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The narrative aims to improve understandings of what Local Fashion is, and contribute to the effort to design new fashion systems grounded in logic relevant to contemporary human needs and aspirations.

Key Words: Slow Fashion, Textiles, Sustainability, Local Fashion, Small Enterprise, Social Enterprise, Design Management, Sustainable Development.
Local Fashionalities: Växbo Lin and WomenWeave

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Thesis for the Degree of Licentiate in Textile Management
The Swedish School of Textiles
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Abstract
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Acknowledgements

I am grateful to a number of people and institutions for giving me the guidance, time, space, and resources that enabled this exploration. Assalam alaykum, namaste, and tack! to my friends, especially Tamara Albu for her constant optimism, and colleagues, and research partners, particularly, of course, to Hemendra Sharma and Sally Holkar in Maheshwar, and Hanna and Jacob Bruce in Växbo.

Kate Fletcher’s 2008 essay “Slow Fashion: An Invitation to Systems Change” startled me with a shameless vision of a healing and loving world of textiles and fashion. Her essay reminds that faith in the intangible and intuitive is what propels research. Thank you to The New School for having contributed travel funding, and to The Swedish School of Textiles and the University of Borås for making this work possible. Thank you to Håkan Torstensson for his kind guidance and good humor; Lisbeth Svengren-Holm for her patience, encouragement, wisdom and cheerful spirit, and Simonetta Carbonaro for nudging me to reconsider "the future we thought we had lost."
Preface

Textiles embody evolutionary journey from past to the future. Human textile skills developed perhaps 30,000 years ago (Soffer et al. 2000), which is some 30 million years later than birds’ ability to create nests, and hundreds of millions of years later than spiders’ ability to spin webs (Grellet-Tinner et al. 2012; Selden et al. 2011). Even if we are latecomers to the textile party, humans do have remarkable ability to produce an astonishing variety of fabrics for endless practical and aesthetic purposes.

The roles cloth and its frequent outcome, fashion, have in creating our individual and collective identities could be explored endlessly. This was highlighted for me some years ago by a small in-class event, and set me toward expanding my own textile consciousness. A young woman was presenting a report on the outdoor clothing company Patagonia’s newish version of Synchilla™, a knitted “fleece” fabric manufactured from recycled polyethylene (PET) bottles, whose production method saved huge amounts of energy and carbon emissions compared to similar polyester textiles made directly from petroleum. It was probably the first time that environmental issues connected with fashion were being discussed in the class; most of what the student was sharing was news to me. The Synchilla™ swatch she showed had a kind of fun-fuzziness that is still popular, even if it felt to me greasy and glistened in a monochromatic way that declares itself synthetic. Similar fabric had been popular for outdoor jackets and vests since the mid-1980s. It was also a bit irritating that this fabric was being marketed as fleece, at a time when fleece still meant sheep’s wool. However, this example, on the market years before the word sustainable had become the most commonly misused word in the English language, was provocative, representing Patagonia’s and manufacturing partner Tiejin’s pioneering effort to transform garbage into garments. It was a brilliant innovation, that, despite my disdain for its aesthetic characteristics, got me thinking, in a positive way, about the purpose of design, and how it can function, or dysfunction, not just on aesthetic and practical levels, but in relationship to how we live within the confines of our planet.

These days, the environmental and socio-economic problems and opportunities connected with textile and fashion systems are much
discussed and studied, and the definition of *good design* has been updated so that it includes social and environmental imperatives. People around the world are seeking mitigations, and experimenting with new transformational systems. There is little doubt however that we are just in a phase of gaining awareness, and even changes that seem excellent may turn out later to be problematic. For example, regarding recycled polyester, there are new studies indicating that it (and other synthetic fabrics) break down during washing and are contaminating our waterways with microplastics. These microplastics are apparently ingested by zooplankton, and are thereby causing yet more environmental stress on, and toxic additions to, the natural food chain (Browne et al. 2011; Cole et al. 2013; O’Conner 2014). I am not qualified to say that billions of PET bottles being put to use for new materials should be avoided, but the findings show once again unexpected negative repercussions of technology. In this case we have a sobering reminder that, as the saying goes, the road to hell is paved with good intentions. How do we proceed when we know we must act immediately, but we also don’t have time for errors? Poly-fleece, as it has come to be called, can be looked at as a kind of symbol, or boundary object, that holds various meanings in different contexts and among different groups of people. For me it has encouraged my preference for seeking socially oriented, rather than technically oriented, solutions.
Introduction

The Global Fashion Problem

It is a given that globally sourced, globally manufactured, globally distributed, and globally used apparel, most of which is designed to be short-lived, what I refer to as Global Fashion, causes, via the logic and requirements of the physical and social systems that produce it, significant and unsustainable environmental and social damage. This complex phenomenon is problematic not because it is, per se, global, but because of the requirements of the large-scale, mass industrial, rapid-throughput/hyper-consumption systems on which it is based. The “globalness” of Global Fashion is a “natural” outcome of a confluence of factors including vastly more efficient shipping and logistics than half a century ago (Levinson 2006); the liberalization of world trade agreements; and radically new instant global communication. Most of all, fashion has been globalized because of industrial-era logic that relies upon the rule of economy of scale. This rule, on which the global economy is based, gives businesses using large factories and facilities the ability to spread the relatively fixed-costs of infrastructure over high units of output. Perversely, this requires high throughput of natural resources, and a population accustomed, if not addicted, to living fast.

Though in the mid-twentieth century, most textiles and apparel consumed in the developed countries were produced within their borders, the adoption of free trade agreements, and the advent of modern global transportation and communication systems has created a market in which the vast majority of textiles and clothing consumed in developed (wealthy) countries are now produced in developing (poor) countries. In the USA, 98 percent of garments and footwear are imported (American Apparel and Footwear Association). In Europe, the weight of imported apparel is more than ten times the weight of that exported (European Commission 2014). Concurrently, the spread of global retailing, by transnational corporations/brands, puts pressure on local cultural differences and diversity, and threatens to create a Global Fashion monoculture. H&M for instance, the leader in terms of brand value (Interbrand 2014) has “approximately 3,200 stores in 54 markets” (H&M 2014).

There is no doubt that Global Fashion, like other global systems that produce food or electronics, for example, provides many and
widespread benefits. The focus now, however, because we live in a time of unprecedented environmental and extreme social pressures, must be on seeking solutions to the problems it creates. Starting with the growing or manufacturing of fibers, and finishing with eventual disposal of garments, the production and use chain is riddled with environmental problems. As can be ascertained from scientific studies (Allwood et al. 2006; Muthu 2014; Slater 2003). The global system uses vast amounts of resources and toxins. It releases effluents into the water, emits volatile organic compounds and soot into the air, and deposits poisonous solid waste into the land. Demonstrating how little import is given to this situation is the fact that in high-consumption economies such as the USA and Europe, annual per capita waste, discarding of mostly usable textiles, is astonishingly high. In the USA, the figure is approximately 30 kilos (US EPA 2013) per person. Europeans throw out similar amounts totaling close to 6 million tons annually in the EU zone. Most of this goes to landfill or is dumped into “third world” markets (FOEE 2013).

Merely opening one’s eyes in a typical fashion retail outlet corroborates the science. Regarding the huge stacks and overstuffed racks of garments, peripheral materials (labels, hangtags, hangers), collateral (signage, packaging) filling outlets across the globe indicates the immense quantity of resources required to make the fashion experience. Merely smelling the unpleasant odors from the textiles at stores ranging from Abercrombie to Zara might be enough to inform one of dangerous substances used in the supply chain. It is however also widely documented (Herbert and Plattus 2009) that garment workers exposure to the chemicals used in textile and garment production, such as dyes, cleaning fluids, and the formaldehyde resins that are used to make fabric crease-resistant, are associated with higher rates of asthma, dermatitis, and bladder, lung and nasal cancers. Moreover, typically poorly ventilated retail environments can increase ambient concentrations of these toxins (Friedman-Jimenez 1994; Ng et al. 1994 in Herbert and Plattus 2009). In terms of labor practices, the textile and fashion industries are notoriously speedy racers to the bottom. Indeed, the history of textile production, particularly industrial production, is the history of the struggle against exploitation and for labor rights (Louie 2001; Sluiter 2009; Rivoli 2005; Ross 2004; Stein 1962). The 2013 Rana Plaza factory collapse in Bangladesh, which killed 1,137
people, 80 percent of them women, working 90 to one hundred hours per week and earning wages that ranged from 12 to 22 USD cents per hour (Kernaghan 2014), is but just one prominent example of modern human exploitation.

The difficult economic relationship between fashion (as it is currently understood) and sustainability is much discussed. In recent decades, fashion has become increasingly based on increasing throughput and maximizing perishability. At the same time, sustainability has increasingly come to be understood as dependent on reducing throughput and minimizing perishability. This mismatch is often framed as a challenge or paradox (Black 2008). However, with a business model based on economic growth achieved by making and selling products created to be quickly irrelevant and rapidly disposed, it is hard not to see Global Fashion as fundamentally and irreconcilably at odds with new economic slow-or no-growth theories devised to prioritize stability, justice, and well-being (Berry 2010; Daly 1991, 1996; Jackson 2009; Hawken 1999, 2010; LaTouche 2010; Packard 1960; Schor 2005, 2010).

Similar to the vast production and distribution networks of global-industrial fast food systems, the vast production and distribution networks of Global Fashion operate—for those of us in the consumer role of the system—as if by magic. These inhumanly structured, hyper-productive systems are surely a cause of the physical and material obesity that is now endemic in high-consumption cultures (Barber 2007; Schlosser 2005; Shell 2009). In terms of clothing, in Europe and the US, citizens buy four times the per capita volume of clothes than they did four decades ago (Textrends.org cited in Siegle 2011, p 3). Average annual spending on clothing is now under six percent of income in Europe, and under three percent in the US, making clothing cheaper, more plentiful—and more problematic—than ever before (Ravasio 2012). Indeed, textiles and clothing, since the industrial revolution, have been transformed from scarce and precious to ubiquitous and cheap. If the hyper-consumption required to support global large-scale systems is no longer affordable either by the planet, neither are consumption-oriented lifestyles anymore useful, in the developed economies, for elevating psychological well-being (New Economics Foundation 2013; OECD 2013).
Current fashion is a far cry from Wilde's well known aesthetically focused remark that fashion is "a form of ugliness so intolerable that we have to alter it every six months." Fashion today could be said to be a form of waste making so efficient that it has to be thrown out every six months, six weeks, or six days.

Less discussed than the above environmental, social, and economic problems associated with Global Fashion, are its cultural impacts. Perhaps this is so because culture (broadly defined as how any group of people behave), what people accept as ugly or beautiful, meaningless or meaningful, is quite a fuzzy area. I find the homogeneity-producing system of Global Fashion as depressing as other large-scale industrial McDonaldizations (ref) taking place in the world. What joy is there in seeing the world's population clad in reiterations of essentially
the same generic products? In other writing (Carbonaro and Goldsmith 2013) I have described most of the Global Fashion offer to consumers as nothing more than \textit{faux-choix}. This is a valid description, because although stylistically, Global Fashion products may appear to be diverse, they are, materially, and in terms of the manufacturing processes, more or less the same. About 65 percent of synthetic fibers used in apparel are polyester; more than 90 of so-called natural fiber used in apparel is from one species of cotton \textit{(Gossypium hirsutum)} and 99 percent of which is non-organic (TextileExchange 2011; TextileWorld 2014). A kind of modern day fashion drab Maoism is observable on people in cities and towns around the world: simple constructions made with price-saving solid color fabrics. Where is the aesthetic resonance, psychic value, or emotional durability (Chapman 2005) that might be found in actual diversity?

If the need to find solutions to damaging aspects of Global Fashion systems is easily understood, bringing about potential solutions is a boggling challenge. It depends on a vast number of factors and forces that are relevant to all approaches to manufacturing and use. This situation has been summarized by Kim Stanley Robinson’s 2013 chapter "Is It Too Late?" in the Worldwatch Institute’s \textit{State of the World 2013: Is Sustainability Still Possible?} (2013). Robinson describes, as have many others, the need for a global and profound paradigm shift, driven by a polyarchic, cooperative effort between government, civil society, science, business, religion, that would reset our "infrastructural path dependencies" from (primarily) private interests to a cooperative global effort to provide for the common good of humanity and the biosphere (p 376 -377).

What routes might be explored in order to achieve such profound changes in the realms of how we clothe and express ourselves via fashion? If garments that are produced via non-harmful systems are on wish lists everywhere, they are barely, if at all, actually present in wardrobes anywhere. Yet, it is clear that changes and explorations are underway. The emergence of mainstream organizations dedicated to improving textile and fashion systems provides evidence of a shift in thinking and doing. These organizations include, for example, The Sustainable Apparel Coalition, a corporate-lead initiative, already involving producers of approximately a third of the world’s clothing production (Sustainable Apparel Coalition 2012) that aims to reduce the
environmental and social harm embedded in the design, supply and production and distribution/retail chains. They are doing so, in part, by developing the Higg Index, a tool for assessing and labeling the impacts of garments produced by members of the coalition. Similarly, The Clean Clothes Campaign, in existence since 1989, globally advocates for rights and living wages for those laboring in the textile and garment industries. Made By is a European organization dedicated to improving the environmental and social impacts of fashion. The Nordic Initiative Clean and Ethical, aims to inspire producers and educate consumers toward best practices. Fair trade, fair labor, and consumer-activist networks are growing; technological and logistical innovations are being made that diminish environmental impacts. Academia is increasingly concerned with and researching sustainability and this is reflected in the growth of textile, fashion, and design management classes and programs focused on understanding materials, processes, aesthetics, consumer psychology, and other issues connected with sustainability. This handful of examples from a much larger number of other indicators, show real effort toward achieving better, or more accurately put, less harmful, textile and fashion systems by employing science and social change.

Such concrete changes to the fashion hegemony correspond with the way in which meanings that are assigned to fashion are also in flux. This lack of consensus can be seen at much-watched fashion events such as New York’s Metropolitan Museum of Art’s May 2014 gala honoring fashion empress Anna Wintour. The scene was a chaotic mix of styles and representations, ranging from mid-twentieth-century nostalgia to modern-day global-tribal. What could be more nostalgic than de la Renta’s black and white, Dioresque new look gown, bearing a huge, *name brand*, cursive signature in *de la Renta red*, and worn by Sarah Jessica Parker? What could be more of the media-moment than Prada’s multi-green, feathered, fringed, bejeweled-rope costume worn by Lupita Nyong’o? If that high-wattage, very public, event showed little or no consensus of what being fashionable means, or little or no apparent investment in fashion as a force beyond entertainment, self-promotion and adornment, out of the spotlight lies a counter-trend that is experimenting with, or searching for alternative fashion meanings that embed or are based on perceived-as-sustainable values.
Examples of this later phenomenon include strategies that include all manner of recycling and repurposing. Re-making is one of many approaches, but it is particularly relevant because it inherently recognizes and responds to the fact that we are overproducing. European micro-makers such as Junky Styling, From Somewhere, and DreamandAwake are interesting cases of fresh clothing businesses that are changing not only ways of doing business, but also ways of creating beauty by piecing together tidbits and yards of second hand fabrics drawn from hundreds of millions of tons of textile waste. Radical transparency, such as Honestby.com’s detailing of its supply chain, including even the cost and markup of every button and bow, is much talked about. It epitomizes the cooperation and trust that is needed to create change. Do-it-yourself (DIY) and make-it-sell-it-yourself (MISIY) fashion is a part of the alternate fashion zeitgeist, as demonstrated by the success of internet-enabled Etsy. As a B-corp, a new American legal construction that prioritizes social aims in the enterprise model, Etsy now has over 1 million crafter-sellers' whose annual aggregate turnover is now well above 1 billion dollars (etsy.com 2014).

In “Fashion and the Design of Prosperity: A Discussion of Alternative Business Models” Carbonaro and I (2013) speculate how fashion, in both symbolic and substantial terms, might be reimagined and reconfigured so that it would be a vehicle for the creation of
prosperity and sustainability. One potential route discussed there, as well as by others in academic circles (Fletcher and Grose 2012), and in the fashion press, is the notion of Local Fashion. The conceptualization of Local Fashion is, at face value, the inversion of Global Fashion. If Global Fashion produces many problems, perhaps Local Fashion, idealized as its opposite, would yield many solutions. Instead of global sourcing of materials, use what can be found or developed locally. Rather than outsourcing labor to distant lands, employ (even at much higher costs) people living nearby. In lieu of producing for “other communities”, produce for “one’s own community”. Abandon high-volume throughput at breakneck speed in favor of low-volume throughput at slower speed. Instead of industrial, focus on artisanal. Don't blindly consume Global Fashion, keep your eyes open, and embrace Local Fashion. Local systems are popularly discussed as a potentially better means of making and provisioning embracing the belief that preserving or revitalizing local economies, responsibility, sovereignty, pride of place, and awareness of bioregional resources and limits are required for change toward sustainability. These thoughts are frequently linked with mid- and late-twentieth century theorists’ avocation of small and convivial systems. Oft-quoted is Schumacher (1973), who believed that modern provisioning and use must be (re)configured to location-appropriate, smaller scale systems in order to put technology (back) into the service of humanity. Illich (1973), on a parallel track to Schumacher, argued that smaller scale, local systems would build more meaningful social relationships, and has often been cited by advocates of localism. Similarly, the Club of Rome’s (Meadows et al.1972 [2013]) seminal report The Limits to Growth and Daly’s (1991) Steady State Economics support theoretical positions that are concretely manifested in modern phenomena including the transition movement and an array of slow movements, including slow food, slow architecture, and slow finance, that promote locally-oriented systems.

Local and slow textiles and fashion practices are easily connected to the theoretically underpinning of other local and slow movements, but have not been well studied. Although there are, for example, a good number of careful, grounded narratives about the impacts, motivations, and circumstances associated with global textile and fashion systems (Cline 2012; Rivoli 2005; Siegle 2011; Snyder 2007;
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**The “New” Roles for Design and Design Management**

Design and Design Management processes that primarily aim to produce excess consumption have been criticized for no less than half a century. In a chapter called “Planned Obsolescence of Desirability” in *The Waste Makers*, Packard (1960 p 59) describes the social conditions of “design for the sake of consumption.”
All the emphasis on style tends to cause the product designers and public alike to be preoccupied with the appearances of change rather than the real values involved, and tend to force more and more extravagances in the design as the designers grope for novelty.

Packard quotes famed industrial designer George Nelson.

Design is an attempt to make a contribution through change. When no contribution is made or can be made, the only process available for giving the illusion of change is ‘styling.’ In a society so totally committed to change as our own, the illusion must be provided for the customers if the reality is not available (p 59).

On the occasion of the twentieth anniversary of Papanek’s (1971 [1985]) Design for the Real World, which criticized commercial design as “the perversion of a great tool,” and called on designers to fulfill genuine needs rather than “phony wants”, Rawsthorn (2011) notes, that his manifesto is still in print and is perhaps more influential than ever. Papanek is seen as a pioneer of sustainable and humanitarian design.

What, however, constitutes “good design” is not necessarily clear, and ideas about it are ever evolving. Nineteenth and twentieth century art and design progressions such as Dress Reform, Arts and Crafts, Constructivism, Futurism, and the Bauhaus, were deliberately politically and defined by specific aesthetic and ethical agendas. Today the question of “goodness” or “badness” is more relevant than ever, and primarily concerns how well, or how not well, design addresses environmental and social problems. Design-as-a-tool-for-improving-lives-activist John Thackara (2006) has posited an ethical stance that designers—broadly understood as people who materially shape the world via collaborative innovation—should follow in order to be part of the solution toward meaningful lives, rather than part of the problem contributing to the overproduction of meaningless goods. These include, the need to:

- think about the consequences of design actions before we take them and pay close attention to the natural, industrial, and cultural systems that are the context of our design actions;
consider material and energy flows in all the systems we design;

give priority to human agency and not treat humans as a "factor" in some bigger picture;

treat content as something we do, not something we are sold;

treat place, time, and cultural difference as positive values, not as obstacles;

focus on services, not on things, and refrain from flooding the world with pointless devices (p 8).

In a similar vein, Dilnot (2009) in “Ethics in Design: 10 Questions” encourages designers to take a political stance against the socio-economic status quo. He reminds us that we conventionally “separate designing from acting in the world” but that this behavior, “is a product of historical division of labor induced by the Industrial Revolution, whose relevance may now be passing” (p 185). Designers then must strive “against the capitulation of human interests to those of the market.” and design should be “emphatically opposed to the destructiveness of what is and to the catastrophe-inducing economic rapacity” of global capitalism. It should “interrupt the processes of economic ‘errancy’ (Badiou in Dilnot) and ‘de-futuring’ (Fry in Dilnot)”, and reduce the negative consequences of globalization (Dilnot p 182).

To be ethical, designers must aim to design a fairer, restorative world.

The kinds of “design-actions for prosperity” that are highlighted in design discourses are less about the re-manipulation or aestheticizing of materiality, and more concerned with engineering and finding means for changing behaviors. Pilloton’s (2009) compendium, *Design Revolution: 100 Products That Empower People*, for example, shows “design-objects” such as a water-purifying drinking straw, and a large wheel-shaped, water-tank for rolling water home from a distant source. Though these objects are attentive to aesthetics and form (the straw is not unfriendly looking, the wheel-tank comes in bright colors), the design-driver is not how they appear, but what they do. In these cases, they are helping people live better.

The DESIS (Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability), network, founded in 2009 by design theorist and activist Ezio Manzini,
links design school and design-oriented universities in order to promote and support “sustainable change”. It aims to use “design thinking and design knowledge to trigger, enable and scale-up social innovation”, and to make it clear to “designers, design researchers, design media and design schools, that social innovation is ... a fundamental field of application for all the design disciplines (Manzini 2010).” Here, as shown in the DESIS archive of case studies of “design” projects taking place around the world, design is diffused into “non-design areas”—design for the so-called “other 90%” (Smith 2007) of humanity that has little chance to indulge in consumption-activity. In 2012, I presented papers at the DESIS-affiliated “Design: A Catalyst of Sustainable India” at the National Institute of Design (NID) in Ahmedabad, and at the “International Conference on Social Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development” at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in Mumbai. Most papers and projects at both conferences focused on agriculture, healthcare, grass-roots economic development, and environmental protection. In terms of topic and aim, whatever was presented at one conference, could as easily have been presented at the other, though often the “design projects” presented at NID lacked social science underpinnings, and the “social entrepreneurship” projects presented at TISS failed to embrace design functions that define, visual, and aestheticize solutions.

A current textbook definition of Design Management is the “management of the people, projects, processes and procedures behind the design of everyday products, services, environments, and experiences.” Johansson and Woodilla (2010), citing Borja de Mozota (2003), note that as a practice, Design Management has been taking place since at least since the eighteenth century when “the Wedgewood porcelain company in England recognized the need for special arrangements to manage the working relationships between artists from London with potters from the countryside (p 60).” Design, in this framework, is most often something done by design professionals who operate within businesses either on the client side, such as in-house designers within established departments, or on the agency or consultancy side. Management here refers to “the people and processes involved in managing, organizing, controlling, and administrating a business (Best 2010 p 8).”
The Design Management Institute (2014) defines Design Management, as

... the ongoing processes, business decisions, and strategies that enable innovation and create effectively-designed products, services, communications, environments, and brands that enhance our quality of life and provide organizational success.

On a deeper level, design management seeks to link design, innovation, technology, management, and customers to provide competitive advantage across the triple bottom line: economic, social/cultural, and environmental factors. It is the art and science of empowering design to enhance collaboration and synergy between “design” and “business” to improve design effectiveness.

The scope of design management ranges from the tactical management of corporate design functions and design agencies, including design operations, staff, methods, and processes—to the strategic advocacy of design across the organization as a key differentiator and driver of organizational success. It includes the use of design thinking—or using design processes to solve general business problems (DMI 2014).

Design Management is today primarily enacted in top-down, corporate fashion, and used as a tool for increasing sales (Carbonaro 2014), and is, via the production of “well-designed” goods or services one of the major determinants of success in today’s competitive marketplace (Hertenstein et al. 2013).

