

RE — (DIS)

COVERING
FASHION
DESIGNERS

Interweaving Dressmaking and Placemaking

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RE(DIS)COVERING FASHION DESIGNERS
INTERWEAVING DRESSMAKING AND PLACEMAKING

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Acknowledgements

This dissertation is written as an academic publication with the full intention of respecting previous studies from relevant research domains. However, its contents are the result of my personal journey as a “recovering fashion designer.”

I first heard an architect using the term “recovering” to describe his recent decision to focus on a social orientation in practice and take the role of facilitator, rather than becoming a renowned architect. As a former fashion student from South Korea who used to dream of making a name for myself for my family’s sake, the description truly rang a bell. This inspired my journey to begin to rediscover what I can potentially do for society.

Similar to the weaving metaphor that I used in this dissertation, I wove numerous threads of the warp and the weft together to help me recover myself by reflecting on the profession of fashion design. This dissertation as a woven fabric is made of experiences from constant encounters in my academic and professional backgrounds. With this opportunity, I would love to trace back (or rediscover) some noticeable threads of encounters that appear in this dissertation as evident patterns.

The first and freshest pattern is made of encounters at Aalto University in Finland, starting from my two advisors, Kirsi Niinimäki and Olga Gurova, to colleagues at the Fashion/Textile Futures research group and the Department of Design. This environment, where studios and lecture rooms coexist side by side, hugely influenced my studies. Participants in my research, especially fashion designers who fully embody the coexistence, need to be noted. Without their insights and ongoing practice, my research could have been simply an ambitious idea.

Before joining this one of newer schools, I was at the New School. The second pattern consisting of two motifs of design and fashion was created there. With the excuse of being “undefined” in the early stage of the Transdisciplinary Design program, my peers and I truly enjoyed collaborating on how to “act in the face of uncertainty” under the influence of Jamer Hunt and other passionate faculty members who encouraged us to challenge the boundaries of design. Additionally, the activities of Fashion Praxis Lab and its members, including Hazel Clark, Otto von Busch, Pascale Gatzen, Christina Moon and Timo Rissanen, demonstrated how to connect alternative ways of doing fashion through critical thinking. This inspired me to invite a dialogue between design and fashion, as well as the theory and practice of fashion.

The oldest pattern on my woven fabric was made of encounters in my home country. Studying at Sungkyunkwan University and working at the Beautiful Store (a nonprofit organization) helped me realize why I should care about others and embrace differences even in one of the most ethnographically homogenous societies.

Alongside these more obvious patterns, less visible threads also coexist. To name a few, the research grant from the City of Helsinki and occasional food drops from the Hursti Foundation cannot be overlooked, as their support was like a shower during a drought season. Speaking of timing, I am also thankful to Trine Brun Petersen, Ulla Ræbild and Anne Louise Bang for welcoming me with thoughtful comments in Kolding. At the other end of the world, I appreciate Regina Alvares and Angelica Oliveira Adverse for hosting me in Belo Horizonte, which is a town that Aseem Inam had introduced me to as a theory and which then became an inseparable part of me. Additionally, I am grateful to Carlos Noronha and Valquiria Valle, who embraced me with the warmest hearts.

Lastly, throughout this journey, irreplaceable threads in the woven fabric have held the structure together, enabling me to add colorful threads. These threads are my family, especially my parents

and sister. It was possible for me to “float” for a decade, as I know that I have a place that I can always call “home.” More recently, as I have made a home for myself in a foreign place, the meaning of Julia Valle Noronha is hard to define, as she has played so many roles throughout my doctoral studies.

Beside these encounters, so many threads have remained undiscovered, such as Marlyn DeLong and Pammi Sinha who shared constructive thoughts on how to improve the quality of this dissertation, and Peter McNeil, Jack Whalen, Alastair Fuad-Luke, Lauren Downing Peters, Kim Jenkins and Andrea Aranow, who provided emotional support to keep me sane. I will have to keep weaving the threads while stepping ahead. Thank you for all the bread and roses throughout my journey. I hope that, between rediscovery and recovery, there are no more places for “dis”-ing in the world of fashion.

Abstract

The starting point for this doctoral dissertation was the identification of the unclear social contribution of the fashion design profession in the contemporary fashion system. Concurrently, possibilities to expand the role of fashion designers were identified. This research was inspired by design thinking discourses in design research that have explored the practice of designers and encouraged them to question the boundaries of design as a profession. While reflecting critically on what it means to be a fashion designer, the main research question that arose aimed to conceptualize the role of fashion designers.

In the research domain of design and fashion, a number of issues were noticed as a gap for studying fashion designers. In design research, the absent voice of fashion designers is acknowledged while exploring the generic characterization of design practice. The domain-specific knowledge and skills required to engage in fashion design were underexplored due to certain prejudices, including the view that fashion is feminized and frivolous, and lower in the hierarchy of design professions. In studies of fashion, the idea of fashion as an institutionalized system is widely accepted and explored. However, the aspect of designing, especially the dressmaking tradition, has been relatively overlooked compared to the meaning-making aspect due to “academicizing” and the image-making tendency.

To overcome this gap between the domains, this dissertation aims to invite a dialogue embracing the symbolic and material worlds of fashion through two qualitative studies in Helsinki, the capital of Finland. The metaphor of weaving – which has a number of advantages in this context – was adopted to not just interlace the narratives of the

substudies but also to be used as a piece of fabric patchworking the gap between design and fashion. The two substudies were constructed because the rediscovery of the dressmaking practice of fashion designers is required prior to expanding their role.

Accordingly, the first substudy was conducted to theorize fashion design thinking by identifying distinctive features of the profession. Based on a data-driven study of Helsinki-based fashion designers, the entangled relationship between their individual practice and shared culture was discovered. For the second substudy, Pre Helsinki, a designer-driven platform aiming at increasing global recognition of Finnish fashion talents, was investigated as a single case study to explore the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers. Themes of placemaking that emerged from previous studies were examined while identifying practical descriptions of the case and active involvements of fashion designers in the platform.

For interweaving these substudies, the findings were analyzed theoretically to examine how fashion design thinking is employed in the placemaking of Helsinki and Finland. These studies woven together present an original contribution of fashion designers in society and their expanded roles as placemakers. Thus, it further recovers the meaning of fashion design as a profession balancing between the symbolic and material worlds. Altogether, this dissertation invites fashion designers to rethink their roles and to act as engaged members of society.

Keywords: fashion designer, fashion design profession, design practice, dressmaking, placemaking, design thinking, design culture

01. INTRODUCTION

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On November 5th, 2012, the French fashion house Balenciaga announced that its creative director Nicholas Ghesquière had stepped down after fifteen years. More surprisingly, the house offered the position to a young Chinese-American, Alexander Wang. For many fashion industry experts, this replacement was unexpected, since Ghesquière's achievements—returning Balenciaga to its old fame and reconstructing its design identity—were remarkable. Soon after the announcement from Balenciaga, British fashion critic Suzy Menkes (2012) expressed sympathy towards fashion designers in the *New York Times*: “designers today are no longer the heart and soul of their brands. They have become chattels, to be hired and fired [...] the overall message for this new millennium is: The creator is for now, the brand is forever.” She argued that fashion designers have become commodities of luxury fashion brands in the market-driven industry, similar to professional sports where players are recruited and replaced based on their performance in the league regardless of their country of origin (Menkes 2012).

This episode from Balenciaga illustrated some challenges that fashion designers face as a profession in the contemporary fashion system of production and consumption. One obvious challenge is that the general performance or quality of admired fashion designers, even in the most prestigious fashion houses, is judged by sales and marketability, rather than in terms of their work in contributing to companies and ultimately society. In other words, the issue is the commodification of fashion designers that places them in a “puzzling paradox” between the reproduction of endless pursuit for profit under global capitalism and the adjustment of social values through their everyday practice of work (Moon 2011).

The social contribution of fashion designers used to be clearer. When I started studying fashion design for my bachelor's degree in South Korea, stories about famous fashion designers and their dazzling works that shook the world were true inspirations. Reflecting on the lessons, two relevant examples of renowned fashion designers can illustrate the relationship between their work and social contribution. The first example is French fashion designer Gabrielle "Coco" Chanel (Vinken 2005). She not only designed material garments, but also had an impact on society by tweaking traditional perceptions of gender. What she introduced was a jersey jacket for women. Before her design, jersey was not a fabric commonly worn by women. With this simple design choice, the jersey jacket has come to represent modern women and feminism (Vinken 2005). In other words, Chanel created a whole new system of fashion. Her proposed new image of women spread internationally and has thus become an enduring icon. The second example is Italian fashion designer Giorgio Armani (Verganti 2009). Similar to Chanel, Armani reinvented the symbolic image of the male through his unpadded suit. Traditionally, a men's tailored jacket was constructed with thick shoulder pads to portray a strong male image. With a simple functional change of eliminating the pads, Armani radically updated the meaning attached to the male image, which was socially constructed (Verganti 2009). These two historical examples demonstrate how fashion designers not just created iconic designs, including an item and a look (an ensemble of items), but also disrupted the conventional ideology and even proposed new ways of thinking by utilizing fashion as a medium for change.

One of the reasons that caused confusion and ambiguity regarding fashion designers' social contribution is the mystification of what fashion designers actually do (Lee and Jirousek 2015; Ræbild 2015). Apart from the few chief designers of major fashion houses, the "language" that most fashion designers speak is inscribed in their creations or the image they produce, rather than directly communicated with

the public¹. Not knowing why and how they create certain outcomes may offer them artistic freedom (McRobbie 1998). However, in order to engage in or initiate meaningful conversations in society, they often rely on interpretations by other experts, such as fashion journalists and critics, who can "translate" and distribute the meaning (Loschek 2009). American sociologist Diana Crane (1993, 162) noted that: "The clothes created by some designers, particularly the younger ones, are often so highly coded that they are not easily understood by the general public." Such mediation and mystification may have enabled fashion designers to gain the status of "artist" or "author" but also blurred their contribution to society (McRobbie 1998).

Additionally, these examples from Balenciaga, Chanel and Armani are not a representative condition for the entire profession of fashion design. In fact, the examples only represent a very exclusive group of fashion designers. The problem is that "famed" individuals from the selective group are recognized more broadly as representing the fashion design profession. The strong presence of major fashion fairs (also known as "fashion weeks") in global fashion capitals, such as Paris, London, New York, and Milan, has influenced the status of exclusive fashion designers participating in these events as representatives of the profession (Entwistle and Rocamora 2006; Skov 2006; Skov et al. 2009). Also, the glamorous images and "hype" produced by fashion media have reinforced this misrepresentation (McRobbie 1998; Kawamura 2005; Loschek 2009). However, beyond this exclusive group, many other fashion designers coexist in the system, unnoticed and without a voice, but still actively contributing both as individuals and as a collective on various scales from company to society (McRobbie 1998; Malem, Miller, and König 2009; Volonté 2012).

1. Although direct interaction between designers and the public has increased dramatically with the broad use of social media, including Instagram, this interaction is rather limited in terms of enabling the public to fully understand what the image or text posted by designers actually means (McRobbie 2016).

The commodification of fashion designers reinforces the confusion and misrepresentation, as it favors the accumulation of profit and capital rather than their professional knowledge and skills (Moon 2011; Kuryshchuk 2017). Due to these issues, although the importance of fashion in society is generally acknowledged, the contribution of fashion designers is often misinterpreted or misread. Hence, the main intention of this dissertation is to recognize what “anonymous” fashion designers² actually do and to demonstrate their contributions to society. This can invite critical rethinking on their roles and boundaries to reorient them to become engaged participants in society instead of indulging in the current system that constrains their possibilities (von Busch 2009).

This doctoral dissertation was inspired by the development trajectory in the research domain of design that has actively explored various aspects of the design profession, such as knowledge and practice, to both understand what they are capable of and push their boundaries (e.g. Buchanan 1992; Manzini 2009). These studies on design have empowered designers to be able to narrate what they can do and their further contributions to society. Emphasizing the “design” aspect of fashion designers, possible interpretations can be drawn from the accumulative and ongoing discussions in design and applied to fashion. However, generalization emerges as a concern when placing fashion design and generic design under one domain. The term “fashion” requires both a separate conceptualization of the development of the fashion design profession and a critical interpretation to bring the academic discussions from design to fashion (e.g. Hallnäs 2009; Visser 2009; Kimbell 2011; Finn 2014; Ræbild 2015).

In order to also give fashion designers a voice to narrate their own contributions and reflect on their social role as a profession, relevant topics need to be reviewed. Accordingly, to lay the background of this dissertation, Chapter 2 introduces the broader research context in three parts. Firstly, the condition of the contemporary fashion system in which fashion designers reside is reviewed. Secondly, how the design profession has been developed to expand its boundaries and why fashion designers have been excluded from this development will be discussed. Thirdly, further investigation follows, particularly with regard to the practice of fashion designers to rediscover the dressmaking tradition and to propose their possible expansion to different “places.” On top of this background, Chapter 3 discusses the overall construction of this dissertation, including the location of Helsinki, research strategies, and the weaving metaphor. Accompanied by the literature that provides more specific contexts, Chapter 4 and 5 present the results of studies that investigated what fashion designers do and how they can contribute to society. Chapter 6 then strengthens the results by interweaving and clarifying the studies. Finally, Chapter 7 presents the contributions of this dissertation and their implications.

2. This notion of anonymous fashion designers was used as an opposition to the exclusive group of star designers.

02

*CALL FOR
RETHINKING
THE ROLE OF
FASHION
DESIGNERS*

Prior to examining the condition that fashion designers are part of, the notion of fashion that they aim at creating needs to be conceptualized. In support of the conceptualization, the previously introduced examples of Chanel and Armani illustrate the wide spectrum of fashion. For instance, the range encompasses the technical aspect that deals with specific techniques (e.g. Rissanen 2013; Lindqvist 2015); the historic aspect that interacts with sociocultural changes (e.g. Lipovetsky 1994; Lehmann 2000); the material aspect that dresses the human body (e.g. Hollander 1993; Entwistle 2015); the economic aspect that commercializes clothes through production and consumption (e.g. McRobbie 1998; Entwistle 2009; Crewe 2017); the symbolic aspect that conveys certain meanings (e.g. Hebdige 1979; Barthes 1985); and the identity aspect that both constrains and liberates the self (e.g. Wilson 1985; Davis 1992; Crane 2000). This flexible yet blurred boundary for comprehending the notion of fashion requires further investigation to take a position for this dissertation.

Traditionally, in the Western society, the idea of fashion was understood to signal which class the wearer belongs to (Simmel 1957). With this class distinction perspective, the “trickle-down” tendency of fashion to spread from the elite to the general public was more commonly accepted (Veblen 1899). However, as the development of the clothing manufacturing industry led to the modernization of fashion, class is no longer distinguishable exclusively through what people wear (Blumer 1969; Lipovetsky 1994; Kawamura 2005). In other words, fashion became a product of social construction. In his overview of the various aspects and discourses on fashion, British fashion theorist Malcolm Barnard (2007, 3) suggested conceptualizing fashion as simply “what people wear.” He argued that understanding fashion in a particular time and place becomes a useful lens to view a cultural phenomenon (Barnard 2007).

Additionally, under the postmodern system of fashion in the Western world, German scholar Barbara Vinken (2005) noted the

changed status of fashion designers: “the fashion designer loses his [/her] absolute power. His [/her] inspirations no longer come to him [/her] from an obscure genius. Fashion becomes a co-production between the créateur and those who wear the clothes” (Vinken 2005, 35). This perspective resonates with the approach of Austrian fashion theorist Ingrid Loschek (2009) who argued that fashion designers make clothes, rather than fashion. Turning clothes into fashion requires a meaningful engagement with other actors in society, such as observers and wearers (Loschek 2009). These approaches are especially relevant for this dissertation as they speak from the perspective of fashion designers. They are further supported by Yuniya Kawamura’s sociological view (2005). She defined fashion as an institutionalized system:

in which individuals related to fashion [...] engage in activities collectively, share the same belief in fashion and participate together in producing and perpetuating not only the ideology of fashion but also fashion culture which is sustained by the continuous production of fashion. (Kawamura 2005, 39)

In this respect, fashion is not simply multiple pieces of fabric stitched together to form a wearable item; rather, it is a constant dialogue among diverse actors in society through their production and consumption of new artifacts (Teunissen 2013). In other words, the idea of fashion combines both the material and symbolic worlds while creating something new. This definition avoids the binary of fashion versus clothes, and instead suggests viewing them as a fluid concept. Moreover, it resonates with the earlier mentioned examples of Chanel and Armani that illustrate the immaterial and material dimensions of fashion. Thus, despite pluralistic definitions of fashion,

this perspective properly resonates with the conversation that this research aims to join.

Differently from these examples of “star” designers who succeeded in influencing society, the contribution of less recognized fashion designers – who actually comprise the majority of the fashion design profession – has been unclear. One point needs to be noted: This issue emerged not because of their lack of talent, but because of the condition of the contemporary fashion system. The episode of Balenciaga³ and the two historic examples only partially illustrate the condition, as they apply to very few fashion designers who have managed to be part of an exclusive group. However, this does not represent the entire profession of fashion design. In fact, the creation of fashion is achieved as a collective effort instead of by one single individual (Aspers 2006; Aspers and Skov 2006). This condition of the contemporary fashion system where different types of fashion designers coexist with other actors needs to be further reviewed.

2.1. The Condition of the Contemporary Fashion System

Despite the recently addressed questions regarding the conventional mode of the global fashion system, especially the biannual seasonality of the structure for showcasing fashion collections (e.g. Hoang 2016; Sherman 2016; Abraham 2017; Nonoo 2017; Dool 2018), it is important to review the general condition of the fashion system where the main actors of this dissertation, fashion designers, are broadly and active-

3. In 2015, Alexander Wang also exited Balenciaga. Georgian designer Demna Gvasalia has served in this position since then, eventually turning the house into “the hottest fashion brand” in the third quarter of 2017 and the first quarter of 2018, according to the Lyst Index, a search platform for fashion that publishes quarterly reports in conjunction with The Business of Fashion (BOF Team 2017, 2018).

ly involved with other actors. However, instead of covering the whole of the fashion business, this dissertation mainly adopts the sociological description of the global fashion business, corresponding to the intention of this research to explore the social role of fashion designers. For this reason, several sociological studies on fashion will be reviewed to provide a brief description of the complex system from the perspective of fashion designers.

