

HOW DOES THE DESIGN PROCESS EVOLVE WHEN THE FOCUS IS ON SUSTAINABLE PROJECTS AND COLLABORATIVE WORKING?

The need of a sustainable process not only a sustainable product - the designer as facilitator of collaborations

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Abstract

Purpose - The design process and its development demand creativity and strategic thinking of fashion designers who are trained to focus on aesthetics. These have an essential role and their decision-making power needs to support a sustainable future. The purpose of this study is to explore diverse sources of inspiration to investigate new approaches that add value to the design process. Collaborating across disciplines challenges designers to think beyond the traditional fashion design process and to have a positive impact. The phase of inspiration can be viewed as the starting point of the design process. Research is necessary to explore and expand this stage towards alternative thinking beyond trends and aesthetics. This paper is aiming to identify how research can be implemented in the design process by working across disciplines. This reframes design development to achieve a more sustainable design process, rather than merely a more sustainable product. Designers need to take responsibility to embrace sustainability throughout their design journey.

Design methodology - The used methodology is an interpretivist research investigation in social constructions to reflect on diverse practices and perspectives. This practice-based research includes mixed-methods connecting ethnography with interdisciplinary and intergenerational collaborations. The project contains observations and interviews and adopts several methods for each creative partnership. The first collaboration a focus group based on communal crafting has been considered. The second project analyses the service system of a watchmaker, and the last collaboration includes a discussion regarding fashion as a communication tool. The findings present a variety of design elements that have evolved from the aforementioned disciplines and have been transferred to the development phase. The design process was reframed through diverse starting points including interactions with people and materials. The practice-based outcome visualises artefacts by referring to the diversity of strategies that inspired the design development and the work process of the designer.

Findings - The research highlights transitions to a thoughtful design process based on collaborative working rather than commencing with trends and aesthetics as a source of inspiration. During the research phase we need to implement factors that go beyond the creation phase. We have next to the ecological responsibility of the product, a social responsibility during the process. Social impact through our actions should be part of the process, not only achieved with the designed outcomes. The thought of service design or actions within the use phase and end of life phase of the product influence the creation of the product. The three developed design systems focused on possible future design limitations such as material shortage or no decision-making power.

Research limitations/implications - The research describes collaborations influencing the design processes of small scale projects and individual designers. Further non-fashion activities could be implemented in design teams to redesign their commercial design process. This would have an impact on the business models and would raise questions how social impact could be measured or new disciplines and services could be added to the design process.

Originality/value - Sustainable design practices focus on material sourcing and interpret the impact of the supply chain. Within this study alternative ways of the design process will be explored that can reframe current structures and can lead to new small scale business models with a social focus. This study explores practices beyond current industry norms but would practice for independent designers and small and medium scale businesses.

Keywords - collaboration, design process, design systems, interdisciplinary, recycling, designer of the 21st century, inspiration, small scale

Paper Type - Research paper

Statement of Originality

I, Anna Schuster, verify that this is an original and individual piece of work and no part of this thesis has been written by someone else.

Furthermore, that:

- I have acknowledged all sources and citations.
- No section of this work has been plagiarised.
- This work has not been submitted for any assessment.

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