In a recent study that sought to define conceptions of “good design” based on the responses of more than one hundred design managers, Hertenstein et al. (2013) found that “good design”, as understood by these managers, was the result of balancing many themes and requirements. Analyzing the responses, the authors of the study grouped the many hundreds of “thought units” (p 10) into seven categories: form, function, and usability; customer perspective; emotions and feelings; business performance; business differentiation; brand and brand history evolution; and sustainability. The number of responses from corporate design managers that related to “aesthetics”
and “customer experience” were four times that of “provides value”, six times that of “positive impact”, and twelve times that of “makes life better” and “appropriate environmentally” (p 18). Other indicators of the Design Management frame of mind can be seen in a simple review of the academic literature. In “The Evolution of the Design Management Field: A Journal Perspective”, Erichsen and Christensen (2013) have semantically evaluated nearly five hundred articles published between 2000 and 2010 in the leading Design Management journals, *Design Management Journal* and *Design Management Review*, as well as more than 300 articles from the academic journals *Creativity and Innovation Management* and *The Design Journal*. They aimed, among other questions, to answer how the conceptual focuses of the published articles have changed. Their findings show that the dominant key words and concepts during these years have shifted somewhat, but are related (unsurprisingly) primarily to the product, development, cost, management, branding, and companies. In 2000, for example, the leading topics were “product” (discussed in 57 percent of the articles); “development” (discussed in 49 percent); “cost” (discussed in 28 percent); and “management” (discussed in 13 percent). By 2010, the keyword/topic “innovation” grew to being the focus of 12 percent of the articles. In 2008, when there was a special issue of *Design Management Review* on sustainability, articles about products and the environment were prominent. By reviewing the articles published by *Design Management Review* during the past decade, it becomes clear that key words such as “sustainability”, “sustainable development”, “well-being”, “social enterprise”, and “poverty”, occur infrequently. While the 2008 and 2011 issues contained a majority of articles related to design and sustainability (for example, McBride’s 2011 article focused on “triple bottom line design” during the ten year period from 2003 to 2013) the focus has mostly been on design “powers” to facilitate business. These are described by Borja de Mozota (2003) as:

Design as a differentiator and as a source of competitive advantage;

Design as integrator that improves product development processes;

Design as transformer for business coping with change;
Design as a source of increased sales, better margins, better return on investment, and [finally] as a resource for society at large, via inclusive and sustainable design (Borja de Mozota in Best 2012, p 180).

If Hertenstein et al.’s (2013), Erichsen and Christensen’s (2013), and my surveys reflect the status quo of what is considered “good design” in the Design Management context, it must be concluded that it is quite different from what is considered “good design” by progressive design thinkers such as Papanek, Manzini, or Thackara. The later cohort, no doubt, prioritizes factors such as “makes life better” and “appropriate environmentally” over “aesthetics” (understood as physical attractiveness) and “customer experience” (understood as customers taking pleasure, or not, in the given product offer).

The above being said, there are signs that the quest for sustainability delivered via Design Management is being taken on. Indeed, the theme for the 19th DMI: Academic Design Management Conference, which took place in September 2014 in London, was "Design Management in an Era of Disruption." Among other themes, it was recognized that “globally-aware consumers want socially-responsive and sustainable goods” and that innovations and developments in new technologies make it possible to respond to [consumer] demands in the form of mass-niche, mass-customized, or micro niche product strategies." These circumstances are...

... leading to changes in business models and the location of manufacturing as consumers increasingly participate in the product design and development process. These are all indicative of major disruptions to the ways that products and services are designed, made, and distributed. The role of the designer is in many contexts transformed (DMI 2014).

Likewise, Design Management’s role in social innovation outside of the confines of traditional business models is being considered at both popular and academic contexts. In the first case, for example, is a booster-ish DMI editorial “Why the Next Generation of Designers Will Save the World" (Lawrence 2014) that counts on empathy, the Internet, optimism, and hard work to design our way into sustainability.
In the more academic realm, scholars Johansson and Woodilla (2010) frame the epistemological differences, problems, and opportunities that design, design thinking, management, and appreciative inquiry have in contributing to creating a sustainable world.

Sustainability as a construct has had a difficult path to acceptance within the management discourse, due in part to management theory’s lack of biophysical foundations and [lack of] focus on human “progress” (Fougere and Solitander, 2009; Gladwin, Kennelly and Krause, 1995). But sustainability-focused research aims at change of the fundamental societal regulations/structures and challenges notions of objectivity (Cerin 2003). As a consequence, sustainability research can be placed in the Burrel and Morgan “radical humanist” paradigm, where the aim of research is a radical change of society proceeding from the basis of subjective norms rather than objective ones.

Sustainability research proceeds from a fundamentally different paradigm than mainstream management and thus from mainstream design management (Johansson and Woodilla 2010, p 68).

With Johansson and Woodilla’s last thought in mind, it must be asked if design’s potential to be a true differentiator, integrator, transformer, and resource (Borja de Mozota 2003) can be combined with positive management techniques such as strategizing, organizing, steering, and assessing, in order to direct society toward sustainability. The question looms: How could Design Management function to propel sustainability-driven enterprises?

**Purpose of Thesis**

The need for exploratory research into local textile and fashion systems is clear. The primary purposes of this thesis are, a) to explore existing notions and practices in the realm of local textiles and fashion by presenting and deconstructing two extremely different cases, and b) to contribute to a theoretical framework relevant to the discourse and practice connected with the quest for sustainable fashion.
Outline of the Chapters

Following this introduction is an explanation of the approach and methods used. Following that is a chapter called “Fashion Globalities” that presents some of the theoretical and empirical dimensions of *globality*, a term used by Steger (2009) to indicate a “social condition [emphasis in original] characterized by tight global economic, political, cultural, and environmental interconnections and flows that make most of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant” (Steger 2009: 8). That chapter considers “globality” particularly as it applies to textiles and fashion, production and consumption, the specter of global monoculture, and some of the anachronistic characteristics of contemporary fashion. The subsequent chapter offers theoretical underpinnings about the notion of “Local Fashion.”

The next chapters relate my observations, explorations, and interpretations of two locally oriented small-scale textile-fashion enterprises. Växbo Lin is a small, *new heritage*, linen manufacturer located in a tiny hamlet called Växbo, in Hälsingland, Sweden. Växbo lies in a serene, mountainous, forested, and sparsely populated region in Sweden that in previous eras was an important producer of flax fiber and cloth. The other case, WomenWeave, is a social enterprise in the small but bustling city of Maheshwar, India. It produces and sells what I refer to as *naya khadi*, or modern iterations of Gandhian homespun. Although these enterprises are radically different in terms of their business models, circumstances, and missions, they are in some ways similar in their common ethos that privileges human-scaled convivial systems (Illich 1973), geographically anchored meaning, and emotionally compelling pride of place. Following the presentation of the cases are my interpretations.

Two true short anecdotes, that I hope will provide readers with a glimpse of the Swedish and Indian contexts, precede the conclusions.

Definitions of Terms

A number of terms used in this document have multiple meanings. The following list is given to explain how I have generally used them.
Global, Local. These words will be discussed within the chapters, but are used in their conventional adjectival senses to refer to systems that are physically or theoretically far reaching, (global), confined (local).

Sustainable and Sustainability. I use these words as Ehrenfeld (2008, p 7) has as "the possibility that human and other life will flourish on the planet forever." The word flourish assumes that harmonious relationships between the environment, social, economic, and cultural dimensions of life are possible. This construction, based on four pillars of sustainability has been interpreted by The Living Principles partnership of educators, design professionals, and businesspeople in relationship to the powers of design.

Environment: [Design can take] actions and [affect] issues that affect natural systems, including climate change, preservation, carbon footprint, and restoration of natural resources.

People: Design can visualize acute needs, raise awareness, prompt public response, and affect policy. It can promote messages of inclusion, equality, and empathy, helping to establish harmonious and healthy conditions in which all members of society can flourish.

Economy: Design thinking’s approach to investigation, analysis, and visualization can create value and opportunities for companies and people across all streams of sustainability.

Culture: Design can cross cultural barriers to promote universal understanding. It can deliver a compelling view of sustainability that ensures its assimilation by a broad array of people. And at its best, it can shift consumption and lifestyle aspirations, literally changing the definition of prosperity (livingprinciples.org 2013)

With such an ambitious agenda, the words sustainable and sustainability are inadequate, except in specific contexts. The terms “better lives” and "well-being" have been used by many, including Stiglitz et al. (2009); The Happy Planet Index (New Economics Foundation 2013); and the OECD Better Lives Initiative (2013). These
later words seem to me more correlated to a holistic approach, but they are also vague. In this document, I generally use the words sustainable and sustainability in Ehrenfeld’s aspirational framing.

*Textiles, Fabric, Cloth.* Fairchild’s Dictionary of Textiles offers this for this word textile:

Derived from the word Latin word *textilis*, which is based on the verb *texere*, to weave. 1. A broad classification of materials that can be utilized in constructing fabrics, including textile fibers and yarns. 2. Designating the constructed fabric including woven, knitted and non-woven structures as well as lace and crocheted goods (Fairchild 1996).

I use the word *textiles* to indicate a very broad category, akin in breadth, in terms of history, technology, and culture, to the multiple meanings of the word food. The words cloth (from Old English *clap*) and fabric (from Latin *fabrica*, workshop) are used to indicate material and physical characteristics, as well as figuratively, such as in “He is a man of the cloth”, or “When the fabric of the universe becomes unknown, it is the duty of the university to produce weavers” (Gee, ND).

*Garment, Apparel, Clothing, Fashion, Home Fashion, Dress.* Garment refers to a particular item of clothing and therefore relates to the processes or materials that compose it, as in “This garment is made of 100 percent worsted American wool.” Apparel signifies wearable objects that may or may not be noticeably fashionable, and includes items such as shoes, handbags, hats, and the like. Apparel often connotes industrial manufacturing, businesses, or business organizations, for example, The International Apparel Federation and The Sustainable Apparel Coalition. Clothing typically suggests (textile based) objects worn to protect or serve our bodies through daily life. It is used here in that sense, but also as a generic term for what people wear, regardless of if what they wear is considered fashion, fashionable, à la mode. *Fashion*, most commonly used to discuss stylistic changes in apparel and the physical objects that embody those styles, is used here in that sense, but it is also used more broadly to refer to other types of provisions and consumer goods, including food, architecture, transportation modes, electronics, and, home furnishings that follow fashion trends or shifts.
Many scholars object to using the word fashion only in the small-view sense of being a Eurocentric, mystique-dependent, form of rapid (mass) consumption indistinguishable from capitalism (Craik 1994; Hoskins 2014; Koslin 2013; Niessen 2007; Welters and Lilletun 2007). Hoskins, for example, prefers to define it as “changing styles of dress and appearance adopted by groups of people” (p 4), akin to the anthropologically oriented term dress, which encompasses all the tangible artifacts and intangible actions and reactions that are related to the ways and means humans become un-naked, covered, and adorned.

I have used the term home fashion to refer to the textiles, such as table, window, and kitchen accessories used in interiors.

The Beginning of the Research Journey

Eight years ago, at a time when I was beginning to consider problematizations of fashion and sustainability, I traveled from New York, where I was teaching and designing textiles, and teaching English (ESL) to immigrants, to meet and teach ESL a group of handloom weavers in Maheshwar, India. That experience was a first step on a path that has let me explore and experience several small-scale industrial textile manufacturers and their textiles in Sweden, Scotland, and Spain, and several small and micro-scale handloom enterprises, in India. These experiences have in turn become a foundation for my research in this thesis exploring the phenomena, understandings, and practices at the intersection of "local", sustainability, textiles, clothing, and fashion. In person observations and interactions have led me to believe that small-scale/locally-oriented textile manufacturing is not an archaic or sentimental endeavor, but is instead a contemporarily relevant socio-technical practice. My observations and interactions with these enterprises are the true beginning of this narrative.

Meeting the person who first got me thinking about handloom fabrics, Sally Holkar was the result of serendipity. During a class at Parsons, I was daydreaming about going to India to explore what I thought of then as "traditional" handmade textiles. Certainly my wishfulness was connected with the multi-color checkerboard-patterned silk fabric that the students and I were analyzing. It was a crisp, slubby-silk plain weave. It was clearly handwoven with its meandering selvedges and an ikat tie-dye checkerboard pattern of silver grey, pink, and yellow squares that is only achievable through handcraft.
I had purchased this shimmering fabric at an Indian saree shop in Queens, New York, for around ten dollars a yard—a remarkably low price, considering that industrially produced fabrics of similar fiber and weight, but far less visually and tactiley interesting, would cost more. Feeling the vitality embedded in that fabric, I had a longing to discover more about it. Why are we enchanted by it? What does this kind of fabric embody that industrial fabric doesn't? Who made it? Why? How? A few minutes later, during the coffee break, a student, herself from India, talked with me about a newly launched, charitable trust guided, enterprise in Madhya Pradesh. The enterprise’s purpose, once launched, she let me know, would be to, via the making and selling of handloomed fabrics, bring skills and income to economically and socially disadvantaged women. The student asked if I knew any teachers interested in volunteering with English and design, and I said yes.

Months later, I met Sally, the founder of WomenWeave, the trust the student had described, during a networking trip she took to New York. She brought dozens of sample Maheshwari fabrics with her, which I found to be, because of their extraordinary sheerness, technically impressive, but, because of their heavy colors and metallic brocade, not “contemporary.” We brainstormed about ways in which I might contribute to the project. After many more months of emails and planning, I arrived in Maheshwar, a city of about 25,000 (Census India 2014), in a dominantly agricultural region in the central state of Madhya Pradesh. Approximately fifteen hundred individuals earn their family’s livelihoods through handloom (non-automated) weaving and ancillary occupations, such as spinning yarn, warping, knotting, and dyeing (Ganesh 2012; Sharma 2013). WomenWeave had recently opened as a weaving training center for women, as Holkar had planned, on a floor of a concrete building near the center of the city.

Sally and I had originally planned for me to teach English to the female weaver-trainees of WomenWeave. Our thinking had been, that since English is the language of commerce and power, knowing some English would benefit the trainees and contribute to the entrepreneurial goals that are part of the project’s mission. Since Sally and I had last emailed however, it had become clear that the English language learning vision, was, at that time, a bridge too far. Though initially many women had expressed interest in attending, when it came to making a commitment, socio-economic and cultural constraints were too high.
These constraints included lack of time because of domestic responsibilities on top of the 20 hours per week they were already devoting to their (paid) training, and discomfort with the idea of a class run by a foreign male teacher. Only one of the women, Usha, a confident and skilled weaver who was helping train the other women, agreed to attend. While I was in transit from New York, Sally had put Plan B into action and invited people from the Maheshwar handloom community at large. Word traveled fast that an American English teacher would be in town. Eventually two-dozen people, all except Usha, men, committed to attend.

I arrived at the building at dusk, and saw that large areas of walls on the second floor, where glass or shutters might have been, were open to the street. The concrete floor was covered over with a material made of straw and Earth. Forty or so handlooms, yarn spinning machines, bobbin winding and warping devices were placed throughout. Several women were working at looms under dim fluorescent lighting. A place had been cleared in the center of the space. The men, ranging in age from maybe 16 to 60, mostly wore, despite the sweltering heat and humidity, long pants and long-sleeved shirts: generic, low-price, industrially produced clothing. Usha wore a red floral polyester saree. I looked at their faces, their bodies, their comportment, and their hands. I could interpret little about who they were, what they did, what kind of lives they lead. Most sat with a knee, a hip, or shoulder touching the person adjacent, except for Usha, who had more space around her. All sat on a collection of worn rugs and tabletop placemats. The later were the remains of prototypes using vetiver grass that was planted on nearby land to mitigate the erosion that has resulted from deforestation.

With almost no separation from the streets and adjacent buildings, with honking scooters, flashing headlights, angry cows, and amplified azan blasting in from a nearby mosque, it was not only hard to think, but very difficult to hear and be heard. The lighting was so minimal that it was also hard to read, for example, the nametags we made. I had little idea of the English skills or education levels of the participants, and so began using a non-threatening technique that is part of a method called Total Physical Response, in which learners need only to listen and move their bodies. For example, the leader can say, "Please stand up" and indicate to the learners to stand. This broke what little ice there was. Despite the physical challenges of the classroom, the
participants were attentive, enthusiastic. We all seemed to recognize that this was something fun, special, and happy. As we progressed, it became apparent that the diversity of the education levels of the students was extreme. On one end of the range, four or five people were illiterate and had no prior English. At the other extreme were several business college students who had some basic knowledge of English and plenty of learning strategies.

I kept a daily journal with notes and reflections about this sequence of classes, as well as the four subsequent English and design courses I have taught in Maheshwar since that time. Recalling the first night however, I am still mindful of how physically close they were, especially relative to how shielded most Americans or Europeans would be in a similar context. (In fact, over the 15 or so sessions, as the group dynamic became less formal, sometimes the teenage participants would sit on each others' laps.) At the time, I understood their way as just "different social understandings of personal space". In retrospect and with more experience, however, I see it, along with the verbal friendliness they displayed toward one another, and their on-going knowledge of each others' lives, as a sign of conviviality of the sort that Illich (1973) describes as an outcome of appropriately scaled social systems. I have come to understand their system as much more than
people working in a production cluster, a phenomenon defined mainly in terms of the output of goods. Instead, I have come to understand that these individuals were, are still, members of a community of people whose skill sets, knowledge, livelihoods, identities, and aspirations, are, in this case, figuratively and literally, woven together.
Approach and Methods

A Narrative Approach

A narrative approach offers a hermeneutic means to synthesize information gathered from a diverse set of explorations, including through discourse and experience, and allows for sub-methods such as interviews and observation.

In recent years, a number of fashion-centric writings have come to exemplify this narrative methodological approach. One of the best and first of these supply chain stories is Rivoli’s (2005) *The Travels of a T-Shirt in the Global Economy: An Economist Examines the Markets, Power and Politics of World Trade*. Through a first-person account, Rivoli, traces the origins, circumstances, costs and benefits that have come together to produce a t-shirt she purchased at Walgreens, an American super market. A number of similar scholarly books have appeared subsequently, including Snyder’s 2007 *Fugitive Denim: A Moving Story of People and Pants in the Borderless World of Global Trade*; Timmerman’s 2009 *Where Am I Wearing? A Global Tour to the Countries, Factories, and People That Make Our Clothes*; and Miller and Woodward’s 2010 *Global Denim*. Siegle’s 2011 *To Die For: Is Fashion Wearing Out the World?*, and Cline’s 2012 *Overdressed: The Shockingly High Cost of Cheap Fashion* are two autobiographical narratives fortified with data and analysis. Both Siegle and Cline discuss how their research journeys have changed their perspectives, on the problems caused by the current fashion hegemony and the potential for achieving better systems.

Sustainable fashion researchers are employing narrative as a tool for exploration and change. UK based researcher Kate Fletcher’s *Local Wisdom* project for example (www.localwisdom.info) has to date interviewed over five hundred clothing wearers who describe long-term relationships with particular or favorite garments. Similarly, Pia Mouwitz (2013) in her project *Clothes that Matter* at The Swedish School of Textiles at The University of Borås, is leading a group of fashion designers who incorporating life stories and life experiences into the garments they create as a means to foster emotional resonance. From these perspectives, Fletcher, Mouwitz, and many others are exploring individual narratives as a means to build a new social narrative or cultural truth.
Likewise, narrative has become a popular tool used by fashion brands and enterprises to pull customers toward their view of sustainability. Active-wear company Patagonia's “Footprint Chronicles” is one of the most established of these narratives. It is an online, multi-faceted, multi-media presentation of the social and environmental pros and cons of their supply chain. The “Footprint Chronicles” and more recent sustainability-story-sharing by fashion companies such as IOU Project, Everlane, IceBreaker and especially Honestby.com (which even shares pricing calculations) use supply chain storytelling as a device to organize their brand approach to sustainability, as well as an outward, or consumer-facing, mode of communication (Carbonaro and Goldsmith 2014).

For guidance on the theoretical use of narrative as a research methodology in the field of management, I have turned to Czarniawska's 2004 *Narratives in Social Science*. Her baseline discussion positions narrative in the social sciences and humanities as “a mode of knowing and narration as a mode of communication” (p 6, emphasis in original). Her starting point is that identity and meaning are created through the arrangement and presentation of words, and that beliefs (what we at any one point in our evolution accept as true) are intrinsically bonded to what we tell ourselves. In an area of investigation that is fuzzy, as is the interplay between fashion and sustainability, narrative methods seem to be especially valid, because a) fashion is essentially about creating narratives, and b) creating sustainability will require an overarching new narrative for humanity. In this creative sense, I refer to Czarniawska's reference to Maclntyre in which she describes his concept of a narrative quest, as a vehicle that allows the formulation and reformulation of an individual's or a community's life goals. A search, Czarniawska offers, “looks for something that already exists (as in a search for excellence); a quest creates its goal rather than discovers it” (p 13).

Czarniawska mentions, by way of example, the incorporation of the Dada art movement of the early twentieth century, which was intended to be disruptive, into the larger story of Modern Art. She describes Dada, as do many art historians, as an attempt to intervene in the existing social narrative in order to achieve social change (p 11). Regardless of whether such an interventionist agenda was more or less true for Dadaists than it was for other art movements of the early
twentieth century, such as the Italian Futurists, or Russian Constructivists, as narrative making is the art world’s reason for being. Take the case of the photographer Cindy Sherman with which I have personal experience. As an individual artist she has created many hundreds of faux-autobiographical visual narratives, i.e. pictures. However, without a community of other artists, dealers, curators, critics, collectors, and viewers acting together to tell the story of her storytelling, her work would be meaningless. This process of “questing”, or creating meaning and belief via verbal and visual languages, has direct application in the realm of fashion and sustainability.


Exploratory. The study and concept of sustainable fashion is new. Although textiles were highly valued and cherished objects in pre-industrial ages, industrialization of textile manufacturing vastly decreased the intrinsic value of fabric and garments and vastly increased the democratization of fashion. In recent decades, textile and fashion manufacturing and use have come under scrutiny for their detrimental environmental (and social) impacts, but it has been less than a decade since inquisitive academic books such the Hoffman’s (2008) Future Fashion White Papers or Hethorn and Ulasewicz’s (2008) Sustainable Fashion: Why Now? A Conversation About Issues, Practices and Possibilities were published. At this point there is little established about what sustainable fashion is or could be; it is safe to say that the search for sustainable fashion research is in an exploratory phase.

Grounded. Grounded theory, like many research methods, means different things to different people. Denscombe (2010), basing his definition of grounded on Glaser and Strauss’s, summarizes it as a method that a) is dedicated to generating theories rather than testing them, and b) "emphasizes the importance of empirical fieldwork and the need to link any explanations ... to the "real world" (p 107). Further, he describes key characteristics of the method:

Theories should be "grounded" in empirical research ... and fieldwork;

Theories should be generated by a systematic analysis of the data;
The selection of instance to be included in the research reflects the developing nature of the theory and cannot be predicted at the start;

Researchers should start out with an "open mind";

Theories should be useful at a practical level and meaningful to those "on the ground" (Denscombe 2010 p 107 – 109).

Narrative. Narrative analysis, Denscombe explains (citing Reissman 2003, 2008; Elliott 2005; Andrews et al. 2008) is a method that analyses narratives or stories, in whatever form or media, in terms of how they "construct the social world" or "construct a personal world" (p 291 italics in original). My research method, however, has not, per se, analyzed narratives, even if I have critically considered many narratives. Instead, I have used the writing of a narrative as a device for filtering, comparing, organizing, and interpreting, what Clandinin and Hubers (2010) define as narrative inquiry. It is a method in which inquirers retell their own or others' stories, thereby coming to new identities, and new theoretical understandings. Narrative inquiry is for them, and for me, not only a research method, but is also a means for social construction: "In this midst, much possibility exists for social change, that is, for the creation of shifted social, cultural, institutional and linguistic narratives" (p 17).

Methods

The method included four overlapping processes for building a knowledge platform, collecting my experiences, and interpreting or analyzing the information.

Text. I began with an open mind and a desire to explore ideas and practices that were, are now, and might later come to be, located at the intersection of the fields of textiles, fashion, design, and sustainability. One of the subthemes I was particularly curious about, are notions of local and global production and use. In order to intellectually orient myself, I read and considered a diverse array of interdisciplinary literature on the topic of "sustainable fashion", which necessitated reading about the pillars on which it could stand: new-economic and business models, environmental science, and social and cultural behaviors. Sources ranged from the theoretical to empirical, from academic to popular. They included books, articles, science and
business reports, white papers, exhibition catalogues, magazines, editorials, narratives, advertisements, and paraphernalia, such as hangtags and labels.

*Exploration and Experience.* I paid close lose attention to the circumstances and experiences related to my own and others’ lifeworlds in terms of what that are doing and saying about sustainable fashion. I participated in or attended at least thirty conferences, workshops, advisory panels, trade fairs and trade shows, and exhibitions about sustainability, textiles, and fashion. In cities in Europe, the US, and India, I have observed the textiles and fashion that are being sold and purchased at the retail level, and investigated what is being taught about sustainability in more than a dozen leading textile and fashion schools.