2.1.1. Contextualizing Fashion Design

British cultural theorist Angela McRobbie (1998) investigated the development of fashion design as a profession in the context of the United Kingdom. Although her explanation for manufacturing and selling fashion design was grounded in the British context two decades ago, it identified relevant issues that most fashion designers still encounter, such as getting actual work experiences with cutters, sewers and trimmers, employing them either on a freelance basis or full-time, identifying a market to sell, tracking sales and payments as well as competing with others (McRobbie 1998, 117–138). Danish sociologist Lise Skov (2002) in turn explored the condition of Hong Kong-based fashion designers, who are culturally situated between the East and the West as cultural intermediaries. Further expanding these two studies, Italian sociologist Paolo Volonté (2012) more recently investigated Milan-based fashion designers rooted in a specific cultural and social context. These three studies explored the profession of fashion designer in three different geographical contexts, acknowledging the presence of encounters among diverse actors within the fashion system and the complex relationship between the global and the local.

These various issues and “encounters” between actors were also explained by Aspers and Skov (2006) from the perspective of the global fashion business. They highlighted that “the output of this industry is

a consequence of the activities of many actors” (Aspers and Skov 2006, 804). In a simplified manner, Swedish sociologist Patrik Aspers (2006, 749–752) further explained the collective production of clothes from fashion designers’ perspective. In brief, they usually start the design process by participating in fashion and fabric fairs to gather information. Based on the collected resources, they create a “mood board” or “trend board,” a tool for guiding the design team throughout the development of a new collection. From the very first idea to manufacturing and display in the stores, the entire process of production and consumption may take over a year with the diverse involvement of a “multitude of actors” (Aspers 2006, 750).

However, the level of fashion designers’ involvement in production is typified depends on the mode of production. Generally speaking, three modes can be identified: high fashion, ready-to-wear, and mass fashion (see Kawamura 2005; Segre Reinach 2005; Aakko 2016). High fashion, or *haute couture*, stands for the concept of luxury and social class. Besides the head designer’s limitless pursuit of creativity, this mode involves a careful construction process performed with sophisticated craftsmanship and using handcrafted and luxurious materials. Naturally, only a limited number of such items are produced, as they are made-to-measure for individual clients who can afford their high price. Meanwhile, ready-to-wear includes a variety of production scales; thus, it is more accessible than high fashion in terms of price. In this mode, the use of fine quality materials and production is still important, but the designer has to consider profitability in terms of the materials and price, as the new line of items is produced in advance to consumption. Due to this factor, brands and companies employ different strategies regarding various aspects, including price, quality and quantity of items, materials, and retailers, and the role of fashion designers also varies depending on the strategy. However, they still play a significant role

in this mode, constructing new offerings to the public periodically. Lastly, mass fashion refers to industrially produced fashionable items that are attainable to most people. The aim in this mode of production is to achieve commercial success through “economies of scale,” lowering the price per unit produced through the scale of operation, rather than introducing a new fashion. Accordingly, the contribution and visibility of designers in this type of production is lower than in the other modes, as the priority is to deliver timely items when they are fashionable and profitable.

A fashion brand or company is usually associated with a specific mode of production, but the coexistence of multiple modes under one umbrella is also possible depending on the strategic development of the company/brand. Star fashion designers, such as the previously mentioned Ghesquière, Wang, Chanel and Armani, are usually positioned between high fashion and ready-to-wear, and are also collaborating more frequently with mass fashion companies such as H&M and Uniqlo.⁴ Similar to these modes, Volonté (2012) identified typically recognizable positions for relatively successful fashion designers. He also added positions involving novice or marginal designers who do not run a company but still produce their own line of items for sale in an independent store. Although these categorizations are useful for examining the professional profiles of fashion designers, the primary focus of this dissertation is to gain a fuller understanding of the actual practice of the fashion design profession rather than to cover diverse production modes, sizes and stages of business, and other involved actors despite their entangled relationship (c.f. Malem, Miller, and König 2009). Thus, identifying fashion designers’ types according to their level of emphasis on creative activity is more relevant for remaining focused.

4. The Swedish company H&M has collaborated with Karl Lagerfeld, Comme des Garçons, Kenzo, and Martin Margiela, among others. The Japanese company Uniqlo has collaborated with Jil Sander, Jun Takahashi of Undercover, and J. W. Anderson, among others.

For this matter, McRobbie's study (1998) offered a useful category: fashion designers drawing from the educational emphasis in their training at fashion schools in the United Kingdom. She categorized fashion designers as operating in line with professional, managerial and conceptual fashion models (McRobbie 1998, 43–52). First, professional fashion corresponds to the idea that individuals are capable of working with other actors in the global fashion business. Thus, the emphasis is on the “knowledge of the full range of skills employed in the fashion process” (McRobbie 1998, 45). This type of fashion designer does not necessarily pursue originality or imagination, but instead seeks to create work that fits the global aesthetic standard, especially European fashion. Second, managerial fashion refers to an emphasis on the element of business and marketing rather than pursuing a career as a successful fashion designer. In the broad spectrum of fashion-related sectors, including fashion management, fashion media, and fashion retail, among others, incubating individuals who can merge “creativity with commerce” is the intention of this track. However, having knowledge or experience of the production side is not mandatory. Lastly, conceptual fashion refers to the model that prioritizes creativity and “freedom to experiment” over business. This model repudiates commerciality or the association with industry, similarly to the fine arts. Thus, the acquisition of “artist” status is more relevant for individuals pursuing this type of fashion. The recognition of strong individuality and distinctive aestheticization is also highly celebrated. Despite these distinctive descriptions of each category, McRobbie (1998) noted that in most cases fashion designers tend to operate in line with multiple models, rather than adhering exclusively to a particular model.

Understanding these various approaches is helpful to position fashion designers within the contemporary fashion system. These discussions provide the perspective for viewing fashion designers in this dissertation.

2.1.2. Conceptualizing Fashion Designers

Regardless of the mode of production and the type of garments that they are designing (e.g. women's wear, men's wear, sports wear, and knitwear), fashion designers are conceptualized in this dissertation as a professional group of individuals who are actively involved in various activities in the contemporary system for producing and consuming fashionable items, including clothes, accessories, hats and shoes. Instead of focusing on the exclusive group of individuals who occupy the chief designer position of recognizable fashion houses, this approach rather encompasses the majority of fashion designers involved in the fashion system. They may be unnoticed and without a voice, but they take part in the system broadly. With this fluid and flexible definition of fashion designers, this dissertation can focus on the social role that the fashion design profession plays with their experience, domain-specific knowledge and skills (c.f. Aspers 2006).

In support of this inclusive definition, the study of French sociologist Frédéric Godart (2012) is introduced. Applying Abbott's perspective (1988) from the sociology of professions, Godart (2012, 91–92) explained that fashion design as a profession connotes: (1) a form of exclusivity to be a professional fashion designer through institutionalized legitimations, such as education and internship, (2) the existence of knowledge applied to particular contexts and (3) the defined activity area in which they apply their knowledge and skills while the boundary of the area is constantly modified. Considering this view, it can be

argued that it is natural for the professional status and role of fashion designers to change. Instead of struggling to protect its traditional domain from constant challenges, the fashion design profession needs to question its boundaries in order to expand its area of activity in society. Reflecting on these discussions, the main research question of this dissertation was formulated as follows:

- How can the role of fashion designers be conceptualized to understand their contribution to society as a profession?

Understanding their role allows fashion designers to work outside the boundaries of their own activity area more comfortably and rethink their contributions. This is not just a recognition of their cumulative contribution from the past but also an invitation to engage more actively in building the future through their unique knowledge and skills as members of society. Rather than being interpreted by others, such as fashion journalists and marketing experts, this role needs to be constructed from within the profession of fashion design and demonstrated to the outside world of fashion. In order to expand their role, fashion designers need a language and vocabulary to explain what their capabilities are. In fact, this problematization also appeared in studies on design (e.g. Buchanan 1992; Manzini 2009). However, in order to connect design with fashion, it is important to understand the development of the design profession and how designers, especially industrial designers, have expanded their role and status over time.

2.2. Recovering the Meaning of Fashion Designer Profession

In this journey to expand the social role of fashion designers, the main actors are a group of individuals who are involved in designing fashion. Generally speaking, while indicating the profession of fashion designer, the term fashion is often used to refer to clothing or garments (Kawamura 2011; Finn 2014; Aakko 2016). However, this description reflects only a limited aspect of the peculiar profession that deals with the creation of fashion. In order to construct the foundation of this research, it is imperative to have a broader understanding of the development of the design profession beyond this narrow description. The progression of the design profession will be discussed below in terms of how it has influenced sparking an academic discussion on design; why fashion design has not been included in the discussion; and what should be focused on in order to recover the meaning of fashion design as a profession.

2.2.1. The Rise of the Design Profession

Before exploring the development of the design profession, possible accounts for studying design as a profession are introduced. In his inquiry on design history, John Walker (1989) suggested that the monographic study on the *work* of a designer is useful in constructing meaningful narratives, which is different from a biographical study that explores the *life* of a designer. While exploring various perspectives to study the work of a designer, such as the social production of design, and marketing the designer, he also introduced a perspective

to see designers as a professional group (Walker 1989). He described designers as “employees” who “sell their mental labour-power to manufacturers in return for wages or fees; the primary motive of their employers is private profit” (Walker 1989, 29) and this description reflects their role in modern industry as a specific occupational group. Walker (1989, 53–54) argued that this perspective is the result of the steady development of designers as a division of labor, and their significant contributions to the growth of human knowledge and complex societies.

Continuing from the work of Walker, British design researcher Guy Julier (2013) provided an overview of the development trajectory of the design profession. He argued that a designer’s traditional role in relation to the creation of material objects has changed to expand the field (Julier 2013). He further noted that the interest toward the creative professions, especially the design profession, emerged in the mid-1980s. This “rise of design” was led by governmental or independent organizations because of not just the growth of the design profession but also the importance of design in the wider economic context of nations and regions (Julier 2013, 26). Julier’s perspective on design was mostly supported by examples from Western countries, especially the United Kingdom and some other developed countries, such as the United States and Denmark. However, its relevance to the ongoing tendency in the field allows the cases to be applicable to the broader context; thus, it is introduced here as a main reference in order to provide a brief overview of the evolution of the design profession, which is relevant to reflecting on the changed role of fashion designers.

Since the 1980s, the shift in the design profession from the manufacturing sector to the service sector (e.g. marketing, promotion, and branding activities) influenced the divergence of design subfields, such as graphic design and interior design, over more traditional product design (Julier 2013). In particular, the boom in

design consultancy opened up one door to the design profession to work along with marketing-related sectors, yet challenged the status of designers as part of the market-driven culture of consumption. Other than this transition in the design profession, Julier (2013, 48) introduced ways in which designers have responded to the changing conditions. The practice of designers has evolved through a constant dialogue between the domains of production, consumption and the designers themselves (Julier 2013).

The development of critical discussion on design has shed light on this struggle in the design profession (e.g. Thackara 1988; Branzi 1988; Buchanan 1998; McDonough 1993). This emerging academic discussion questioned a fixed definition of design grounded in a single domain of either the production, the consumption or the designer’s authorship (Julier 2013, 48). The following definitions of Walker and Papanek introduced by Julier (2013, 48) reflect the emergence of pluralistic discussions on design:

- It can refer to a process (the act or practice of designing); or to the result of that process (a design, sketch, plan or model); or to the products manufactured with the aid of a design (design goods); or to the look or overall pattern of a product (“I like the design of that dress”). (Walker 1989, 23)
- All men [human beings] are designers. All that we do, almost all the time, is design, for design is basic to all human activity. The planning and patterning of any act toward a designed, foreseeable end constitutes the design process. Any attempt to separate design to make it a thing by itself, works counter to the fact that design is the primary underlying matrix of life. (Papanek 1972, 3)

While the former introduces the flexible use of the term “design” in various contexts, the latter opens up the definition of “designers” to an entirely new group of individuals beyond the design profession. This coexistence of plural definitions contributed to the development of academic discussion on design and the design profession (Julier 2013). This divergence of design can be explained with the increased amount of complex problems in society, challenging the common belief that one should rely on traditional ways of planning and solving problems (Rittel and Webber 1973). As a response to this challenge, the design profession has been investigated, as designers may be able to respond to the growth in uncertainty and ill-defined problems in the world (Buchanan 1992; Cross 2006). In order to both understand and expand the role of designers, a significant amount of studies have been conducted to explore diverse aspects of designerly practice (e.g. Lawson 2005; Cross 2006; Dorst 2011). This academic endeavor has been labeled as “design thinking,” a term coined by Rowe in 1986 (Dorst 2008). In general, design thinking is understood as the ways in which designers actually work and think with a perspective that investigates both the theory and practice of design (Kimbell 2011). Understanding design practice has allowed scholars and practitioners in design to rethink the boundaries of the field and the expanded roles of designers (e.g. Buchanan 1992; Manzini 2009). In consequence, the research stream has influenced professional designers to extend their roles to unconventional domains, such as public, nonprofit and medical sectors (e.g. Thackara 2005; Brown 2009; Martin 2009).

Regardless of these academic endeavors, the research stream on the professional knowledge of design remains ambiguous (Lawson and Dorst 2009; Wang and Ilhan 2009). Friedman (2003) argued that this issue is caused by the broad spectrum of design knowledge that arises from many sources beyond practice. Cross (2001) also noted the emergence of design knowledge in broad actions, such as designing,

manufacturing, and reflecting. Wang and Ilhan (2009, 13) commented on this issue: “Our assessment is that, actually, there is nothing to define—or, put another way, there is everything to define. And everything is hard to define.” This ambiguity is a double-edged sword, especially for the notion of design thinking. On the one hand, it has limited the establishment of the field due to pluralistic approaches that involve confusion. On the other hand, it has also made it possible to explore design thinking more freely without confining designers’ roles solely to their own field (Lawson and Dorst 2009). In fact, within design research, a number of discourses are identifiable in relation to the notion of design thinking. The major discourses will be further introduced in Chapter 4.

This multilayered progression of design as a profession and an academic discussion demonstrates why a single definition of design should be avoided. Rather, Julier suggested that “definitions of design can be discursive. In other words, how, when, where and why something is termed as being ‘design’ indicates something about its position or status that is generated by and for it” (Julier 2013, 50). Thus, what is truly important is to understand the ways in which the definition of design and the roles and statuses of designer have evolved in a certain direction over time. This suggestion of Julier (2013) invites further reflections on the underdevelopment of studying fashion design.

2.2.2.

Identifying the Gap between Design and Fashion

If the definitions of design are discursive, depending on a certain position and status, the ways in which research on fashion design has been considered imply the presence of invisible barriers in the design field. In the development and expansion of the design profession in both practice and academic discussion, fashion design is often understood without critical questioning on its authenticity or difference compared to other subfields of design, such as product design, design engineering and architecture. In particular, when the notion of design thinking shed light on the design profession and contributed to the expansion of the field, the discussion often omitted the perspective of fashion design (Nixon and Blakley 2012). At the same time, it has been observed that fashion research has lacked an interest in the ways in which fashion is actually designed (Finn 2014). In fact, the discussion on a certain level of prejudice towards fashion is not novel for academics in the field (e.g. Lipovetsky 1994; Kawamura 2005). However, as a serious endeavor, this section aims to reexamine these issues in regards to fashion design. In the following Chapter 4, this gap will be discussed more thoroughly, but here the key issues behind the neglect of fashion design in both design and fashion research as well as the importance of overcoming the issues are introduced.

While referring to design thinking as an inspiration, Nathalie Nixon and Johanna Blakley (2012) proposed “fashion thinking” as a set of actionable strategies to apply in broader domains beyond the conventional fashion industry. They emphasized that insufficient efforts have been made to embrace the greater potential of studying the ap-

plication of fashion design. Nixon and Blakley (2012) identified three reasons for the overshadowing of fashion design in design. The first reason emerges from its implicit association with a specific gender. In other words, the fact that fashion design is often considered to be the work of women or homosexual men influences the status of fashion designers. Citing Davis (1994) and Crane (2000), who studied fashion in a sociological perspective, Nixon and Blakley (2012) argued that this preconception regarding fashion discouraged people from considering it a “serious and important job.” This frivolity of fashion is a much discussed topic in sociological and historical studies (e.g. Lipovetsky 1994; Kawamura 2005; Vinken 2005). Besides these contexts, this issue was also clearly observable from the development of British fashion design education (McRobbie 1998). Second, conflicting attitudes to fashion in society also have influenced the absence of fashion design in design research. Although fashion is an essential element of everyday life due to the daily practice of dressing for various social events (Buckley and Clark 2017), it is not accepted as something worth talking about. Although several studies remarked on the importance of fashion as a “second skin” and how it embodies personality (e.g. Kaiser 1996; Entwistle 2015), extensive interest in fashion and discussions about it are perceived as superficial and “shallow” (see Lipovetsky 1994, 3-4). Lastly, but more related to the academic discussion on design practice, Nixon and Blakley (2012) noted the existence of a hierarchy among subfields of design. Architecture tops the pyramid, while the fashion design profession appears only after industrial design, graphic design and digital design.

Regarding the last point, Julier (2013) noted the hierarchical relationship between architecture and design subfields. While presenting the development of the design profession, he introduced the notion of “design entryism,” which refers to the lack of normative systems in design that are “established by both the state and their own

institutional arrangements—education and professional bodies” (Julier 2013, 52). In other words, neither a specific training nor educational background is required for an individual to claim to be a professional designer or to be perceived as one. This factor sets design in a “minor” position in comparison to other creative fields, especially in comparison to architecture (Julier 2013). To become an architect, an individual needs to acquire a license from a specific authority in the field. For instance, in the United States, the American Institute of Architects is responsible for the task of issuing licenses to formally registered architects. Meanwhile, the design profession involved in highly conceptual practice or skill-based production has a relatively lower barrier to entry for allowing outsiders to transfer to the field (Julier 2013). In this respect, the absence of a standardized normative system and traditional prejudices combined together to place fashion design at the bottom of the hierarchy. Moreover, this tendency in the profession has led to implicit disdain from academia for studying fashion design.

In comparison to these issues of fashion design as having “minor” status in design, Australian fashion designer/researcher Angela Finn (2014) presented additional issues involved in studying fashion design from the perspective of fashion scholarship. In her doctoral dissertation exploring a new methodology for practice research in fashion design, she introduced the issue of “academicizing” fashion research (Biggs and Buchler 2007, 63, cited in Finn 2014). Referring to Friedman’s description (2003) of the transitional moment around 1990 for practice research in design, she argued that a similar issue emerged due to the perspective change in teaching technical skills of fashion design (e.g. design process and methods) to establishing academic research through fashion design practice (Finn 2014, 20). In her view, practitioner research in fashion that simply adopts research methodology from other fields is an “incomplete paradigm shift.” The interdisciplinary and unsettled state of the study of fashion has also been discussed in

terms of the development of domain-specific theory and methodology (Tseëlon 2001; McNeil 2010; Kawamura 2011; Granata 2012; Black et al. 2013; Jenss 2016). Finn (2014) further problematized existing practice research models in fashion design that blurred into design research:

Although relevant to developing process for effective design practice, these models do not engage with the theoretical or methodological approaches that accommodate the fashion aspect of design practice in fashion. The process model is criticised here as too focused on design methods, in the same way that design researchers have been criticised for becoming ‘fixated’ on research methodologies, rather than the ontological and epistemological aspects of design. (Finn 2014, 26)

More importantly, Finn (2014, 27) criticized the lack of “design” in the research domain of fashion. In other words, while the academic discussion on fashion is often constructed in relation to objects, the discussion has not been expanded to include the designing of fashion objects. In response to this absence of design in fashion research, she defined fashion design practice as “the action of creating fashion objects (designing and making fashion garments or accessories)” in professional practice (Finn 2014, 28). This definition offers a useful viewpoint in order to recover the meaning of the fashion design profession, as it narrows down the focus to their creative action while contributing to society. It helps to not just add the design aspect but also avoid academicizing in fashion research. Additionally, this definition provides a device to contain both the symbolic and material worlds that fashion designers are deeply associated with.

