

Re-Fashioning the way we wear. Is there "I" in sustainable dressing?

Tamzin Rollason

RMIT University Melbourne, Australia

Tamzin.rollason@rmit.edu.au

Abstract

This is an abstract for a 5000 word paper. It is framed by theories of social practices with an innovative focus on the part of identity in the dynamics of dressing practices. This focus positions this paper within the culture agenda for this conference, and aligns it most strongly with the theme of Fashion's social practices.

Fashion contributes significantly to overconsumption of global resources and as such the social practices of dressing sustainably warrants examination. While consumer and fashion scholarship understands identity as an important part of dressing there is little examination of identity in social practice theory. This paper examines how identity is instituted by, and adds to, the context of dressing sustainably. In particular, I explore how understandings specific to this practice about style and taste define rightness of the dressed body. I do this by undertaking a digitally-based ethnographic study detailing the performance of routine and daily dressing. I argue that dressing sustainably is a negotiation of embodied knowledge of dressedness, being dressed for purpose and comfort, and desire and pleasure in looking right. Furthermore, I find that other practices such as laundering, heating and cooling, and mobility mediate the performance of this practice and that identity is part of these inter-practice relations. This offers a new insight that identity is a part of social practices by defining relations between both material and conceptual entities to form and carry the practice. My analysis shows that the identity associated with dressing sustainably results in a performance that is a negotiation between other practices and the elements that make up the practice of dressing sustainably. Importantly, for the sustainable fashion industry, this is more than the materiality of sustainably produced garments. Facilitating a greater uptake of sustainable dressing practices requires better inclusion of identity in growing the development of sustainable dressing.

Keywords: dressing, consumption, sustainability, identity, social practice theory

ISBN: 978-989-54263-0-0