I visited Växbo Lin in Hälsingland for a full day in 2011, and interviewed the two owners and two people working there. I took notes, photos, and followed up with clarifications and confirmations by email. I investigated its natural environs, its history, and the history of the region’s connection with linen growing and textile manufacturing. I studied Växbo’s products and communication (marketing). I wrote a conference paper and further developed my interpretations at a three-day academic conference and workshop for developing fibersheds lead by Nova Scotia College of Art and Design, Nova Scotia Agricultural College, and Agra Point Consulting Group. To better place the Växbo Lin case in the “landscape” of local textile production, I visited, and met informally with the owners and employees, three other small-scale, locally-oriented European textile manufacturers: Wålstedts Textileverkstad in Dala-Floda, Sweden (2011); Ardalanish Isle of Mull Weavers in Scotland (2012); and Östergötlands Ullspinneri in Ödeshög, Sweden (2013).

I visited WomenWeave four times: in 2009, 2011, 2012, and 2013 for between two to six weeks each visit. During this period, I have had extensive and ongoing conversations with the founder, the board of directors, the managing director, visiting experts and advisors, corporate interns, and university students associated with WomenWeave. I documented this with field notes and email correspondence. In April of 2009 Sally Holkar and I, using a semi-structured interview guide, interviewed and audio-visually recorded twelve weavers at WomenWeave. I have taught, at WomenWeave’s site, English and design skills to approximately sixty people from
Maheshwar’s weaving community and documented this via lesson plans, a reflective journal, and photographs. I have talked with and become friendly with dozens of people living in Maheshwar who have informed my understanding of the context. I have been a salesperson for WomenWeave at two exhibitions in India and am a liaison between WomenWeave and Rachel Comey, a fashion retailer based in New York City. I conducted two discussions regarding WomenWeave’s products at the Swedish School of Textiles: one in March 2011 with six faculty members and researchers, and one in May 2014 with 25 undergraduate students in textile design, engineering, economics, and marketing.

Organizing and analyzing via writing. The information and experiences were interpreted and synthesized through writing two conference papers, a journal article, and two book chapters, and eventually, through the writing of this monograph.

The specific cases, Växbo Lin and WomenWeave were chosen from among many possible cases for a number of reasons. Firstly, an aim was to look at “local enterprises” in dissimilar economic and cultural settings. Since my research institution is in Sweden, it was logical to choose a Swedish enterprise. Växbo Lin, being, at the time, the only flax spinner in Scandinavia was an obvious contender. Flax is considered indigenous to Sweden, and Växbo’s design and marketing is deliberately formulated to say “Swedish.” Importantly, it was a new and successful business, perhaps indicating a larger trend. The owners were willing to participate; and their products appealed to me personally, “jumping” off the shelves as something new in the venues in which I came across them. WomenWeave, in India, was chosen, as will be explained in the introduction, as the result of my previous association with them, but more importantly because the enterprise is philosophically based on achieving local empowerment through local resources. WomenWeave is not unique in India in terms of this agenda, but is has reached further into the realm of fashion than most other handloom textile producers, which are most commonly associated with handcraft.

This research was done either at the desk or with informants and fellow-participants who gladly shared information, thoughts, and their life experiences, but throughout the process I have informed my
contacts of the research project. I have gained permission to quote or use information received through them.
Fashion Globalities

Fashion, that is the ubiquitous and standardized apparel on offer today to consumers worldwide, bloomed fully only in the past few decades. It is a result of the forces of international trade liberalization and rapid advances in techno-logistics. From the early 1960’s to 1990, international trade grew seven-fold (Bernhoffen 2012). The defining driver of free-market fashion was born in the form of the WTO’s 1995 Uruguay Round Agreement on Textiles and Clothing, which removed, during a transition period ending in 2002, quantitative restrictions on imports. One of the most significant features of the agreement was opening the door for whopping volumes of textile and apparel exports from China, which grew from 12 billion in 1994 to over 95 billion in 2012 (WTO 2014). Instantaneous global systems for communication between people and for tracking products have facilitated, as has the adoption of containerized shipping and intermodal transportation, the geographically unrestricted, nonstop flow, of fashion.

A picture of such Global Fashion could be drawn from an infinite number of perspectives. A partial list of Global Fashion’s facets would include its environmental benefits and detriments; its contribution to social development and devolvement; its role in mass and niche communication; and its relationships to consumerism, “celebritism”, ethics, and aesthetics. I have chosen to use the term Global Fashion instead, of other potential choices such as the fashion system, the international fashion sector, mainstream fashion, growth-based fashion, or fast fashion, because Global Fashion imparts a feeling of physical and material universality that the other terms lack.

Kunz and Gardner (2011) describe the current globally amalgamated form of the textile and apparel sector as “a matrix of interconnected structures and activities that provides multiple venues for designing, producing, marketing, merchandizing, and distributing ... that begins and ends with the consumers (p 67).” Global Fashion produces more than 80 billion garments annually, and revenues generated through the sale of apparel were over a trillion dollars (statista 2014). Its products provide protection from nature for the vast majority of human beings for the duration of each of their lives, and gives a means of expression and identity-creation for many hundreds of millions individuals. It can also be described as an internationally
interdependent, high-speed, mass-market-oriented system that is reliant on, and brilliant at stimulating, the consumption of reiterative, largely unneeded, goods.

Like similar global systems, Global Food, or Global Electronics, for example, Global Fashion is both a generator and recipient of the twin forces of free-market capitalism and world-flattening-technology. Yet, textiles, apparel, fashion, and globalization have for millennia co-evolved alongside human ingenuity, migration, environment, trade, technology, and all forms of socio-cultural expression. It is no surprise that in a globalized world, fashion would be a globalized system producing globalizing trends. Indeed, history is littered with tales of travels and trade in textiles, owing to their once-upon-a-time scarcity, aesthetic excellence, and prestige value, as the most famous example, the 2,000 year long chronicle of commercial and cultural exchange along the silk routes, attests. The production and trade in textiles was closely tied to once-accepted social systems such as slavery, colonialism, and imperialism.

Today, two advocacy groups’ mission statements anchor the range of opinions, in general about globalization, but may be considered in terms of the goods and bads of Global Fashion. The World Trade Organization’s ethos claims that continuing economic “globalization will encourage and contribute to sustainable development, raise people’s welfare, reduce poverty, and foster peace and stability (WTO 2014)”. The opposing belief is represented by the 300,000 member US non-profit lobbying group Public Citizen. In their view, globalization is a destabilizing threat producing “disastrous legacies” and “broken promises” that must be contained so that citizens “can enjoy economic security, a clean environment, safe food, medicines and products, access to quality affordable services such as health care and the exercise of democratic decision-making in matters that affect them and their communities (Public Citizen 2014).

Recent and current world-wide conditions—among them the internationally repercussive impacts of the 2008 economic crisis (Lane and Milesi-Ferretti 2014 2012; Stiglitz 2012); the rapid acceleration of social inequity (OECD 2011; NEF 2014); concerns about national and local self-sufficiency (Cato 2013; Hopkins 2012) and the continuing overall annual increases in net damage to the environment (IPCC 2014;
Recent Economic Globalization and Fashion

The term globalization has been variously used in popular and academic literature to refer to “a process, a condition, a system, a force, and an age” (Steger 2009) in which humanity is closer together in time, space, threats, and opportunities, than ever before. Spurred by continuing industrialization, modern economic globalization accelerated rapidly in the period between 1870 and 1914, post-World War II, and during the financial liberalizations of the late twentieth century. The last period being the one in which 123 member-nations dropped long-standing international trade quotas on textiles and apparel that had been, depending on one’s point of view, encumbering or protective.

Economic globalization has been primarily driven by multinational enterprises, as they “embody simultaneously the international transfer of capital, highly skilled labor, technology, and final and intermediate products” (WTO 2014, p 9). This can be shown, for example, by two sets of financial statistics. Foreign direct investment, as a portion of Gross Global Product, rose from 5.2 percent in 1982 to 25.3 percent in 2012. Globally sourced “intermediate inputs” (components of goods and services) currently represent 56 percent of trade in goods, and 73 percent of trade in services (WTO (2014). A recent survey of textile, apparel brands, retailers, and wholesalers in the US found that 52 percent of them source from between six to twenty countries, while another 26 percent source from more than 20 countries (Ellis 2014).

Another way to consider the financial flow of the contemporary textile and clothing industries is in terms of national balances of trade. The three largest textile and clothing markets: the EU, the USA, and China, are representative. It is well known that both the EU and USA have, during the past twenty-five years, changed from net exporters of textiles and apparel to net importers of each commodity, even if the majority of the world’s large brand retailers remain based in those two economic zones. In 2011, according to the WTO (2014), the EU imported 84 and exported 77 billion dollars worth of textiles. It imported 189 and exported 116 billion dollars worth of assembled clothing. The trade balance figures for the United States are radically different than they
were a few decades ago, when, like the EU of yore, it was also a net exporter of textiles and clothing. In 2011, the USA imported 25 billion in textiles and exported 14 billion. It imported 89 billion dollars worth of clothing, while exporting 5 billion; this staggering disproportion, is more staggering if considered in terms of volume rather than dollar-value: 98 percent of the clothing purchased in the United States is imported (AAFA 2013). World production leader China imports 19 billion in textiles, and exported 94. China imported miniscule 4 billion clothing, while exporting an astonishing 154. In volumetric terms, the disproportion is extreme. The majority of clothing imported to China is high-priced, and correlates with China’s place as a major consumer of Western luxury fashion (Yang 2014).

American polemicist David Rieff (2006) argues that the economic theories of globalization that were coherent during “times of comparative peace and economic expansion like the 1990s are less persuasive in times of conflict and fear like those we live in today.” He wondered if the pace of globalization might not be slowing down.

... the “inevitabilist’ vision of globalization so dominant in the 1990’s, was its rigid, almost Marxist-like economic determinism ... is no longer able to overrule nationalist sentiments or national security objections, increasingly marked by the phenomenon of Asian companies buying European and North American assets.

... Now it may seem that Western nations were never committed to economic interdependence—globalization in the true sense of the word—but simply to opening new markets for their own corporations and exporting political and legal norms coined in Washington or Brussels (Rieff 2006).

Indeed, since the financial crisis of 2008, there is evidence economic globalization has paused.

A simple measure of trade intensity, world exports as a share of world GDP, rose steadily from a 1986 two 2008 but has been flat since. Global capital flows, which in 2007 $11 trillion, amounted to barely a third of that figure last year. Cross-border direct investment is also well down on its 2000 peak ...
The trend in foreign direct investment, to distill toward liberalization, but a survey by the UN Commission for Trade and Development shows that restrictions are increasing on foreign direct investment. The flow of people between countries is also being managed more carefully than before the crisis.

A clear pattern is beginning to emerge: more state intervention in the flow of money and goods, more regionalization of trade as countries gravitate toward like-minded neighbors, and more friction as national self-interest wins out over international cooperation. Together, all this amounts to a new gated kind of globalization (Ip 2013).

Because the contours of Global Fashion are fundamentally defined by the encompassing global economy, it will be interesting to see if this sort of retraction will eventually be seen in the textile and fashion sectors. At present, however, the fashion retail industry, the public face of Global Fashion, continues to expand into more nations, as a rather poetic report from A.T. Kearny (2012) indicates.

*Global Retail Expansion: Keeps on Moving.* Global retail is finally growing into its name and becoming ‘global’.

While the largest developing markets continue to attract most leading retailers, a handful of smaller untapped countries are getting a second look.

On the radar screen are Georgia, Oman, Azerbaijan, and Mongolia, small gems for retailers seeking a concentration of wealth and a first-mover advantage.

Unprecedented levels of tourism, strong GDP numbers, healthy consumer spending, and increased exposure to global brands augur well for Sri Lanka’s retail industry.

Growing, oil-rich countries Georgia and Azerbaijan enter the GRDI [Global Retail Development Index] as their citizens adopt modern retail formats quickly, making them targets for luxury good brands.
Anachronistic Globalities of Fashion

Global Fashion is more than “merely” a globalized means of production and consumption that defines socio-cultural value systems. Steger (2009) has used the word *globality* to mean “a social condition characterized by tight global economic, political, culture, and environmental interconnectedness that make most of the currently existing borders and boundaries irrelevant (p 8).” Applying Steger’s formulation to Global Fashion, it is possible to consider a *globality of fashion*: a social condition that dictates our ways of understanding and using our textiles, clothing, and fashion, that is determined not by locally possible provisioning responding to locally relevant needs, but by virtually unconstrained global flows of ideas, capital, operations, leadership, labor, artifacts, impacts and meanings.

Considered as a globality, Global Fashion is a colossally new phenomenon. Yet in fundamental ways, Global Fashion, like other consumption-worshipping systems, can be seen as a relic of the Holocene. This is foundationally true in terms of the difficulty it will have adapting, if it is even possible, from a system designed during to create obsolescence to a system designed to create permanence. This challenge can be seen from many perspectives. In the following sections, I consider three unsustainable aspects of the economic model: its economic scale and scope, its problematic labor issues, and, its lack of aesthetic vitality.

A Model Misfit for the Times

Above all else, actually fashionable fashion today, that is fashion that really represents the time and place in which it exists must embrace the question of environmental sustainability. Science proves that the industrial revolution, the concurrent population explosion, and the development of consumption-centric societies have propelled humanity out from the environmentally stable geological period known as the Holocene, into a new era, appropriately called the Anthropocene. This new era is one in which “human actions have become the main driver of global environmental change (Rockström et al. 2009, p 472). Rockström and colleagues’ report for the Stockholm Resilience Center (2009) indicates that humanity has already transgressed at least three of nine planetary boundaries that allow for a “safe operating space” for our biosphere: climate change, biological diversity and the nitrogen cycle.
The other six—atmospheric aerosol loading, chemical pollution, ocean acidification, stratospheric ozone depletion, the phosphorous cycle, fresh water use, and change in land use—may have already been transgressed or are in jeopardy of being transgressed.

During the Holocene, environmental change occurred naturally, and Earth’s regulatory capacity maintained the conditions that enabled human development.

This could see human activities push the Earth system outside the stable environmental state of the Holocene, with consequences that are detrimental or even catastrophic for large parts of the world (Rockström et al. 2009, p 472).

Unlike year-on-year upward-pointing visualizations of production and sales figures, the Earth’s biosphere is nonlinear, and often reacts in abrupt ways that are “particularly sensitive to key variables.” These tipping points could radically and quickly change subsystems, for example, the monsoon that keeps Asia viable, and the North Atlantic drift, that keeps northern Europe and much of Scandinavia temperate (Rockström et al. 2009; Barbie et al. 2003). Examples of life-consuming environmental damages are endless. One of two that I find especially troubling is that the rate of extinction is now between one hundred and 1,000 times (Rockström et al. 2009), perhaps as many as 10,000 times (Cato 2013 p 11), what is considered natural. Second is that the levels of phosphorous and nitrogen in our fresh waterways and estuaries are already passed what archeological studies indicate what may have been passed tipping points that caused previous mass marine extinction (Rockström et al. 2009 p 474). Analyses by governmental agencies, including the US National Intelligence Council (NIC 2012), point out that by 2030 severe weather patterns will intensify climate instability, water shortages and cause dramatic food scarcity and major economic and political systemic changes. These facts and forecasts, and many, many, others, indicate that civilization is imminently heading towards an environmental, therefore socio-cultural breakdown. A breakdown in which the current globality of fashion will have contributed to, but would not survive.

The threat—or perhaps fait accompli, given how little we actually know about what is in store for us—of such a calamity, is the
key factor compelling the search for new socio-economic models that do not rely upon ever-expanding consumption to achieve prosperity. Compelling steady state or slow growth economic theories that relate to “fair share of resources per capita”, have been put forward by Meadows et al. (2004); Daly (1996), Hawken (2010); Hawken et al. (1999); Jackson (2009, 2011) and the New Economics Foundation (2013).

These theories begin with the assumption that there are physical, planetary, limiting human-based consumption, and that—in the absence of a technological miracle that would improve resource efficiency more than a hundred times (something that mitigations like recycling and renewable energy sourcing do not do on their own)—the consumption economy cannot be saved. Jackson (2009) is quoted at length below because his calculations, if taken to heart, would require an inversion of our clothing habits, so that “no-fashion fashion” would become the only way to be fashionable.

The only possible answer [to the growth-based system] is to decouple via technological material throughput ...

... knowing that efficiency is key to economic progress, it is tempting to place our faith in the possibility that we can push through relative decoupling fast enough that it leads in the end to absolute decoupling, but just how feasible is this?

Carbon intensities have declined on average by 0.7% per year since 1990. Population has increased at a rate of 1.3%, and average per capita income has increased by 1.4% each year (in real terms) over the same period. Efficiency has not even compensated for the growth in population, let alone the growth in incomes.

Instead, carbon dioxide emissions have grown on average by 2% per year leading over 17 years to an almost 40% increase in emissions. To meet IPCC Fourth Assessment Report standards for achieving a 450 ppm stabilization target means getting global carbon dioxide emissions down to below 4 billion tons per annum by 2050 or soon after. This would be equivalent to reducing annual emissions an average annual rate of 4.9% per year between now and 2050.
But income and global population are going in the opposite direction. According to the United Nations’ midrange estimate, the world’s population is expected to reach 9 billion people by 2050—an average growth of 0.7% each year. Under business as usual conditions, the decline in carbon intensity just about balances the growth in population, and carbon dioxide emissions will end up growing at about the same rate as the average income of 1.4% a year... Or 80% higher than they are today.

If we are really serious about fairness and want the world’s 9 billion people all to enjoy an income comparable with European Union citizens today, the economy would need to grow six times between now and 2050 ... and the carbon intensity per dollar would need to be 130 times lower than the average today. This may not be technically impossible but implies a transformation well beyond the scale or speed of dematerialization achieved during the history of industrial society.

Businesses, governments, researchers, and consumers are now in the early phases of measuring and responding to the environmental impacts of textile and textile products (Cato 2010; SAC 2014). The heavily cited report, “Well-Dressed?” (Allwood et al. 2006) provides an overview of the main areas of concern:

The major environmental impacts of the sector arise from the use of energy and toxic chemicals:

The sector’s contribution to climate change is dominated by the requirement for burning fossil fuel to create electricity for heating water and air in laundering.

Other major energy uses arise in providing fuel for agricultural machinery and electricity for production.

Toxic chemicals are used widely in cotton agriculture and in many manufacturing stages such as pre-treatment, dyeing, and printing.

Waste volumes from the sector are high and growing in the UK with the advent of ‘fast fashion’.
On average, UK consumers send 30kg of clothing and textiles per capita to landfill each year.

Water consumption – especially the extensive use of water in cotton crop cultivation – can also be a major environmental issue as seen dramatically in the Aral Sea region (p 4).

Meanwhile, rather than moving toward the reduction (whether it needs to be ten or 1000 times less) of carbon output and the correspondent reduction of material throughput, the volume of fashion production continues to increase. Annual world fiber consumption (about 35 percent of which is used for apparel) has almost doubled since 1992. It now stands at close to 70 billion tons (FAOUN 2011).

An environmental impact not mentioned by Allwood et al. is fashion’s impacts on biodiversity and genetic engineering, as in the case of genetically modified Genetically Modified (GM) cotton. It is an excellent example of the kind of sticky problems that are associated with achieving sustainability, of trying to make this fashion model fit. GM cotton, designed by the multinational Monsanto, headquartered in St. Louis, Missouri was introduced in 1996. As with other GM organisms, GM cotton is highly controversial. Arguments in favor produce evidence that GM plants bring vast increases in yield; vast reductions in pesticides and water needed; and higher profits for farmers and that it is may be less intrusive on biodiversity than mechanically bred species (BCI 2014; Gruere and Sengupta 2011; ICU 2004; Mission 2014; Peterson et al. 2000). Arguments against it include the fact that long-term ecological impacts are unknown; that there is insufficient oversight; that it trespasses upon the Earth’s biodiversity, the fundamental arrangement allowing life on the planet (Garcia and Altieri 2005; Naeem et al. 2009). In India, where 90 percent of cotton grown is from Monsanto’s GM seed, it is widely reported to have been the cause of thousands of suicides (the result of indebtedness to the seed suppliers), and diminished biodiversity in a region that previously cultivated over a thousand types of cottons (cban 2014; Vandana 2013). At present, 25 of the 33 million worldwide hectares of land devoted to cotton are planted with GM seeds. GM cotton has been adopted in China, Pakistan, the US, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Sudan, Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay, Columbia, Mexico, Costa Rica, Burma, Australia, and Egypt (cban 2014).
A Problematic Pattern of Exploitation

The long relationship between globalization and textiles is unfortunately marked by a long battle between exploitation and equity. This is seen particularly in terms of the once immense, and still intense, amount of labor needed to cultivate fiber, make it into fabric, and cut and sew it into garments. In less industrial, but not distant, history, the preciousness of textiles—derived both from the base value of the fibers and the “added value” of the immense amount of time that was once needed to create fabrics helped motivate the era of mercantilism. A hallmark of the era was the centuries long Opium Trade, which networked European’s desire for exotic and adored goods, poppy growers in Turkey and Colonized India, and an addicted population in China willing to barter its silk and indigo (among other products) for its opium fix (Burt 2003; Farrington 2002; Peck et al. 2014; Weiner 1991).

In the west, also for centuries, the Atlantic Slave Trade, provided the human labor that built the trans-Atlantic economy, much of which depended, of course on the massive numbers of people needed to cultivate and process cotton. Examples of empowerment connected to textiles: should also be considered. The Indian independence movement, via Gandhi, used the re-shoring to India of textile manufacturing as a vehicle to take India to independence; and the American and European labor reforms of the early and mid-twentieth centuries spread some of the financial profit further up the supply stream, that is, to the factory workers.

Shadows and aspects of these and many similar phenomena still characterize today’s global trade in fiber, fabric, garments, and fashion. The economics dimensions are most commonly framed in terms of competitive national advantages and disadvantages “offering opportunities for countries with differing resource endowments” and in which the import, distribution and retail segments, rather than manufacturing and labor, play an ever more important role in the industry’s value chain (OECD 2014). Kunz and Gardner (2012) note that “Significant progress has been seen in the mechanization, automation, and in some cases ‘robotization’ of textile production, especially in spinning, dyeing, weaving, and knitting processes ... yet most garment pieces must be hand fed into sewing machines, and hand control must still be maintained throughout all the remaining stages of production (p 89). Throughout the world, whether in Los Angeles or Laos, there are
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In many countries, a job in a factory producing clothing for the fashion industry is a sought-after position.

But garment workers across the world face a daily grind of excessive hours, forced overtime, lack of job security, poverty wages, denial of trade union rights, poor health, exhaustion, sexual harassment and hazardous working places (CCC 2014).

It is often said, following the notion that “a rising tide lifts all boats”, that such conditions are part of the “normal” process of upward mobility. Yet despite absolute reductions in poverty during the past decades, inequality is at all-time highs. As the OECD (2014) reports: life expectancies among the rich is around eighty years, but among the poorest, around forty. More than half of the world’s assets are owned by the richest two percent of adults; the bottom half of the world adult population owns only one percent of wealth.

In July of 2014, more than a year after the 2013 Rana Plaza apparel factory collapse in Bangladesh that killed and maimed thousands, labor experts on BBC’s Business Daily debated the positive and negative values of sweatshops (BBC 2014). Opinions, as if in a theatrical play, are presented by each “character”. Philip Jennings, General Secretary of UNI Global’s 10 million-member unions implores the Bangladeshi government to do more to improve policy and enforce workers’ rights, because the world will not forget! The Bangladeshi minister of commerce, Tofail Ahmed, described the Bangladeshi government as effective and un-corrupted, and asks listeners to be patient, to continue to purchase Bangladeshi-made garments so as not to add more people to the ranks of the 80,000 workers newly unemployed, by the government’s recent closing of 220 non-compliant garment factories (Nur 2014). Ben Powell, director of the Free Market Institute, says that “sweatshops are part of the process that eliminates poverty by raising capital” and that they are Bangladesh’s “least bad option.” Tansy Hoskins, author of Stitched Up: The Anti-Capitalist Book of Fashion (2014) counters that trade unions and labor laws, not capital
accumulation, raised the economic well-being of the West’s textile and garment workers. Powell says that workers want cash, not safety. Hoskin sites “the billions and billions of pounds swilling around in the fashion industry” some of which could easily be directed to improving conditions if the will were there. In considering the conflicting arguments in relationship to sustainability, the consumption paradigm that powers the whole system should always be remembered. A global leader of globalized fashion, H&M, sources close to 80 percent of its garments from Bangladesh to sell to its price-oriented and eager customers in its 3,285 retail outlets in fifty-five countries and webstores that reach still further across the globe. H&M has experienced growth in early 2014, with sales spiking 17 percent in April, 13 percent in March, and 11 percent in February (Antoshak 2014). Its chairman is said to be the eighteenth richest person in the world, with holdings of 32 billion dollars (Dolan and Kroll 2014).