With the identification of prejudices against fashion design, the issue of the lack of conversations between the research domains of de-

sign and fashion was acknowledged. Then, the real challenge is how to overcome this separation and spark a dialogue between them. Clarifying terms can help to address this gap between design and fashion research. First of all, the term “design research” refers to the domain concerning various aspects of design practice, including the context of designing, the process of design, and research-based design practice (Clark and Brody 2009; Koskinen et al. 2011). The term can be traced back to the Design Research Society, which was founded in the 1960s. This Society has contributed significantly to the progression of design studies encompassing broader concerns, such as design history and theory, beyond the practice of design (Margolin 2002).

Although the terms “fashion research” and “fashion studies” are often used interchangeably (see Skjold 2008; Finn 2014), the former can, like the term “design research,” be related to academic discussions stemming from practitioners’ knowledge perspective. As this dissertation intends to investigate the practice of fashion designers in great depth, the choice was made to use the term “fashion research.” Additionally, it supports the main topic of “fashion design thinking” in that it both signals the continuity of the design thinking approach and expands the discussion by accounting for the possible contributions of fashion designers. Similar to the development trajectory of design research, understanding what fashion designers are capable of can contribute to recovering the meaning of the fashion design profession in society. Furthermore, this can trigger expanding their role. Then, it is vital to explore the conversation on fashion design practice that this dissertation further aims to join.

2.3. Rediscovery of Fashion Design Practice

Although this research is not about the history of the fashion design profession, acknowledging where the conventional practice of fashion design originated from and how it is different from the development of the design profession is relevant. As a broader understanding of professional individuals, the various perspectives on designers that Walker (1989) noted can be easily applied to fashion design. For instance, auteur theory views the designer as “the person wholly responsible for the form and style of a designed artefact, in other words its author” (Walker 1989, 48). The difficulty in design is the fact that the author is often a group of individuals in diverse types of relationships, rather than an individual. Borrowing Foucault’s perspective (1969), Walker (1989, 51) described authorship as “a role or place certain individuals occupy at particular times while others who write and paint do not” that can be applied to most designers, including fashion designers.

Additionally, the perspective towards design as social production understands the designer as “the man in the middle” (Walker 1989, 51). In other words, the designer plays a mediating role in connecting the industry with society. Walker (1989, 50–51) identified five reasons why most designers cannot be detached from society: (1) designers’ education/training provided by society, (2) shared trends of the particular time, (3) the tradition of the field, (4) agreed “languages” for communicating with other members in the field, and (5) designers’ dependence on clients and consumers. In addition, he also acknowledged the increased awareness of designers’ social responsibility as members of society (Walker 1989).

However, the term “fashion” refers particularly to the practice of fashion designers. Walker (1989, 90) also acknowledged the connotation of fashion while introducing the theory of change in design history. To explain the different rhythm of change in fashion, he cited Barthes (1985, 296):

History cannot act on forms analogically, but it can certainly act on the rhythm of forms, to disturb or change it. It follows that paradoxically, fashion can know only a very long history or no history at all; for as long as its rhythm remains regular, fashion remains outside history; it changes but its changes are alternative, purely endogenous [...] in order for history to intervene in fashion, it must modify its rhythm, which seems possible only with a history of very long duration.

Fashion design practice that has embraced this disruptive rhythm of change over centuries has a distinctive nature. Alongside this change aspect of fashion, the strong influence of fashion in people’s appearance and behavior attaches additional complexity while viewing fashion design practice (Walker 1989). What locates fashion designers in a unique position is the fact that their practice is related to this unique and complex system of fashion encompassing both the symbolic and material worlds.

Thus, in the following, various discussions on fashion design practice will be reviewed from the past to the possible future. First, the dressmaking tradition, the “forgotten” root of fashion design practice, will be explored while reviewing the development of the modern empire of fashion. In fact, this review on the change in fashion design practice resonates with previously mentioned prejudices (e.g. Nixon and Blakley 2012); thus, the emphasis will be on why the dressmaking aspect is important in recovering the meaning of the fashion design profession.

Afterwards, the recently highlighted practice of professional designers in relation to places (e.g. Julier 2013; Manzini 2015) is briefly introduced to propose a possible expansion of fashion designers as placemakers due to their strong engagement with places.

2.3.1. Dressmaking in the Empire of Fashion

In Wim Wenders’ film *Notebook on Cities and Clothes* (Released in 1989), Japanese fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto described himself: “I’m not a fashion designer, I’m a dressmaker.” This internationally acclaimed designer’s refusal to use the term fashion designer seems self-contradicting and confusing. However, in addition to Yamamoto – who is considered a “postfashion” designer, having disrupted the conventional idea of fashion (Vinken 2005), – many “in-fashion” designers, including Coco Chanel and Karl Lagerfeld, have also chosen to use the term dressmaker to describe their job (McRobbie 1998). This offers a departure point to conceptualize dressmaking as the practice of individual fashion designers.

In fact, this association of dressmaking with fashion designer can be easily found from the simple translation of the French word *couture* in English (Oxford English Dictionary, Collins English Dictionary). More precisely, based on both Collins and Cambridge French-English dictionaries, *couturière*, which is a feminine noun, is translated as dressmaker while *couturier* (a masculine noun) is fashion designer. Although the French words in both genders have a neutral position, the English translations reveal the tradition that still dwells in the meaning of the word in regards to the modern history of the development of the fashion industry.

In order to understand what these translations actually imply, revisiting the origin of modern Western fashion, which was born in Paris, is important (Lipovetsky 1994; Kawamura 2005; Vinken 2005). Modern French fashion evolved alongside the reformation of the Western world in the 19th century. In the early establishment of fashion, the first professional fashion designer in history was, arguably, a British man, Charles Frederick Worth (e.g. Lipovetsky 1994; Kawamura 2005; Godart 2012). He was not just a dressmaker (*couturière*) for elite female clients but also a fashion designer (*couturier*) who presented his proposals to them. French author and *couture* expert Didier Grumbach noted that:

For the first time, men were creating fashion. By raising the status of the dressmaker, Worth also transformed the way people dressed. [...] Recognized as a creator in his own right, the couturier moved from the status of an anonymous artisan to that of designer; and could now label his creations. (Grumbach 2014, 22)

Worth was also talented in the promotion of his image to the public; thus, he successfully seduced more clients (Kawamura 2005; Grumbach 2014). Altogether, he demonstrated the power of seduction that later contributed to the birth of high dressmaking (*haute couture* in French) and this was the beginning of the firm institutionalization of the ephemeral in fashion (Lipovetsky 1994; Kawamura 2005).

Regarding this power shift in dress from elites to fashion designers, in the book *The Empire of Fashion* (1994), French sociologist Gilles Lipovetsky presented how the idea of fashion evolved together with the Western society to become more democratic. He argued that:

haute couture contributed to the great commercial revolution that is still under way. The aim is to encourage people to spend and consume without guilt, through strategies that use advertising displays and product overexposure. [...] At a deeper level, the seduction process works through intoxication with change, the multiplication of prototypes, and the possibility of individual choice. (Lipovetsky 1994, 78)

This view may have resulted from a theoretical investigation but it is useful to perceive fashion as a driver for change. Particularly, the change was noticeable in the modernization of fashion. After this “exercise” for the modern right to individual freedom, ready-to-wear (*prêt-à-porter* in French) was introduced in the 1950s (Lipovetsky 1994). Despite the similar role of the makers, while *haute couture* employed custom-made production based on the measurement of particular clients, this new mode of fashion was produced without having anyone specific in mind (Grumbach 2014). This new fashion was “an industrial production of clothing accessible to all that would nevertheless be ‘fashion,’ inspired by the latest trends of the day” (Lipovetsky 1994, 90). Thus, the second shift of power in fashion emerged in the form of “open fashion” where the constant dialogue between different fashion designers and individual wearers introduced new fashions, rather than being dictated by a particular group. Mass production in the 1960s and 1970s brought another wave to the empire of fashion. The constitution of industrial production demanded “humanization”; thus, the design aspect of fashion was highlighted in order to allow individual freedom for “the voluntary adventure of the new” (Lipovetsky 1994, 149).

Besides the French context, this ready-to-wear approach expanded more rapidly in the global context, enforced by industrial production. In particular, with the economic development of the United States even

before the 1920s, large clothing manufacturers were dominant in the local market, while the trend of French couture was still imported by individual dressmakers and designers at American firms (Crane 1993, 136–140). Kawamura (2005) explored how fashion designers evolved after the dawn of contemporary fashion, when making clothes and dressing the public were no longer an issue. She described the transformation of the designer from a dressmaker to an image-maker, which did not entirely derive from his or her own choice:

Today’s designers place the strongest emphasis in recreating and reproducing their image, and the image that is projected through clothing is reflected on the designer’s personal image as an individual. (Kawamura 2005, 35)

This is due to the social construction of fashion that is legitimized by the institutionalized system of fashion, which is a collective activity of individuals who are part of the system. Not every piece of clothing becomes fashionable. However, fashion designers make clothes with the intention of constructing fashion through their “star quality” (Kawamura 2005, 57–64). Moreover, as this legitimation of designers’ creativity is practiced by both their clients and other actors in the system, such as fashion journalists and editors, a label that conveys refined products of image-making became more relevant than the dressmaking tradition.⁵

In a more recent historical analysis of fashion, McRobbie (1998) noted the disavowal of the dressmaking tradition in the development of fashion design education and the profession of fashion design in the British context. Among other studies that remarked on

5. Due to this reason, in postmodernist studies on fashion, Kawamura (2011, 123) noted that material clothing is less important than the contexts in which fashion/dress is placed. However, from the fashion design education perspective, Almond (2009) argued that learning technical methods, including dressmaking and pattern making, is vital in becoming a professional.

this issue, her argument is aligned with the domain of dress history that acknowledged the neglect of home dressmaking in broader academic discourse (Burman 1999). As discussed earlier with respect to prejudices against fashion design due to its perception as a frivolous and domestic activity, these views have influenced the delayed development of the fashion design profession in comparison to overall design. McRobbie (1998, 29) explained:

Indeed, it was during the inter-war period⁶ that we first see the term ‘dress designer’ or ‘fashion design’ appear in popular usage. While there are no official definitions available, ‘design’ in these contexts appears to be based on the practice of the established designers in Paris to describe work based on an original sketch, drawing or set of drawings and translated into a model or prototype garment.

From this late introduction of the English term fashion design⁷, McRobbie (1998) argued that fashion design in the British context needed to be differentiated from the dressmaking tradition in order to secure its place in art schools. In the competitive condition, fashion design education emphasized the image-making aspect rather than dressmaking, reinforced by the rise of the status of fashion designers as artists and celebrities since the 1980s. Conversely, garment-making practice was labeled as a shameful activity although it was inseparable from fashion design. Rather, this encouraged sustaining the separation between fashion design and production. McRobbie (1998, 39) noted:

6. McRobbie (1998, 29) referred to this period as the time between the late 1920s and the 1930s.

7. This adoption of the term fashion design and the practice over French *couture* in foreign countries is supported by previous studies (e.g. Crane 1993; Grumbach 2014). Growth in the business of French couture in other countries was noted, particularly in the United Kingdom and the United States (Grumbach 2014, 42–44).

Fashion education finds it difficult to integrate the skills and techniques upon which it is dependent into its professional vocabulary because these are too reminiscent of the sewing and dressmaking tradition, or else because they conjure up images of sweat shops or assembly lines.

Despite this tension around the practice of fashion design, McRobbie (1998, 186) concluded her investigation into the development of British fashion design with the strong suggestion for the rediscovery of dressmaking: “I argue for the dressmaking dimension to be retrieved, revalued and recognised in fashion culture.” As introduced earlier (Julier 2013), a definition tends to be discursive as a reflection of specific position and status regarding the term. In the current era when the contribution of the fashion design profession is unclear, their role in society is obscured and this condition urges rethinking what fashion designers can do. The rediscovery of fashion design practice can be fully achieved by embracing this forgotten or ignored tradition of dressmaking into its definition rather than revisiting the importance of the meaning-making aspect.

Emphasizing the dressmaking tradition of fashion design practice shares a certain degree of commonality with craftsmanship. While reviewing the development of fashion design practice, Loschek (2009, 175–178) described changes in how clothes have been classified. In the 19th century, clothes were classified as handicraft products made by various types of craftspersons, including tailors and seamstresses, among many others. However, due to the modernization of fashion through *haute couture* and *prêt-à-porter*, clothes became a product of designers working together with a team of craftspersons. Thus, referring to Sennett’s study (2008) on craftsmanship, Loschek (2009, 176) argued that the quality of design is no longer strongly associated with its craftsmanship in the contemporary world of fashion, although de-

signers and craftspersons coexist in the production of clothes. However, other aspects involved in examining quality, such as aesthetics, functionality, form, added values, and emotion, are emphasized. Thus, viewing clothes as design, not as craft helps in understanding the dressmaking tradition and rediscovering it for fashion design practice.

Moreover, the significance of using the term *dress* rather than *clothes* can be traced back to Kawamura’s more recent work (2011). Beyond the use of the term in everyday language to describe Western clothes mostly worn by women, Kawamura (2011) introduced the following definition of dress:

Our definition of dress as body modifications and body supplements includes more than clothing, or even clothing and accessories. Our definition encompasses many ways of dressing ourselves. In addition to covering our bodies, we apply color to our skins by use of cosmetics, whether paints or powders, and also apply color and pattern through tattoos. (Eicher, Evenson, and Lutz 2008, 4)

This definition questions the eurocentric perspective that considers a dress or clothing as a body supplement placed upon the body (Eicher, Evenson, and Lutz 2008, 6). Kawamura (2011, 10) further noted four advantages of this definition: (1) the avoidance of the possibility of using culturally biased words, (2) the understanding of dress as a form in both physical artifacts and practice in relation to the body, (3) the recognition of a social context in use, and (4) the emphasis on the relationship between wearers and any form of dress or dresses. These advantages reinforce McRobbie’s emphasis on dressmaking (1998) and revisit the ignored historic roots of fashion design practice (Lipovetsky 1994; Kawamura 2005).

Accordingly, in this doctoral dissertation, regardless of the earlier mentioned gender issue encountered when translating the original French words into English, the term dressmaking was selected to indicate fashion design practice, embracing both the material and physical dimensions. Then, the term dressmaker refers to the conventional role of the fashion designer who dresses the public in the ephemeral empire of fashion. In other words, one of central inquiries in this doctoral research is to rediscover the dressmaking practice of fashion designers in tandem with their meaning-making, which is already strongly emphasized due to the image-making tendency. Considering these physical and symbolic dimensions of fashion design practice, one possible scenario to expand the role of fashion designers can be found in certain “places” beyond the empire of fashion.

2.3.2. Placemaking in the (Im)material World of Fashion

While fashion designers’ conventional practice of dressmaking has been eclipsed by image-making, new proposals to apply design practice have been introduced in relation to the notion of place (Julier 2013; Manzini 2015). In order to suggest rethinking the social role of the fashion designer as a placemaker, the emerging design practice of place-branding and place-making will be discussed in the following.

As mentioned earlier, Julier (2013) proposed viewing design as a culture that embraces a wider scope encompassing designers, production, and consumption, instead of limiting it exclusively to the visual aspect. To apply this perspective on design culture, he introduced the ways in which design contributed to place-branding in two European cities, Leeds in the United Kingdom and Barcelona in Spain (Julier 2013,

138–159). Drawing on urban design discourse, the cases illustrated that place-branding is “to promote a reconfiguration of perceptions of the human resources available in a location” (Julier 2013, 151). In this sense, design plays a particular role not just in forming visual and material artifacts based on the cultural heritage but also, as a practice, in projecting a certain “attitude” derived from the location (Julier 2013, 159). Beyond architectural and urban planning practice, this involvement of design for places has taken place only recently alongside the emergence of branding practice in the design profession around the 1980s (Julier 2013). Besides these two cases, the emphasis on creative industries, especially design, in post-industrial cities has been increased. This development of designers’ new relationship with places has emerged more strongly in the context of cities and regions rather than nation-states. Julier (2013, 154) explained that the multicultural and inclusive aspect of a city or a region offers design-friendly conditions for weaving production, consumption, and distribution into a tightly bounded location. Despite its strong commercial rather than social implications, designers’ practice of place-branding illuminates their evolved role in society.

In comparison to Julier, who related the notion of place with a geographic location, Italian design strategist Ezio Manzini (2015, 189) invited an understanding of a place as “a space that is meaningful for someone.” This inclusive definition of place implies that the meaning is constructed through dialogues between diverse actors in a social space; this thus shifts design practice from place-branding to place-making, as “making” requires collaborative efforts beyond the design profession. Manzini (2015) argued that the evolution of the design profession has not occurred in isolation from the rest of society. Rather, it has happened concurrently with the emergence of collaborative initiatives that are willing to get involved in local issues. While seeking new modes of constructive coexistence for the design profession and these collaborative organizations, Manzini (2015, 63) intro-

duced potential strategies to achieve “the expert design contribution to a co-design process aiming at social change” – in other words, design for social innovation. The strategies include making the current condition more visible in order to identify points of change; making new infrastructure that encourages active participation of diverse social actors; making the encounter between collaborative organizations and design experts more effective and meaningful; making social innovation replicable and expandable; and making the new ecology of a social and physical space (Manzini 2015).

The last strategy is especially associated with the new design practice of placemaking⁸. According to Manzini’s definition of a place (2015), the discursive process of meaning-making in contemporary society is no longer restricted by geographical distance due to the development of communication technology, such as the Internet. Thus, the idea of places is more relevant for the social context as their existence reacts to fragile and uncertain conditions in the physical territory. Building and rebuilding of places deal with “a close relationship between the existence and the quality of a territory and that of the communities which live in it, and by living in it produce places and keep them alive” (Manzini 2015, 195). With two cases from Italy and China, he examined the ways in which design experts can contribute in this practice of placemaking (Manzini 2015). Upon the employment of design expertise, the experts adopt the current local state and focus on available or potential resources to construct a new place collaboratively with local actors. Manzini (2015, 189) remarked that this process of placemaking develops gradually “over long periods in quasi-natural ways.” Compared to Julier (2013) who attempted to objectively view design in a bigger frame phrased as design culture, Manzini’s perspective (2015) stemmed from his direct participation in the culture that designers are situated in. In other words, Julier’s

8. Due to the importance of placemaking in this dissertation, from this point, the term will be used without the hyphen (-).

approach to design is “outside-in” while Manzini’s approach starts from designers and is thus “inside-out.” This discussion on design and culture will be further introduced in Chapter 4.

