and their component materials make (for example, making yarn or fabric from raw materials); b) about the kinds of ethical questions that are raised by fast fashion (e.g. the human and environmental costs of mass consumption of cheap clothing); and c) the learn skills to make, mend, and modify clothing themselves.

Drawing on Fletcher and Klepp's (2017) wardrobe research methodology, we conducted wardrobe audits at the beginning and end of the workshop series (in Cornwall) and mid-series in the West Midlands (Hackney et al., 2021). Participants were invited to estimate the number of items in their wardrobes, before making an accurate count of the number of them. Next, audio-recorded interviews were conducted with individual participants as they introduced a researcher to their wardrobe. The interview schedule was designed to understand how people felt about their clothing, the turnover of items in their possession, and how they made their purchases (Hackney et al., 2022). Although this might have been imagined as an invasion of participants' privacy, those who engaged

did so in an enthusiastic and engaged manner, enjoying the opportunity to talk in-depth about their clothing choices.

Small, informal, focus group sessions during workshops were recorded and transcribed, gathering over 100 h of interview data. These sessions included all attendees, around 20 in the West Midlands and 10–12 in Cornwall. This data was inductively coded following the principles of grounded theory (Charmaz 2006; Strauss et al. 2008), looking specifically at the ideas and affective emotions (Ahmed 2004) that participants attached to clothes, the various processes involved in clothes-making, the materiality of clothing, and how participants felt about clothing choices. This process was completed manually, reading the transcripts, noting the topics that participants raised, and the kinds of thoughts, feelings and ideas attached to these topics. In the second phase of the analysis, we assembled codes around emerging themes. For example, a selection of codes from the 'act of making changes' theme, included pressure, preaching, memory, perfection, education and personal honesty. New themes were added if codes did not fit well into existing ones.

The affective economy and fast fashion

As expected, the Cornwall group of relative beginners had the steepest learning journey concerning understanding how making, mending and modifying clothing can affect the way that that they think feel and act about clothing. The West Midlands group were able to use their greater experience and embeddedness in cultural milieu around the materiality of garments to think about clothing at a deeper level. Echoing Middleton (2014) they were also able to demonstrate that it is not enough to simply and passively *have* a skill-set. Instead, the availability of a regular, supportive meet-up group enabled or inspired participants to put their skills into *action*.

We identified four thematic strands: choices and attitudes; ethics; the act of making changes; and 'servicing' clothes. The latter was the largest These strands amount to a discussion about something much more than just a lifestyle change (Collado et al., 2013), or embedding new practices into one's life (Skarin et al., 2017) but involve, instead, amending the way that clothes are imagined ontologically at the level of society. In the following pages we show that clothing, rather than being financially low-cost, as fast fashion is popularly imaged, from the perspective of material resources it is precious, complex, and fluid. Discussing and imagining clothing in this way means that we move beyond using affect in a mechanistic fashion that is embedded in notions of cause and effect (Jatinder et al., 2018; Rhodes 2017) or lifestyle change (Burke et al., 2018; Thweatt and Wrench 2015). Instead, we move towards something that examines the materiality of the object around which cash and affective economies are constructed. We argue that immersion in the materiality of clothing allowed affect to be mobilised, enabling potentially transformative affective encounters. Moreover, it is not enough for a group-learning environment – or milieu – to teach approved normative values and behaviours. In order to activate affective learning, people need the space to create and situate their own knowledges around the topic. By making visible a whole other way of examining often-familiar material things, we are better equipped to think about the practices and procedures that

help to embed those changes into personal practice. In this section, we will explore the affective economies that people expressed through the thematic strands.

Clothing choices and attitudes

This strand emerged predominantly through the wardrobe audits, during which participants tended to be surprised at the number of clothes they owned (Hackney et al., 2022). Clothing choices were assembled around a wide range of factors, including practicality, comfort, how the clothing made individuals feel about themselves, peer pressure, culture, and decoration. Some participants felt enormous loyalty to their garments, which they had imbued with many stories about the adventures that they had shared together. Here, the garment came to embody moments, places, and people, but also particular states of mind, becoming an extension of the self, which (subject to a certain amount of social pressure) affected the body image of participants. In some respects, this echoes the Hegelian notion that it is through (our) property that we become solidified into objective beings, and can be recognised by others. In this context, garments both reflect the wearer's personality and project it for others to recognise. For some participants, this was a deeply self-aware relationship, where individuals were comfortable in their style, and knew who they were. For others, it was more problematic as personal uncertainty or being of an 'irregular' body shape meant that it was difficult for them to adequately reflect who they were. This participant at the Wolverhampton launch event epitomises this when she says '*As a plus size I'm very limited in what I can wear, what I can buy. It's not always affordable on a limited budget*'. This affected purchasing behaviours in complex ways, and either situation was equally capable of leading to responses such as over-shopping, or rejecting consumerist behaviour.