Illustration 7: H&M’s geographic penetration as of July 20, 2014. On that day, following the links to the various regions yielded the same splash page of images of all skinny, almost all “white” models.

This year in Los Angeles, US-based fashion favorite Forever 21, with 2013 revenues of 3.7 billion dollars (Forbes 2014) introduced F21 Red, an 18,000 square-foot store selling “camisoles that start at $1.80, jeans at $7.80, tees at $3.80, and leggings at $5.80 (Merrick 2014).” Writing in The New Yorker, fashion journalist Amy Merrick ponders why young shoppers in the US today are relatively disengaged—compared with the student
protests of the 1990s which resulted in some reforms—from the labor politics imbedded in their garments:

... tuition and fees at public universities rose, as did student-loan debt. For financially burdened students, ethical-fashion retailers such as Zady, which Elizabeth Cline wrote about for The New Yorker last year—and whose clothes cost ten times as much as F21 Red’s—may be out of reach.

Social-media culture also might encourage young people to buy cheap clothes in bulk. A few years ago, reporters began to note the proliferation of “haul videos,” in which shoppers, usually young women, unload their overstuffed plastic bags and lovingly display their purchases.

Forever 21 has capitalized on the trend, sponsoring contests in which shoppers post their own haul videos. The winners receive gift cards to buy more clothes (Merrick 2014).

Lost in this morass of opinions and behaviors is the fact that labor is but just a small fraction of the eventual sales price. Using normal Cut-Make-Trim operations, labor costs are between three and six percent (Kunz and Gardner 2012) of production costs, and 1.8 percent of the retail price (Pollin in Hickel 2011). At the micro level, that is the level, it may be true that a low-paying, health-diminishing, spirit-squelching job is better than destitution, but on the macro level, and in the long term, carelessness, greed, and exploitation of the unseen other, cannot be building blocks for sustainability.

An Impoverished Aesthetic
A simple definition of the noun aesthetic is “a set of ideas or opinions about beauty or art” (Merriam Webster 2014). In the fashion world however, the word is most often used to mean a look, or more accurately, a pastiche, as in these randomly pulled examples from the Internet:

The Chanel tweed suit reinterpreted with Proenza’s edgy surf/skate aesthetic is way cooler than Lagerfeld’s yearly reproductions.
Kudos for marrying upmarket positioning with digital savvy, the aesthetics and tone of their online initiatives remain firmly rooted in the highly polished and produced legacy of print media.

The looks were preppy, quirky, and identifiably J. Crew, but each outfit had a certain element of dissonance that came from trying to blend an increasingly avant-garde runway aesthetic with the cool-school staples J. Crew actually produces and sells on a large scale.

The word aesthetic is almost never used to refer to the result of the processes that create Global Fashion. Yet moving toward sustainability would require a motivation beyond just a sense of responsibility. That motivation might, at least in part, be provided by garments that have lasting aesthetic resonance, a quality that is obviously lacking in most global generic fashion products. In *Dress and Globalization*, fashion and dress historian Margaret Maynard (2004) examines some of the cultural and aesthetic issues associated with globalized (mostly mass-market) fashion (what has been referred to as "world dress") during the period between the early 1970s and the early 2000s. She describes that period as one that covers many major global changes including the collapse of "Sovietism"; the consumer (and therefore fashion) revolution in China; and global speculative booms in equity and property markets. She draws attention to the "vast social changes brought about by postcolonial rule and the changing, flexible rhythms of post Fordist production and outsourcing; the rise of multinational corporations, the globalisation of finance systems; and not least the growth of world media networks and the e-revolution (p 3)". Her focus is on understanding if fashion is the "supposedly single interwoven macro-culture", the global normalization of western clothing, as it is often described. She determines that "given income limitations, choice is conditioned by what is offered for selection, both by a retail industry reaching out to the global" but also by local practices and adaptations of the offer, via individualized ways of wearing, altering, and repurposing generic garments. Maynard asks her readers to accept that although standard industrially produced garments (for example, jeans, t-shirts, skirts, blouses, cargo pants, trainers (sneakers), and baseball caps) are now worn even in the most remote areas of civilization, the visual language and meanings of these garments varies from place to place. In
Maynard’s view, this is due in part to the fact that “ethnic” garments, such as Mauritanian *boubou* robes, Peruvian ponchos, or Indian sarees, are often worn together with those of “Western” (conceptual but not physical) origin. Two decades ago, Appadurai (1996) described this kind of eclecticism and constantly changing formulations as part of the *culturescape*, or global flow, representing the struggle between homogeneity and homogenization. In the realm of dress or fashion, Maynard (2004) describes this as a “complex and shifting process of self-presentation crucial to the creation of personal, national, ethnic, and international identities” (p. 11).

For those several hundred million people who travel internationally, or for the billions more who are connected via global media, Maynard’s argument, and Appadurai’s framework are essentially self-evident. The typically eclectic sartorial choices of a fashion-oriented young woman in New York offers a good example of how the meaning of clothing is individualized, dependent on context, and therefore never fixed. Although living in Manhattan, “Mandy” is constantly cyberlinked with friends and family in her home country, China; as such, she in fact living in (at least) two places simultaneously. Her personal “assemblage-style style” reflects this. An autumn outfit, for example, that she might wear to school could combine an ironic “Colonial China” blue, black, and green plaid, pleated wool skirt with a cheap white blouse and black pantyhose from Forever 21. She usually chooses “Chinese Glossy Girl” make up (precise and doll-like mascara, glitter-lacquered nails, blue contact lenses, and lens-free eyeglass frames). Accessories could, at any given moment, include authentic or counterfeit (all that matters is the look, as the entire project is ironic) “luxury” items—a Burberry belt from her dad’s closet, a puffy Borsolino cap from Rome, a fake Céline purse—along with a hand knit scarf and mittens sent her from mom. Shoes, depending on the weather, might be classic Converse sneakers, Doc Martin boots, or plastic-jeweled flats. Though these items are produced all over the world, the story she tells with them is precisely calibrated to make sense (only) in her time and space. She has discussed with me a number of particular garments. One is a Katherine Hamnett-like t-shirt with “MADE IN CHINA” displayed in giant letters, an item she said she would not wear while in China because it would be “stupid” there. An item she thinks is good anywhere, however, is a black baseball
cap embroidered with the meme "Comme des fuck down", an expression, she says I am too old to understand.

Among the young weaver-entrepreneurs I work with in Maheshwar, India there is no offer or discussion of globally promoted clothing-fashion brands. The Global Fashion that these teenagers and twenty-somethings wear is generic down-market private label—garments that have somehow “leaked” from nearby factories, or have been purchased at a street market. On the other fashion hand, they have expressed their desire to own Apple iPhones. Two years ago, while I was India, several of them asked me if I could buy, with money they had in hand, a bunch of used iPhones in the US and bring them on my next trip back to India. Imagining that they would be better off with less “prestigious” and less expensive electronics, I tried to persuade them toward other options. Among the several reasons they countered with, was that the prestige of the iPhone is linked to their business model: specifically the "Sent from my iPhone" stamp. To them, "Sent from my iPhone" would signal in their business transactions, which are often conducted via email from their phones, that they are part of a global community of "cool", not "merely" young Indians using more common phones. On the other hand, my peers in the US or Europe disable that stamp, seeing it as invasive branding of their personal communication.

Maynard makes the point that since clothing choices are likely to be “inflected by factors of age, gender, local tastes and preferences” it is impossible to sustain an argument that Global Fashion is creating a universal sameness (p 38). She points out that "generic western style dress is a direct product of capitalism, and a global industrial capacity to produce and market mass volume clothes cheaply and easily (p 33).” No matter then what particular inflections may be added by individuals and cohorts, market-driven globalization does not want actual diversity, because diversity would require the consideration and adaptation to local circumstances, something that large-scale industrial systems are not designed to do (Klein 2002). With this in mind, Maynard’s argument is true only at a superficial level: inflections do nothing to change the underlying sameness of the production process, or its environmental and social impacts. The same garments may mean different things in different contexts, but the differences are, what I have elsewhere (Carbonaro and Goldsmith 2013) called faux choix. Fashion consumers worldwide are increasingly free to make false choices between these or
those industrially manufactured, fundamentally anonymous garments of mostly the same fibers, fabrics, and forms. They have little or nothing to do with building new perceptions of beauty, meaning, and identities appropriate for moving toward sustainability. Even casual observation on any high street, epicenters of Global Fashion diffusion, shows that what we are generally wearing is not pretty, not nutritious. Baseball caps are tantamount to BigMacs; t-shirts are potato chips; cargo shorts are candy.
Framing Fashion Localities

In the preceding chapter, “Fashion Globalities”, I discussed some of Global Fashion’s inbuilt, systemic limitations vis-à-vis moving toward sustainability. Systems expert Donella Meadows defines a system as “a set of things—people, cells, molecules or whatever—interconnected in such a way that they produce their own pattern of behavior over time” (2008, p 2). Meadows outlines characteristics of any system, and how various types of inputs and elements, to greater and lesser degrees, control the output of the whole. These inputs and elements can be used as leverage points, or “places in the system where a small change could lead to a large shift in behavior (Meadows 2008 p 145).” She lists twelve leverage points common to all systems and finds that among the less effective ways to change a system’s output is by adjusting "constants and parameters." Considered in terms of changing textile and fashion systems, such leverage points might include developing better and broader certification and enforcement schemes. A number of standards, certifications and labeling initiatives already exist in the fashion sector, such as for organic cotton, and fair-trade, but they cover a miniscule portion of what is produced. The Global Organic Textile Standard International Working Group (GOTS) for example, guarantees a minimum standard based on a long list of environmental and social criteria regarding textile and apparel manufacturing. However, given that the primary fiber that it traces is organic cotton, and the fact that organic cotton is about one percent of the cotton produced worldwide (Textile Exchange 2011) even if all current organic cotton producers adopted the standard, the direct impact, though admirable, and symbolically important, would be, according to Meadows, minimal. The Sustainable Apparel Coalition, a much larger organization than GOTS, is currently discussing a consumer-facing labeling system that would provide shoppers with means of relationally ranking garments’ environmental (and perhaps social) impacts. Logically, this would help producers and consumers make better choices—as has been seen with Fair Trade labeling (Linton 2012), but could it also unintentionally encourage more consumption by giving those involved in the cycle a "pass" to buy more? There is, for example, evidence (Polimeni et al. 2009) that instigating recycling and other efficiency measures can have a rebound effect that actually increases consumption. At the other end of
leverage gamut, are the most effective points for bringing change. Meadows explains these as a) goals, or changing the purpose of the system; b) paradigms, or changing the mindset out of which the system operates, and c), the most powerful point, transcending paradigms, which she defines as responding through time to the fact that no paradigm remains true forever.

If the global conditions of the way we live now are problematic, it is logical that people should seek local solutions to its problems, to seek balance, via opposite-alternatives, That is to say, if our problems are caused by growth and global capitalism, then why not turn to degrowth (LaTouche 2010) and local provisioning for solutions? Perhaps it would be beneficial to re-orient fashion around the geographically and culturally local. Perhaps it would be easier to manage, easier to take responsibility, easier to enjoy.

Scholars and proponents of localization, or, as political analyst Walden Bello (2004) and others put it, deglobalization, believe that local economic, production, use, and social systems, could re-empower individuals and communities thereby creating the opportunity to build sustainability in ways that anonymous large-scale systems cannot. These theoretical positions, several of which are described below, have been used as reference points by fashion scholars and practitioners who are interested in relocating fashion culture to exist within sustainability-oriented local economies (Black 2008, 2012; Fletcher and Grose 2013; Fletcher and Tham 2014).

In his collection of essays, What Matters? Economics for a Renewed Commonwealth, oft-quoted poet and environmental activist Wendell Berry (2010) gives his point of view on the links between local economics and local culture from his position as someone living and working in the southern USA state of Kentucky.

As local community decays along with local economy, a vast amnesia settles over the countryside. As the exposed and disregarded soil departs with the rains, so local knowledge and local memory—that is of local culture—has being ignored, or written off as one of the cheaper "prices of progress," or made the business of folklorists. Nevertheless, local culture has a value and part of its value is economic. This can be demonstrated readily enough.
For example, when the community loses its memory, its members no longer know one another. How can they know one another if they have forgotten or have never learned one another’s stories? If they do not know one another’s stories, how can they know whether or not to trust one another? People who do not trust one another do not help one another, and moreover they fear one another. And this is our predicament now. Because of general distrust and suspicion. We not only lose one another’s help and companionship, but we are all now living in jeopardy of being sued (p 143 – 144).

In such ways as this, the nuclei of home and community have been invaded by organizations, just have the nuclei of cells and atoms. And we must be careful to see that the old cultural centers of home and community remain vulnerable to this invasion by their failure as economies. If there is no householder community economy, then family members and neighbors are no longer useful to one another. When people are no longer useful to one another, then the centripetal force of family and community fails, and people fall into dependence on exterior economies and organizations. The hegemony of professionals and professionalism erects itself on local failure, and from then on the locality exists merely as a market for consumer goods and is a source of "raw material," human and natural. The local schools no longer serve the local community; they serve the government’s economy and the economy’s government (p 150).

The loss of local culture is, in part, a practical loss and an economic one. For one thing, such culture contains, and conveys to succeeding generations, the history of the use of the place and the knowledge of how the place may be lived in and used. For another, the pattern of reminding implies affection for the place and respect for it, and so, finally, the local culture will carry the knowledge of how the place may be well and lovingly used, and also the implicit command to use it only well and lovingly. The only true and effective "operator’s manual for spaceship Earth" is not a book that any human will ever write; it is hundreds of thousands of local cultures (p 152).
The motto *Economics as if People and the Planet Mattered* expands (with the addition of *and the Planet*) the subtitle of Schumacher’s (1973) *Small is Beautiful*. It is the guiding principle of the New Economics Foundation (NEF) think tank, which is responsible for *The Happy Planet Index*. Similar to the OECD Better Living Index, it attempts to measure human well-being. In the case of *The Happy Planet Index*, this is done in terms of life expectancy, experienced well-being, and Ecological Footprint (NEF 2014). NEF’s mandate is "to bring about a Great Transition – to transform the economy so that it works for people and the planet."

Founded in 1986 at an alternative economic summit challenging the "right of the G7 leaders to speak for the economic future of the planet", NEF, via multidisciplinary research in economic, environmental, and social systems, paints a credible portrait of “The Great Transition from Faltering Systems to Sustainable Systems.”

Green economist Mary Scott Cato, shares an intellectual infrastructure with NEF that is based, in part, on Polanyi’s (1944 [2001]) *The Great Transformation*, that "conceived of the economy as 'submerged in social relationships', and "enmeshed within a complex system of social rules and cultural norms" (Cato 2013, p 25). In *The Bioregional Economy: Land, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness*, Cato argues for a networked global economy composed of self-sufficient local economies. Such a networked system has been articulated in other realms, such as design and service (Jégou and Manzini 2008; Thackara 2006) and food (Petrini 2009; Slow Food Foundation. 2014). Cato’s work is useful in terms of envisioning the overall form of a radically localized, bio-regionally determined provisioning strategy, in which most subsystems (the production and distribution of goods, services, food, energy—and fashion) would reside. Cato (2013) provides an in depth argument, a declaration of independence, as the sub-title indicates, for a departure from the anonymity that seems to be an inherent part of geographically dispersed systems, to the conviviality and tangibility that she determines are more likely to be found in geographically concentrated systems.

Cato states that the bioregional economy has two main characteristics, which I have quoted at length below because they are the core of her argument, and the most tangible framework from which to consider environmental sustainability.
First, [the bioregion economy] attempts to make a fair sharing of the Earth's resources feasible and meaningful. The sheer scale of the global marketplace invalidates the achievement of equity, as well as stretching our sense of moral responsibility beyond the breaking point. When considering the starving children in Burma or Bolivia we feel our lack of power to make a difference precisely because we cannot trace the complex relationship between our overconsumption and their deprivation. Our comprehension that this connection exists is intuitive and strong, but we cannot find the statistical evidence or argue a rational line from one to the other. In a bioregional economy, the resources of our bioregion would be ours to share as a community. Those of every other bioregion, whether in Angola or Aberdeen, would be outside our purview. This immediately feels like a rapid and shocking shrinkage in what we will have access to ... it does not mean that trade is impossible, but such trade will be seriously curtailed, as will the variety of goods we can routinely make use. We will be cutting our coat according to our cloth (emphasis added) rather than living at the expense of the rest of the world and enjoying a standard of living bought through illegitimate military and currency power.

Second, and perhaps more importantly, the bioregional economy has a significant moral and democratic advantage of making a direct link between the areas whose resources you, as a community, control and the area from which you elect political representatives. Political economy means that any response to issues surrounding energy or resource allocation only makes sense if you have responsibility for the resources in the area where you also vote. This is the political-economic impact of the bioregional model, and it will invalidate much of the hand-wringing and protestations of powerlessness in the face of global forces that are the routine response to questions surrounding global inequity (Cato p 150).

In the academically-oriented literature, as well as popular discourse, concepts and practices associated with the Local, are regularly linked with concepts and practices associated with the Slow. Even if the two need not be conjoined, the pairing functions well for
discussion, especially vis-à-vis the actually conjoined Global-Fast. The chart below aggregates (from Beverland 2001; Fletcher and Grose 2013; Thorpe 2007) some of the words that are being used to compare the “mindsets” in relationship to the designing products and services, including fashion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local and Slow</th>
<th>Global and Fast</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>globally networked localization</td>
<td>globalization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>small and medium scale</td>
<td>large scale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>community ownership</td>
<td>corporate ownership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>diversity</td>
<td>mass-production; one size fits all, homogeneity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>qualitative</td>
<td>quantitative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sobriety</td>
<td>intoxication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>provisioning</td>
<td>consuming</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>substantial</td>
<td>stylistic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>aware of impacts</td>
<td>disconnected from impacts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>doing; handmade</td>
<td>watching; machine made</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>associated with time and place</td>
<td>disassociated from time and place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>interpersonal communication</td>
<td>broadcasting, opinion polls, targeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>public discourse and debate</td>
<td>opinion polls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>true price incorporating ecological and social costs; internalized</td>
<td>cost based on labor, materials, production, marketing; externalized</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>trust</td>
<td>dependency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>objects as means to ends</td>
<td>objects and ends in themselves</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long term</td>
<td>fleeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>hopeful</td>
<td>cynical</td>
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</tbody>
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In the academically-oriented literature, as well as popular discourse, concepts and practices associated with the Local, are regularly linked with concepts and practices associated with the Slow. Even if the two need not be conjoined, the pairing functions well for discussion, especially vis-à-vis the actually conjoined Global-Fast. The chart below aggregates (from Beverland 2001; Fletcher and Grose 2013; Thorpe 2007) some of the words that are being used to compare the “mindsets” in relationship to the designing products and services, including fashion.
Although this vocabulary is a useful theoretical rubric, the parameters of local and global are in actuality difficult to define, and the terms slow and fast are in no way absolute. Looking at the first characteristic on the list, for example, who is to say what defines a community, particularly in this age of cyber-connectedness? The *Vesto Come Penso* (I Dress as I Think) case illustrates the fluidity of the concept of community. *Vesto Como Penso* is a line of clothing fashion basics by Italy’s Co-op, whose approximately eight million member-consumers "pushed Coop’s top management" to development a new ethical fashion offer. Coop’s management took their members’ requests seriously, and formulated the parameters for what the collection ought to embody. A Co-op vice-president explains.

> When we think about fashion, we don’t only think about colors, styles and all those elements that are always changing, ephemeral and that follow the seasons and cycles of the fast fashion system. We think instead that the substance of fashion is made of the same matter as our ideas and our values: first of all the respect for and right to work. One of the ways that we do that is by joining in solidarity with the farmers and suppliers of the southern parts of the world by paying a fair trade premium that is not linked to market oscillations and which finances initiatives and services in the workers’ communities (Latini in Carbonaro and Goldsmith 2013, p 584).

A defining feature of contemporary life for people living in developed countries, the places on Earth where fashion consumption is high, is the Internet and mobile communication. In the Nordic countries, for example, the number of people regularly using the Internet is almost as high as literacy rates, more than ninety-five percent. It should be remembered however that in the countries that produce most garments, Internet use is radically less: In China, Thailand, and Viet Nam, it is less than 50 percent; in India, about 15 percent; and in Pakistan and Bangladesh around six percent (Internet Society 2014).

This global communications technology revolution, which, so far only in theory, allows anyone on Earth to instantly connect with anyone else anywhere, and has, created all sorts of virtual communities —many of them united by the discussion and consumption of fashion—that further destabilize traditional notions of community. Elsewhere, I have
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This global communications technology revolution, which, so far only in theory, allows anyone on Earth to instantly connect with anyone else anywhere, and has created all sorts of virtual communities —many of them united by the discussion and consumption of fashion —that further destabilize traditional notions of community. Elsewhere, I have written (Goldsmith 2012) about how this new meetingplace-marketplace, often referred to as the Long Tail Economy (Anderson 2008) has enabled developing world textile artisans to not only find new markets, but to co-produce, and sometimes even co-sell their goods around the globe.

If the line between local and global is conceptual, experiential differences can be concrete. It may be useful to illustrate this using examples from the Global Food and Local Food realms, rather than from fashion because slow and local processes and parameters in the food sector are, in terms of enterprise models in high-consumption countries, relatively well-established. In the center of New York City are two, side by side, food-shopping meccas. One is the Union Square Green Market, a renowned farmers market that represents the vitality of the Slow Food movement in the United States. The other is a large branch of the supermarket chain Whole Foods and whose 2013 sales were almost 13 billion dollars. Their “higher purpose statement”:

> With great courage, integrity and love, we embrace our responsibility to co-create a world where each of us, our communities and our planet can flourish. All the while, celebrating the sheer love and joy of food (Whole Foods 2014).

The farmers’ market has grown in the past thirty years from the dream of a few food activists to a thriving, four-day-a-week event with approximately 140 vegetable, fruit, and flower farmers, fishers, butchers, bakers, pastry-makers, vintners, cheese and dairy makers, “pretzlers” and picklers, and more. Found among them are sheep meat, wool fiber, and wool yarn vendors popular with know-your-meat eaters and DIY spinners and knitters.

The number of local food markets has been growing rapidly, in the US, where they, and other Local Food schemes, such as community gardens, community kitchens. They are described by the US Department of Agriculture as a means to boost economic opportunities, and improve access to healthy local food, particularly among disadvantaged groups with limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables (USDA 2014). Most of the vendors at the Union Square Market are from the surrounding region, and bring their products into the city by truck, though the beekeepers and some others are based in the city. Mark Bittman, the New
York Times columnist and food activist said this recently about the market.

What’s inarguable is that farmers’ markets offer food of superior quality, help support smaller-scale farmers in an environment that’s more and more difficult for anyone not doing industrial-scale agriculture, and increase the amount of local food available to shoppers. All of this despite still-inadequate recognition and lack of government support.

Then there’s “know your farmer, know your food.” When you buy directly from a farmer, you’re pretty much guaranteed real freshness (we’ve all seen farmers’ market produce last two or three times longer than supermarket produce). You’re supporting a local business—even a neighbor! And you have the opportunity to ask, “How are you growing this food?” Every farmer I’ve spoken to says—not always in a thrilled tone—that the questions from shoppers never stop. But even if a vegetable isn’t “certified organic,” you can still begin to develop your own standards for what makes sense and what doesn’t.

Farmers’ markets are not just markets. They’re educational systems that teach us how food is raised and why that matters (Bittman 2014).

I have shopped this market hundreds of times. People from all walks of life and ethnicities gaze upon the local bounty and chat with fellow shoppers. They ponder, purchase, and, as Bittman notes, delight in the opportunity to connect with the producers.

Whole Foods’ stated core values range from selling the “highest quality natural and organic products available” to “serving and supporting our local and global communities.” Being in one of the several hundred Whole Food stores, or for that matter even perusing their website, is to enter a fantasy land of foods and ingredients of every sort, from everywhere, all of it marketed under the banner of “social-ecological care and excellence (Whole Foods 2014).” In the US, Whole Foods is more than a supermarket. It is a measure of the state of the art of aspirational, so-thought of as, correct-consumption. The Union Square store is always crowded. The feeling is hipster-privileged, with a
selection of everything from organic avocados to GMO-free zabaglione. Long color-coded checkout lines, populated by mostly light-skinned people, lead past raw-sugar candies, fair-trade ginger-chocolate marshmallows, and Dwell type magazines, to more than forty cashiers, almost all of whom are dark-skinned. Shopping at Whole Foods is always a mesmerizing experience, even if nicknames for it, like "Whole Frauds" and "Whole Paycheck", are commonly heard. It is easy to see how people get hooked on the endless varieties and variants. However, unlike the experience of the adjacent farmers’ market, people shopping at Whole Foods never seem to be having any fun.