To generalize, placemaking can be conceptualized as the emerging practice of design from the social construction of meaning for places.⁹ From the perspective of fashion design practice, it seems logical to adopt these proposals of Julier (2013) and Manzini (2015) that connect design with a physical and social, or a material and immaterial, space. As discussed earlier, since the birth of modern democracy in the Western society, the idea of fashion has been discussed as a certain level of changes in symbolic and material worlds involving a wide range of individuals (Lipovetsky 1994). Fashion has been strongly attached to these multidimensional ideas of space not just in the historic development of modern fashion in particular cities, such as Paris and New York (Rantisi 2002; Kawamura 2005; Breward and Gilbert 2006), but also in the contemporary condition where the geographic and socio-economic bonds of clothes are inseparable (Skov 2001; Crewe 2017). Aspers (2013, 222) emphasized: “Spatiality is both constituted by fashion and helps to constitute fashion.” Furthermore, separately from these studies on designing places in design research, placemaking of fashion design has been discussed already in the sociological domain of fashion research (Rantisi 2011; Skov 2011; McRobbie 2015). However, designing fashion, or the practice of fashion design, requires further articulations in order to explore how fashion design thinking can be applied in placemaking and why it is relevant to consider fashion designers as placemakers in comparison to other subfields of design.

9. The term placemaking is more broadly used in urban studies where the main subject of inquiry is physical urban spaces and the actors involved in the spaces, including urban planners, policymakers, and residences, among others. In an overview of key publications that have contributed to the discussion (e.g. Lynch 1960; Jacobs 1961; Whyte 1980), Silberberg et al. (2013, 7) noted that its present focus is “on human-centered urban transformations that increase social capital in a multitude of ways.” Even though this discourse in urban studies is relevant for the notion of placemaking, due to its broad scope and the intention of this dissertation to explore the role of fashion designers, it was excluded while constructing the argumentations.

This chapter presented the overall background of this dissertation, including the current context that situates the research and emerged discussions. The articulations on two main inquiries—fashion design thinking and the role of fashion designers as placemakers—will be presented in corresponding chapters through the review on relevant literature. This is due to both the complex structure of this dissertation and the relevance of a specific research stream to a part of this dissertation rather than the whole (see Ridley 2012).

2.4. Conclusion to the Chapter

In summary, this chapter provided the background for the recovery and the rediscovery of fashion designers, thereby helping to achieve the goal of this doctoral dissertation: conceptualizing the role of fashion designers. The notion of recovery was presented in relation to the unclear social contribution and meaning of the fashion design profession in the contemporary fashion system due to the mystification of the design practice of fashion designers. However, instead of considering this condition as a challenge, it suggests rethinking what they are capable of and exploring possibilities to expand their role. Meanwhile, the notion of rediscovery was tied to fashion design practice. The tradition of dressmaking was discussed as the conventional practice of fashion designers in need of rediscovery in order to shift towards their expanded practice of placemaking. In other words, without properly understanding the ways in which fashion designers actually design material clothes and immaterial fashion, proposing an expanded role for them would involve limitations. Thus, to properly re(dis)cover fashion designers, it is equally vital to empirically study both dressmaking and placemaking practices.

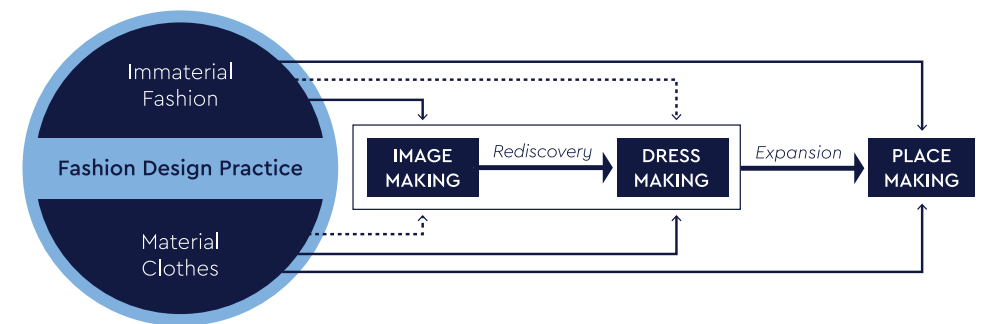


Figure 2.1. An illustration of the research objective regarding fashion design practice.

Figure 2.1 illustrates the intentions of this dissertation in reflecting on previous studies on fashion design practice including both immaterial and material aspects. Instead of viewing these two aspects in binary terms, the notion of fashion design practice encompasses both of them, moving from one to the other depending on the intention of fashion designers. The solid lines indicate the presence of an association between the two aspects while the dashed lines indicate the lack of an association.

To address these inquiries for conceptualizing the role of fashion designers, this dissertation firmly grounds one of its feet on design research while the other foot stands on fashion research. In order to balance between these research domains of design and fashion, a carefully customized architecture of research is essential through the contextualized review of the relevant literature. Thus, the construction of this doctoral dissertation will be introduced in the following chapter.

03

*WEAVING
NARRATIVES
IN HELSINKI*

The previous chapter mainly addressed the title of this dissertation, *Re(dis)covering Fashion Designers*. As a continuation, this chapter aims to clarify the second half of the title, *Interweaving Dressmaking and Placemaking*, by presenting two approaches that weave the rediscovered and newly proposed practices of fashion designers.

3.1. Two Inquires and Methodological Challenges

The research interest in seeking the expanded role of fashion designers originated from the encounter with their unclear social contribution. The interest evolved through the realization of the hierarchy among design professions and the disavowal of dressmaking in fashion design. Corresponding to the twofold meaning of the dissertation title, the main question to conceptualize the role of fashion designers can be rephrased in order to address two points, namely, the recovery of the meaning for the fashion design profession and the rediscovery of fashion design practice. However, in order to address the main question, the dressmaking practice of fashion design has to be unfolded first, as it provides a foundation to further explore the role. Hence, the main question was divided into two units of analysis:

- (1) What distinctive features fashion designers have. In other words, what fashion design thinking is.
- (2) How fashion designers can expand their social role.

These two units of analysis were formulated as two corresponding sub-studies: (1) an inductive study to construct the notion of fashion design thinking and (2) a single case study on Pre Helsinki, a designer-driven platform from Finland. With these two inquiries on fashion design, this research addresses the gap identified in the intersection between the research domains of design and fashion. The shortcomings emerged from the research on design practice that overlooks the difference among subfields of design (Visser 2009; Badke-Schaub, Roozenburg, and Cardoso 2010; Kimbell 2011), especially fashion design (Hallnäs 2009; Finn 2014; Ræbild 2015), and the research on fashion design that simply adopts research outcomes from design while scrutinizing fashion design without careful translation between domains (e.g. Lamb and Kallal 1992; LaBat and Sokolowski 1999). However, this gap also requires discussing the unexplored potentials of studying fashion design. A proper review of the domains and relevant literature regarding this research gap needs to be conducted and will be further introduced later in Chapter 4 and 5; practical descriptions of Pre Helsinki will be provided in Chapter 5. Instead of integrating the literature under one chapter, the specific literature is presented for the corresponding sub-studies as they are constructed in different theoretical contexts and strategies (see Ridley 2012). Thus, packaging the literature that has discussed relevant topics with the finding provides a stronger context for each sub-study that investigates a specific inquiry.

The two sub-studies are independent yet communicate with each other under the single narrative of this dissertation. The first inquiry constructs knowledge to enable a fuller understanding on recurring features of fashion design practice while the second inquiry investigates involvements of fashion designers within a case. These two inquiries complement each other to envision rediscovering the dressmaking practice of fashion designers in order to expand their role in society. In doing so, rather than simply fashioning the discussion on design think-

ing, this research can invite a constructive dialogue between community members in both design and fashion.

In addition to the different theoretical contexts, due to the dialectical yet distinctive inquiries, conducting these substudies embracing different strategies of qualitative research was natural (Creswell 2013). The rationale for designing a less conventional structure for this doctoral dissertation is supported by previous studies on fashion (e.g. Kawamura 2011; Jenss 2016). For example, a particular issue in conducting multi-methodological research in fashion studies that arises due to its interdisciplinary nature was discussed by Francesca Granata (2012). She utilized her doctoral dissertation as a case study to explain the necessity of employing diverse methodologies rooted in studies on material culture, visual culture, film and performance for the research domain of fashion studies (Granata 2012). Similarly, McRobbie (2016) raised methodological challenges in the field, especially for studying fashion designers. Based on her reflection on studying fashion micro-enterprises, she expressed that conducting research with fashion designers has become more challenging recently due to the blurry boundary between primary and secondary sources (McRobbie 2016). She shared her fieldwork experiences from creative industries in London, Berlin and Milan as a sociologist researcher. The tension between designers and researchers has recently increased due to the evolution of communication in the fashion industry. The changing leadership in the research condition has occurred due to the rise of mediated channels, such as news media and social media (McRobbie 2016). Influential designers are mostly inaccessible to a researcher while commercial magazines or industry-driven media, such as *The Business of Fashion and Women's Wear Daily*, publish interviews with those designers frequently. Moreover, in the era of social media, such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram, self-generated and highly-curated contents from the designers are available not only to researchers, but also to the public.

These changes are natural as fashion designers need to constantly communicate with the target audience in order to sustain their status. In fact, these closer interactions between fashion designers and the public through social media may have improved the issues of communication and possible confusion due to mediation through industry experts, such as fashion journalists and buyers (Kawamura 2005; Loschek 2009). However, the actual intention or connotation of the images and texts produced by the designers still needs to be understood. In this condition, a researcher can easily face difficulties in choosing relevant data for his/her study. While encountering external pressures, such as funding and changes in the research field, researchers need to learn how to navigate the constantly generated resources in order to produce sound research outcomes (McRobbie 2016).

Besides these issues noted by McRobbie (2016), this dissertation also faced the typical challenges of qualitative research (e.g. Flick 2009), including identifying relevant research participants, having access to proper samples, and balancing between the specific local case and the global context. This research was no exception to these challenges. In fact, despite the employment of multi-methodology for two substudies, the general principle of qualitative research encompasses both inquiries. Based on American applied research methodologist John Creswell (2013), qualitative research is on the whole suitable for the in-depth understanding of a specific phenomenon, the empowerment of research participants to hear their voices, the exploration of contexts where research participants address an issue, the explanation of mechanisms through building models, and the development of theories. To generalize, the aim of qualitative research can be summarized as the construction of narratives based on constant dialogues with the world. This methodological fit is flexible and not fixed; thus, different strategies can be employed. In Creswell's study (2013), he introduced and compared five different qualitative studies, namely a narrative study, a phe-

nomenological study, a grounded theory study, an ethnographic study, and a case study. He identified shared characteristics of qualitative research (Creswell 2013, 42–68), including natural setting for collecting data, researcher as key instrument for addressing the inquiry, multiple methods of collecting data instead of relying on a single source, complex reasoning through inductive and iterative logic throughout the research process, the importance to the context of research participants, gradually modifying emergent research design, researchers' previous experiences informing their perspective on their study, and the tendency of sketching a larger picture rather than examining detailed correlations among factors. This dissertation also shares these characteristics, distinctive from quantitative research seeking generalizable knowledge through collecting and analyzing quantifiable data. Conversely, qualitative research tends to provide interpretive narratives that are often limited in terms of generalizability to other contexts due to their specificity. This mode of writing as “storytelling” is emphasized while balancing between what the data and literature say and the researcher's own voice (Glesne and Peshkin 1992). Thus, “researcher reflexivity” is vital for how the researcher positions himself or herself explicitly in the context of this constant dialogue (Creswell 2013).

For the two qualitative inquiries of this dissertation, the location of Helsinki, the capital of Finland, offered not only an intriguing context but also several advantages for overcoming the methodological challenges. More importantly, the condition of the Finnish fashion scene in Helsinki influenced the construction of this research. Accordingly, prior to the introduction of research strategies, the condition of Helsinki will be presented.

3.2. The Context of Helsinki

Finland is one of the Nordic welfare states, which can be categorized as a postindustrial Western society despite its peripheral geographical location between Eastern and Northern Europe (Lavery 2006). It has recently sought to proactively position itself in the global fashion landscape (Pöppönen 2016). Various Finnish efforts can be observed, ranging in scale from global to local. At the global level, young generations of Finnish fashion designers have won awards in international competitions, such as Hyères International Festival of Fashion and Photography and the LVMH Prize.¹⁰ Several new fashion brands from Finland, such as Samuji and Makia Clothing, have expanded in international markets beyond the Nordic region. Concurrently, at the local level, ambitious new initiatives, including Pre Helsinki and Helsinki New, have emerged to promote Finnish fashion to the outside world as collectives.

As a response to this development, several international fashion media began describing Finnish fashion as “up-and-coming” (see Szymdke and Folcher 2013; Petersen 2015; Sjöroos 2016). The description implies both the emerging and uncertain status of Finnish fashion. The lack of recognition for Finnish fashion in both academic and industry contexts reflects its fluctuating status. This recent growth of Finnish fashion is comparable to the Belgian fashion phenomenon in the 1980s (see Grayson 2013; Moreno 2015; Pechman 2016). Belgian fashion first established its reputation due to the global recognition of six Belgian designers, the so-called “Antwerp Six.” Since then, the phenomenon of Belgian fashion as a whole has attracted interest from the

10. See the official website of the Hyères Festival (<http://www.villanoailles-hyeres.com/>) and the LVMH Prize (<http://www.lvmhprize.com>).

industry to academia (Gimeno-Martinez 2007, 2011; Teunissen 2011). Additionally, the work of individual Belgian fashion designers, such as Martin Margiela, has been studied as a mode of “postfashion” (Vinken 2005). However, Finland, which can be categorized as a “second-tier region” in fashion based on Skov (2002), has not been introduced in the academic context (see, however, Ainamo 1996; Gurova and Morozova 2016; Chun, Gurova, and Niinimäki 2017; Chun and Gurova 2019). Similarly, from the global fashion industry point of view, Finland has not been considered as a “fashion nation.” Marimekko is an internationally known Finnish company known for its bold prints in a broader use, such as interior textiles and ceramics, rather than for exclusively wearable products. Due to its print-focused approach to clothes, the company is often described as a “cult” in the fashion industry (Sherman 2014). In particular, from the industry perspective, several master’s level theses from local universities¹¹ and industry reports noted the rising challenge facing smaller Finnish fashion companies to survive in international competition after Finland became a member of the European Union. These studies commonly suggested reconstructing the Finnish fashion ecosystem in order to support local fashion businesses (Lille 2010; van Eynde and Wiinamäki 2012).

Despite this unstable status of local fashion, Finland is commonly recognized as a “design nation” together with other Nordic countries, especially Denmark and Sweden (Riegels Melchior 2010, 2011; Skov 2011). In fact, the tendency of Finnish fashion designers to seek global recognition through international fashion competitions can be traced back to the history of Finnish design. Since the early 19th century, the country has introduced iconic designers, such as Eliel Saarinen, Ilmari Tapiovaara, Alvar Aalto, Tapio Wirkkala, and Kaj Franck, through international events, including the Paris World’s Fair of 1898 and 1937,

11. See master’s theses on the Finnish fashion industry (Salonoja 2013; Colliander 2015; Takkinen 2015).

New York World’s Fair of 1939 as well as Milan Triennials of 1952 and 1960 (Davies 2002). This was achieved through the country’s strong tradition in applied arts and knowledge in materials, such as wood, ceramic, plastic, and textile (Korvenmaa 2010; Hohti 2011).

According to a study by Finnish design historian Pekka Korvenmaa (2010), the development of the design profession in Finland aligns with the overall history of design as reviewed earlier through the studies of Walker (1988) and Julier (2013). Korvenmaa (2010, 9) noted that the terminology shifted from “applied art” (*taideteollisuus*) to “design” (*muotoilu*) in Finnish mainly due to the introduction of industrial design, but the artistic tradition of Finnish design remains strongly present in the work of contemporary designers. This tradition was derived from the domestic material-based industry, especially paper and timber, that implemented handcraft- and workshop-based production (Korvenmaa 2010). In parallel, as Finnish industrial design evolved with the rise of globally successful companies such as Nokia, team-driven collaborative works became vital for national competitiveness, more so than strong individual designers. Throughout the turbulence of modernization, industrialization and digitization between the 1960s and the 1990s, this tradition was challenged; but as it evolved, design was recognized in the national-level policy program approved by Finland’s Council of State in 2000 (Korvenmaa 2010). Helsinki, the capital of Finland, also has a strong connection to the heritage of design. Not only was it selected as the World Design Capital¹² in 2012, but it has also fully embraced design in various domains from education to policy making. In particular, Helsinki became the first city in the world to hire a Chief Design Officer in 2016. The creation of this position clearly demonstrated how vital the role of design is for the city.

12. World Design Capital is a biennial city-scale event organized by the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design to celebrate successful implementations of design in the selected city. See the official website <http://wdo.org>.

This importance of design for Helsinki and Finland was also noted by Nikodemus Solitander (2010) from the perspective of creative industries. He introduced the ways in which the country harnessed the design industry as part of its national-level strategy to increase its competitiveness and internationalization through its restructuring policy, industry and education. Solitander (2010, 52) appraised “the human-centered, more beautiful and safe” approach that Finland had demonstrated through incorporating design actively. However, as has been observed from the grassroots development of Finnish fashion, this government-driven strategy had limitations in terms of recognizing barriers between subfields of design and supporting the reformation of the local fashion ecosystem. In other words, prior to its recent emergence, Finnish fashion was often considered simply as one subfield of Finnish design. Additionally, policymakers had not yet fully recognized fashion as either a separate field requiring extra developmental support or a viable source to contribute to improving the global competitiveness of Finland.

This overshadowed and changing status of Finland, especially Helsinki, regarding fashion actually offered four advantages for conducting this research with professional fashion designers. These advantages are: (1) the launch of grassroots fashion initiatives, (2) the increased visibility of Finnish fashion through an emphasis on its artistic approach, (3) the accessible and clustered community of Finnish fashion in Helsinki, and (4) the tendency to engage in small-scale business operations relying on evident dressmaking practice.

