

Here Today Here Tomorrow: experimental socially engaged business

Katelyn Toth-Fejel

Here Today Here Tomorrow & Centre for Sustainable Fashion, London College of Fashion,
University of the Arts London, United Kingdom

katelyn@heretoday-heretomorrow.com

Julia Crew

Here Today Here Tomorrow & London College of Fashion, University of the Arts London, United
Kingdom

julia@heretoday-heretomorrow.com

Anna-Maria Hesse

Here Today Here Tomorrow & Coventry University London

Email: anna@heretoday-heretomorrow.com

Abstract

Purpose: For fashion to transform into a more sustainable industry, it needs experimental fashion enterprises that challenge and innovate its current systems. Yet dominant assumptions that a business's primary contribution must be financial growth and profit impede such experimentation from taking place. The Here Today Here Tomorrow design collective (HTHT), practices an alternative approach to fashion entrepreneurship. In this paper the HTHT 'shop studio' offers a case study for fashion enterprise where prosperity is defined by creative freedom, wellbeing, community connectedness and opportunities to participate meaningfully in common projects.

Design/methodology/approach: A research process of self-reflection and literature review forms the basis of this case study. Three key observations are offered of alternative fashion entrepreneurship and sustainable prosperity that stem from direct experience.

Findings: Firstly, exploring 'Multiple Narratives of Sustainability' as integral to HTHT's function and fluid evolving practice. Secondly, 'Collaborative and Cooperative Working', a cornerstone of sustainable practice, as HTHT's organisational structure; an explicitly non-hierarchical and empathic approach to business partnership. Lastly, the need for 'Freedom for Experimentation', for there to be space and time available for organisations of diverse scale and social contribution.

Originality/value: This paper will be relevant to educators, academics and fashion industry leaders looking to foster experimental or cooperative models for sustainable fashion. We highlight challenges and restrictions posed by current economic, social and industrial systems and offer suggestions to provide conditions for more alternative projects.

Keywords: sustainable prosperity, experimental spaces, collaboration, alternative fashion practices

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