Fletcher and Grose (2012), note that a longing for Local Fashion is being propelled by a desire to counter both the "innate anonymity that globalized fashion perpetuates" and the “logic of economics-driven globalized production and distribution [that] is at the core of unsustainability." The authors propose that "shifting to a smaller scale of activity changes the relationships between material, people, place, community, and the environment (p 106)" that may in turn lead to healthier (less harmful) fashion practices.

For references to Local Fashion in the (post)-industrialized countries, we need only look back a few decades. Lucy Siegle (2011) writes about the nostalgia in Britain (but applicable many places) associated with making garments locally, a practice which existed there from “the beginning of time” until the early 1980s.

... a large chunk of our clothes would have been manufactured in Britain, from fibre that was even processed or finished here ... “Made in England” was not a surprising label to see attached to a piece of clothing. Nor did it mean artisanal one-man-band production, as it often does now, when more often than not courageous designer/makers try to give the concept of home-grown fashion some resonance. Until just over a decade ago M&S, something of a UK behemoth, sourced 90 percent of its own-label clothing in Britain.

There was always a degree of outsourcing to manufacturers abroad, but ... we had build up a rather impressive peacetime army of tailors, machinists, cutter, finishers, colourists, weavers and, of course, designers. They were served by the sort of infrastructure, of farmers producing sheep for wool,
slaughterhouses producing for the leather trade, cobbler's, menders and recyclers (who in those days took the more prosaic form of rag and bone men), that today's sustainable style warriors can only dream about (Siegle 2011, p 12).

Though not as extensive as the local food movement, local-orientations, or at least aspirations toward becoming local, are now visibly part of the fashion scene. A description of this phenomenon should include both Maynard's conception (addressed in the preceding chapter) of the local varieties of Global Fashion, as well as global varieties of Local Fashion. The later are seen in grass roots fashion phenomena and enterprise models. These include the DIY, second-hand, sharing, and upcycling movements, and the artisanal, transparent, and "Made Here" trends, and also includes more indigenous/tradition forms of dress (typically and erroneously excluded from notions of fashion) that survive for example in the Miao culture of China or among the Mayans in Guatemala, or the Sami of northern Scandinavia. Each fits into the Local-Slow column of the rubric above, by manifesting processes and mindsets that are small or medium scale, about making, about being active, and are linked with frugality, hope, sobriety, longevity, and place.

A working definition of Local Fashion could begin with the assumption that the product is derived from resources and capacities available from a particular physically location on the planet. The question of "how local", could be considered by various parameters: distance, for example, from the fiber source, or paramatized by town, region, bioregion, nation, or trading zone, or, one could also argue, planet.

Local Fashion products would also represent the values of people living in the producing locality. Building on Steger's thoughts on globality as a social condition in which boarders are irrelevant, the word locality (in addition to holding its normal meaning of a physical place) could be used to indicate a social condition in which economic, political, cultural, and environmental boundaries are relevant. The term fashion locality then is born to indicate fashion that is conceptualized, produced, and used within a particular, definable psycho-geographic space. With these parameters in mind, fashion localities, or perhaps better said, particular Local Fashionalities can be described. Several examples follow.

The first, representing the "do it ourselves/bioregional approach", is a 2008 collaborative project lead by artist-educator Kelly
Cobb called *The 100-Mile Suit*. The project involved more than twenty artisans using materials, beginning with the sheep for the wool, sourced within 100 miles (160 kilometers) of a point within Philadelphia. Using the limits of artisanship and distance, the project created an entire men’s outfit, including undergarments, socks, shirt, pants, jacket, gloves, and shoes. It is a compelling artwork that asks us to profoundly reconsider the nature and form of fashion. In Cobb’s words, it is:

A fiber to finish project inspired by initiatives in sustainability such as the 100-mile diet, community supported agriculture, local car-share transport and creative collectives. The 100-mile Suit unravels the disconnect of consumer to product by reintegrating and reconnecting the wearer of clothes to local trades and economies. (Cobb 2008).

As an art-research project, Cobb et al.’s work shows an intellectual and creative freedom that is ahead of mainstream thinking about fashion and sustainability. That advanced approach is shared by a number of other artist-researchers questioning and proposing alternative ideas of fashion that go beyond the Warholian collaborations that merely link artists and fashion manufacturers as a means to increase sales, such as
the well-known 2002 Louis Vuitton program that produced the tantalizing, candy-bright Takashi Murakami collection of accessories.

Sheena Matheiken, for example, in her *1 Dress 365 Day Uniform Project*, wore one simple black dress everyday for one year. Similar recent projects include fashion journalist Sofía Hedström’s decision to go a year without shopping for clothing, and Andrea Zittel and Tiprin Follett’s artist-run Smockshop project, which produced artist-made one-off garments designed to be worn for six months at a time. A piece by Zoë Saldaña consists of two identical, simple (cheap), red and white gingham blouses. One garment was created via the global industrial supply chain and purchased by her at a Walmart in Berlin for $9.77. The other garment is Saldaña’s handcrafted replica. Side by side they appear to be the same, even if the systems they represent are radically different. Famously, Yinka Shonibare has created a complete body of work recontextualizing the vibrant Dutch wax-resist fabrics, which have a complex history in international textile trade, but are today typically associated with West African dress. Shonibare’s work employs these fabrics for reproducing the garment forms of colonial-era ruling-class fashion. As such, this sartorial switch, asks us to consider the relationships between capital and labor, the rulers and the ruled, and notions of “here” and “there.”

Another type of Local Fashionality is seen in the Maine-based, family-owned business Ramblers Way (www.ramblersway.com). Founded in 2009 by "natural toothpaste titans" Tom and Kate Chappell body products company Tom’s of Maine, Ramblers is producing fine wool garments, fiber-sourced, spun, knit, woven, cut, and sewn, in the USA. Unlike established “Made in The United States of America” clothing and fashion brands such Woolrich, which was founded during late nineteenth century, Ramblers, was started during a period in which textile and clothing manufacturing production infrastructure is, in the USA, minimal. With a supply and production network spread from Colorado to the Carolinas and north to Maine, it may not be an example of locality in terms of geographic proximities, but it is clearly a Local Fashionality in terms of its nationalistic organizing principle.

We are concerned also about the negative effect globalization has had on the local economies of American communities, especially where manufacturing of goods has previously thrived.
Choices made by companies to move their manufacturing and services to other global locations has cost jobs in America, made our industrial centers vulnerable to decay, and destabilized the general economic sustainability of the town and city.

We believe at Ramblers Way Farm that we need to be intentional about stimulating local, particularly, manufacturing economies for job creation and maximum cash flow to offset the destabilizing effect of globalization (Ramblers Way Farms 2014).

Innovative fashion management that connects production with skills and culture to specific geographic locations is seen in a growing number of enterprises (Carbonaro and Goldsmith 2013). The repositioning, and subsequent resurgence of Scottish handloomed wool tweed, described by Harris (2012) in “The Very Recent Fall and Rise of Harris Tweed” is an interesting case in which a once-prominent but then abandoned aesthetic and community skill-set have been revived. Fashion designer Natalie Chanin’s establishment of garment design and production, in order to embrace a local embroidery tradition and create unique garments, in and around Florence, Alabama has frequently been used as an example of Local Fashion and a shift toward a new fashion management strategy. Designer Antonio Marras is well-known for using fashion as a local narrative, and working with the “incompleteness, irregularity, and handmade qualities” (Vacca and Bertola 2010) that are a result of collaborating with Sardinian tailors and artisans skilled in embroidery and basting. Rahul Mishra is just one of many Indian fashion designers promoting location-specific handloomed fabrics. Like Chanin’s and Marras’ approach, Mishra aims to help build a local, resilient economic model not beholden to mass-market economic logic, and says that he aims not to grow rich and famous, but to make the people around him prosperous (Dugal 2010; Tewara 2014).

Sustainable fashion leader Kate Fletcher’s Local Wisdom project begins the assumption that “to live well and to thrive as human beings on this planet, we need a different engagement with material things, including our clothes” (www.localwisdom.info). Local Wisdom is an ethnographic endeavor that, through hundreds of interviews with individuals (in high-consumption cultures including the UK, Denmark, Canada, the USA, Australia, and New Zealand) explores how people use
and (re)craft their clothes in “satisfying ways that go beyond their original design and far beyond the passive act of purchase (Fletcher 2014). Ways in which individual “wearer-users” engage with their garments (arguably the most Local Fashion processes possible) include, sharing, repairing, altering, never washing, climate-based choosing. These choices promote long-term use and act “to buffer, refine and reduce the pace of consumption – with benefits including our own wellbeing and that of others on whose goodwill we depend (Fletcher 2014).”
Local Fashionalities

This chapter explores in depth two cases of Local Fashion enterprise models: Växbo Lin and WomenWeave.

Växbo Lin

Växbo is a hamlet of fewer than two hundred people set in a lake-adorned, pine and fir-forested mountains in Hälsingland, Sweden. It lies some 270 kilometers northwest of Stockholm, not far from the Gulf of Bothnia about 15 kilometers from Bollnäs, a sparkling clean railroad-hub town of about 13,000. Today the economy of Gävleborg, the county that encompasses the traditional landskap of Hälsingland, is led by forestry, paper production, and steel manufacturing. Tourism is a growing industry, accounting for approximately SEK 6.4 billion a year and employing close to 6,000 people (investingavleborg 2014).

In addition to its natural beauty and wildlife, Hälsingland hosts about 1000 timber farm houses, many of them decoratively painted, and seven of which have been designated World Heritage sites by UNESCO in 2012 for:

representing the zenith of a regional timber building tradition that dates back to the Middle Ages. They reflect the prosperity of independent farmers who in the 19th century used their wealth to build substantial new homes with elaborately decorated ancillary houses or suites of rooms reserved for festivities. The paintings represent a fusion of folk art with the styles favoured by the landed gentry of the time, including Baroque and Rococo. Decorated by painters, including known and unknown itinerant artists, the listed properties represent the final flowering of a long cultural tradition (UNESCO 2014).

It is in this Instagram-ready setting that Växbo Lin, a slow-tech, small-scale linen weavery, and its main sales outlet are located. Växbo Lin produces, as the name indicates, linen (cloth made from flax fiber) made in Växbo. Almost all of their ready-made products are home fashion: tablecloths, napkins, and towels, but they sell their yardage, which is well-suited for clothing and is used for wood-soled slippers produced in collaboration with another Swedish manufacturer.
Condra (2013) relates that Hälsingland maintained the tradition of wearing special-occasion folk costume (as opposed to daily peasant dress) well into nineteenth century. For women, this nationalistic (as the costumes were displayed in world’s fairs, such as in Paris in 1867 Vienna in 1873 and Philadelphia in 1876 included stiff cotton headdresses in printed material, leather, and linen.

On the other hand, "there is a small group of subcontractors that specialise in different parts of the production process such as weaving, knitting, sewing and printing; thus, it takes several subcontracting services to make an entire garment (Mouwitz and Svengren-Holm 2013).

Illustration 9: A bride and groom, late nineteenth century, Delsbo, Hälsingland

Illustration 10: Nineteenth century pillow ticking from Hälsingland (Nordiska Museet).
Linen was used extensively for daily wear, and in the home, as bedding, table coverings, napkins, and wall hangings.

The existence of Växbo Lin and its manufacturing model is unusual in today’s Swedish textile market, which, like many wealthy regions of the world, produces fewer textile products than in previous decades. In fact, the Swedish textile and clothing industry has experienced rationalisations since the early 1970’s, when production of the traditional manufacturing apparel business was gradually relocated from Sweden to low-wage countries. This has contributed to a decrease in employment in the sector ... from 7,357 in 2008 to 5,983 in 2011. The number of companies has fallen slightly from 763 in 2008 to 740 in 2011 (EuroFound 2014)

In a recent report for the Baltic Fashion Project, Mouwitz and Svengren-Holm (2013) note, in reference to apparel manufacturing in Sweden, that it is very small, on account of globalisation ... [although] the textile industry (NACE Rev. 2 code 13) has survived quite well by specialising in knowledge-intensive areas such as technical textiles ... which has led to the textile industry playing an important role in the modern Swedish economy. In comparison to other European countries, the industry can be described as R&D- and capital-intensive with high knowledge content in the

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Though today ranked as one of the world’s most developed nations, Sweden was later than other European countries to industrialize. According to Brück, “nonprofessional handicraft production of textiles and garments prevailed until the second half of the nineteenth century, when the boom began for the textile industries, lasting about one hundred years (Brück 2010, p 7).” When industrialization of the textile sector did take hold, manufacturing and trading developed in three
locations. Each specialized in goods made from one of the three dominant fibers of the time. The region surrounding the southwest city of Borås home of the Swedish school of textiles, experienced the first wave of textile industrialization in the 1870s and relied upon imported cotton fiber. Further north, the city of Norrköping specialized in the manufacturing of fabrics from domestic wool (Bruck date). Hälsingland, further north still, which already in the 1700s had been an important region for flax cultivation and cottage (home-based), manufacturing, became established for industrially-manufactured linen.

Archeological finds show that flax was cultivated in Europe since around 7000 BCE (Heckett in Collins and Ollerenshaw 2003). Evidence shows that it was grown in northern Europe including modern-day UK and Ireland since Neolithic times (Fairweather and Ralston 1993); and in Denmark since about 1600 BCE.

European trade in linen with China has been going on at least since 1300. It was, according to one source, "the only western article that could bear the cost of transportation as far as Peking" (Lopez in Collins and Ollerenshaw 2003). Flax, was grown and used for clothing throughout most of Sweden for millennia before industrialization (Jonsson 2003). Jonsson in her study of linen production in Sweden, describes the proto-industrial system of seventeenth century Hälsingland as

an complicated network of mutual dependence and competition between different actors such as flax-growing and linen-trading farmers, peasants' wives and poor widows working as spinners and scutchers, local town merchants also trading in linen, and linen-buying wholesalers in Stockholm (Jonsson 2003, p 210).

The eighteenth century is regarded as the golden age of linen manufacturing in Europe, with an increase in production and commerce, though exports directly from Sweden apparently did not occur. In certain regions of the country however "the production of linen came to be the most important livelihood beside farming, and linen from those areas was sold and distributed all over the country" (Jonsson 2003, p
As was the case in other parts of Europe however, the beginning of the early nineteenth century is the beginning of the end for the Swedish linen industry. Over this period, a series of events, including the growing demand for cotton, competition from flax production in the Russian Empire, disturbances of war, the Great Depression, and opportunities for earning in the timber industry brought about a greatly diminished market.

Later changes in domestic habits (Collins and Ollerenshaw 2003; Jonsson 2003) and environmental concerns—retting, the process of separating the fiber from the stalks causes eutrophication (van der Werf and Turunen 2008)—caused further decline in its use. Although the tradition of giving linen dowries did linger into the twentieth century, by 1965 all commercial cultivation of flax grown for fiber ceased (FAOUN 2011). Somehow though, linen fabric still holds a spot in some Swedish hearts. It remains the prestigious fabric of choice at the Nobel Prize dinner. It is spoken of fondly by colleagues, friends, and people I chat with in Swedish second-hand shops. They have memories of it when it used to have a larger role in daily life. Apartment buildings’ laundry rooms still have hand-cranked or electric mangles. These machines have heavy wooden rollers through which linen is pressed to take out its wrinkles, and, by flattening and smoothing its obedient bast fiber, give it is well-known luster and crisp, *knäckebröd*-like drape.

There are a small number of non-hobbyist linen businesses in Sweden today. Among them are four small companies, each with its own showroom, network of domestic and international re-sellers, and their own e-commerce sites. Ekelunds in Västra Götaland, founded in 1692; Klässbols in Värmland, founded in the early twentieth century; Hälsinge Linneväveri in Hälsingland, founded in 1980s, and Växbo Lin founded in 1989. In their marketing and with their carefully designed and well-made textiles, these manufacturers exhibit pride in their heritage, social significance, and technical methods. All four use imported yarns or imported fiber. Together, they offer a diversity of products. These include a range of styles: Klässbols’ is classic-contemporary; Ekelunds’ is whimsical and colorful; Hälsinge Linneväveri’s feels timeless and placeless; and Växbo Lin’s looks happy and chic.
Material and Immateral Value
Växbo Lin was opened in 1989 as the dream incarnate of Rolf Åkerlund. At a time when the local linen industry was virtually extinct, Åkerlund's passion was to restore not only the physical spinning and weaving processes to the area, but the intangible community-culture that it had previously fostered.

My parents' flax farm in Växbo must have made a big impression on me. The women's hands that pulled the flax, the smell of flax retting in the lake and on the drying racks, and on the roof of the chapel.

I remember the flax breaks' monotonous thump through Växbo Valley during quiet autumn evenings. Then, after some years of absence from the homestead, I returned to Växbo with a growing enthusiasm to develop the linen tradition.

One thing led to another and a collection of enthusiasts undertook to build a modern industry for linen processing. It is with some measure of pride that we spin and weave in Växbo, well aware of the historical legacy we are entrusted to pass on (Växbo Lin 2011).

In 2005 Hanna and Jacob Bruce, Stockholmers with roots in Hälsingland, and backgrounds in human resources and graphic design, took ownership. In an interview in Vävmagisinet (author date) Hanna describes a chance re-meeting with Åkerlund that led the couple to buy the business. As a teenager, Hanna had been a tour guide at the factory, and she had dreams of one day running the company. While visiting Dalarna with Bruce on their first wedding anniversary, Hanna accidentally met Åkerlund. She joked with him that she was ready to buy the factory. Coincidently, Åkerlund had said that morning to his wife that he was ready to pass the business on. Although neither Hanna nor Jacob had previous textile business experience, they believed they had opportunity. They bought the business, and moved home to Växbo.
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Illustrations 11 and 12: Above, the Växbo Lin factory exterior, and below, nearby scenery.

With the collaboration of textile designer Ingela Berntsson, the team began updating the product line. Their current offer is fashion for the household: tablecloths, napkins, kitchen, yardage, towels, as well as wooden-soled, diamond-patterned slippers. The fabrics are modernist in their simplicity, but have a contemporary feeling about them due mostly to infusions of bright playful colors. Many patterns take advantage of the flax fiber’s smooth and straight shape (when magnified it resembles bamboo) to create sharp and oppositional design elements. Examples include a plain weave natural (undyed) fabric with thin stripes of a sunny yellow; a bestselling diamond twill, called strandräg (beach rye) composed of a natural warp and raspberry colored weft; or a satin damask fabric that reverses from a grid of spring green squares on a
white background to a grid of white-squares of a spring green background.

Illustration 13: Natural and dyed yarns, classic Växbo technique.

Other fabrics use threads of softer shades, such as a pale blue and off-white that are meant to show-off textures that Berntsson devised to further increase flax's inherently highly absorbency. These “bubble” and “seashell” (as they are called by the designer) textures have a high surface area in relationship to their length and width, and need no mangling to look good. They make excellent bath towels. From my own experience, I can say that they dry the body faster and then dry out themselves faster than typical cotton terry bath towels, though they are not soft or snuggly but firm and utilitarian. Like all linen fabrics, they gain strength when damp or wet.

A signature Växbo Lin item is the 33 centimeter square, open weave, dishcloth. Available in more than thirty colors, it retails for about 12 euros and has become an item one expects to see in Swedish museum gift shops, for example at the Nordiska Museet in Stockholm, or the Textile Museum in Borås. It is an effective and pleasant to use item, a kind of luxurious tool for the kitchen-centered soul that can be tossed into the compost heap after its active life has expired.

Berntsson, who trained at The Swedish School of Design and Crafts, relates that in her childhood she was forming her thoughts about nature, and "felt it important for the products to have some connections with the factory surroundings" (in Gustavsson 2010, p 170).
Before designing the base line, she spent time in Hälsingland visiting heritage centers and museums. "People used a lot of linen in Hälsingland, and also appreciated it by taking care of it and saving it" says Berntsson, who has a master's understanding of linen's innate physical characteristics. She finds differences in the fiber's aesthetic properties that often go unnoticed:

...unbleached, the natural colours of linen range from a warm beige to grey, depending on the growth conditions of the flax, the soil, the climate and the retting. Ever-changing colours, representing life itself. Eternally beautiful, these are designs for each and every day throughout a lifetime (Lotbiniere 2006).

Further, she states that the fiber

...is more beautiful the more it is used, also an aspect of sustainability. You don't have to buy new stuff. I often think of young people buying a handtowel of unbleached linen, to use for the rest of their life (in Gustavsson 2010).
Like Växbo Lin’s product assortment, their marketing is well-considered and straightforwardly presents their brand-aesthetics. Using a white background, as do many newer and sustainability-aware or “sustainability-driven” fashion brands (Carbonaro and Goldsmith 2013), their website’s graphic design is simple, easy to read, and easy to navigate. Customers land on a splash page showing a large color image of blue lake surrounded by green trees, and, in the foreground, but off-center, a piece of linen fabric casually draped over a wooden chair. The headline, in English (in both the Swedish and English versions of the site), and in an all uppercase san serif font: “REALLY MADE IN SWEDEN.” Subsequent images automatically slide across the screen. First, a close-up of the diamond twill *strandräg* pattern, the fabric, gently rolled to show off its luster, lies on top of a spray of green flax bearing new yellow seed pods. Next, a super close-up showing individual yarns of a puckered fabric. Next, an interior shot of bright blue warehouse shelves loaded with rolls of colorful fabrics adjacent to neatly folded neutrals.

Prominent on the splash page are two Swedish Society for Nature Conservation’s (SSNC) Bra Miljöval (good environmental choice) ecolabels: one for fiber and the other for processing and finishing. Växbo has earned these marks since 2004. They indicate, that the flax is grown organically or in conversion to organic, and is certified by the International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements (IFOAM) in accordance with ISO-guide 65. It also ensures that the retting (removal of the fiber from the plant stalks) is done in association with water treatment, and that the processes (carding, spinning, bleaching, dyeing, weaving, stitching, etc.) used to turn the fiber into products must be declared, documented, and conform to hazard risk reduction standards (SSNC 2012).

The first body of text a visitor to the website sees is a declaration not of their products per se, but of their vision for the enterprise.

> It is with pride that we work to preserve and develop a Swedish cultural heritage. We weave and sew our linen products in our factory in Hälsingland, literally weaving together established handicraft traditions with modern design. Past and present meet, forming both timelessness and a future with a human touch (Växbo Lin 2014).
Further on, descriptive text, in Swedish and English, explains, rather than pushes, the products’ characteristics. For example, about the bubble bath towel:

Our Bubble Bath towel is woven in a honeycomb pattern, which is extremely pleasant to the touch. Linen has superb absorbing properties and dries quickly. The more you use it and wash it, the softer and more pleasant it will be to the touch. Avoid mangling for maximum honeycomb effect (Växbo Lin 2014).

The Gothenburg-based digital communications agency called shimpanz worked with the Bruce’s on the design of the website. shimpanz describes their approach to the project:

Växbo Lin is proud to work to preserve and develop Swedish cultural heritage by designing and manufacturing the best linen products in the world. We are proud to make them even better by creating their website where they can show off all their awesome products.

For the website to really be able to reflect their sense of tradition and quality, we used many images from the beautiful environment of Hälsingland, the factory environment and lots of beautiful close-ups of their linen products. Along with the bright and clean design, the website becomes a great source of inspiration and understanding of Växbo Lin’s quality products and their efforts (shimpanz 2014).

While shimpanz is perhaps a tad too boastful about the quality of Växbo Lin’s fabrics (“the best linen products in the world”) it is on the mark matching the aesthetics of the website with the aesthetics of the products and setting.

Växbo Lin’s factory and store are two of a handful of buildings that one can visit during a several hour experience in this patch of forest the others being a red-painted grain mill and barn from the late nineteenth century, and an adjacent red-painted pub, serving “responsibly fished MSC-certified north Atlantic cod (växbokrog.se).” The factory building is a large modern red-painted shed. It holds the restored mid-twentieth century machines brought from France to Sweden by Åkerlund, offices, and showroom, and the 15 or so people working there.
When I visited in 2011, the production of the fabric began with imported linen tow, cleaned and organized fiber that is near-ready to be spun.