First, to tackle the issue of internationalization, multiple initiatives began emerging in the Helsinki fashion scene. Starting from Pre Helsinki in 2012 and Helsinki New in 2016, fashion designers and business experts from Finland initiated new platforms to support the local fashion scene (Chun, Gurova, and Niinimäki 2017). In particular, Pre Helsinki has become an internationally recognizable fashion event or-

ganized in the country. It is not merely another fashion week that periodically coordinates seasonal fashion shows of multiple Finland-based labels, but is instead a designer-centered and designer-driven platform that promotes young Finnish fashion talents, including winners of international fashion competitions. Beyond the purpose of increasing the visibility of Finnish fashion designers, the platform has been developed and operated mostly by fashion designers. Through this initiative, the fashion scene in the city has not just brought international recognition to local designers but has also formed active platforms to communicate with the global fashion industry. Additionally, the diverse involvements that fashion designers have demonstrated both inside and outside the platform can exemplify their expanded role in society. These context-specific advantages yielded by Pre Helsinki have demonstrated greater potential for exemplifying the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers.

The emergence of these initiatives is related to the second point regarding Finnish fashion’s increased visibility in the global landscape. Most Finnish fashion designers involved in the initiatives were incubated at Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture (formerly known as the University of Arts and Design Helsinki)¹³. The recent success stories from the earlier mentioned global fashion competitions were influenced by the educational transformation at the university alongside the applied art tradition. Since 2010, the university has carried out a gradual reformation of fashion and textile design education in order to minimize barriers between fashion and textile design programs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (Niinimäki, Salolainen, and Kääriäinen 2018; Salolainen, Leppisaari, and Niinimäki 2018). By infusing the textile-driven approach into fashion

13. Aalto University was launched in 2010 through a merger of three independent universities in the Helsinki metropolitan area, the Helsinki University of Technology, Helsinki School of Economics and University of Art and Design Helsinki, with a strong emphasis on multidisciplinary education.

design, its students have not just avoided the curse of image-making that McRobbie (1998) noted but have also overcome the local lack of infrastructure and resources in comparison to “fashion capitals” such as Paris, New York, London and Milan. Accordingly, the recently graduated fashion designers from Aalto University have demonstrated highly skillful dressmaking practice with deep material knowledge that has earned recognition in competitions and resulted in their recruitment by major fashion houses (Pöppönen 2016). Thus, the city of Helsinki where the university is located becomes a rich condition to actually engage with the driver behind the recent growth in order to correspond to the inquiries of this research.

The third advantage stems from the fact that this recent growth of Finnish fashion is mostly observable in the Helsinki metropolitan area. While the territory of Finland is relatively large, the smaller scale of Helsinki has been a home for most fashion-related business owners and viable activities, including Pre Helsinki. Additionally, the evolving stage of the fashion community in Helsinki offers a convenient condition to access relevant participants for the research. These participants are both professional fashion designers who are capable of demonstrating their own ways of thinking and working as well as designers who are involved in reshaping the status of Finnish fashion. Thus, for the first inquiry into the distinctive features of fashion design, the evolution of Helsinki-based fashion designers and their rising global prominence appear to have more relevance. Furthermore, due to its rapid expansion and development, the findings from this smaller context of Helsinki can serve as a stepping stone for interpreting other emerging fashion contexts.

The third point is intertwined with the fourth advantage of the higher tendency to be self-employed in the fashion business in Helsinki/Finland. As mentioned earlier (see Lille 2010; van Eynde and Winamäki 2012), the current Finnish ecosystem may not be friendly for developing fashion businesses. However, in contrast, this condition is

actually advantageous for studying the distinctive features of fashion design, as the fashion designers are actively involved in operating their own business rather than being part of big companies. When a designer runs his/her business independently, the engagement level tends to be higher for manual design work, including sample making and fabric experimentation (Sinha 2000, 2002). The designer in the small business can make his/her own decisions while designing, rather than being influenced by other factors (Sinha 2000). Thus, this condition of Helsinki is effective for uncovering distinctive features of fashion design through an empirical study with fashion designers representing the majority of the fashion design profession, rather than an exclusive group of individuals who work as chief designers for global fashion houses.

Altogether, the location of Helsinki provided a suitable condition for both inquiries. Furthermore, another practical advantage was the ease of communicating with diverse research participants in Helsinki. Some scholars have shared their difficulties in conducting field studies in foreign countries. For example, as her doctoral research, Skov (2001) conducted a study of Hong Kong fashion and interacted with various local actors, including fashion designers, educators, buyers, and journalists. As a non-Cantonese speaker, she explained the strategies she had to employ in order to overcome the issue of communication (Skov 2001). However, although the author of the current dissertation is a non-Finnish speaker, this issue did not arise during the entire phase of research engaging with diverse actors in Helsinki, as most participants are capable of communicating in English. The context of Helsinki thus provided a convenient condition for conducting this research.

In the meantime, studying fashion design in Finland also posed one difficulty. Relatively many publications have dealt with Finnish design, as it has played a vital role at the historic, economic, social, and cultural levels in understanding the relationship between the country and design (e.g. Davies 2002; Solitander 2010; Korvenmaa 2014). How-

ever, Finnish fashion design has emerged only recently and has thus not been investigated systematically. In fact, apart from certain topics, including sustainability and textile design (e.g. Niinimäki 2011; Laamanen 2016), the overall development of studying fashion design has been limited in the context of Finland.¹⁴ Therefore, while relying on the perspective of Finnish design, an interpretive approach had to be taken in order to apply the results to this research, especially Substudy 2 that requires understanding the case of Pre Helsinki.

While being influenced by and fully utilizing these conditions of Helsinki, the two qualitative inquiries were explored through corresponding strategies. In order to address the methodological issues that McRobbie (2016) noted, multiple layers of triangulation were employed. Four types of triangulation, namely data sources, investigators, perspectives (theory), and methods, are commonly acknowledged (Patton 2002; Flick 2009). For this dissertation, at the methodological level, two different strategies of qualitative research were employed for two substudies in order to explore the complementary inquiries on fashion design thinking and the expanded role of fashion designers. Other types of triangulation, such as investigators, were also employed. In the following, the methodological fit and methods for each substudy are clarified while endorsing the general principle of qualitative research.

14. Some research outcomes may exist but only in Finnish (e.g. Lille 2010).

3.3. Substudy 1: Grounded Theory Strategy

Instead of starting the investigation with the literature review on design thinking and design practice, this substudy first dove into the field in order to engage with fashion designers. This approach was based on the principle of grounded theory, emphasizing that reality is understood by individuals who are engaged in it (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss (1967) coined this inductive approach to systematically interpret qualitative research data in order to theorize social phenomena. Since its first introduction, this approach has branched out into slightly different forms that nevertheless share an emphasis on data-driven inductive methods. Based on Creswell (2013), grounded theory can be typified in two approaches stemming from the systematic procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) and the constructivist approach of Charmaz (2005, 2006). In the following, together with Glaser's classic approach, these types of grounded theory will be briefly introduced in order to provide an overview of both the spectrum of grounded theory studies and the justification for adopting a particular type for Substudy 1.

3.3.1. Types of Grounded Theory

Although Glaser and Strauss together introduced the term grounded theory, their approaches have been formed in different ways. Thus, understanding the differences and the background helps explain the implications for this substudy. For instance, Glaser, one of the co-founders of grounded theory, advocated for the rigorous approach of "letting the data speak." He criticized Strauss's approach to grounded theory (e.g.

Strauss and Corbin 1990) for being overly descriptive due to his emphasis on developing concepts rather than theories (Glaser 1992). Glaser (1992) strongly discouraged acquiring relevant knowledge through a literature review prior to data analysis, as this might result in possible bias, interfering with the investigator while constructing a theory from data (Glaser 1992). This strict approach reflects his belief in data.

In comparison, Strauss's grounded theory has gained more attention due to his accessible and clear writing (Bryman 2012). The systematic approach of Strauss and Corbin (1998) is commonly adopted to develop a theory that unfolds a process, action, or interaction on a specific topic. In particular, their approach offers more structured procedures for individual investigators who are interested in conducting research through grounded theory. In order to discover such a theory, this approach instructs researchers to conduct interviews until the data reaches the moment of saturation. In other words, the data are collected until additional information is no longer found. Additionally, Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggested "theoretical sampling" that requires the selection of research participants based on a relevant theoretical foundation to the theory being constructed.

The procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1998) typically consist of three steps: open coding, axial coding and selective coding. First, open coding refers to the ways in which the investigator breaks down and compares data. In the phase of open coding, concepts are discovered as "building blocks of theory" (Strauss and Corbin 1998, 101). From open coding, categories can also emerge as an evolution of concepts that represent real-life phenomena. Categories are more abstract than concepts and one category covers more than two concepts. Second, axial coding is "a set of procedures whereby data are put back together in new ways after open coding, by making connections between categories" (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 96). While revisiting initial categories, the investigator can identify new relationships between categories, thereby

creating more meaningful categories. Lastly, selective coding involves choosing a core category that plays a vital role in developing a theory. By "systematically relating it to other categories, validating those relationships, and filling in categories that need further refinement and development" (Strauss and Corbin 1990, 116), the researcher can create a relevant narrative. Throughout these coding phases, newly discovered concepts/categories are compared with previously identified concepts/categories. This constant comparison is another important tool in grounded theory to elaborate and refine a certain concept/category. Writing a memo during the comparison is essential to capture evolving ideas for building a stronger theory. Strauss and Corbin (1998, 22) described a theory as "a set of well-developed categories" that forms a theoretical framework to unfold social phenomena. They introduced two types of theories: substantive theory and formal theory. The former offers a theoretical framework related to a specific phenomenon, while the latter provides a more abstract-level understanding covering several substantive fields. As a result of research with the grounded theory approach, an abstract model, or a diagram, is typically presented to illustrate relationships among categories from the phenomenon (Strauss and Corbin 1998).

In contrast to this systematic approach that emphasizes the discovery of a core category, the work of Kathy Charmaz (2005, 2006) acknowledges plural realities with a social constructivist perspective. She argued that grounded theory findings are never certain but suggestive, incomplete, and inconclusive (Charmaz 2005). Besides the constructivist thought that refuses the existence of a single absolute truth, this pluralism is partially due to her emphasis on the stronger role of the investigator in the grounded theory research with flexible procedures. The focus of developing theory differs depending on the investigator's perspective and experiences. For instance, a researcher makes decisions to develop categories, connects questions with the data, and evolves while

conducting the research. Charmaz (2006) argued that embedded or hidden values, relationships and meanings can be discovered throughout the process of collecting rich data. Accordingly, she encouraged the active use of coding and suggested avoiding the use of jargon, complex descriptions, diagrams, and systematic approaches that both Glaser (1992) and Strauss and Corbin (1990) favored.

Based on the overview of different types of grounded theory, it can be seen that Charmaz's approach emerged as a criticism of previous approaches (Bryman 2012). Other researchers have also presented concerns about grounded theory. In particular, Bulmer (1979) challenged the idea of a lack of bias and being freed from previous studies during the coding phases, as most social scientists are already familiar with their own field. In relation to this concern, practical challenges occur when the investigator needs to introduce his/her research and its implications. In many ways, researchers face such situations when applying for grants and presenting their work in academic contexts. The lengthy amount of time required to transcribe the data from interviews and code through constant comparisons also poses additional practical difficulties to reach the theorization stage. Finally, the difficulty of identifying a formal theory was discussed (Bulmer 1979). Discovering concepts/categories is achievable through systematic approaches. However, most grounded theories are applied to a specific empirical context. More rigorous attempts to identify a formal theory need to be placed in a broader context that generalizes beyond the specific social phenomenon.

3.3.2. Implications of Grounded Theory

The first substudy aims at providing a basic understanding of the distinctive features of fashion design. Due to the intention of this inquiry to conduct an inductive empirical study on professional fashion designers, a grounded theory approach that fully embraces the voice of the designers was suitable. This substudy employed the grounded theory approach based on the work of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998). In this section, the rationale for selecting their approach will be introduced. Using the criticisms of grounded theory as a guideline, the reasons for applying systematic grounded theory in this substudy are explained below.

First of all, choosing this approach was logical for a junior researcher who aims to acquire methodological knowledge through practice. The systematic procedures of Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) provided clear instructions to construct this substudy. The slow development of the research allowed research questions to be revised gradually while exploring relevant literature. The literature was identified alongside the development of coding phases. As new concepts/categories were discovered and new relationships between them were found through constant comparison, research questions directly linked to this substudy were revised several times, but with the intention to theorize the notion of fashion design thinking.

The second point is related to the geographic context of this substudy. Grounded theory tends to construct a theory from a certain empirical context (Strauss and Corbin 1998). As discussed earlier, the location of Helsinki provided a convenient research condition for this substudy. In particular, for this substudy on the practice and culture of fashion designers, the fact that many fashion designers are self-em-

ployed and run their own business offered a distinctive advantage in comparison to fashion capitals, such as Paris, London, Milan and New York, and neighboring cities, such as Stockholm and Copenhagen, where fashion designers tend to work for larger companies (e.g. Malem, Miller, and König 2009). As the study of Sinha (2002) observed, this particular condition of Helsinki provides convenient access to study fashion designers' practice and culture, as they engage in autonomous decision making and have higher involvement in design rather than being restricted by the decisions of other actors in the company, such as managers, merchandisers and marketers. Hence, this substudy can successfully provide useful knowledge on fashion design thinking. Although it may require additional studies in contrasting settings to generate a formal theory, this context of Helsinki provided a firm foundation to construct a substantive theory that can be interpreted for broader contexts. In the following, using the work of Strauss and Corbin (1998) for guidance, the more detailed procedures employed for data collection and analysis will be explained.

3.3.3.

Theoretical Sampling and Data Collection

For this substudy on fashion design thinking, two methods of collecting data—semi-structured interviews as well as observations, including studio visits and presentation participations—were employed, mostly during the ten-month period between February and November in 2016. As several presentations by designers were scheduled after this period, a few additional observations took place in 2017. Following Cross (2011) who suggested the interview as an effective approach to gain insights into designing from designers, this method was selected as the main source of data collection. The interviews were held in the working space

or studio of the participants. Upon invitations from a number of designers, the researcher also attended their presentations of new collections. In conclusion, interviews and observations were conducted from a total of eighteen designers for this first substudy.

As the vital part of data collection, a series of semi-structured interviews was conducted with Helsinki-based fashion designers. Although the fashion scene in Helsinki is relatively small, studying all of the fashion designers in the city was not the intention of this study. Thus, the theoretical sampling approach (Strauss and Corbin 1998) was employed to source the most relevant data that can support constructing fashion design thinking. The following two criteria were set to guide the selection of research participants:

- Individuals who are currently working as a fashion designer.
- Individuals who have more than five years of continuing professional experience as a fashion designer.

In order to develop these criteria, the first criterion was set to clarify what is meant by “fashion designer.” In this study, “fashion designer” refers to an individual who is involved in designing a wide range of wearable items including apparel, accessories and shoes. The second criterion is supported by the study of Lawson and Dorst (2009) on design expertise. They classified designers in seven levels and noted that an “expert” level designer can express a certain set of values through his/her design practice. Therefore, according to Lawson and Dorst (2009), designers who have developed an expertise in their work and field were suitable for this study that constructs fashion design thinking through the collection of empirical data. Initially, ten years of experi-

ence was set as a criterion, but the small scale of the Helsinki fashion scene meant that there would not be a sufficient number of eligible experienced fashion designers, and thus the criterion was revised to five years, which is often a minimum requirement for senior-level fashion designer positions.¹⁵

Two factors influenced the total number of interviewees. First, in relation to the sampling, the smaller scale of the Helsinki and Finnish fashion scene restricted the identification of an abundant number of qualified interviewees. Second, data saturation was determined in the early stage of data interpretation. As the data collection proceeded, the repetition of findings was observed. Accordingly, the collection process was discontinued after eighteen interviews. Table 3.1 below provides relevant information regarding the interview respondents for this sub-study. The information includes professional experience in years, types of product, as well as business size in number of employees.

In advance of each interview, in order to formulate relevant guiding questions, secondary sources, such as print and online media articles about the designer and texts from the official website of the designer, were collected and reviewed. Business-oriented social networking platforms, such as LinkedIn, often provided useful information about the educational and professional background of the interviewees. Additionally, as McRobbie (2016) recommended, previous interviews with the designer in other media were reviewed in advance of the interview. These resources were mediated data, which were produced for purposes other than this sub-study. Therefore, the resources only functioned as supportive information separated from the main set of data even though they facilitated collecting the most relevant data in

15. Job openings for senior fashion designer positions were confirmed on relevant websites, such as *The Business of Fashion* (<https://www.businessoffashion.com/careers>), *Indeed* (<http://indeed.com>), and *The Guardian* (<https://jobs.theguardian.com>), between January 2015 and May 2018.

Respondent ID	Professional Experience (Y: Years)	Type of Product	Business Size (N: Number of employees)
1	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Men's wear	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
2	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Women's wear	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
3	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Women's wear, accessories	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
4	$Y \geq 20$	Women's wear, accessories	Small ($3 \leq N < 10$)
5	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Women's wear	Small ($3 \leq N < 10$)
6	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Women's wear	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
7	$10 \leq Y < 15$	Women's wear, accessories	Small ($3 \leq N < 10$)
8	$10 \leq Y < 15$	Women's wear	Small ($3 \leq N < 10$)
9	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Women's wear	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
10	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Women's wear	Medium ($N \geq 10$)
11	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Women's wear	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
12	$15 \leq Y < 20$	Women's wear, accessories, home	Medium ($N \geq 10$)
13	$10 \leq Y < 15$	Women's wear	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
14	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Women's wear, accessories	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
15	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Unisex	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
16	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Women's wear	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
17	$5 \leq Y < 10$	Unisex	Micro ($1 \leq N < 3$)
18	$Y \geq 20$	Women's wear	Small ($3 \leq N < 10$)

Table 3.1. The summarized information of interview respondents (a list of fashion designers who participated in this sub-study can be found in Appendix 3).

each interview. Fashion designers tend to have a hectic work schedule and the interviews took place mostly during breaks in their schedules or meetings. Thus, already having the basic information about the interviewees supported conducting the interviews more efficiently within the limited time available.

The process of each interview normally started with an informal conversation about the basic information gathered through mediated data, including the designer's academic and professional background,

and previous interviews. Then, related questions followed based on his/her comments. In this way, the interview was conducted as natural “conversations,” rather than as a technical exchange of questions and answers (Kvale 1996). However, a set of questions was prepared to guide each interview in order to prevent loss of focus and to collect basic information on all participants. The questions intended to cover educational and professional background, their practice while developing a new collection, and their opinions on the global fashion industry and Helsinki fashion scene (see Appendix 2). Overall the average duration of the interviews was one hour (with the shortest being 30 minutes and the longest 95 minutes). The interviews were recorded with a digital voice recorder, usually after the participant signed the consent form. While transcribing the recorded voice data, memos were taken to capture possible directions and tentative thoughts for further reviewing the data.