What clothing choices demonstrated very clearly was the stickiness between garments and the self. Although it is hard to argue that clothing choices are not cultural processes, embedded in the complex affective economies of which Clough (2010) speaks, and which overlay or 'colour' how we are perceived as expressed by Bergson (2004), or Connolly (2002), they were not imagined in this way for our participants. Instead, the individual is culturally atomised as the surface of their garment mediates how the subjective self interacts with collective identities. The garment acts as a boundary that both delineates the personal from the group, and borrows from personal and cultural symbolic repertoires in order to (attempt) to construct a desired perception. Finally, the garment begins and ends with its wearer. For example, this participant in one of the Cornwall wardrobe audits discussed a top that she had retained for a long time, recounting some of the '*really nice memories*' that she had experienced with the garment. These stories made her think about her friends. She says '*I messaged my friends because they live all up north and I was like oh when are you all gonna come out for a night out in Newquay … so perhaps I'll keep it for when we go out and have it-give it one last like night out.*' The piece reminds the owner of these good times, and presents a part of her past identity, which she has now moved beyond. Because of the fondness of this attachment, the owner is reluctant to part with an item that she has not worn for many years. Instead, she plans to make it into a piece of home decoration because she feels that it is too deeply infused with her own memories to dispose of it.

Further, clothing as a material object does not have an imagined life before it is acquired, and once it is disposed of (either through utilising charity shops, passing it to someone else, or binning) it ceases to exist This is subverted in instances related by participants, where some products have contained a label that informs the buyer which person fabricated the garment, telling the stories behind the people who made our clothes. One participant discusses this following the series of pattern cutting workshops in Wolverhampton. She says that '*Burberry do that now in one of their streets in… shops in London, where, you know, as you pick something off the rail, you get this sort of like… just by you, you get a kind of a… a video of… of who's made it, you get that intimate sort of relationship with that garment.'* As the conversation progresses, the participants discuss other companies that have done similar things. Through this conversation, we start to see that all of the persons involved in the myriad of processes involved in garment production have *all* added their stories to the item. Including the growers/makers of the yarn, the people working in (and the communities living around) dyeing plants, weavers, pattern cutters, sewers, and distributors and people working in logistics deliveries. However, these stories are usually invisible.

Ethics and the act of making changes

Connolly (2002) and Bergson (2004) discuss how affective markers attract or repel us. The story of the garment emerged as an important part of how participants discussed ethics, creating an affective narrative around the fabrication of the object, which attracts or repels consumers. Even if they did not imagine themselves as ethical shoppers, participants generally were aware from the outset of the study that there were ethical questions around the companies and processes which make clothing, even if they were uncertain as to the details. This extended to knowledge about ethical brands, questions over the kinds of fabrics worn, issues of exploitation, greenwash, heroes and villains; and who really pays for clothes. As also might have been expected, over the duration of the project participants understandings became more nuanced and reflective.

Discussions flagged that ethical issues can often be interpreted as being preachy, or applying pressure. As one participant from West Midlands put it in the deconstructive knitting debrief; '*We've had quite a few good chats about cheap clothing and not demonising it and the privilege of being able to clothe yourself adequately. … We've been talking about … the privilege of being able to make ethical clothing choices when you're on a low income and … one of the dangers of it is that it becomes, like, a bit of- there's some snobbery in it'*. In a pre-workshop wardrobe audit in Cornwall, another participant shared the view *'that I don't think it's about shaming people about what they buy, and going "and that's wrong", I think it's more about helping people make more informed decisions'*. Affects were collected around an assumption that the non-participating public need to be 'educated', implying that people that do not follow a particular value-set are lacking in the correct knowledges, and by association, were wrong, and needing to change. Participants found these kinds of emotive responses to be an alienating experience, which did not encourage them to engage with the issues. Resonating with the behaviour change literature of Van Cappellen et al., (2018), and Walsh and Kilviniemi (2014), individuals needed to feel that they were on a journey

which was infused with pleasant and positive emotional affects. Some people likened this to planting seeds, which, infused with possibility and becoming, hold the potential to grow and change the world. For many participants, the workshops provided a site for planting these seeds, doing what Ahmed (2004) might describe as creating their own personal affective economies and feedback loops (see Boler and Davis 2018) around their ethical choices.