Illustration 15: Linen tow, modeled by Hanna Bruce. The fiber that was used to spin yarns was grown in and imported from France, and arrived coiled in large cardboard and steel cylinders. At the time, “the only thing missing” from the fiber-to-fashion equation was a swaying fields of blue flax flowers growing for the harvest.

Hanna, a cheerful and energetic woman, was dressed, the day we met, in the company’s pink and white striped linen. She said that she would prefer to buy the fiber locally, but that there were too many financial barriers to bringing back that infrastructure. Restoring flax fiber production to the area would mean not only agricultural investments. It would also require retting pools or fields, or a safe way to use the river, which was the traditional means in this region to remove the lingon and pectin that binds the fiber and chaf. Another group of machines would be required to clean and prepare the fiber for spinning.

The machines in the factory have a friendliness about them. The dominant materials are steel or painted cast iron, and most of the working parts, the gears, wheels, winders, rods, and bobbins are exposed. They seem to me to have personalities that have developed during their long time in use. Some of them show style from generations ago, for example, a twining machine exhibits a 1950s or 1960s color palette: pale pink and yellow ochre cylinders attached to a sea-foam green painted apparatus on top of which are perched large spools of “singles waiting to be forever co-joined into two-ply yarns. 

Illustration 16: Hanna Bruce mending a thread. She is wearing a pink and white stripped homemade linen dress.
They are however unpleasantly noisy, and according to Hanna, frequently break down even though they are well-cared for by the mechanic-operators. The volume of irregular fabric is high, about thirty percent, which is sold at discount in the factory outlet store. The kinds of flaws that I observed were mostly broken or missing yarns—problems that can often be worked around by those making the fabric into finished products.

Unfortunately, in 2012, the flax spinner, which was apparently the only commercially running one in Scandinavia, broke down and was deemed irreparable. As a result all the yarn is now imported from Italy (Bruce 2014). Hanna relates the dilemma they faced:

Since two years ago we have made some investments in more weaving chairs, and at the same time, we had to scrap our spinning mill. The machinery was from the 60s and did not function any more. Since we are a small factory, we had to choose between investing in weaving or spinning. We decided to go for the weaving.
It goes almost without saying that summer is the time when Växbo receive most of their 80,000 annual visitors who come from other parts of Sweden and around the world. Many arrive via tour buses. Daily scheduled tours of the factory are given during peak periods, and by appointment during slower times, but it is always possible to take a self-guided tour of the factory. The number of visitors is growing, and the Bruces note an increase in foreign tourists since the historic homes were made UNESCO World Heritage sites two years ago.

The large store next to the factory is spacious, and well-lighted. The walls are white and the flooring is pale grey. Displays are created using objects that have either been or could have been found in the factory such as wood crates reinforced with galvanized steel strips and peeling painted-steel drums. Tables are laden with their products as well as dishes, fresh flowers, bouquets of dried flax. Framed environmental certifications and commemorations hang behind the sales counter. The merchandize is color-coordinate and plentiful—but not massed. It is a store, but like upscale shops the world over, it has an air of being in someone’s home—in this case, one that is ready for a large dinner party. Products are shown, mostly folded and stacked neatly, but also hanging, leaning, standing in rolls, and piled into an old bathtub. Many are shown “nude”, that is without any packaging. Some have bands of plain linen-colored recycled paper around them with the company name. In the center of the band is the sky-blue logo of the five-petal flax flower—a flower that seems in its simple clarity to have been designed by nature to be a logo! Only a small quantity, mainly the large tablecloths, is in plastic bags.

Illustration 17: Interior of factory store.
Other marketing materials are simple, friendly, and relate aspects of their products and story. Hang tags, for example, made of linen-color recycled paper, give a description of the product, care instructions, and price. At the point of sale, purchases can be gift wrapped in “eco-evocative” brown paper, a sprig of seedpods of dried flax, a linen bow, and a flax flower label.

The website is similarly designed to be visually straightforward and consistent. Linen-lovers must find the marketing language poetic.

"Our Bubble Bath towel is ... is extremely pleasant to the touch ... Avoid mangling for maximum honeycomb effect."

Who wouldn’t want to avoid mangling that would minimize a honeycomb effect?

"A completely smooth plain-weave curtain with proper selvedges ... primarily intended for curtains but just as suitable for table-runners or why not a lovely bridal veil (emphasis added)"

Proper selvedges may not be on everyone’s mind, but they certainly are on the radar of fashion forward hipsters in Tokyo, London, Stockholm, or New York who crave the firmness and declaration of boundary that a proper selvedge supplies to fabric. Why not a lovely bridal veil, indeed? The durability would be unsurpassed, and the thought reminiscent and lighthearted in the way that Diana Vreeland’s famous “why don’t you” suggestions were to fashion followers during the early days of World War II.

Total sales volume has more than tripled, from 4.7 million, to 15 million SEK (from about half a million euro to more than a million and a half). During my 2011 interview with Jacob and Hanna, Hanna described being concerned about having had to raise prices, and was relieved that their sales did not suffer as a result. Current retail prices are, for example, 610 SEK per square meter for a white warp, colored weft chambray-like fabric. At 865 SEK or close to 100 euros, the large bath towel, described above, is priced at almost fifteen times that of a same-size cotton terry bath towel on IKEA’s Swedish website, but it is one of their bestsellers. Of the 30 percent that cannot be sold at full price, Hanna says that they have no problem selling all of it, and could sell more.
The number of employees, working with the machines, in production, in the office, and on the sales floor has doubled to 15. The average month salary is 20,750 SEK (roughly 2,250 euro). They sell through about 500 resellers in fifteen countries (Bruce 2014). The business kept a showroom in Stockholm until 2000, but is currently represented by one of their most active resellers, Svensk Hemslöjd.

Hanna summarizes some of the aspects she feels have been contributing to the success of the enterprise, and the investment they have made in their design and strategy.

It's not the quality of linen we want to alter, but ways of thinking about linen. And we are aware of the cultural heritage aspect. Though we don't want to get stuck in it. Our main assets on the market are that our production is based in Sweden, and we do eco-labelled high quality products. And our history too (Bruce 2011).

She adds that “the proudness we feel everyday at work is priceless,” and notes, in response to a question about what customers say about the goods, that “they appreciate that the production is in Sweden. However, not everyone is willing to pay for it (Bruce 2014).”

Understood from a design management point of view, Växbo Lin’s approach can be considered conventional, but re-scaled to fit a small enterprise. The idea, the process, the manifested product, the presentation of the product, and customer’s experience of the product, are all carefully and deliberately executed. Like design management at a larger scale, it aims to manifest a vision for a recognizable identity, and raison d’être within a marketplace.

**WomenWeave**

Maheshwar is a several-hours bus ride from Indore, the largest city of Madhya Pradesh with an estimated population of about 2 million, and Pithampur, a special economic zone that is home to national and transnational industries and corporations. The region’s first industrial textile mill was established in 1866 by the Maharaja Holkar. Today, Indore and Pithampur have significant industrial textile and garment manufacturing that contribute to the state of Madhya Pradesh’s total textile and apparel exports, estimated at 1800 crore, or approximately 220 million euro (Ministry of Textiles 2013).
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Understood from a design management point of view, Växbo Lin's approach can be considered conventional, but re-scaled to fit a small enterprise. The idea, the process, the manifested product, the presentation of the product, and customer's experience of the product, are all carefully and deliberately executed. Like design management at a larger scale, it aims to manifest a vision for a recognizable identity, and raison d'être within a marketplace.

WomenWeave Maheshwar is a several-hours bus ride from Indore, the largest city of Madhya Pradesh with an estimated population of about 2 million, and Pithampur, a special economic zone that is home to national and transnational industries and corporations. The region's first industrial textile mill was established in 1866 by the Maharaja Holkar. Today, Indore and Pithampur have significant industrial textile and garment manufacturing that contribute to the state of Madhya Pradesh's total textile and apparel exports, estimated at 1800 crore, or approximately 220 million euro (Ministry of Textiles 2013).

Maheshwar, on the hot, flat lands of the southwest part of the state, is a town of about 25,000 people. The climate is hot, reaching into the 40s centigrade during the summer and the low 20s during the winter. It depends on the monsoon for nearly all annual precipitation. The town’s main edifices, for residents as well as visitors, are the one and a half-kilometer long stone ghats leading into the broad, slow, and to many, sacred, Narmada River. Ahilya Fort, built in 1766 by the queen of the Holkar dynasty, is perched above the ghats and has views over the rivers into the plains. It is now a boutique heritage hotel.

Maheshwar is a bustling and relatively prosperous city, especially since the town started receiving, several years ago, twenty-four-hour electricity (as well as fish-kills) from the damming of the Narmada. The town’s buildings, along paved or dirt roads, are one or two stories of concrete, brick, or mud. Most are painted off white, some with bright, saturated colors, and patterns made with paint, tiles, or painted ironwork. Hindu shrines and Muslim mosques are found throughout the city. Cellphones are ubiquitous. The tallest structures are the Eiffel-like cell phone transmission towers.

The region around the city is agricultural, with cotton and chili peppers being the main crops. At harvest time, small mountains of purple-red chilies, heaped onto sheets of plastic burlap or other utilitarian textiles, are found in open areas of town drying in the sun. Food, almost all of it fresh vegetables, fruits, grains, beans, pulses, seeds, nuts, cereals, eggs and dairy, is purchased at small daily street markets, or at the larger, weekly, market that takes place every Tuesday, the local day of rest for many. There are no supermarkets, fast food outlets, or chain stores, and few refrigerators. The only industrially processed
foods I have seen in Maheshwar are packaged cookies, potato chips, and soda.

Being a market town, Maheshwar supports a range of service and shops, including many vending household items, pharmaceuticals, and electronics. There are several Internet cafes. Shoemakers, basket-weavers, ironmongers, and potteries, and goldsmiths are common, but the town is primarily known for its centuries-old weaving tradition.

Information garnered from Maheshwar’s historical museum, and locals, gives credit for the founding of handloom in the city to Devi Ahilya Bai Holkar, who brought, in the late eighteenth century, weavers from various clans in Gujarat and from elsewhere in what is now Madhya Pradesh. Nearby the palace is an area of small homes inhabited by the weavers of her day, as well as many of Maheshwar’s present weavers. The divine Holkar is still revered in Maheshwar, where her likeness is seen in illustrations around town and as a statue on the ghats.

Illustration 19: Statue of the divine Holkar standing before the Narmada River.

Carvings on the fort complex have influenced the design of the city’s fabrics for centuries.

The carvings on the Ghats of Narmada influence the border and pallu designs of Maheshwari sarees. Ahilya Bai was taking so much interest in the Maheshwari weaving that she used to develop designs for the sarees.
The specialty of Maheshwari saree is its typical attractive [brocaded] border which looks alike from both the sides. The check pattern became so famous that many other weaving centers of Maharashtra and Coimbatore adopted it in their weaving. There are differently checks, which are known as Gunji, Pakhi, Popli, Dowra, and Chandtara etc. (Ramachandran 2013).

As evidenced by the majority of fabrics in the shops of Maheshwar today, the tradition of brocading geometric patterns along the selvedge continues, and these patterns are still known by name. For example, *liharia kinar* is a zigzag; *chattai kinar* is a fine diamond pattern. According to Ramachandran (2013), it was not until the early 1940s that silk weaving was introduced to Maheshwar, which, at the time, the city had been known for its cotton sarees. The fly shuttle, a string and block device that enables the weaver to weave at a faster pace, was introduced in the late 1940s.

Chishti et al. (1989) describe a sequence of diminishments to the sector, during the mid-twentieth century. After centuries of practice using natural dye, the weavers adopted high quality synthetic German dyes were used. In the period between the world wars however, the dyes became unavailable, and most weavers opted for cheaper chemical substitutes that bled color on the brocaded *pallavs* (sarees decorative panels), and brocaded vertical borders. Two other problems were that the durability of the fabrics deteriorated further by eliminating the finer reed in the borders. Secondly, the fabric had a shorter shelf life as the combination of silk and cotton causes, over a period of time, it to crack at the folds, (Chishti et al. 1989).

Textile production was at its lowest in the 1950s when the government set up a training center for technical support and assistance with purchasing and dyeing yarn. It was also during this era that more production was switched to silk. This change has been attributed to the loss among the weavers of the skill sets needed for sizing fine cotton yarn: painting the yarns with rice water requires haptic sensitivity, learned techniques, and patience. Silk, because it is stronger and more resilient than cotton, does not requires sizing. The vast majority of this silk has been cultivated via *Bombyx mori* moths, and is processed into the fine smooth and consistent “silk” thread that most people think of when they think of silk. It is referred to locally as China Silk, and either
degummed, or “undegummed.” The former is shiny, because the protein sericin has been washed out of it. The later is somewhat matte, because some of the stiffening and dulling sericin is left on. Although India is the worlds second largest producer of such silk (Ministry of Textiles 2014), this type of silk is imported from China.

Sally Holkar, an American from Texas, has been living, on and off, in Maheshwar since the early 1970s. A descendent, via marriage, of Ahilyabai Holkar, she and her husband Richard founded the Rehwa Society, a for-social-profit enterprise in 1978. They had two missions: to revive the centuries-old handweaving tradition of Maheshwar, and to improve life in Maheshwar by placing income directly into the hands of women weavers (Rehwa Society 2009). Rehwa has achieved and continues its missions and is today a well-established cultural institute of the city. According to its 2014 website, it now has 130 weavers who produce over “100,000 meters of fine fabrics a year ... and also provides a free school for weavers’ children and runs a low-cost health scheme...”

Chishti et al. (1989) describe a conversation in 25 years ago with “the gentle Shri Patwardhan, a retired handloom department official who looks after the Rehwa Society”, regarding the past glories of Maheshwari fabric.

We learn how the most typical elements or the Maheshwar design vocabulary of the baila-aankhi,...
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Illustration 20: One of the many shops selling locally woven predominantly silk fabric with brocaded selvedges, 2012.

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We learn how the most typical elements or the Maheshwar design vocabulary of the baila-aankhi, muthda, kangoora ... were evolved on throw shuttle looms, with the use of a number of levers that lifted the threads and how these elements were combined with an unlimited number of stripes and checks in the body known by specific names ...

... the mirani chowkda, a heavy warp stripe with a single light weft stripe, the phutani chowkda, a two by two check, the chand-tara, a check after every eight or ten thread ends, the gunji-paui, or three by three checks ... and so on ...

There were typical contrasting colour combinations for these, such as black and red, red and yellow, red and pink, highlighted by the subtle tones of madder or indigo ... (Chishti et al. 1989)

Handloom in India remains primarily a cottage industry, but it provides a way of life and livelihoods for millions. Overall, the position of handloom in the economy and culture of India is uncertain. There are signs of despair, as there have been for decades, but there are also signs of prosperity (Jay 2010; Kar 2011; Mamidipudi et al. 2012; Soundarapandian 2002). The estimated number of people who earn their livelihoods via handloom, that is, using non-automated looms, varies widely. The Indian Handloom Census of 2009-2010 counts about 2.3 million "weaver households", more than eighty percent of which are in rural areas. Other numbers are as high as 6 million (IOU Project 2014).

Though the number of people it supports is small relative to the perhaps 35 million employed in total by the industrial textile and fashion sector (Ministry of Textiles 2013) the handloom sector still produces about 15 percent of India’s fabric, which is 95 percent of the global total. Handloom output has increased approximately 30 percent from 2003 to 2011, and exports have increased in value: jumping 38 percent from 2009 to 2011, and 60 percent from 2011 to 2012 (Government of India Ministry of Textiles 2013).

In Maheshwar, there is no doubt that handloom is growing in both number of weavers and volume of sales. There are now almost 1,500 weavers in Maheshwar, up from only a few hundred at the low point during the 1970s (Sharma 2014). This figure includes more than 300 weavers who, in the last couple of years, have migrated from Barabanki in Uttar Pradesh. Sharma estimates that the total annual output of handloomed fabric for the town is 1,400,000 meters. With an
average retail price of 350 INR per meter, the gross retail for the town’s handloom sector is likely around 49,000,000 rupees (600,000 euro). He bases this estimate on weavers’ three-meter per day average output, working on average six days a week. As a result, the weavers now have some advantage to negotiate with the so-called master-weavers—those weavers with financial capital and retail stores, who, depending on one’s view, and the particular circumstances, either support or exploit the other weavers.

Material and Immaterial Value

Around the turn of the millennium, Sally Holkar was eager to begin a new venture. In 2003, she worked with two trustees and a team of advisors to form WomenWeave, a charitable organization to train women to spin and weave for the purpose of “making handloom a profitable, fulfilling, sustainable and dignified income-earning activity particularly for women in rural areas of India (WomenWeave 2014).” The Gudi Mudi Khadi Project was initiated by WomenWeave in 2008 in order to fulfill these aims, and create avenues of gainful employment for the under-skilled women weavers of Maheshwar, through capacity building, product and market innovation. This will be achieved by hand-spinning locally grown cotton into yarns and weaving that handspun yarn into cloth …” The project brings together women from different segments of the town and gives them a common platform to interact with each other, to explore opportunities—be it training, weaving, spinning, or stepping out of the homes to earn livelihoods. The project will go a long way in bringing the community together … economically as well as socially (Holkar in Goldsmith 2009).

In a 2009 interview (Goldsmith 2009) Sally discusses the drivers that pushed a local vision for the project forward.

Gudi Mudi (which means “scrunched” in the local language of Nimadi) began with the realization that the Maheshwari textile, with which I have worked for so many years, is composed of cotton weft, mill spun in Coimbatore, south India and 20/22 denier un-degummed silk warp, imported from China! The gold thread used in borders and extra warp/weft designs comes from Surat in Gujarat, which is far from Maheshwar. In other words, nothing in the Maheshwari textile is local except the labor and the traditional designs.
Yet cotton is grown in the local black cotton soil fields around Maheshwar! This cotton is short staple and therefore not suitable for what has come to be known as Maheshwari textiles, but it is perfectly acceptably as sliver staple for hand spinning and hand weaving a decent local textile.

So, this locally grown cotton was one factor in the Gudi Mudi equation. A second important factor was the presence of bioRe. bioRe\textsuperscript{1} is a Swiss-German collaboration with [approximately 5000] organic cotton farmers in our region. bioRe was seeking ways to enhance the income of the women in their farmers’ families, so we conceived the idea of hand spinning and hand weaving the locally grown organic cotton to create a very Earth friendly, local and appealing product. bioRe supplied the Gudi Mudi project with organic sliver during the training period training period and [sold] us organic yarn spun by the wives of their farmers.

Many objectives have been achieved: both for WomenWeave and for bioRe. The Gudi Mudi women, to be involved as spinners and weavers, were selected from the poorest of poor local women and were trained in their respective activities, thereby immediately almost doubling their prior income earning levels that were very low indeed. A final component, in keeping with the Earth friendly aspect of the project, has been our partnership with "natural dye resources." Natural dyeing at the yarn stage is expensive and complicated, but I am happy to say that we have had an excellent response to our organic, naturally dyed products.

WomenWeave, whose mostly cotton, light and medium weight fabrics are quite different than the typical sheer and brocaded silks of Maheshwar fame, has also seen their sales rise.

\textsuperscript{1}bioRe is a consulting/producing company founded in 1991 with the objective to improve small famers’ livelihoods through organic farming. In India, bioRe currently works with 5,000 organic cotton farmers on 10,000 hectares of land (bioRe 2014). It is primarily funded by Remei AG one of whose primary shareholders is the Swiss retailer Coop that uses the cotton in its Naturaline products, which range from garments to disposable baby-wipes.
The organization has morphed from being an enterprise in need of funding, to one that became, to one that is now slightly profitable (Holkar 2014). In fact, at the time of writing, WomenWeave is redefining its legal and enterprise models to catch up with its success. A key aspect of the change is the fact that the trainees, almost of whom have come from difficult or desperate socio-economic situations (Holkar 2014; Goldsmith 2009) have become de facto partners in the enterprise, collectively improving the quality of the goods, and the organization and the financial and social benefits of the system. WomenWeave now consists of about 200 people plus a network of board members and advisors. Craftworkers number 175, most of whom are female, and 25 people, more of whom are men, work in administration, accounting, stock keeping and management.
Its main office and production facilities are in a two-story poured-concrete building on a less developed edge of town nearby weavers’ homes, and across from a wide, litter-strewn ravine. Two sides of the building face a residential area; one side is adjacent to a road on which people, on foot, with carts, on bikes, scooters, motorcycles, in trucks and cars, and cattle, goats, dogs, chickens, and the occasional camel or elephant, pass by. The fourth side of the building opens onto a green lawn and a large classroom for The Handloom School, another WomenWeave program that will launch in 2015.

Cloth is an important aspect of all cultures, but in India it has, perhaps more so than anywhere else, a history of political activism and philosophical debate. In the form of homespun yarn and handwoven fabric nurtured and promoted by Gandhi in the early twentieth century, khadi was an important symbol, and an economic driver toward, independence from Great Britain (Roy 1999; Ramagundam 2008).

There are no greater, more declarative fashion moments, than Gandhi’s wearing, in the London rain of November 1931, a plain cotton dhoti and plain cotton shawl to attend the second round table conference on constitutional reforms for India.

WomenWeave’s mission, along with many other small-scale spinning and weaving enterprises, is Gandhi-esque in many ways. It aims to develop the material well-being, self-reliance, and spiritual condition of humans via the handspinning and handweaving. These slow techniques necessarily define the aesthetic aspects of WomenWeave’s fabrics, and produce what I define as naya khadi, or new khadi. Khadi, whether referred to as naya or not, has been experiencing a fashion revival within and outside of India.

Private label retailers of khadi, such as India-based FabIndia, and Anokhi, and Pakistan-based Khaadi, that cater to middle class and wealthy customers, together have more than two hundred retail outlets in India, Pakistan, Dubai, UAE, Malaysia, Singapore, Italy, and the UK. Chic boutiques such as Khadi and Co. in Paris, and Rachel Comey in New York sell khadi garments. The quintessentially rural product has been popular on the urban runway for a number of high-profile Indian fashion designers, for example Neeru Kumar, Ritu Kumar, Pranavi Kapur, and Rahul Mishra.
These designers have consistently used khadi, and have been part of the force that has made khadi popular again. In April 2014, as the largest democracy in the world began voting for new leadership, *The Times of India* noted that:

... khadi has always been the go-to-choice for Indian politicians. The fabric with humble origins has always been synonymous with the image of the modest neta and as election fever grips Gurgaon, this country cloth has again seen an upsurge in sales as politicians and their followers trump out their khadis. Khadi retailers in the city say that demand has increased 20-30% owing to elections ... though it is not just limited to politicians, as youngsters too can be seen flaunting khadi. They are not afraid to experiment either, says cloth seller Prem Kumar from Sadar Bazar, as they pair their khadi kurtas and shirts with denim jeans (Jose 2014).
In 2010, Sunil Sethi, president of the Fashion Design Council of India reflected upon the khadi scene: “We have to be Indian, but we have to reinvent ourselves and Rahul [Mishra] does that very well. It’s all about India. Wearing your Indianness on your sleeve is being proud of who you are (Jay 2010).” In an interview in 2012, Mishra, who has used fabric by Maheshwar weavers, put it this way:

I do not aim to grow rich and famous, but to make the people around me prosperous. Though ancient, handloom is as contemporary as my vision. The “problems” we encounter with it, as in other areas of modern life, are often the most beautiful things that happen to us (Goldsmith 2012).

Though the initial linkage with bioRe precipitated the direction Gudi Mudi would take, WomenWeave is now associated with a smaller multi-program rural development organization called Magan Sangrahalya Samiti (MSS) that supplies their organic cotton sliver for spinning and does the natural dying of Gudi Mudi’s yarns. Magan Sangrahalya Samiti (MSS), is about five hundred kilometers southwest of Maheshwar. MSS works with about five hundred farmers, many of who were previously working with Mr. Ram at bioRe (Sharma 2014). Gudi Mudi uses medium length staple cotton that produces a low luster yarn. Especially in the first period of prototyping, the trainees spun the yarn at a high enough twist so that they had a bit of bounce, or resiliency. The spinning is done on hand-cranked spinning machines, still being produced but of mid-twentieth century vintage technology. The fabrics that are made from these yarns feel dry and have a slight stretch (due to the ability of high twist yarns to be elongate under tension) that gives them an unusual hand that the weavers nicknamed gudi mudi, which means, in Nimadi, one of the local languages, scrunched.