Likewise with the aim of seeking a comfortable environment for conversation, conducting each interview at the designer’s studio or workspace helped the interview to capture the participants at their most natural. Visiting studios was also convenient because this made it possible to immediately review tangible examples supporting the interviewee’s comments. In addition to recorded comments, field notes were taken during or after the visit to document observed information about the designer, such as the general atmosphere of the workspace, personality and organization of the work. In the case of some designers who occasionally organize presentations of new collections in Helsinki (Respondent 2, 3, 4, 6, 9, 12, 15, 16, 17 and 18), additional data were collected through field notes and photographs from these events. This participation was especially useful for understanding the ways in which designers present their works to audiences, such as buyers, journalists and clients, and engage with them.

3.3.4. Coding Phases

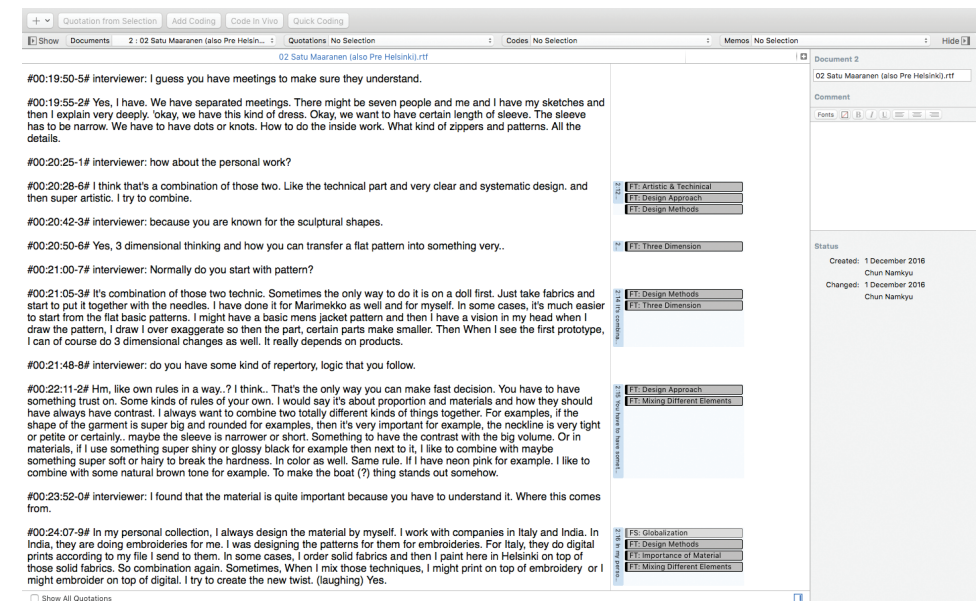


Figure 3.1. A screenshot of Atlas.ti software with codes.

For Substudy 1, all recorded interviews were transcribed and then combined with field notes. These sets of data were reviewed through grounded theory coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998). Throughout the open and axial coding, the Atlas.ti software was used, as it helped digitize the coding phases (see Figure 3.1). This was necessary to ensure convenience in the handling of the gathered data, which totaled 20 hours and 19 minutes. The gathered data were first broken down into small portions of meanings. Initial codes were generated and compared with each other to later identify concepts. Categories of fashion design thinking emerged while refining concepts. Then, the relationships

among the key categories were further explored. While identifying the relationships, initially coded data were also printed out and analyzed manually (see Figure 3.2). This manual activity often provided a new perspective to view the already identified concepts and categories. Selective coding was followed to articulate and validate the categories.



Figure 3.2. A manual coding activity in the coding phase.

Throughout the coding process, the most relevant literature was identified constantly to compare with the emerged categories. As a result of the interpretation and constant comparison with previous studies, the identified categories contributed to formulating a substantive theory of fashion design thinking. Figure 3.3 summarizes the coding phases of Substudy 1.

Data Set	Transcribed interviews (primary source), field notes, and photographs.
Open Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Labeling codes to incidents (small chunk of meanings) from the data set. - Constructing concepts through comparison among the codes. - Identifying relevant literature for the concepts.
Axial Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identifying categories while refining concepts. - Understanding relationships among categories. - Comparing categories with literature.
Selective Coding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Articulating the emerged categories by revisiting the codes. - Selecting representational quotes for the categories from the data. - Refining the description for the categories.
Results	<p>Three Categories on the Practice of Fashion Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dimension of Process: Continuity -Dimension of Product: Collection -Dimension of Use: Context <p>Two Categories on the Culture of Fashion Design</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Dimension of Meaning: Objectives of Designing (Internal) -Dimension of Material: The Production System (External)

Figure 3.3. A summary of the data analysis process in Substudy 1.

As a result of these coding phases, three categories of fashion design practice and two categories of fashion design culture were discovered. Figure 3.4 shows the relationship between codes, concepts, and categories constructing fashion design thinking.

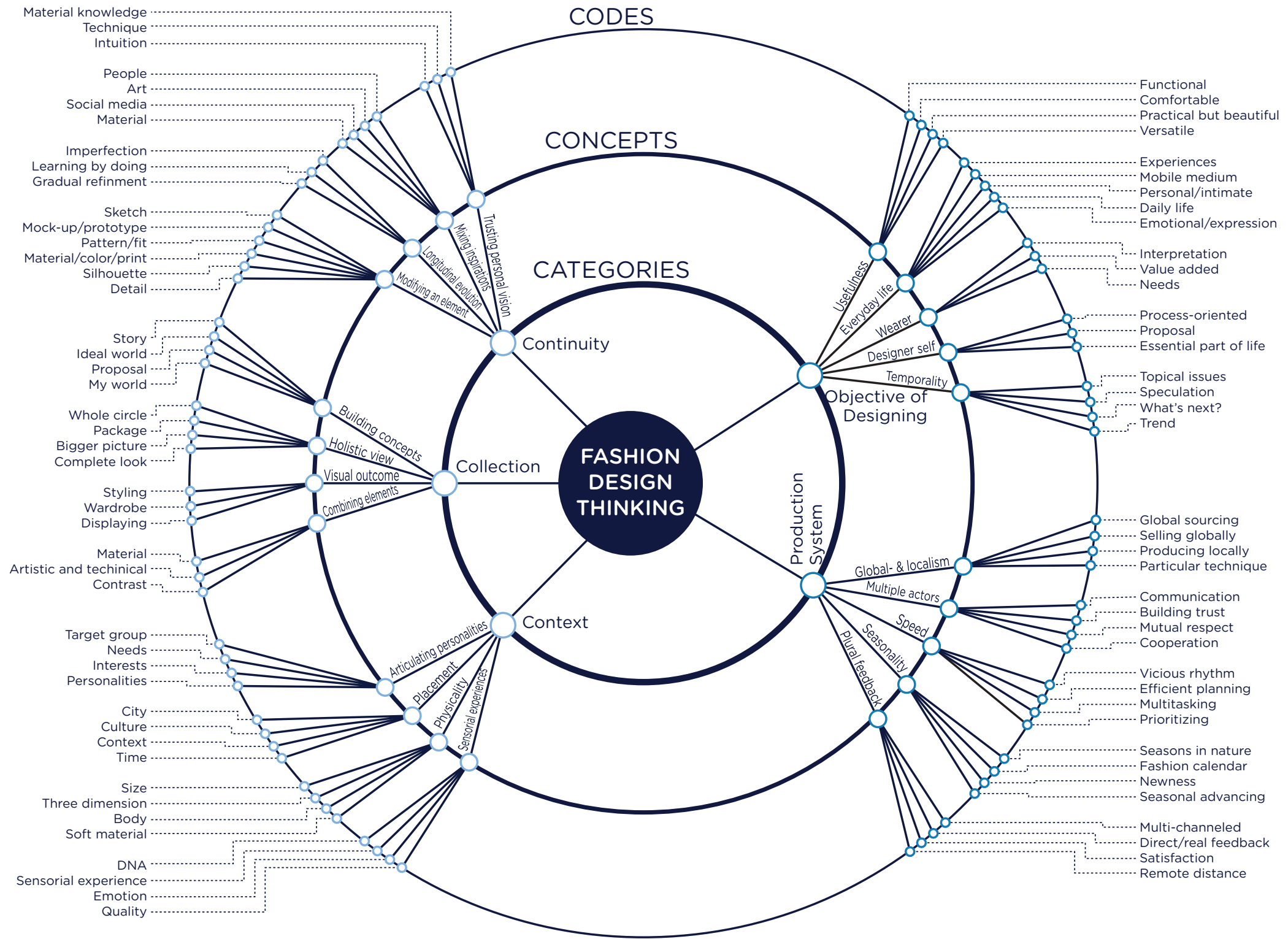


Figure 3.4. A radial chart illustrating the hierarchy of data.

In the actual coding process, the construction of fashion design thinking took place gradually. Table 3.2 below shows how the data were converted into codes and then concepts. Several concepts are grouped together to form a category. These categories can also form a higher-level category.

DATA (TRANSCRIPT AND FIELD NOTE)	CODE
<p>when I make a collection, I think there are certain pieces that <i>go together</i>. (Respondent 1, interview, February 3, 2016)</p> <p>Because we are doing many things at the same time and quite big things and have to have a <i>big picture</i> in mind all the time. So how all these different things are going into the <i>same direction</i>. (Respondent 5, interview, February 24, 2016)</p> <p>I try to develop it [with] the other materials also [so] that our sweater or sweatshirt, sweatpants would have <i>the same feeling</i> even though [they] are made in cotton. (Respondent 5, interview, February 24, 2016)</p> <p><i>The bigger picture</i> also seeing what is lacking. (Respondent 3, interview, February 23, 2016)</p> <p><i>Very holistic</i>. you need to keep developing the <i>whole area of the picture</i> all the time. You don't go into one area and finish that off and then move on to the next area. You just slowly develop it. [...] all the areas come into a view softly and gradually. (Respondent 9, interview, March 18, 2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Circle • Package • Bigger Picture • Complete Look

DATA (TRANSCRIPT AND FIELD NOTE)	CODE
<p>Everything we thought about together; so it's a <i>package</i>. (Respondent 10, interview, April 1, 2016)</p> <p>You have to think [in terms of a] <i>very complete</i> packet, everything through to make such [a] successful brand. (Respondent 11, interview, April 6, 2016)</p> <p>it's kind of natural, because clothing is normally different pieces, what you are wearing, [...] you can have pants and shirt and jacket and scarf and hat and socks and so, like they are many items, in the, in one outfit already. And then we have to think about the collection and <i>everything goes together</i> and you can wear it, and then <i>the collection looks good at once</i>. And I always think also that, how it looks, when they are hanging in the sales moment, that I try to visualize how they will look in the rail. (Respondent 13, interview, April 8, 2016)</p> <p>this idea of collection that <i>complement to each other</i>. (Respondent 18, interview, November 30, 2016)</p> <p>We just think <i>what's missing</i>, what we need next in the next collection. (Respondent 15, interview, August 31, 2016)</p> <p>we want to think of how to bring something new to the collection like <i>how to build the collection</i> in a sense that it works best in the shop also building this wardrobe that has all the essential garments in it. (Respondent 16, interview, September 9, 2016)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whole Circle • Package • Bigger Picture • Complete Look

Table 3.2. An example of coding the data (the concept of Having a Holistic View).

3.4.

Substudy 2: Case Study Strategy¹⁶

Different from the gradual development of Substudy 1, the second sub-study investigated the timely case of Pre Helsinki to demonstrate the expanded social role of fashion designers as placemakers. Since 2013, the Pre Helsinki platform has developed a series of programs, both locally in Helsinki and globally in other cities, such as Paris, New York and Shanghai, in order to increase the visibility of young Finnish fashion designers. Fashion designers have been noticeably proactive in the formation and operation of the platform. Additionally, its contribution to the changing fashion ecology in Helsinki/Finland has been significant. Thus, studying the platform was relevant to not just demonstrating the dynamic involvements of fashion designers but also exemplifying how fashion designers can play an expanded role as placemakers while employing fashion design thinking.

3.4.1.

Research Questions and Proposition

While encountering the case of Pre Helsinki, Skov's study (2011) on placemaking in the polycentric world of fashion offered a theoretical departure point for Substudy 2. In the study, she raised the question, "What do fashion designers produce that is significant for the nation?" (Skov 2011, 150) Being a sociological study, the answer to the question remained at the macro-level of analysis rather than centering her observation on the actual activities of fashion designers. Both to continue her inquiry and to interlace with Substudy 1, the Pre Helsinki case was

16. Some of the descriptions of collecting and analyzing the data in Substudy 2 were taken from earlier published journal articles by the author (Chun, Gurova, and Niinimäki 2017; Chun and Gurova 2019).

investigated for Substudy 2. With a meso-level perspective on fashion designers' practice of placemaking, the main inquiry on the expanded role of fashion designers was broken down into two research questions to explore: (1) the practical descriptions of the Pre Helsinki platform, and (2) the involvements of fashion designers in playing the role of placemakers through the platform (these questions will be further introduced in the corresponding chapter). Both relating to these questions and continuing the discussion on place and design (Julier 2013; Manzini 2015), previous studies in fashion that explored the relationship between fashion design and place will be further reviewed in Chapter 5. Figure 3.5 visualizes the construct of Substudy 2.

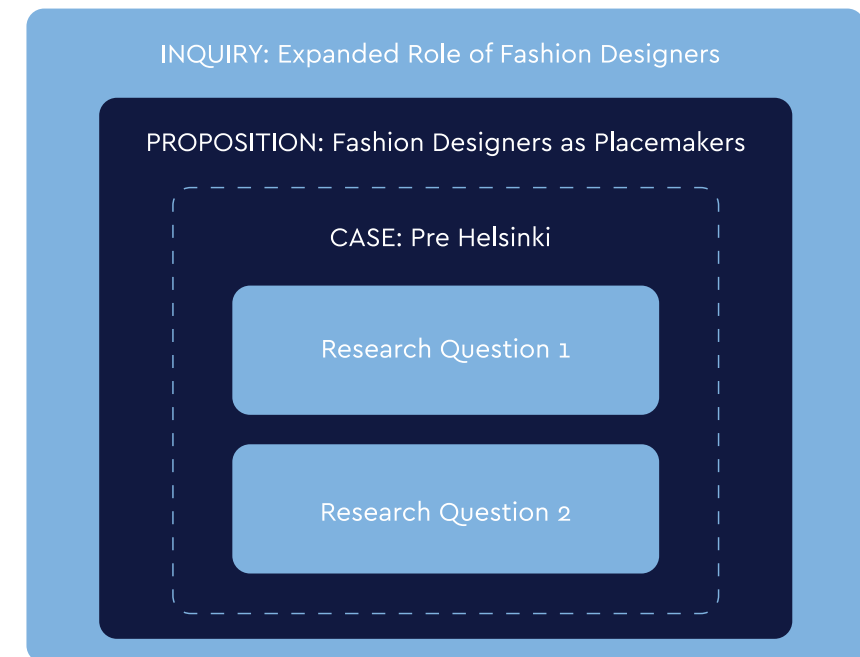


Figure 3.5. A visualization of the structure of Substudy 2.

3.4.2. Designing a Single Case Study

Based on this structure, Substudy 2 was designed as a single instrumental case study and several studies supported this choice. While listing examples of research works conducted in architecture and urban planning, Rolf Johansson (2003) argued that the case study approach can be beneficial in practice-oriented fields of research. He stated that: “The ability to act within professional practice is based on knowledge of a repertoire of cases. These cases are based either on personal experience or are model cases established within the profession. Case studies contribute to the building of a professional repertoire” (Johansson 2003, 4). This substudy does not aim at building a professional repertoire but instead seeks to investigate the employment of such a repertoire, which was theorized as fashion design thinking, in the case of Pre Helsinki. Therefore, for demonstrating the employment of a repertoire, the iterative approach of Robert Yin (2014) was relevant.

Based on Yin (2014, 16), the case study approach is defined as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundary between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident.” Due to this ambiguous boundary, he also noted that case study inquiry depends heavily on multiple sources of evidence and benefits when the development of theoretical propositions occurs in advance to data collection and analysis in order to serve as guidance in exploring the phenomenon (Yin 2014, 17). Yin (2014, 19-22) offered ways in which to address traditional prejudices against the case study approach. In this section, three relevant prejudices for this substudy will be discussed, as they offer clear instructions to avoid possible methodological challenges. The prejudices include the level of rigor, generalizability, and workload. The first

concern is related to the lack of rigor in the case study approach. This issue emerges from the unsystematic procedures of case study investigation and methodological instructions; thus, he suggested conducting a case study with systematic procedures. The second concern is with the generalizability of the case study result. He argued that generalization is intended for use at the theoretical rather than the statistical level; thus, he advocated building a generalizable theory through case study. The last point of concern stems from the overwhelming amount of evidence and the time-consuming research process. However, this issue can be resolved by triangulating multiple sources of evidence instead of solely depending on data from fieldwork over a long duration of time.

The work of Robert Stake (1995) is also useful to understand case study. Depending on the intent of a certain case study, he differentiated between intrinsic and instrumental cases. An intrinsic case study seeks to explore a case demanding deeper descriptions due to its uniqueness and unusual characteristics. An instrumental case study aims to understand specific phenomena, but it can be a single case study or multiple case study depending on the number of cases within the study.

In Substudy 2, general procedures for collecting and analyzing evidence for a case study were adopted from Yin (2014), who introduced rigorous and systematic approaches to viewing case study as a research strategy. The following sections explain the ways in which the case study of Pre Helsinki was conducted.

3.4.3. Collecting Multiple Sources of Evidence

Due to the aim of this substudy to explore fashion designers' expanded role in the case of Pre Helsinki and to provide explanations for the application of fashion design thinking in the perspective of placemaking, multiple sources of evidence were collected (Yin 2014). Yin introduced: documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant observations, and physical artifacts. For this substudy, other than archival records, most of the sources of evidence mentioned by Yin (2014) were considered. Triangulation of the evidence from this single instrumental case enabled the construction of a holistic viewpoint to identify relevant explanations while building connections between the case of Pre Helsinki and placemaking. In the following, depending on the importance of the evidence used in this substudy, the four sources will be introduced in the order of interviews, observations, physical artifacts, and documentation. The collected data from interviews and observations provided the main sources of evidence and were further analyzed. Data collected from other sources were utilized to support the findings and to help prepare for interviews and observations. The collection methods of each source will be explained in the following.

Among the sources of data collection, the interview was the primary source of evidence. Following the purposive sampling approach (Flick 2009), interviewees were selected by two criteria: (1) involvement in the Pre Helsinki platform and (2) platform organizers' comments from the early stage of interviews. As a result, during the period between February and November in 2016, a total of fourteen interviews were conducted (recorded data: 10 hours 2 minutes). The interviews started with the co-founders and organizers who currently

work for the platform (creative director, brand director, PR/marketing director, among others). After learning about individuals who influenced the formation of the platform, additional interviews with the experts from both the local educational institution and industry (educators, consultants and prominent designers) were followed. Understanding the perspective of fashion designers who have participated in Pre Helsinki programs was vital to acquire a balanced view of the platform. Therefore, a couple of interviews with designer participants were conducted to add their voices to this study. Lastly, to view the platform from the outside, external partners who collaborate with the platform at the local scale, including a ministry representative, were contacted to participate in the interview. Table 3.3 below presents the interview participants, including their role in the platform and their relationship with it.