The innovative milieu of the workshops enabled participants to practice new skills, but also invited them to look at familiar things in a different way. For example, when the Cornwall group visited the West Midlands to discuss the project, one person spoke of how: '*You're in that little rut and you don't… you don't necessarily meet new people, you know, and do new things very often sometimes. Or I certainly don't. You know, I get up, I get on my bike, I eat scrambled eggs, and go to bed again, you know. So, this has… this has made me look at… at the world a little… a little bit differently, which I think has been good from a personal point of view as well as a kind of a behaviour changing point of view.*' Consequently, they were able to develop and nurture their own creativity, whilst exploring how they might embed their learning into their own lives. Decisions about adopting more sustainable practices were based on having the agency to *want* to incorporate this creativity, rather than feeling that they were obligated to *change* their lives. It also meant that making, mending, and modifying clothing was fused with memories about the uplifting, pleasant, and even joyful experience of the group activities, in a mutually supportive learning environment, which gave participants the encouragement and inspiration to try new things and reimagine both their ethical relationships with clothing, but also how they considered the garment and its story. If ideas are embodied in the objects that they stick to this means that garments start to become a repository for a new set of meanings and pre-cognitive somatic markers, which engage with ethical questions whilst being creatively embedded in individuals' lives.

Servicing clothes

The thematic strand about servicing clothes arose from our realisation whilst analysing the material that much of what we were doing within the workshops covered aspects of clothing maintenance and upkeep. Whilst this is a familiar concept with regards to items such as expensive pieces of machinery (for example, maintaining a car), it is less familiar as part of a narrative which expended personal or delegated labour (for example, through cash payment to a specialist) in the maintenance of a piece of clothing. This is particularly pressing within a cultural environment in which clothing is a part of an affective economy where it is imagined as being disposable (see Environmental Audit Committee, 2019). These perceptions are enabled and sustained by the ready availability of cheap garments and the affective relationships 'mined' by retail capitalism in the pursuit of clothing sales. This was raised multiple times over the course of the research, where participants discussed how low quality clothing is a fragile object that distorts when it is washed, and the fabrics start to degrade.

In contrast, by exploring the complex and time consuming processes involved in fabricating the materials out of which clothing is comprised, participants were introduced to the realisation that contemporary society's relationship with consumer goods is relatively

new. We learned through the multiple processes involved in making yarn, thread, or fabric, that garments embody extensive temporalities which are not reflected in the ways that they are imagined as part of the disposability of fast fashion. More than this, whilst mending, making, and re-making garments – unravelling jumpers to re-use their wool, slicing t-shirts to make a fabric yarn to knit with and transforming shirts into skirts, or trousers into tops – participants and researchers came to realise that the solidity of a garment is merely imagined. Instead of being a fixed material object made up of a complex array of parts, they are fluid, malleable, and dynamic. Wearing a garment makes it subject to entropy, and its dynamism subjects it to a process of unravelling that we can either mitigate (through learning how to care for clothes in order to preserve their life), or repair with visible or invisible mending techniques. These can embellish the garment and make it more beautiful and meaningful.

Unlike some of the behaviour change literature, we found that the driving factor for developing a sensibility for sustainable clothing lay not in the appeal towards environmental issues (Collado et al., 2013), lifestyle (Skarin et al., 2017), or self-interest as Hurth (2010) claims. Instead, it lay in the realisation that clothing and the materials that it is made from are precious, and embody the labour and time of many different (often very low-paid and vulnerable) actors, globally. Often the effect on participants was that they expressed a desire to reduce their clothing either by buying fewer goods of better quality that they expected to be able to keep for longer, or, for some participants, choosing not to buy anything at all for an extended time. All of these options involve the requirement for extensive servicing of their garments, both for maintenance, or to re-make into something new.