The initial collections of fabrics that were made from these with different densities of warp and weft within the same fabric are similar to gauze or casement fabric that might be (and is) used as curtains. Though many of the fabrics were from undyed cotton, or mostly undyed cotton with a few stripes of yarns dyed with by MSS mainly with forest refuse” including Aam (mango), Palash (butea) Pakpu (Mexican creeper), Behada (Belliric) and Bibba (marking nut). MSS has developed 200 hues of organic dyes, and with the support of the government of India, “has developed new improved tools and techniques of natural dyeing and
effective ways of recycling the effluents of a natural dyeing unit (MSS 2014)."

Illustrations 24 and 25: Gudi Mudi yarns dyed by Magan Sangrahalya Samiti.

While their signature products are the hand-spun, organic, naturally dyed fabrics, as WomenWeave has developed, they have taken an experimental approach to the designing of their products, trying to understand the parameters of their collective skills, and market responses. No one person or team has consistently designed the fabrics, and, in addition to the naturally dyed organic cottons, WomenWeave has been including synthetically dyed yarns as well as Indian wild silks such as tussah and mugha, and cultivated mulberry silk.

Illustration 26: A spinning trainee adjusting the 8-spindle charkra at WomenWeave.
According to Sharma, the motivation for including these products is economic: the margins on these silk and conventionally dyed products are higher. This has resulted in eclectic, often ad hoc collections, of various “globally contemporary” products, but recent collections from Gudi Mudi, and from the newer and smaller KhatKhata program with rural weavers in the tribal village of Dindori, have been designed by Gita Patel, and Subhabrata Sadhu. Both studied textile design at the National Institute of Design in Ahmedabad, and have created visually cohesive collections, that seem be building a WomenWeave design grammar.

WomenWeave’s website is informative, but itself does not yet have a look and allure that says, “We’re WomenWeave”, in the way that other handloom producers sites say, “We’re LemLem”
(www.lemlem.com) or “We’re The IOU Project” (www.iouproject.com). On the other hand, the variety can be surprising—at one turn bright, large-scale plaids, at another turn, fine stripes of low luster brown silk and no luster organic cotton.

When, for example at trade and gallery exhibitions, there is space to display the goods by the aesthetic rules of each of the collections, a customer could easily imagine that they come from different producers. However, one thing they all share is that they are handloomed, and as such, to a slightly trained eye and hand, carry a history of the makers’ processes. In the case of the handspun cottons, this can be seen in the slight variations of thickness in the yarns. In all the fabrics, small variations are possible, for example, in the spacing between the yarns and in the widthwise or lengthwise tension. Magnified the selvedges might look the edges of handmade papadum, rather than the perfect symmetry of automated-machine-made selvedges.

WomenWeave sells their goods domestically and internationally, via a peer-to-peer network of customers, artisanal textile exhibitions, and contacts developed through its website. Many of the fabrics are available as scarves, sarees, or yardage. Yardage prices, as with other prices, are the same for all orders, whether “retail” or “wholesale” and range, in the in-stock bestsellers category, from 350 to 800 rupees (4.5
to 9.5 euro). In the fiscal year 2012-2013 close to 30,000 square meters of fabric were created for gross sales of approximately 9 million rupees, (110,000 euros). Sharma (2012) provides some insights into what the Internet has meant to WomenWeave:

The Internet has been playing a most important role in the marketing of our products. It is only because of the Internet that we are able to sell our products in more than twenty countries. Having a website is important but social media is very critical. For example, in a three-month time span, WomenWeave has made 1000 followers on Facebook and many of them are placing orders. Recently we made a client from Taiwan and within a week, we had finalized the order of 70,000 rupees.

In terms of the promotion of business, we are participating in exhibitions in various towns, but the leads that we are generating are much higher through the Internet as compared to our physical participation in exhibitions, which is more expensive and stressful. With the Internet, we can expand our market just sitting in this small town in India, which is very cost effective. Currently about fifty percent of WomenWeave’s business is coming from the contacts developed through the Internet (emphasis added). Internet interaction will also give the time, space and the visual means to explain our story very well, which is very important for long lasting relationships (Sharma 2012).

Independent weavers in Maheshwar earn by the piece, but the effective average hourly rate is around twenty-one rupees (twenty-five euro cents) working, typically eleven to twelve hours a day, six days per week (Sharma 2014). Operating on a different model, the weavers at WomenWeave earn, at a self-determined rate based on meters woven and the complexity of the fabric. The weavers at WomenWeave typically work seven plus take an unpaid hour for lunch. Their scheduling is also largely self-determined, as most have considerable family responsibilities, even if many bring their children to the onsite and free childcare. The structure of all the fabrics that they make is plain weave, but within that category, a great variety of fabrics can be produced using color, yarn varieties, yarn spacing, and techniques. The women's' skills and talents vary from basic (able to weave a fabric that requires
consistency and care, but little visual or haptic decision-making) to advanced (being able to weave a fabric that requires finding a visual rhythm of color and texture, controlling the distance between yarns, and feelings or focus sensitive enough to achieve a desired tension. Few are as skilled as the town’s weavers, who come from generations of weavers. According to Sharma, most of the weavers earn between 22 to 25 rupees per hour though some earn as much as 30.

WomenWeave’s “design management” process matches the ad hoc and cooperative nature of the enterprise model. In fact, the term design management is a poor fit for what actually happens, because the envisioning, development, and positioning of its offer are not a top-down, well-planned phenomenon. Although Sally Holkar and Hemendra Sharma lead the organization, neither are product or process designers, nor do they consider themselves “design managers” (Holkar 2014; Sharma 2014). This is not to say that designing and planning is not taking place, but that inputs come from individuals and circumstances throughout their system, for example, from the characteristics and limitations of their material resources and infrastructure, from the weavers, from the salespeople, from visiting and cyber-linked designers or advisors, and from customers’ suggestions. The enterprise model is primarily controlled by flows and responses to information and conditions, and only somewhat directed by conventional linear styles of management.

A Local and Global Wardrobe

In considering the cases Växbo Lin and WomenWeave in relationship to the notion of Local Fashionalities, I begin with the underlying economic logic of their business models and then ponder several specific garments in terms of their meaning vis-à-vis locality.

Like other consumer-goods enterprises, they aim to grow and earn a profit—Växbo Lin through the sale of beautifully romantic, thoughtfully produced, high-quality linen fabric; WomenWeave, through the sale of unique handwoven cotton and silk fabrics. Växbo does this from within one of the world’s most developed countries; WomenWeave from a small city in a developing one, but both aim to produce great stuff that customers will want more of. Can that sell-more-model fit within the environmental limits and consumption limits that seem to be required? It could, at least, be a mitigation, if the overall
throughput/harmful impact of their cloth is less than what an alternative purchase might represent. In idealized scenarios, their products could be incentives for consuming fewer but more personally resonant, meaningful, or “nutritious” garments. Indeed, both Hanna Bruce of Växbo, and Sally Holkar of WomenWeave have discussed how their enterprises are focused on changing the way people think about and use textiles.

The fact of an enterprise being in this or that physical spot has little, on its own, to do with sustainability. Good and bad practices can be established anywhere, even if complicated supply chains that rely on inputs from distant locations are often pointed to as more environmentally damaging than sourcing locally. That would be true if all other factors were equal, but all other factors are not equal. Turning again to the Local Food/Global Food discourse for a reference, food activist and historian James McWilliams (2009) has shown by comparing multiple studies that whatever virtues the locavore movement may have for raising consciousness and connoisseurship, it is not necessarily beneficial to the environment, or even for providing food for all who need it efficiently. A key reason of course has to do with the “competitive advantage” of different spots on Earth to yield more and at different rates of energy consumption. The tomato purchased in the UK but grown in Spain might have used, including transportation, just a tenth of the energy used to produce one in a hothouse in UK, if that hothouse is using conventional energy sources. Likewise, environmental impacts of shipping cannot be generalized in the textile and fashion sectors. An efficient long-distance system can have a lower carbon emission per unit transported than an inefficient local system bringing stock short distances. Container shipping is vastly more energy efficient than local trucking (Levinson 2008). Like food systems—whose more problematic aspects in terms of reaching sustainability include high volumes of waste and high use of resources to produce meat—fashion systems, have bigger problems than the impact of transportation. In the much-cited study by Allwood et al. (2006), it is estimated that the total energy used during the life cycle of a global t-shirt (i.e. a t-shirt bought in UK, manufactured in China from fiber grown in the USA) to be about seven percent of the total. This represents less than half that used for material, fabric and garment production, and a tenth as much as for washing, drying, and ironing.
Two other ways to consider the locality of business models are in terms of scale and speed. Växbo Lin’s and WomenWeave’s small-scale models are radically different from the large and fast, fashion paradigm. The leaders of these fashion enterprises are not on anyone’s list of the richest people in the world, as are the leaders many Global Fashion brands (Forbes 2014; Hoskins 2014). Neither are they beholden to stockholders. Their profit schemes are not based on low-prices at any cost, nor are their prices inflated by status-oriented marketing. Retail prices for Växbo’s products are high, but reasonable, considering the internalized costs of some environmental protection and fair, Made in Sweden wages. Their average employee monthly salary is about 21000 SEK (Bruce 2014). Växbo’s production facility is small; it cannot, and is not designed to, turn out massive volumes of material to exploit economies of scale. Nor is Växbo Lin racing against the clock in terms of producing rapid style changes. New designs are brought into the assortment occasionally, but not with the purpose—or accompanying media and marketing storm—of replacing customers’ previous purchases. Fashion forecaster at WGSN, Natalie Singh, describes the purpose of trend: “to make you feel that what you’ve currently got is not quite right” (Singh in Hoskins 2014, p 46). In this regard, Växbo’s products can not be said to be on trend, even if they are of our time. To the contrary, they are designed to make you feel that what you currently have is exactly right.

As a producer of fashion, WomenWeave’s core business model, like most other contemporary fashion enterprises, is to sell stuff to people who already have a lot, probably too much, stuff. However, unlike Global Fashion’s aim to accumulate wealth for its producers, and mythologize, for its consumers, the possibility of the accumulation of wealth, WomenWeave aims to distribute wealth to the bottom of the economic pyramid, and thereby help to demystify the accumulation of wealth. In this way, it is a fundamentally different economic model, with different consequences in terms of social sustainability than Global Fashion. Since 2009, WomenWeave has been producing twice-yearly collections of scarves and yardage, although products from all the collections are always available to be order-made. The collections function not so much as tools to accelerate reiterative consumption, but more as initiatives to improve their technical capacities; to develop their "brand" identity; and, of course, to better connect with their customer-
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About 40 percent of WomenWeave’s sales, which in 2013 were 92,000 lakh (approximately 112,000 euro), were earned selling speculatively produced merchandise for retail exhibitions, and in-stock items for purchase either through the office shop in Maheshwar, or via their website. Commissioned sales, with 50 percent deposits required, represent the other 60 percent of their business with individuals, small shops, and at least one apparel and home furnishings chain. This approach ensures that almost all that is produced is sold and that “mark-downs” are not part of the equation (Sharma 2014). Aside from shipping, their processes are slow, as was described previously. Handloom weaving in Maheshwar is at least one hundred times slower than modern industrial machine weaving. If practiced everywhere, this slow pace, would certainly, as it once did, limit the consumption of textiles.

WomenWeave’s supply chain is a mix of local, regional, national, and international. In neither case are their products materially derived solely from a circumscribed area, such as was once the norm in the realm of textiles, as exemplified by linen toile du jouy, from Jouy, France; silk shantung, from Shandong, China; cotton madras, from Madras, India; wool wadmal from Scandinavia, and countless others). If national borders are used to define what is local, Växbo Lin’s products are less Swedish than WomenWeave’s products are Indian. Växbo’s localness begins with the concept, is “interrupted” with imported resources, and becomes local again with the weaving. WomenWeave’s production begins, in the majority, with Indian-grown fiber, even if it must often be shuttled back and forth across long distances. Their organic cotton, for example, now comes from, and is dyed in Wardha, a small city 500 kilometers away. The fiber is first delivered for spinning to WomenWeave’s facility in Maheshwar; after spinning it is then sent back to be dyed, after which it is again sent to Maheshwar for weaving. The silk threads they use, come from India as well as China, but all are dyed a few blocks away.

WomenWeave feels their dispersed supply is problematic, and is working to become more vertically integrated.

The entire raw material chain, including cotton yarn, silk (from China) and jari (metallic thread) which has
found its way from southern and western India to Maheshwar may be considered as a weakness for the Maheshwar handloom industry due to potential disruptions from policy changes by the government, relationships with China, market shifts ... and opaque production modes, etc.

Hence, the project has been activated to sustain Earth-friendly, tightly verticalized production that makes sense for Central India's cotton growing area, India's unique craft heritage, and growing international fashion consumer preferences for localized production and transparent supply chains. In this regard, WomenWeave's Gudi Mudi project could be seen as a leader of the global slow fashion movement.

Now the project will focus on the backward integration of the value chain by establishing micro units for raw cotton processing in Maheshwar and surrounding villages where the raw cotton will be procured from the marginal farmers, preferably from the farmers of the tribal community. Young people from the same community will be trained to operate the units. This would help to achieve improved financial self-sufficiency and demonstrate additional examples of social-entrepreneurship at the core of the overall project, as well as demonstrate potential opportunities for self-reliance of the handloom industry of Maheshwar and beyond (WomenWeave 2014).

If Local Fashionalities were defined only in terms of local sourcing and production, neither Växbo Lin nor WomenWeave could be considered highly localized. Moreover, if where their products are used were factored into a concept Local Fashion, they would be have to be considered global. In WomenWeave's case, based on first hand experience in Maheshwar, I can estimate that only a few dozen people, if that many, living in the city wear WomenWeave fabrics. These include some of the administrative/managerial workers at WomenWeave, and other "friends of WomenWeave". During my 2012 visit to Maheshwar, I stayed at an apartment which WomenWeave rents for visiting advisors. People who stayed at the apartment, in the home of a well-off master weaver, were helped by a woman, I'll call her Lali, who cooked and cleaned and looked after the guests. For the care she gave me, I wanted,
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I have not had an opportunity to visit people's homes in Växbo, or in the surrounding area of Hälsingland, to see to what extent people there have embraced Växbo's home fashion. I did notice however their fabrics in use on tabletops at my hotel, 20 kilometers from the weavery. Considering however that most of Växbo's sales are made to day-visitors to Växbo, via the Internet, or via far-flung outlets, it is safe to say that Växbo's products are part of an urban and international fashion scene not a local one. If it is problematic to define these cases as Local Fashionalities in terms of resources used, it is easier to consider them in terms of cultural expression, aspiration, and symbol of actual heritage and the creation of new heritage.

I use the slogan New Heritage to represent the main aesthetic grammar of fashion (or other cultural expressions) that reflects the past but looks to build a new world. In terms of fashion, a New Heritage enterprise draws its look and processes from the past, and simultaneous, and self-consciously, designs the product and fashion experience as one allied with sustainability, and, therefore, the hope of creating a future heritage. Växbo in Hälsingland, and WomenWeave in Maheshwar can be considered New Heritage enterprises, as should, many other small-scale, vertically-oriented, apparel businesses such as Raleigh Denim in North Carolina (artisanal, locally sourced and made jeans), Ardalanish Mills in Scotland (low-tech, locally sourced, organic wool blankets). A good example of a New Heritage model is Swedish Hasbeens, a shoe fashion company that uses the styling and hand-processes of the past to create a brand and message. In their case it is done by updating the famous 1970s Swedish clogs you can be "sure your kids will inherit." In the Hasbeens case, the heritage of the past is also intended to become the heritage of the future, as two (of many possible) clips from their website proclaim.
You Are Looking At A Revolution. Revolutions bring change and we all feel the time has come. The time to throw away the plastic chrome tanned shoes with too much bling-bling and really bad quality. People across the world are demanding quality, natural materials that age great and that our grandkids can wear. Bring on the revolution!

Swedish Handicraft. Machines can never replace humans. Our shoes will always be made by hand. That makes them better than any machine-made shoes. Swedish Hasbeens’ shoes are made by artisans in an old traditional way in small factories that have made shoes for decades. This makes every shoe unique and a work of art.

By grounding fashion enterprises in an aesthetic past, as these companies, and Växbo, and WomenWeave do, they also necessarily ground themselves in a place. Växbo does this through referencing age-old patterns and memories associated with Hälsingland and "slow and peaceful times". WomenWeave achieves a sense of place by utilizing a mostly Indian supply chain and a Gandhian inspired philosophy.

Lali’s Red Saree
I don’t remember Lali’s red saree well because it was generic. Mostly I remember that Lali, the gentle women who cooked and cleaned (she has passed on since I began this writing) for WomenWeave’s guests and advisors, was quite thin, and her red saree, a sheer chiffon-like fabric, seemed a bit puffy on her. This was most likely because the saree was polyester, which is bouncier than silk, but I can’t say for sure since I did not get a chance to touch it. A dull ruby color, the saree, like all sarees, is both an ancient emblem and modern garment worn in this area of Southeast Asia. It is by nature extravagant—using at least six and often nine yards (5.5 or 8.25 meters) of fabric—but also thrifty, because, unlike fitted clothing (dresses, suits, etc.) no fabric is wasted in the construction of the kind of garment, and it is easily worn by people of all shapes and sizes. I don’t know how many sarees Lali had, or used, but I saw her in two. The other was a similar fabric of the same drape, but the color of a yellow-orange marigold. Both pieces of cloth had some “jari-esque”, that is metallic embellishment, on the long borders, and end panels. Most days she wore the red one. The fabric in Lali’s type of saree
is generic, industrially produced, and synthetic. Such fabric is often printed with bright floral and geometric patterns, and often embellished with “plastic glitter and gold.” Sarees such as these are common in Maheshwar, and throughout India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and such fabric can easily be purchased in retail saree-fabric shops in New York, London, or other areas of the world with significant populations of saree-wearers. These kinds of sarees, when found in markets or shops in Maheshwar, are always of unknown origins. You may find a label “Made in China” or “Made in India”, but even if, for example, the fiber was extruded in nearby (to Maheshwar) Pithampur, the petroleum from which it would have be derived would likely have been imported from the Middle East, as India imports about four times more oil than it produces itself (USEIA 2014). Lali’s red saree cannot be thought of as Local Fashion, even if, the saree retains a connotation of place more so than Total Global Ensemble.

Total Global Ensemble
Most people on the scene in Bollnäs, a city of 12,000 people not far from Växbo, wear standard Global Fashion, obviously purchased from large global chains. The two images below present an interesting lack of distinction in clothing choices. The kids are demonstrating for open hearts; the men below for closed borders. Despite ideological differences, they are all wearing Global Fashion. The man standing in the center of the far below image, wears an example of Total Global Ensemble: sneakers, jeans, hoodie, baseball caps. Total Global Ensemble should not be associated with any particular political belief. Hundreds of thousands of participants, wearing the same products, wore it in 2012’s Million Hoodie March against racism, although it can be argued that such a global, banal, uniform is not harmless.

The invisible violence of the market: diversity is the energy of profitability and uniformity rules. Mass production in a gigantic scale imposes its obligatory patterns of consumption everywhere.

More devastating than any single-party dictatorship is the tyranny of enforced uniformity. It imposes on the entire world a way of life that reproduces human beings as if they were photocopies of the consummate consumer (Galeano 1990, p 252 in Cato 2013).
Hanna’s Pink and White Striped Dress

If a costume were needed for a female character named “optimistic owner of a Swedish linen weavery”, it would be found in Hanna’s pink and white striped dress. Made, of course, with fabric made at the mill, and dyed nearby, it has a clear provenance. The narrow, vertical, alternating stripes, are yarn-dyed, making the optics of the stripe sharp, even when the fabric is creased and wrinkled, which, being linen, it usually is. The mid-length dress is utilitarian and charming: a cross between a smock and an apron, with deep armholes and low neckline for easy reaching and doing. Matching, pattern-aligned, front pockets hold tools, timetables, pencils, and perhaps a couple of whole-grain, homemade cookies. Worn with a white shirt, it would “work” equally well in as a costume in a 1950s TV scene, for example one staring the always glamorous Lucy McGillicuddy Ricardo.

The dress can be considered a Local Fashionality in several ways. It is flax. Although not now grown nearby, it is, per UNCTAD standards,
indigenous to the area; it could be part of bioregional fibersheds, which are understood by many to be a critical component of any march toward "biofairness." Unlike Global Fashion, the design, marketing and management aspects of the business that produced it are not cleaved from production. The textile is made with relatively slow processes using refurbished old machines, and nearby and "cyberby" partnerships. Their manufacturing system follows an economic logic that pays a decent local wage in the society in which it is produced and used. The pink and white striped dress, in ways imagined and real is a prototype of Local Fashionality.

Lali’s Really New Saree
Lali’s Really New Saree does not yet exist, but could be thought about as an example of Extremely Local Fashion, a theorized opposite of Global Fashion, originating not, as most fashion does, for the purposes of consumption, but instead based on provisioning individuals within the fair-share boundaries. Philosopher Peter Singer (2004) discusses Marx's view that a society's ethic "is a reflection of the economic structure to which its technology have give rise (p 12)." In feudal societies, social structure was based on the economic system of serfs, lords, and chivalry. Industrial capitalist society, as Singer points out, requires a mobile work force, and an ethic in which the "right to buy and sell is paramount" (p 12). A new socio-economic ethic, he argues, would serve the interest of all who live on the planet based on the principle of fair-share distribution of limited planetary resources. Following that framework, individuals and communities "might feel a need to justify [their] behavior to the whole world (p 12)." Singer frames this new ethic as an altruistic opportunity for linking people around the planet. Referencing a United Nations report issued shortly before September 11, 2001, he notes that "In the global village, someone else’s poverty very soon becomes one’s own problem: of lack of market’s for one’s products, illegal immigration, pollution, contagious disease, insecurity, fanaticism, terrorism (Singer 2004, p 7)."

Ideas vary about what the actual amount of each individual's fair-share of the Earth's carrying capacity is. The Global Footprint Network (2014) estimates humanity's current ecological footprint at 18 billion global hectares (each representing a hectare of the global average of land/water productivity), or 2.7 hectares per capita. This represents a
50 percent overshot of the biosphere's ability to renew itself. Since the wealthiest fifth of the world's people account for the lion's share of environmental damage even if the specific fair-share numbers can be debated, it is certain that those living in industrial and post-industrial societies are using many times more than their share. Blunt models, such as the Global Footprint Network's calculator "guesstimates" how many worlds we would need to support various lifestyle-scenarios. If everyone lived as I do (living usually alone in a 55 square meter home; periodically replacing electronics, eating some meat, recycling everything I can, riding a bicycle or taking the bus, and flying a couple of dozen hours per year) we would need five worlds to maintain environmental equilibrium. Per the same footprint calculator, if everyone used the Earth's ecosystem as much as the Maheshwar weavers (who live in small homes together with many others, buy few consumer goods, use little fuel for lighting, heating, or cooling homes, and rarely use transportation) we could make do on "half a world."

How do these fair-share facts relate to fashion? If they were taken seriously, it might mean the establishment of fashion allotments, or fashion-rations, collated to one's fair share of environmental impact. Lali's Really New Saree then, would be made of what resources, based on an absolute quantity of resources and biosphere services (if it could be accurately calculated) to which Lali is entitled by virtue of being human.

Cato (2013) and Hopkins (2012), argue for making the provisioning of communities' needs primarily dependent on the resources available within that community's bioregion, which is defined as

... any part of the Earth's surface whose rough boundaries are determined by natural characteristics rather than human dictate, distinguishable from other areas by particular attributes of flora, fauna, water, climate, soils, and landforms, and by the human settlements and cultures those attributes have given rise to (Sale 1991, p 55).

Using Polanyi's concept of "embedding" to describe the need for the economy to be enmeshed within a complex system of social rules and cultural norms, Cato (2013) presents Polyani's description of an earlier
human transition, one from a provisioning civilization to our current market-based social system:

Machine production in a commercial society involves, in effect, no less a transformation than that of the natural and human substance of society into commodities. The conclusion, though weird, is inevitable; nothing less will serve the purpose: the dislocation cause by such devices must disjoint man’s relationships and threaten his natural habitat with annihilation (Polanyi 1944, p 44).

Cato proposes to counter this threat/reality of annihilation, by relying on the scale-appropriate logic of Schumacher and Illich, the limits-appropriate logic of systems thinking, known environmental boundaries, and envisioned social-equity. She proposes that humanity again transition, this time to a bio-regionally oriented economic system that would re-establish local resource sovereignty and foster a cooperative-local, rather than a competitive-global, mindset. The cooperative-local is not dependent on the competitive advantage, but on self-reliance, comparable to Gandhi’s concept of Swadeshi. Believing as Gandhi did, that a locally based economy enhances community spirit, community relationships, and community well-being, Cato (2013) questions notions of justice and equity based on

... the system that enables those in the wealthy capital West to enjoy flowers grown on land and using water that would once have produced subsistence crops for Kenyan peasants. While the fair trade movement has questioned the prices we pay for such products it has not challenged our right to use the land of others to satisfy our desires (p 148).