Name	Role at Pre Helsinki	Job
Satu Maaranen	Co-Founder, Creative Director	Fashion Designer at Marimekko
Miia Koski	Co-Founder, Former Project Manager and Producer	Consultant at Juni
Martta Louekari	Co-Founder, Former PR Director	Consultant at Juni
Kirsti Lindberg-Repo	Mentor	Professor at Aalto University in Branding
Pekka Mattila	Mentor	Professor at Aalto University in Business
Tuomas Laitinen	External Partner	Lecturer at Aalto University, Fashion Editor of S&S
Vuokko Nurmesniemi	Mentor	Designer/ Owner of Vuokko
Laura Väinölä	Brand Director, Event Manager (since 2016)	Creative Director at Duotone
Maija Juutilainen	PR and Marketing Director (since 2016)	PR Manager at Zalando
Johanna Kotkajärvi	External Partner	Director at the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Pirjo Hirvonen	External Partner	Professor at Aalto University in Fashion Design
Pekka Korvenmaa	Finnish Design Historian	Professor at Aalto University in Design and Culture
Sasu Kauppi	Fashion Designer Participant	Fashion Designer / Owner of SSSU
Laura Juslin	Fashion Designer Participant	Fashion Designer / Co-Founder of Juslin Maunula

Table 3.3. Summarized information on the interview participants.

The interviews were conducted to not just understand the case of Pre Helsinki but also to explore the involvements of fashion designers. In order to address both, the relationship and different perspectives needed to be incorporated. Thus, diverse actors involved in the platform were selected for the interviews instead of isolating them. This approach was employed by Aspers (2006) in the study on contextual knowledge of fashion designers and photographers. He placed the development of networks in which fashion designers are situated and their cultural dimension as the center of analysis, as their knowledge is not isolated from the networks and domains. However, it also implies the importance of understanding diverse actors' involvement in the platform in order to actually conduct interviews. Due to this reason, in advance of each interview, various types of documentation from secondary sources, such as news media, websites and social media, were searched to understand the background of the interviewee and the role in the platform. Reviewing these sources was helpful to construct relevant questions. Other than these individually formulated questions, several topics were commonly discussed with every interviewee. These topics include personal opinions about the Finnish and Helsinki fashion scene, his/her relationship with the platform and its future development scenarios (see Appendix 2). Diverse angles of opinions involving varying expertise and relationships with the platform helped constitute a coherent and objective view of the case.

Second, in addition to the interviews, a series of observations were conducted during the Pre Helsinki program from 2014 to 2017. Starting from the first observation in 2014, its annual programs organized in Helsinki were followed to observe the continuation and evolution of the platform. In particular, from May 20th to 28th in 2016, the entire program was intensively followed and documented through

field notes and photographs as a formal data collection activity for case study. During or after the observations, field notes were taken to document various factors for each event, including audiences, setups and atmosphere. The format of events varied from an exhibition to a fashion show, a showcase, an opening of a pop-up store, a workshop, and a party (see Table 3.4 for the observed program in 2016). After this formal research activity, additional observation took place during the 2017 program to confirm the findings that emerged from this substudy.

NO	ACTIVITY	DATE
1	Daniel Palillo "Mainly Portraits" Exhibition	May 20
2	Marimekko Public Fashion Show	May 20
3	Pre Helsinki Pop-Up Store Opening Breakfast	May 23
4	Ville Varumo "Playground" Exhibition Open House	May 23
5	Aalto ARTS Fashion Seminar	May 25
6	Tekstiili (Textile) 16 Exhibition Opening	May 25
7	Näytös 16 (Aalto University Fashion Show)	May 25
8	Pre Helsinki House Presentation	May 26
9	Tekstiili (Textile) 16 Exhibition Party	May 27
10	Pre Helsinki "Working Shop"	May28

Table 3.4. A list of observed events in the Pre Helsinki 2016 program (the platform was responsible for organizing the highlighted events in this table).

Third, due to the engaging setting and intention of Pre Helsinki programs, during the observations, physical artifacts made by designers were accessible to study. These artifacts for this substudy included items presented at various events, especially a pop-up store opening and

a presentation and exhibitions. Thus, on-site observations of the artifacts were conducted and documented as field notes and photographs to capture useful insights that may be useful for further analysis.

Lastly, various types of documents were collected as mediated data. These types of data were not produced for this specific case study but were published either digitally or in a printed form to communicate with larger audiences. The spectrum of this data includes texts and visual materials from official digital communication channels of Pre Helsinki 2016, such as a website and social media.¹⁷ Brochures from each event were collected as well. Several news items and articles from both local and global fashion media about the platform were reviewed. However, these materials were only used as supportive information for this substudy to confirm the findings, rather than combined together with the main data set from the interviews and observations.

3.4.4. Thematic Analysis

For the second substudy, the recorded interviews—the main source of evidence—were transcribed and combined with other data, including field notes and photographs from observations and physical artifacts. The analytic process selected for this data set was thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is “a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. [...] it also often goes further than this, and interprets various aspects of the research topic” (Boyatzis 1998, cited in Braun and Clarke 2006, 6). Despite the lack of clear agreement on its use as an analytic method, Braun and Clarke (2006, 9) noted that “thematic analysis can be a method which works both to reflect reality, and to unpick

or unravel the surface of ‘reality’.” They typified thematic analysis in inductive and iterative approaches depending on the driver of the research: either data-driven or analyst-driven. For this substudy, the iterative or theoretical approach was employed due to its specific research inquiry. Thus, themes of placemaking were first identified from previous studies in order to compare with the results from the case of Pre Helsinki. Bryman (2012) noted that a theme can be understood similarly to a code from grounded theory. In spite of the vague definition of thematic analysis, he introduced a theme as (Bryman 2012, 580):

- a category identified by the analyst through his/her data;
- that relates to his/her research focus (and quite possibly to the research questions);
- that builds on codes identified in transcripts and/or field notes;
- and that provides the researcher with the basis for a theoretical understanding of his or her data that can make a theoretical contribution to the literature relating to the research focus.

To both address the methodological concern McRobbie (2016) posed and follow Yin’s (2014) suggestion for evaluating a case study, triangulation of the multiple data sources was employed (Patton 2002). Firstly, after the selective review of previous studies on the placemaking practice of fashion design, its main characteristics were conceptualized. Ryan and Bernard (2003) noted that themes can be identified while seeking repetitions, indigenous typologies or categories, metaphors and analogies, transitions, similarities and differences, linguistic connectors, missing data, and theory-related material. Considering these aspects, collected data from interviews and observations were re-

17. Official website (<http://www.prehelsinki.fi>) and social media (<https://www.facebook.com/PreHelsinki/> and <http://instagram.com/prehelsinki/>) of Pre Helsinki.

viewed repeatedly using the Atlas.ti software to identify findings while triangulating the data. Throughout multiple revisions, the findings were refined to present a precise description of the Pre Helsinki case and the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers. Figure 3.6 below summarizes the analytic process of data in Substudy 2.

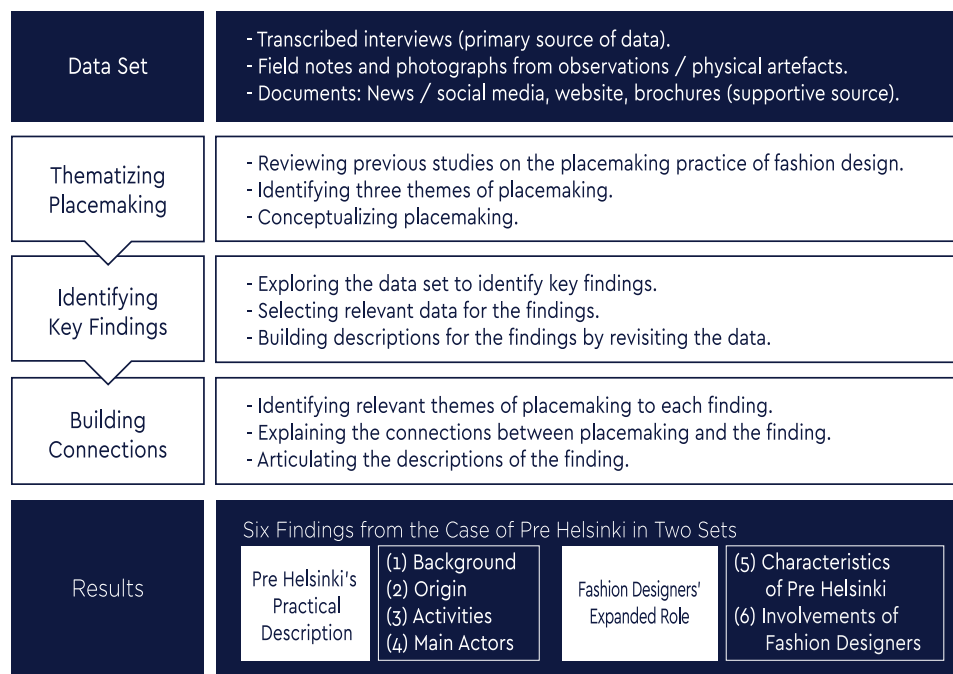


Figure 3.6. A visualization of the data analysis process for Substudy 2.

As results of thematic analysis, six findings of the Pre Helsinki case were identified, namely background and origin of the organization, its activities, main actors, characteristics of the platform, and involvements of fashion designers.

3.5. Addressing Ethical Issues

Before introducing the structure of the studies in this dissertation, this section is dedicated to discussing research ethics, as the general issues may vary depending on the type of research concerned. For this research employing qualitative research strategies, the guidelines of the Finnish Advisory Board of Research Integrity (2012) were reviewed and six relevant issues were identified: (1) data management, (2) harm to participants, (3) lack of informed consent, (4) invasion of privacy, (5) deception, and (6) plagiarism. The ways in which the issues were addressed in this dissertation will be explained below.

First, this research employed interviews and field research as the main channels for data collection and a vast amount of data were gathered, including interview transcripts, field notes, photographs, and reflective memos. Thus, having a systematic structure was important to organize and manage the data. At first, a plan for data collection was written according to the unit of analysis and observation. Clear labeling and tagging information was added digitally once the data were collected. This step was useful in order to ensure that the analytic methods could be applied more easily later, such as grounded theory coding and thematic analysis.

Second, this research does not include any physical involvement of participants. However, potential mental stress and emotional discomfort were considered while conducting interviews and field research. For instance, all interviews were conducted only after mutual agreement had been reached, without rushing the participants. Particularly in the case of Substudy 1, conducting the interviews at the working space of designers minimized the level of discomfort.

Third, consent forms were used carefully throughout the research. This research relied heavily on the information from the participants, including fashion designers and actors around the platform of Pre Helsinki. Therefore, a consent form was carefully prepared to ensure that the participants fully acknowledged the aim of the research and the ways in which the collected data will be used. This was also intended to prevent issues with intellectual property. Informed consent forms were used for data collection in both studies (see Appendix 1 to view the form). The form was given and explained to the individual in advance to the formal research activity, such as an interview and a studio visit.

Fourth, regarding possible invasion of privacy for the research participants, Substudy 1 and 2 utilized different approaches due to the purpose of each study. For Substudy 1, all interview participants were anonymized when citing concise quotes in this research (e.g. Respondent 1, Respondent 2), as the unit of observation for this study was the practice and culture of fashion designers, rather than a specific individual (see however Appendix 3 for the list of respondents). Although the objective of this substudy was to give a voice to the unnoticed fashion design profession, it was intended to achieve this through the construction of fashion design thinking. Additionally, this research avoids contributing to the promotion of specific designers. As this is an independent academic study, it does not seek to have commercial implications for any particular fashion company or brand. In contrast, for Substudy 2, the names of interview participants were not anonymized. This is due to the transparency of the Pre Helsinki platform, which shared information about the organizers and partners publicly on its website. Identifying the research participants is not difficult due to their involvement in the platform. Additionally, information on each individual participant is also available online as most participants have the status of quasi public figures in the local context of Finland.

Fifth, throughout the whole research process, transparency was the key to avoid the issue of deception. In practice, an email was sent to each research participant with a brief introduction to the research and the researcher. Before the interview started, the research was recapped to the participant while presenting the consent form. After the interview, additional explanations on the purpose of the research and the use of the gathered data were provided. This aimed at minimizing the possible influence of the explanation on the participant.

Lastly, the author sought to be as thorough as possible in citing other works relevant to this research. For the identification of the research gap and theoretical foundations, the work of other scholars was acknowledged respectfully. In addition, the findings and arguments of previously published articles by the author were carefully revised as much as possible from the original publications to minimize self-plagiarism. This issue is especially relevant to Substudy 2 as multiple articles were written and published with senior researchers (Chun, Gurova, and Niinimäki 2017; Chun and Gurova 2019). Additionally, following the Chicago style of citation, the previous publications are cited precisely to avoid possible confusion caused by duplicate texts. To prevent possible coincidental plagiarism, the originality of the dissertation was checked using the online tool Turnitin provided by Aalto University.

3.6. The Weaving Metaphor

In order to both describe the multiple strategies of qualitative research and combine two narratives into one more effectively, the use of the weaving metaphor was decided upon. The adoption of textile or fabric metaphors is not an unusual practice in academic writing (see Creswell 2013, 42). For instance, in her study of British fashion design, McRobbie

(1998, 67) described smaller portions of her studies as fine and delicate pieces of fabric that can together form the main body of “material.” Expanding this description, among diverse types of textiles, woven fabrics are considered as basic materials for fashion design (Hallett and Johnston 2014). Based on *The Textile Terms and Definitions* provided by the Textile Institute, weaving is “the action of producing fabric by the interlacing of warp and weft threads” (Beech et al. 1986, 276). The warp is the vertical line of threads (lengthways) that provides a main structure while constructing the fabric. The weft is the horizontal line of threads (widthways) that provides character to the fabric. During the construction, the warp is fixated to a weaving machine while the weft is added to the warp by moving a carrier zigzag constantly.

This metaphor is useful to explain both the methodological logic of this research and the narrative of the two substudies. Similar to the warp, the first substudy provides the foundation of this research while the second substudy offers case-specific explanations as the weft. Moreover, the objective of this research, which aims at providing a fuller understanding on distinctive features of fashion designers in order to expand their roles, resonates with the metaphor, as fashion designers must have basic knowledge of materials, such as woven fabric, in order to develop their work. Starting with the case of Pre Helsinki, this dissertation envisions becoming the groundwork to weaving in additional roles of fashion designers beyond placemakers. Figure 3.7 below visualizes the weaving metaphor.

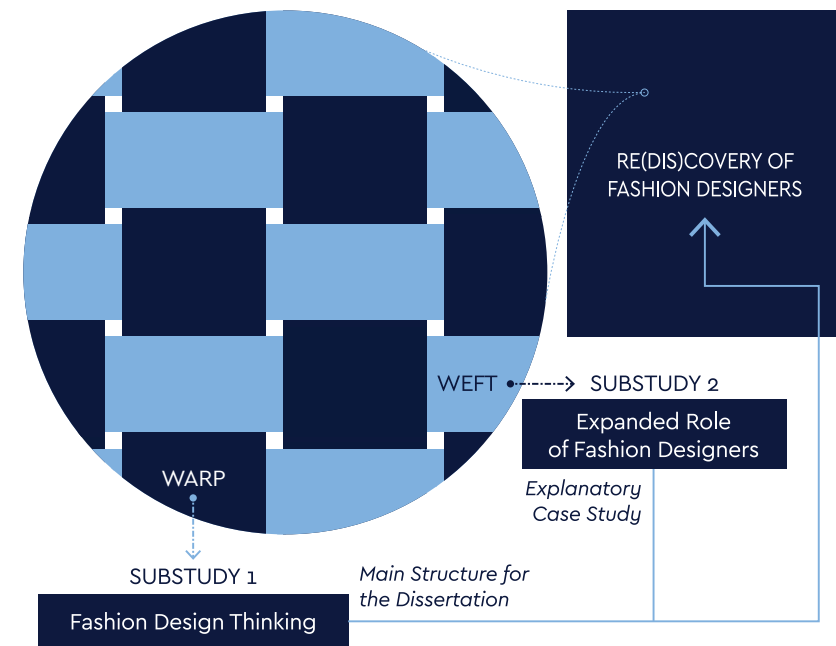


Figure 3.7. The weaving metaphor for the two substudies.

Even the simplest plain weave must be constructed carefully in order to be useful in the future. Therefore, as noted earlier, each substudy was conducted as independent research but designed to enable the weaving of the results to re(dis)cover fashion designers. The relationship of the two substudies is complementary. The first substudy seeks to build new knowledge on fashion design thinking that includes the two dimensions of the practice and the culture of fashion design. The findings of the first substudy support the second substudy, which explored the involvements of fashion designers in the placemaking of Helsinki/Finland through the case of Pre Helsinki. The application of fashion design thinking to the case reveals the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers.

Woven fabric can be constructed from multiple combinations of different threads. This metaphor also illustrates the multiple layers of triangulation. As explained earlier, methodological triangulation was employed to weave two research strategies and narratives in this doctoral dissertation. The second layer of triangulation addressed McRobbie’s (2016) methodological concern regarding the level of data sources. Following the basic principle of qualitative research (Flick 2009) and the triangulation of data sources (Patton 2002), each substudy employed more than two methods to collect various types of data instead of relying on a single source of evidence. With the grounded theory approach, Substudy 1 carried out an in-depth investigation of the data from interviews and field notes from observations, especially studio visits and presentation participations (Strauss and Corbin 1998). In contrast, for Substudy 2, various types of data were collected from interviews, observations, documentations, and physical artifacts with the case study approach that emphasizes multiple sources of evidence (Yin 2014).

SUBSTUDY	1	2
Strategy	Grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998)	Case study (Yin 2014)
Unit of Analysis	Distinctive features of fashion design	Expanded role of fashion designers
Sample	Helsinki-based fashion designers	The platform of Pre Helsinki
Data Collection	- Interview (20 hours 19 minutes) - Observation - Secondary source (supportive)	- Interview (10 hours 2 minutes) - Observation - Physical artifact (supportive) - Document (supportive)
Data Analysis	Coding (Strauss and Corbin 1998)	Thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006)
Related Chapter	Chapter 4	Chapter 5

Table 3.5 A summary of qualitative research strategies for the two substudies.