The repair part of clothes servicing is attached to a cultural affective repertoire that foregrounds some complicated emotional responses in which the past was very present (see Bergson's 2004 discussion about memory and time). Participants spoke with fondness and nostalgia about the button-boxes owned by their mothers and grandmothers, and patches that were sewn on their clothes when they were little. '*I had one of those full of buttons which had been my mum's, so it was like, it had, like, my mum's and my grandma's. But I got into it. At some point in my 20 s or maybe early 30 s I'd decided, you know, I've had this button box for years, I'm never going to use all these buttons, I'll get rid of them. I carefully sorted through and got down to a small box and the rest I gave them all away. And then within a year or so this uncle of-my dad's uncle died and … I got this next tin of another family button tin, the same size.*' In one of the Make Do and Mend workshops in Cornwall, participants had a lengthy discussion about patching clothing. One woman recounted that '*my mum used to put those on, and they were always like cherries or like stars, or like rainbows. They were quite cool. I think it was like a… yeah, and it was always, yeah, when I got a hole, it was almost, oh, yeah, I can have like a patch. I could pick a patch out of my mum's box, and she'd put it on.'* The conversation went on to note that nowadays a patch might no longer be hiding a hole, but be a piece of decoration added to brand new items of clothes.

Participants discussed how making and mending clothing had been a highly gendered subsistence type of activity, associated pre-cognitive somatic markers assembled around poverty or war-time rationing. From reflections at the end of Cornwall's Make do and Mend sessions, we were told that (my mum); '*Grew up in the forties and fifties, and*

she's not very, she kind of rebelled against all of this make do and mend, and crafting. I think because she kind of came from an age in the women's liberation movement, and so I think she was like, no, no, that symbolises women in the home; I'm a modern woman, but she remembers her mother telling her how in the Second World War she made overcoats'. Some people had learned some making, mending or modifying skills from their mothers or grandmothers, and for whom intergenerational family learning was a crucial part of their attraction to these activities. Others opposed their parents influence, rejecting the more 'careful' or frugal practices of their childhood for a strong consumerism. On the converse, others learnt (knitting) skills elsewhere because the feminism of their mothers reacted against the domesticity of making.

Another participant came from a family cultural backdrop whereby it was extremely important to look good. She had grown to associate making, mending and modifying with objects that were imperfect, and therefore inadequate. She had joined the group because she was loathe to throw away outgrown clothing belonging to her daughter, for which she had a strong emotional attachment. Consequently, she had wanted to learn the skills that would enable her to make something new with the garments. Over the course of the workshop series, she learned not only the skills, but also that she was able to make beautiful objects, and that any imperfections made them unique.

As we can see, participants' development of the theme of 'servicing clothing' needed to navigate a complex, subconscious cultural repertoire of negative affective economies. However, the workshops generated an enjoyable and supportive learning environment that helped to do this. For example, at the West Midlands visit to Cornwall's Make Do and Mend series, we heard that '*what this workshop is giving me is the confidence. Where before I was thinking like, oh, my God, I will never be able to keep one of those things in my hand and do something out of it, but now I feel like really I can'*. Some participants attended despite challenging personal circumstances because they felt that the skills learning that they experienced was so rewarding, and the conversations over the duration of the making process so supportive, that it was worth the additional effort of making the time to attend. These positive affects spill over from the practical skills shared, and into an acknowledgement about how the workshops had supported mental health and wellbeing. The meanings that have been attached to making practices mutated over the duration of the workshops, creating newer (sub) culturally produced affects. They also created new emotional responses that oriented how participants delineated the concept of servicing clothing. Additionally, workshops incubated a nascent affective economy around a sensibility for sustainability, nurturing its development, and encouraging its ability to grow, disperse, and amplify beyond the boundaries of the workshops, and into the wider socio-economy.

Developing a sensibility for sustainable clothing

Our research suggests that the first task in developing a sensibility for sustainable clothing is to generate new imaginaries around the materialities of clothing. If the clothing industry 'mines affect for value' Clough (2010), the task is to expose these affective processes and raise culturally situated challenges to them. We need to expose a different affective

repertoire. For example, as an individualised purchaser of a garment, consumers make a series of nested assumptions. Consumers assume that they are buying a fixed, solid, and final object, where the only change that it is going to undergo are the processes of entropy as it begins the process towards disintegration, and (clothing) death. The object itself has no life or creativity in as much as that it is never going to become something new. Even more than this, all meaning attached and attributed to that garment starts and finishes with the purchaser, owner, and/or wearer of it. Items of clothing are locked in temporalities whereby they have no histories outside of whoever currently utilises it.