Instead she suggests a "devolution of powers", with the base power of the system living within a fair-share energy budget. The next power goes to the community for planning. Provisioning, strategy, including land use, and the power to introduce tariffs and taxes is done within the bioregion and bioregional partnerships. To the nation, goes the power of defense and carbon rights, and to the global government, employment rights, and carbon emissions (p 198). Cato’s argument is long, detailed,
and convincing as an orientation point. In sum she represents the view that bioregional economies promise

a strongly embedded local identity to replace the global consumer identity, a stronger sense of connection between people, and between people and their local land, and a greater sense of sufficiency and security ... The bioregional economy would replace the rationale of the capitalist economy to engender a sense of scarcity within awareness, perhaps even a reference, for nature's abundance (Cato 2013, p 138).

In another passage, Cato hits upon the "taking responsibility" theme that is also part of the discourse about making fashion sustainable.

The bioregional economy attempts to make a fair sharing of the Earth's resources feasible and meaningful. The sheer scale of the global marketplace invalidates the achievement of equity, as well as stretching our sense of moral responsibility beyond breaking point. When considering the starving children of Burma or Bolivia we feel our lack of power to make a difference precisely because we cannot trace the complex relationship between our over-consumption and their deprivation. Our comprehension that this connection exists is intuitive and strong, but we cannot find statistical evidence or argue a rational line from one to the other.

In a bioregional economy the resources of our bioregion would be ours to share as a community. This does not mean the trade is impossible but such trade will be seriously curtailed as will the variety of goods we can routinely make use of. We will be cutting our quote according to our cloth rather than living at the expense of the rest of the world and enjoying a standard of living.

Second and perhaps importantly, the bioregional economy has the significant moral and democratic advantage of making a direct link between the area whose resources you, as a community, control and the area from which you elect political representatives. Political economy means that any response to issues surrounding energy or resource
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Second and perhaps importantly, the bioregional economy has the significant moral and democratic advantage of making a direct link between the area whose resources you, as a community, control and the area from which you elect political representatives. Political economy means that any response to issues surrounding energy or resource allocation only makes sense if you have the responsibility for the resources in the area where you also vote. This is the politico-economic impact of the bioregional model, and it will invalidate much of the hand-wrangling and protestations of powerlessness in the face of global forces that are the reach routine response to questions surrounding global inequity (p 150).

What might Lali’s Really New Saree be if it were conceived of as an example of Extreme Local Fashion delimited by fair-share, bioregional provisioning? We can look to the existing model of WomenWeave, the “fashion makers” in Lali’s community, for clues. Maheshwar and environs have good infrastructure for fiber, spinning, dyeing, weaving, and embellishing fabric. Lali’s Really New Saree could be conceptualized, sourced, and produced locally. Referring to Cato’s devolutions of power, the base power (that is the people of the production enterprise and community of potential users) is already living well-below their fair-share budget. The next power, community planning, is imbedded in the WomenWeave’s cooperative, inclusive, democratic model. It is debatable how much, if any, sway WomenWeave has in governmental policy and land use, and issues such as tariffs and taxes, but WomenWeave clearly has an important role is articulating a local socio-economic ethos.

In addition to the capabilities training that WomenWeave provides, their new initiative, The Handloom School, has been piloting design, business, and sustainability training workshops with young weavers. In the fall of 2013, together with collaborating fashion design students from Delhi, they exhibited prototypes of Maheshwar fashion. With all this in place, it wouldn’t be physically difficult at all for Lali’s Really New Saree to be made in her own backyard by her own community, as was done for millennia before consumption-based industrial capitalism became the norm.

Whether or not Lali could, or would (if she were still with us) be willing to pay many times more for it than a low-priced industrially produced synthetic saree of unknown origin or impact is another critical issue. Lali’s salary for cooking and cleaning was about 4,000 rupees a month, somewhat less than what most WomenWeave weavers earn, and about half of what is recommended by The Clean Clothes Campaign for an Asia Floor Wage (minimum living wage) for industrial-garment
workers in Asia (Clean Clothes Campaign 2014). Using a very rough estimate based on the inherently flawed idea of purchasing power parity, her earnings were equivalent to 130 US dollars (World Bank 2014). Such an income, if paired with another similar income, is enough to provide a basic home, food, cooking fuel, a little bit of electricity, and buy children’s school supplies (Ansari 2014). It is hard to imagine that such earnings would make a purchase of the six yards of naturally dyed, locally sourced organic cotton, handmade by her neighbors—at a cost of about a month’s salary—a priority.
Two True Local Fashion Anecdotes

In a Field of Grass

It was 2014 and springtime in Borås. It was not raining and the world was green and air was lily of the valley sweet. Behind my co-op apartment house, down a hill, through the mossy forest, are two well-kept, full-size fotbolsplan. One is grass, the other is artificial grass. Surprisingly to me, the later is quite pleasant because it stays dry, and is very flat, which makes it nice for stretching out and lying on one’s back. I watched the extensive drainage and support system for it being built last year.

I go down there to get away from computer-isolation, to look at the clouds, to check out the soccer games, though as often as not, I am there alone, or alone save an occasional passing bicycle rider, dog walker, or lone immigrant from Syria, Iran, or other tortured place. The soccer fields, along with an adjoining gravel field create a circular clearing in the forest, so it feels a something like being at the bottom of a giant pine, fir, and birch tree-lined bowl.

That day, the sky was a perfect blue. 21 degrees centigrade, sunny, happy weather. Around noon, I trotted out, thinking, oh, good, happy weather, maybe I’ll see a person. What would she or he be wearing? Likely hoodies, form-fitting spandex exercise wear, cargo pants and jeans, running or cross-trainers. A few Converse sneakers, which somehow have remained cool for more than half a century. I was wearing my cotton sweatpants and a few t-shirts.

When I got there, there was no one there. It was Gertrude Steinian, without the Gertrude. Boggling because the weather was so delightful. Where was everyone? The real-grass field was dry enough to use, and I settled on it because it smells good, and I imagine I breath in more oxygen than on the artificial turf. The grass was well clipped, as if someone finished mowing a minute ago. All this air, light, space. No one else in sight or sound. Am I in heaven or hell?

In a corner of the field, I did a cobra pose, and some leg and hip stretches. While on my back gazing into the distance past the hand on my outstretched arm, I saw what looked like a two-meter round, army green plastic batmobile. It was moving, with its noticeable buzz of an electric motor, across the other end of the field.
It was traveling menacingly faster, than I can, because of an injury, could walk. It rotated and moved seemingly randomly this way and that until it was a hand’s length away from a goal post, an edge of the field, or perhaps, on another day, a lost shoe or a crawling baby. Sensing the boundary object, it stopped and re-oriented itself. Oh, I said to myself, “It’s a robotic lawnmower like the robotic vacuum cleaners that bump into chairs and swivel around—the sort that are totally useless in a cramped and stuff-filled space, where all they do is bump around.” The field, one hundred meters square, was already totally clipped. Why was it still busy? Who’s idea was this? No one was there to check up on it.

I tried to go back to stretching but couldn’t because, a) the buzzing sound was irritating, and b) uncannily, like a daytime zombie, this BigMow kept redirecting itself toward me. The first three times, I got up and moved. On its fourth aim, I stood, waited, and literally put a foot, the one on my gimpy leg, down. I prayed to technology for salvation. Thankfully its electric eye caused it to stop some centimeters before my frightened toes. It backed up a meter, however, and aimed for my other foot. I went to the plastic field for safety.

After a stretch and meditation there, I decided to rejoin my computer up the hill in my apartment. On the way home I pass the grass field. The BigMow was parked at a little electric charging station in the corner of the field opposite where I tried to stay. The machine costs, I found out later, about 9,000 euros. I see it regularly. It looks harmless, but I know it isn’t. When it is not busy over-clipping the grass, it sits there at its charger. Nobody bothers it.

**On a Lawn of Grass**

In 2011, I went on a textile research journey to Ahmedabad, India. Ahmedabad, like Borås, Sweden, is a textile city. Both have long pre-industrial as well as industrial textile histories. The Borås textile scene has turned predominantly to high-tech or smart fabric research, design, education, and sales. Alongside the many present-day textile factories in Ahmedabad are a few communities of artisans who intricately carve, and then print with, woodblocks.

I had been to Ahmedabad before. It’s an interesting and intense city of traffic, scalding summers, historic havelis, temples, mosques, and masses of people wearing “western” and “Indian” clothing. Shirts and
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I had been to Ahmedabad before. It’s an interesting and intense city of traffic, scalding summers, historic havelis, temples, mosques, and masses of people wearing “western” and “Indian” clothing. Shirts and kurtas, dhotis and pants, dresses and sarees, a high percentage of them made with synthetic fibers. It’s noisy—mainly from the cars and diesel-powered rickshaws—but also because of the bicycles, trucks, and occasional camels. Ahmedabad is in a region that is regularly in drought; except in from monsoon season, the river through town is a dusty and dry avenue of stones, weeds, concrete, and litter.

During my previous trip, I was stayed at a posh and calm, air-conditioned colonial era heritage hotel: The House of Mangaldas Girhardas. It was built in 1924 by one of the city’s wealthiest textile barons. The hotel’s staff to guest ratio is eight to one. Someone to greet you, someone to call your taxi, someone to always accompany you to your impeccably clean room, sparely decorated with Gujarati antiques, complex hand-appliqued cotton fabrics, and fresh flowers perfuming the air.

For this visit though, no such posh hotel luck. Instead, it was a generic concrete and stucco building 45 minutes up the “river” into the parched suburbs. This charmless hotel had, however, a perk: a pool. Small and heavily chlorinated, it was surrounded by generic white plastic chairs and tables—the kind with a molded “woven” rattan pattern, the kind that make grunting noises when pulled across a concrete patio. After my chemical dip, I looked at the well-watered, well-manicured grass lawn adjacent to the pool’s concrete bib. The lawn seemed about a fifth as large as the soccer field near my place in Sweden. Off toward the center of the lawn, a man was sitting and doing something to the grass. I walked over to see what was going on.

He was clipping the grass, handful by handful, with a pair of rusty steel scissors. He sat comfortably. He looked to me to be about five-foot ten inches and in his early twenties. Very thin, he wore grey, generic, twill slacks that reminded me of Williamsburg or Brick Lane hipsters, a long-bodied, long-sleeved, white shirt, and leather or pleather-soled sandals. I imagined his were defective clothes from local factories, stuff, since they looked like cotton-poly blends, not good enough for the Gap, but good enough for Old Navy or some other brand lower on the comfort ladder. I said hello.

He spoke some English and seemed happy to talk. He stopped clipping, and we had a simple conversation. I told him I was visiting India for work, and that I liked the food and friendliness of people I met. I asked him about his family, and about his work. He said he lived in
Ahmedabad, and that his job was to take care of the hotel grounds. I asked him how long it takes to cut the lawn with the scissors. He said a long time, and I imagined a long time might literally mean forever. I tried to find out how he felt about his work, but I couldn't understand what he was saying, or perhaps I couldn't understand what he was thinking.
Conclusions

This work has aimed to contribute to the discourse, exploration, interpreting, and envisioning that is necessary for achieving a kind of fashion that could reasonably be called sustainable fashion, not merely fashion that is part of “the reduction of unsustainability” (Ehrenfeld 2008). The preceding pages have deconstructed some of the actual conditions, presumptions and problematic results of the global clothing fashion system, and, via the cases of Växbo Lin and WomenWeave, considered notions, ideals, and practices associated with Local Fashion and sustainability.

In the past decade it has become self-evident that alternatives to the consumption norms of the present Global Fashion system must be found. Even if specific useful adjustments in the management of the existing mass-manufacturing paradigm can reduce per-garment environmental damage and slightly improve social equity, there is no getting around the fact that the underlying proposition of Global Fashion is out of synch with planetary boundaries and therefore contemporary human needs. This is true in terms of the inhumanly large machinery, the masses of time-managed factory workers “bred” to become consumers, and the abstract, instantaneously-changing exchange values that produce the 80 billion or so (statista 2014) mostly unneeded (by those who buy them) garments manufactured annually. If we believe in and take seriously the scientific evidence supporting the precarious state of the biosphere, the boggling discrepancies in quality of life between our fellow humans, and recognize the alienation brought about by consumption-focused living, then we must be prepared to change, not merely mitigate, the system that produces these conditions. As Jackson (2011) states.

To rely on heroic beliefs about technological or behavioural change without exploring these questions is to default to a kind of magical thinking about the future. It would be fanciful to suppose that “deep” resource and emission cuts could be achieved without confronting the structure of market economies. In particular, it is essential to understand two interrelated features of economic life that together drive the dynamic of modern capitalist economies: the profit motive that stimulate the continual search for producers for new or better or
cheaper products, which is intimately linked to the symbolic role that material goods play in our lives. This "language of goods" (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979) allow us to communicate with each other—most obviously about social status, but also about identity, social affiliation, and even (through giving and receiving gifts for example) about our feelings for each other (p 160).

The growing cultural caché of Local Fashion is a response against the status quo and a leap of faith toward new ways of thinking about fashion: an aspiration for fashion to embody a spirit and a logic that is not enslaved to the social and environmental perils, and aesthetic and cultural bleakness of global gigantism. What its many new forms might one day be is delightful speculation. Local Fashionality certainly feels like a route to living diversely, with self-reliance, stability, and sensitivity, and a means through which we could come to understanding sustainability as flourishing (Ehrenfeld 2014). Jackson, rightly, cautions against default magical thinking. Yet deliberate magical thinking, the kind of thinking that is manifested by Växbo Lin and WomenWeave should be valued highly. Deliberate magical thinking, inseparable from intuition, and so often the result of emotional response, is the essence of creativity. It is possible that the "magical territory of possibilities and aspiration, where words such as love, empathy, care, hope, creativity, imagination and play" thrive (Fletcher and Tham 2014) is where truly Local—or Global—Sustainable Fashion will be born and subsequently thrive.

The Macro and the Micro

Firm conclusions from this research experience can be considered quite broadly, that is from a macro point of view, such as framed by Jackson, or optimistically by Fletcher and Tham, above, as well as, narrowly, from a micro perspective, as seen in the cases studies. The most important conclusion that I have made through this research (as well as through other research done during the span of this project) has little to do with geographical conceptions of place such as local and global, They concern instead the anthropological place and purpose of fashion in relationship to radical social transformation. If fashion is to be a human activity that could be sustainable, it would mean an end to key aspects fashion as we have come to understand it. There is no possible
resolution to the sustainable fashion paradox (Black 2008), or, less
gently put, the sustainable fashion quagmire, if mindsets such as fashion
is prematurely perishability, fashion is an exclusionary tool, and fashion
is consumption/addiction/entertainment are not transcended. At the
most general level, Local Fashion, as a potential vehicle to a new,
sustainable, fashion place, would be a failure in terms of global health
unless it also brings about a new set of social values that make frugality,
equity, and longevity, fashionable.

A second conclusion that has been made clear through the
research is that fashion cannot be compartmentalized, or separated
from the free-flowing and shifting realities and boundaries of
contemporary life on the planet. Although it goes without saying—is
indeed a major characteristic of our present human condition—that vast
differences exist between the way that people live, it is nonsensical to
pretend that, at the macro level and with regard to sustainability, the
global and the local, us and them, here and there, also still exist. Instant
communication has collapsed age-old understandings of physical
distance. Bauman (2000, 2009) describes our era as liquid modernity, or
society characterized by ubiquitous flows of once-upon-a-time
(relatively) stable, but now liquid, "everything". This includes floods of
contradictory information, hundreds of millions of global migrants,
uncontrollable social, labor, and economic reverberations; and above all,
nation-oblivious climate change. What does the biosphere care about
the words local and global? In this reality, it is easy to declare that
locality (except in strict geographic terms such as Cato’s proposed
bioregionalism or Cobb’s 100-Mile Suit) is a phantom of previous eras. In
the realm of creating sustainable food systems, McWilliams (2009) has
argued as much already, and that there is a need to “go beyond ‘local’
and ‘global’ and all the moral judgments these terms convey in order to
establish a complex systems that are intelligently integrated into
worldwide environmental conditions (p 49). Similarly, there is no sense
in considering Global Fashion as inherently “evil”, or Local Fashion as
inherently “good” (Fletcher 2008). Further, chauvinistically fetishizing
the local, or understanding it as equal to sustainable (see the recent
marketing of Zady.com), is a mistake.

If, at the macro level, the localization of fashion cannot by itself
be an indicator of sustainability, and if defining the parameters of
locality is problematic, at the micro level, in terms of the cases
investigated, the picture looks more hopeful. The two cases have show, in radically different socio-economic circumstances—Växbo Lin, in a pristine rural spot in one of the world’s most developed countries, and WomenWeave, in a quickly changing small city in a country dealing with vast development challenges—that aestheticizing the local can be economically viable, and bring about unusual and delightful offers different in form, function, and approach than the norm. These cases prove that it is possible to sustain the alternative and new models of thought fashion needs to be relevant (Carbonaro and Goldsmith 2013; Carbonaro and Votava 2009). With this framing in mind, locality, insofar as textiles and fashion are concerned, is not (only) a historically-rooted, anthropological phenomena, as in: "this is the kind of flax we grew here" or "this is the brocade technique we use here." Locality is instead a new organizational structure. Växbo Lin is not making Swedish-style linen just for the sake of making "authentically Swedish-ish" textiles. WomenWeave is not producing Gandhi-inspired cotton fabrics merely because they are in India. Both enterprises are using locality as a tool for creating new identities, systems, and meaning.

**Design Management and the Promise of Local Fashion**

Design Management today, like so many other concepts and practices, is in a period of flux, formation, and reformation, and now encompasses both the management of design and the design of management. More conventionally, it is an approach and process aimed to use design as a driver of innovation to deliver a competitive advantage. The inverse is a relatively new approach in which management is designed to be a driver for integrating project or mission-oriented design thinking into various business and management functions (Carbonaro 2014). Boland and Collopoy (2004) describe this later orientation as predicated on the belief that enterprise and projects offer an "opportunity for invention that includes a questioning of basic assumptions and a resolve to leave the world a better place than we found it." In this conception of Design Management, "managers are designers as well as decision makers." Such a stance departs from management-as-usual in which decisions are driven by making rational choices among alternatives using tools like: economic analysis, risk management, multiple criteria decision-making, simulation, and the time-value of
money. Therefore the focus is on analysis instead of creating alternatives to existing solutions. Decision attitude assumes that the alternatives are already in hand, and that there is need for the creation of new good ideas (Boland and Collopy 2004).

For both WomenWeave and Växbo Lin, because they are small-scale enterprises in which individuals perform simultaneously as entrepreneurs, designers, managers, marketers, trainers, accountants, salespeople, and makers, the two conceptions of Design Management are already integrated. Neither the Bruces at Växbo, nor Holkar and Sharma at WomenWeave, the leaders of their respective enterprises, have indicated, nor is there evidence, that there is a schism between the management of design and the design of management. In fact, the enterprises are notable for how well the design of their products, management approaches, and business identity and mission go hand in hand. Both cases have employed the design, the physical manifestation of their textile products—the fibers, yarns, colors, patterns, textures, performance, meaning—as a vehicle to define their enterprises and set them apart from other enterprises. Both enterprises’ management-agendas have from the start integrated design thinking aimed toward cultivating the prosperity of their respective communities.

Växbo Lin has done this by creating tangible products that embody intangible or romantic longings for home and historical place. They have done so via a progressive, for-profit-business model that does not use cheap offshore production and labor costs in order to sell more at lower prices. Instead, they have created an offer imbued with visual, tactile, and emotional appeal, and charged with a vision of neo-heritage resonance. The model pays fair local wages and takes on the other high financial costs of manufacturing in Scandinavia. The business subscribes to Swedish criteria for environmental protection, and if the logic of the model were followed further, could make nudge along the movement toward fiber and textile sovereignty. At the same time, Växbo, through clear communication and brand management, has convinced consumers that their relatively high prices are appropriate. As such, Växbo Lin represents a potentially replicable local model that is especially relevant in over-saturated markets in wealthy regions of the world.

Like Växbo, WomenWeave, has used the management of design and the design of management from the get-go. Compared to Växbo’s more planned approach, and narrower aesthetic focus, WomenWeave’s
Design Management is emergent, though it has nonetheless, via ad hoc design-thinking, created a long-tail, twenty-first century, self-sustaining social-enterprise. The model is functioning at the nexus of sustainable development, craft heritage, and slow fashion, and its design ethos is well rooted and globally relevant. Unusual in terms of fiber, yarn, pattern, and process; unconventional in terms of their socio-aesthetic purpose; and utilizing an innovative collaborative-network enterprise model, WomenWeave is as close to a sustainable fashion success story as there is.

Both Växbo Lin and WomenWeave would make interesting sites for additional research. Experience, data, knowledge, and insights are needed, for example, on product life-cycle assessment, consumer behavior, aesthetic shifts, and the relationship between these micro/local models and macro/global sustainability. In terms of being cites for future Design Management research, WomenWeave is for me the more interesting case, primarily because design and management practices are far less established than at Växbo. Like most innovative consumer goods businesses in high consumption cultures, Design Management is already a key gene in Växbo’s DNA.

On the other hand, scant research exists into the function, form, outcomes, or promise of design and management as it currently is, or might be used, in small-scale, bottom of the pyramid (BoP) artisan enterprises (Dasra/EDRF 2013). It is an opportune moment, since collaborations between such BoP artisans and top of the pyramid fashion elite are in progress and being spotlighted by the fashion press as a means toward social change (Nannar 2014; Reshmi 2014; Tewari 2013, 2014). Moreover, thanks to the Internet and other globalizing forces, "traditional" artisans' have improved access to, and are increasingly on offer in, the Global Fashion market (Goldsmith 2012).

To bridge this gap, my PhD research will focus on how WomenWeave, as an example of a locally oriented, slow-fashion, social-enterprise, conceives of and implements design, the management of design, and the design of management, and explore how that applies to and can be developed to support the quest for sustainability. WomenWeave is an ideal case for such research for a number of reasons. Firstly, it is “managed”, and its products are created, by a “task-flexible” network of individuals and teams and therefore it presents a radically different model than the status quo, top down, approach to design and
design management. Second, my “insider-outsider” relationship with WomenWeave will allow for a rich ethnographic, longitudinal, and inclusive study. Third, WomenWeave is a leader in terms of positioning itself not as a “traditional craft” organization, but as a slow fashion innovator.

Questions already in sight include: What are WomenWeave's current ways of using design and management? What is lacking, and how might principles and practices be improved? Could better processes bring more benefits to WomenWeave's stakeholders, and how, by extension could Design Management, and new conceptions of Design Management improve the lives of the millions of people who comprise India’s vast and impoverished handloom sector?

Action research involving WomenWeave's leadership, artisans, advisors and experts, retailers, and customers will be planned to respect the need to be adaptive and incremental, and that assumes that relevant design must be infinitely more than giving form to objects. It is assumed that management toward sustainability is a collaborative process, not the work of a single, heroic maestro. Innovative methods of collaborating across disciplinary, functional, and organizational boundaries are essential to the design of successful new products and processes. Good dialogue and persuasive argumentation, along with the physical handling of artifacts, contribute to the quality of design ideas (Boland and Collopy 2004 p 17).

Methods will include open-ended and triangulated interviews; English language-learning interactions, and workshops. Field notes, photo documentation, prototypes, and memorabilia will be collected, and the information and experience will be interpreted and represented via a discursive narrative analysis whose working title could be Artisans, Design, Management, and Sustainability: The Case of WomenWeave.
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Global Fashion, via the logic of high speed, large scale industrial production and anachronistic high-volume consumption habits, causes significant social and environmental damage. Local Fashion is understood as part of the Slow Fashion movement that aims to change the functions of fashion so that they support or lead the quest to flourish within known human and planetary boundaries.

This Licentiate thesis examines, through an exploratory narrative based on new and existing research, two Local Fashionalities. Växbo Lin is a small linen manufacturer/brand in Hälsingland, Sweden, producing new heritage home textiles. WomenWeave is a handloom social enterprise in Madhya Pradesh, India, making naya khadi. Their approaches and practices are presented and discussed vis-à-vis notions of globality, locality, design management, and the quest for sustainability.

The narrative aims to improve understandings of what Local Fashion is, and contribute to the effort to design new fashion systems grounded in logic relevant to contemporary human needs and aspirations.

Key Words: Slow Fashion, Textiles, Sustainability, Local Fashion, Small Enterprise, Social Enterprise, Design Management, Sustainable Development.