

**Redesigning Together:  
Relearning Roles and the Value of Materials in the  
Overproduction of Fashion**

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## Abstract

*What could cause greater upheaval in any system of trade than the consumer becoming the producer?*

Even though there is a vast amount of information concerning the negative environmental and social impact that the overproduction of fashion contributes to, the industry still manages to attract and make more people into consumers as they are playing on the human need and desire for renewal. The purpose of this study is to learn more about collaborative approaches on a grassroots level that could contribute to reducing the growing mountain of second-hand garments created by this overproduction.

Based on the two premises that (1) everyone can be a designer at times, and (2) reutilisation is a viable sustainable approach to deal with problems of waste, a third premise (3) an installation matters was put into practice as an installation containing an exhibition and a crafting workshop was organized in Mozambique, Mexico, Sweden and Singapore. Taking support from the two theoretical frameworks of community of practice and activity theory the participants' activities and responses during the redesign of second-hand garments were analysed. The resulting installations can be said to have facilitated four different temporary communities of practice in which learning and artefacts were socially produced.

The project shows that people were attracted to and then inclined to participate in the proposed activities as they voluntarily chose to engage and find their own role in the process of reusing and redesigning materials that they previously had not considered using. Their resulting artefacts confirm the initial assumption that everyone can be a designer at times if given the opportunity. The project also shows that it is possible to use the concept of reutilisation and redesign to link people from different socio economic backgrounds with different motivations, ages, cultures and pre-skills into a collaborative learning experience that also becomes a means of production.

To place the production process closer to consumers in this way changes people's relationship towards the materials and processes needed for the production of fashion. They become closer to their personalised garment and their perception of waste materials changes. This revaluation of roles and materials could have an impact on the way people choose to continue to engage in fashion as they may either move away from the habit of buying new materials or begin to create affordable fashion from what already exists. If this initiative can become recurring within communities then significant difference could be achieved as people choose to turn waste into resource, satisfying their need for renewal and urge to be creative together whilst coming up with their own everyday approaches to sustainable fashion.

**Keywords:** social production, participatory design, community of practice, value creation, sustainable fashion, do-it-yourself, do-it-together