Being a part of the cultural milieu of the workshops raised challenges to this individualistic/narcissistic imaginary, exposing the fluidity of clothing and the textiles out of which they are made. More than this, the workshops brought attention to how a garment embodies multiple, complex affective economies that begin with the raw material of which components are derived. These are embedded in intricate processes and through the labour expended at each stage, a myriad of stories that render the garment precious, rather than disposable. Finally, far from being on a steady process towards disintegration, the garment is really a precious textile that can be serviced and cared for. Moreover, through a combination of creativity and skills it has the potentiality to become something new. In other words, it is a fluid, rather than a fixed object, infused with becoming. Understanding these questions is a sensibility for sustainability.

Did the cultural milieu of the workshops result in behaviour change? What we saw was that there is not a mechanistic relationship between people's behaviour and workshop participation. It is impossible to say that the workshops *made* people exhibit more sustainable behaviours – or even hold more sustainable values around clothing. Indeed, we see that there was a strong resistance towards being 're-educated' with the 'right' set of progressive values. Participants wanted to explore new ideas and skills in a positive affective environment so that they themselves could create new ways of incorporating knowledges into their own symbolic repertoires, and apply them in ways that fit their lives. This might, or might not include making desirable behaviour changes. But the workshops did create the cultural milieu whereby a fluid and dynamic relationship to textiles and clothing could be fostered. In other words, we found that inviting people to immerse themselves in the materiality of clothing enabled potentially transformative affective encounters which like seeds, can be nurtured and fostered. We also know that the workshop environment supported participants to become more 'fluent' as people who create with textiles, and to (re)find their enjoyment in undertaking these activities. Moreover, they supported the transformation of passively 'held' skills, into active practices, in a stimulating affective environment.

At the end of the project many participants found that they were much more reflective about the clothing purchases that they made. Many felt that they had reduced their consumption of clothes. The reason for this is that over the project they had become part of an affective cultural milieu that deliberately examined the materiality of clothing, and imagined garments and their components as having a much bigger life before purchase, during use and after disposal. We believe that if individuals are to be able to sustain this challenge to dominant cultural values, they need to be a part of a cultural milieu that helps to reinforce these new knowledges and behaviours. In this way, affective learning is not only activated, but can also be sustained.

Conclusion

We can see from this journey that an examination of clothing and fashion has a lot to add to political analyses. In this paper, we use a politics of attitudes towards clothing to consider sustainability and behaviour change. In the introduction we signalled the importance of addressing the value-action gap, whereby people hold particular ethical beliefs and attitudes but that these often do not translate into consistent actions (Blake 1999; Kollmuss and Agyeman 2002; Lucas et al., 2008; Peattie and Peattie 2009; Hurth 2010). Our paper finds that although mobilising emotions through the concept of affect is one way to deal with this problem (Burke et al., 2018; O'Donnel 2017; Van Cappellen et al., 2018; Collado et al., 2013; Blanton et al., 2008), the mobilisation of affect alone is not enough to create long-term changes. Collado et al. (2013), and Skarin et al. (2017) already told us that situating and embedding new affective knowledges and values into ones internalised value systems is an important part of this process. From Mahler (2018) and Blanton et al. (2008) we know that peer group support – or cultural milieu is crucial in order to be able to maintain this because people have a need to conform to group norms (Boler and Davis 2018; Kosch 2017; Feola 2016). What this study demonstrates is that the group environment is not just about teaching a prescribed set of approved normative values and behaviours. Our workshops immersed participants in the materiality of clothing, providing the space for them to create their own knowledges, affective economies, resonances, and webs of cultural meanings based around the conversations and practices that they encountered whilst participating in the project. Participants were exposed to a cultural milieu that imagined garments as precious, complex and fluid mobilities with stories and lives that were much bigger than that of the current garment owner. This cultural milieu sustained and reinforced newly acquired affective economies.

For affect, this paper considers how it can be mobilised through materiality and embodied learning. For this, we see the importance of creating new milieu to explore, discuss, and importantly, activate and acquire latent skills. The workshops operated as a space for people to explore the perceptual repertoire that they held around clothing, making, and fashion. This included the materiality of the objects that they worked with, and the industries, practices, and processes around clothing which mobilise current affective and capital economies (Arnett 2016; Laketa 2016; Lahdesmaki 2017; Ahmed 2004; Arnett 2016; Laketa 2016; Boler and Davis 2018; Clough, 2010). In order to mobilise affective capacity, participants needed to have the space to be immersed in it, and the offered the space to develop their own embodied affective understandings.

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ORCID iD

Joanie Willett https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9966-2116

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