Besides these two types of triangulation, another interweaving took place from the level of data analysis. Due to the different intentions of the two substudies, different approaches for data analysis were employed in comparison to data collection, which employed similar methods of interviews and observation in both substudies. Despite the constant dialogue between theory and data, in Substudy 1, the data were a starting point to discover concepts and categories to theorize fashion design thinking rather than using the data to verify theory (Glaser 1992). This data-driven approach was motivated by the aim of the substudy to discover distinctive features of the dressmaking practice of fashion designers through an inductive study; thus, their practice can be rediscovered. Meanwhile, in Substudy 2, theoretical backgrounds on the placemaking practice of fashion design were reviewed first to identify themes, followed by further analysis of the data. This iterative approach of thematic analysis was useful to identify the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers. Overall, the role of theory and data in each substudy was distinctively different. The difference for analyzing the data in the two substudies is visualized in Figure 3.8.

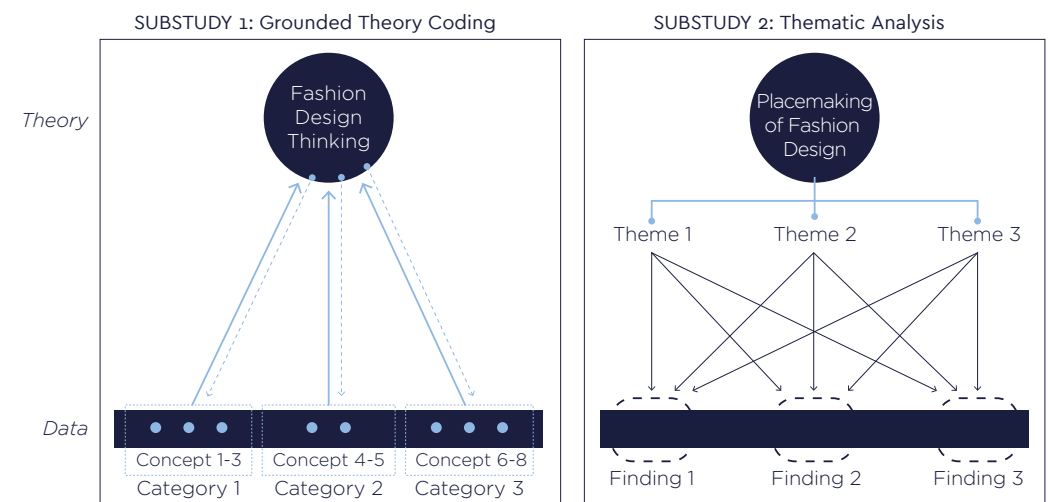


Figure 3.8. A comparative scheme of data analysis between Substudy 1 and 2.

In terms of actual phases of the research, after the preparation phase where the research scope was narrowed down from the initial idea, the data from both substudies were collected concurrently in 2016. Nevertheless, as the centerpiece of this dissertation, Substudy 1 was developed at a slower pace than Substudy 2 due to its inductive approach, which requires iterative coding phases for theorization. The process of analyzing the data, drafting papers and even presenting a partial result at a conference for Substudy 2 proceeded faster (see Chun, Gurova, and Niinimäki 2017). Moreover, as a case-specific study, constructing Substudy 2 was relevant immediately after the main data set had been collected from the fieldwork during the Pre Helsinki 2016 program in Helsinki. In comparison, Substudy 1 was developed throughout the gradual process of coding. Consequently, after the documentation of Substudy 1, the findings from Substudy 2, especially the involvements of fashion designers, were examined again to demonstrate the application of fashion design thinking in the expanded practice of placemaking. Thus, the initial intention of identifying fashion design thinking first and then investigating its application to a case study was challenged. However, instead of directly applying the result of one to another, the reversed development process helped to avoid oversimplifying the result and enabled revisiting it. In other words, the assessment of the application of fashion design thinking to various involvements identified in the Pre Helsinki case was possible due to the reversed process. Conducting the substudies in this order strengthened the structure of the warp and the weft to serve as a foreground for future studies on fashion design. Figure 3.9 below summarizes the overall phases of this research.

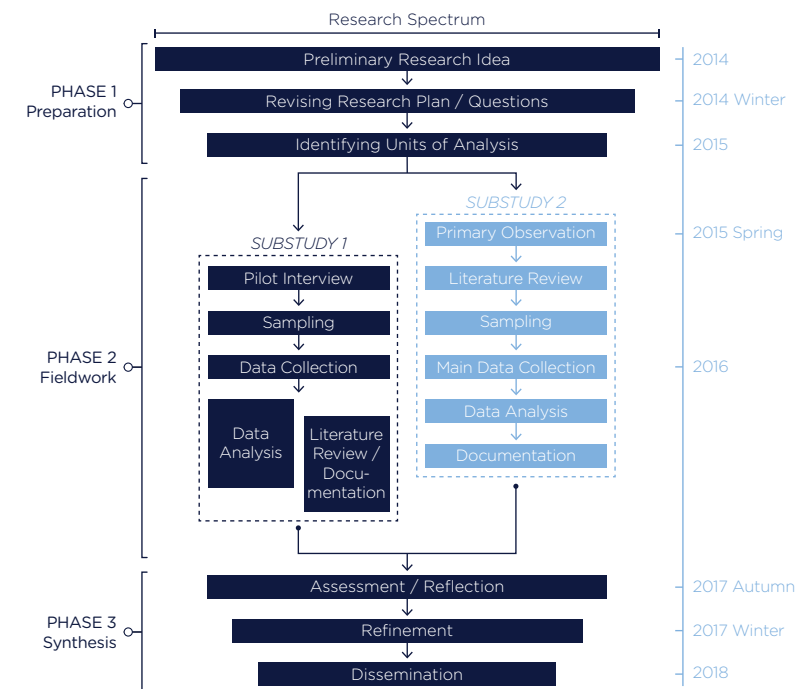


Figure 3.9. A visualization of overall research phases.

By introducing the structure of the dissertation and the weaving metaphor, the groundwork for this dissertation is finalized through the dialectic process between being in the field and reviewing previous studies, and woven together as one piece of fabric for further uses. In the following, the results of these two qualitative inquiries are presented as the warp and the weft of the woven fabric in Chapter 4 and 5. Afterwards, in Chapter 6, the two substudies are woven together to complete the construction of the woven fabric by theoretically connecting findings from the two substudies.

04

*THE WARP:
FASHION
DESIGN
THINKING*



In this chapter that introduces the warp—the essential structure for woven fabric—the distinctive features of fashion design are the main unit of analysis. It is a vital part of this doctoral dissertation that aims at recovering the meaning of the fashion design profession and expanding the role of fashion designers. Without identifying the features that offer foundational knowledge to differentiate them from designers in other subfields, presenting the authentic contributions of the fashion designers would have limited applicability. In other words, this dissertation first requires exploring various aspects of fashion designers who are situated in a certain condition. In design, research on fashion design has not yet been articulated enough, as argued by Nixon and Blakley (2012). Moreover, research on fashion tends to stay on the social and symbolic level rather than fully incorporating the actual practice of fashion designers (Finn 2014). For these reasons, the strategy of grounded theory was suitable for exploring this underdiscovered condition, instead of limiting this substudy within a specific predefined theory. Relevant literature for this substudy is introduced first in order to offer a theoretical scope that provides a specific context for constructing fashion design thinking. In fact, as an inductive study, this review on previous studies was developed alongside the coding phases. The literature spans from the research stream of design thinking to the culture of design, fashion design, and fashion thinking. The findings help the construction of fashion design thinking, which introduces a perspective to understand how fashion designers work, what they do and why. As noted earlier, the term fashion design thinking was selected to hint at the application of design thinking discourses supporting the construction process. After reviewing previous studies on design practice and fashion design throughout this substudy, the inquiry on the distinctive features of fashion design was evolved and rephrased into two minor questions:

- (1) What are the recurring features of dressmaking practice identifiable from individual fashion designers?
- (2) What factors are shared among fashion designers in the collective to situate their individual practice?

The first question sought to provide explanations for the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers while comparing it with the generic characterization of design practice. Meanwhile, the second question aimed at presenting the macro perspective to view where the individual practice of fashion designers is situated – in other words, their shared culture. Figure 4.1 below visualizes relevant conversations that this substudy joins in the research domain of design and fashion.

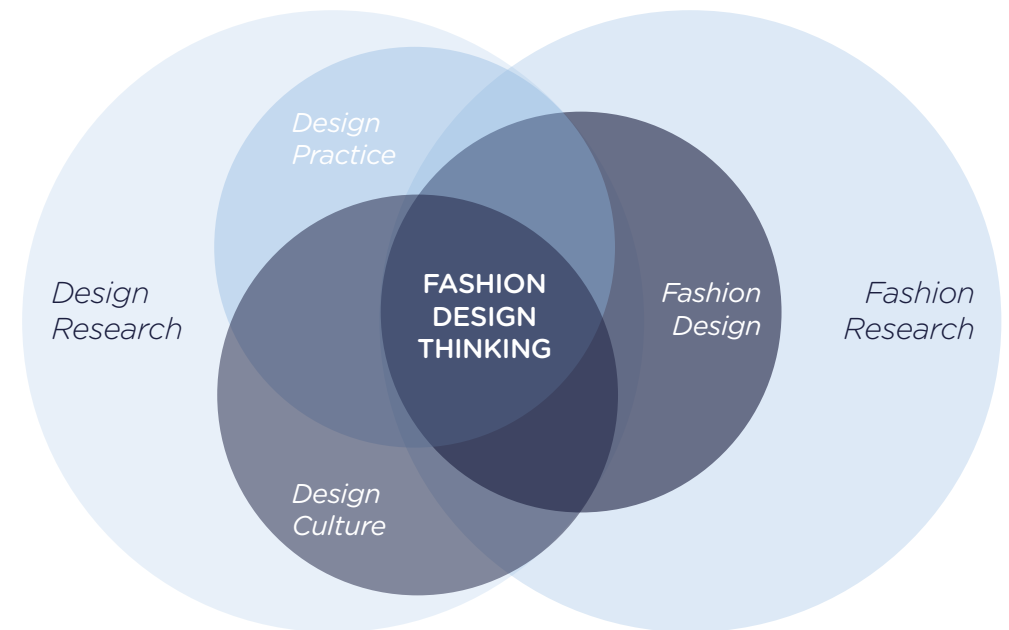


Figure 4.1. A visualization of the theoretical scope for Substudy 1.

4.1. Theoretical Scope for Substudy 1

The generic practice of design has been explored for many decades and sufficient knowledge has been accumulated for it to be recognized as a research stream (Cross 2001). However, research on the practice of fashion design and its application has begun only recently. Due to its emphasis on creative activity, Finn's (2014, 28) definition of fashion design practice—"the action of creating fashion objects (designing and making fashion garments or accessories)"—is adopted to further explore the academic discussions. To establish the scope of the research, relevant literature is reviewed in this section. The development of research on design practice will be presented first, followed by the emerging research on fashion design. To conclude the introduction of the theoretical context for this substudy, the important aspect of the culture for studying fashion design will be explained.

4.1.1. Design Practice in Design Thinking

Regardless of the issue of ambiguous definition (Lawson and Dorst 2009), several scholars have attempted to provide a holistic view of the research on design thinking due to its significance and relevance to the field (e.g. Badke-Schaub, Roozenburg, and Cardoso 2010; Kimbell 2011). Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya (2013) identified two streams in studying design thinking. The first stream refers to various academic discourses within design research while the second stream is related to management discourses that inferred the application of designerly thinking to non-designers in order to foster inno-

vation in business organizations. The primary objective of this section is the review of literature on design thinking within design research; thus, five discourses identified from academic discourses in design will be presented, rather than introducing management discourses (however, see Boland and Collopy 2004; Brown 2009; Martin 2009). The five discourses presented in the study of Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya (2013) view design and designerly thinking as (1) creation of artifacts, (2) a reflexive practice, (3) a problem-solving activity, (4) a way of reasoning/making sense of things as well as (5) creation of meaning.

First, design thinking was identified as the creation of artifacts. This discourse was drawn from Herbert Simon's famous definition of design as "the transformation of existing conditions into preferred ones" (Simons 1996: 4). In his view, the transformation is achieved through creation of something new instead of accepting existing conditions. Thus, the notion of creating artifacts was used to include a broad range of conscious actions to solve problems ranging from engineering to management.

Second, design thinking was described as a reflexive practice stemming from Donald Schön's seminal work (1983). He inferred that design problems are not well structured but confusing. He characterized design as "a conversation with the materials of a situation" (Schön 1983: 78); thus this conversation should be reflective, as the understanding of a designer's action towards problems evolves constantly. According to Schön (1983), designers define a problem that they choose to deal with ("naming") and formulate alternative solutions to explore further ("framing").

Third, drawing on Richard Buchanan's work (1992), a problem-solving activity was presented as one of the discourses that discussed design thinking. Unlike studies that heavily investigated individual designers and their design practice, Buchanan viewed design as

“a new liberal art of technological culture” (1992: 5) that affects four areas, such as symbols and signs, things, actions and thoughts. By discovering new relationships among these areas, he proposed new roles for designers to address complex and indeterminate problems beyond fixing technical and simple issues.

The fourth discourse on design thinking as a way of reasoning/ making sense of things was identified from the research stream of design exploring the practice of individual designers, represented by the works of Nigel Cross (2006, 2011), Bryan Lawson (2005) and Kees Dorst (2010). Through convincingly illustrated “designerly ways of knowing,” Cross (2006) argued that designers have the ability to translate meanings that objects contain based on their hands-on experience with materials. While constantly addressing problems during their design practice, designers tend to employ a solution-focused abductive mode of reasoning to address ill-defined problems (Cross 2006; Dorst 2010). Meanwhile, Lawson (2005) investigated “how designers think” while considering various types of constraints for their practice, such as contents, users, practicality and the future. Through observations on designers’ practice, these authors proposed process- and strategy-driven models to generalize the design practice.

Fifth, lastly, creation of meaning is a discourse on design thinking that emerged from philosophical and semantic stands. In contrast to Simon (1996) who emphasized the creation of artifacts, Klaus Krippendorff (2006) noted that “design is making sense of things” (2006, vii) and highlighted the intention of designing that concerns creating meanings. With this meaning-making, designers create relevant “language” for their community that is different from others. He identified “a science for design” that aims at improving the language and practice of design “to generate new proposals, to justify them to those who matter, their stakeholders, and above all, to make the redesign of design discourse a routine obligation” (Krippendorff 2006, 35).

Independently, these discourses have accumulated a large number of studies, but three discourses emerging from Schön, Cross and Lawson as well as Buchanan are directly related to the practice of design (Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya 2013). Table 4.1 below summarizes the five discourses of design thinking.

DISCOURSE	KEY PUBLICATIONS	BACKGROUND OF THE AUTHORS	CORE CONCEPT	PRACTICE RELATED
Creation of artifacts	Simon (1996)	Economics and political science	The science of the artificial	No
A reflexive practice	Schön (1983)	Philosophy and music	Reflection in action	Yes
A problem-solving activity	Buchanan (1992)	Art history	Wicked problems	Yes
A way of reasoning/ making sense of things	Cross (2006, 2011) Lawson (2005)	Design and architecture	Designerly ways of knowing	Yes
Creation of meaning	Krippendorff (2006)	Philosophy and semantics	Creating meaning	No

Table 4.1. A summary of design thinking discourses adopted from the study of Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya (2013, 126).

In the meantime, regarding these discourses, several studies have also noted a shortcoming that leads to the overgeneralization of subfields of design (see Badke-Schaub, Roozenburg, and Cardoso 2010; Kimbell 2011). In particular, according to Willemien Visser (2009), who viewed design from a cognitive perspective, various subfields of design have both similar and different characteristics depending on the situation, the designers, and the artifact. On the one hand, common characteristics—such as problem-solving, ill-defined problems, and pluralistic approaches—exist regardless of different design situations (Visser 2009, 191–197). On the other hand, different forms also occur in diverse design situations (Visser 2009, 199–214). While comparing studies in several subfields of design (architecture, mechanical, and software design), she noted three dimensions of the design process, the designers and the artifact that influence design situations form differently. However, due to her hypothetical argument in the conceptual paper (Visser 2009), she suggested conducting empirical studies to further explore the different forms of design.

Thus, conducting an empirical study that explores the practice of fashion design is required in order to understand whether the generic characterization of design is applicable to fashion design or not. Without sensing the contextual difference that each design subfield possesses (Visser 2009; Badke-Schaub, Roozenburg, and Cardoso 2010), directly implementing research outcomes and theories from design research to fashion design involves limitations. This issue is especially noticeable while applying the approach of design thinking to fashion designers. The voice of fashion designers is often absent in empirical studies on design thinking. In fact, studies on generic design practice tend to exclude the voice of fashion designers.

For instance, when Lawson (2005) introduced “how designers think,” he provided multiple examples of the peculiarities of fashion design. In a chapter of his book, Lawson (2005, 159–180) listed the

guiding principles of design. While linking a consumerist approach to design outcomes, he compared fashion designers with architects in terms of the style aspect of design. In his view, the work of architects is longer-lasting and costly because of the scale of buildings, whereas fashion designers naturally engage with more temporal and constantly changing artifacts. Moreover, he employed fashion design practice as an example to explain the content of design (Lawson 2005). In terms of the multiplicity of contents, he argued that not only the style of clothes, but also the sociocultural construction of fashion that resides in a piece of clothing is changing. The major shortcoming of this study is that the examples of fashion design were not based on empirical data from professional fashion designers although they were used to support his arguments on design practice. In fact, diverse aspects of fashion designers have been explored only to a limited extent in design research. As noted earlier in Chapter 2, this underdevelopment is due to certain prejudices toward fashion design (Nixon and Blakley 2012). In the following section, the other end of this conversation on fashion design will be introduced: the perspective from fashion research. Despite recent efforts, studies providing an overview of various approaches to fashion design are absent; thus, the integration of fragmented approaches to fashion design is the main intention for presenting the theoretical scope for this substudy.

4.1.2. Fashion Design

Growing interest in studying fashion design practice has been seen while adopting approaches from design research. Several studies have explored the design process of fashion or apparel designers. For instance, adopting the problem-solving perspective of design, Lamb and Kallal (1992) presented a conceptual model for apparel design that includes functional, expressive, and aesthetic aspects and its applications. LaBat and Sokolowski (1999) elaborated this model and introduced three common stages of the clothing design process, namely problem definition and research, creative exploration and development, and implementation. More recently, with a specific case of Hong Kong fashion designers, Au, Taylor, and Newton (2004) investigated their design process and presented a model based on inductive research. The identified process includes major influential factors, gathering ideas, synthesizing ideas, and design evaluation.

Besides these studies investigating the design process, other aspects of fashion design practice have been explored to differentiate it from other subfields of design. A few examples of this stream of study will be provided here. Eckert and Stacey (2000) conducted an ethnographic study to understand the ways in which knitwear designers communicate. They discovered that various sources of inspiration are a language enabling designers to visually and verbally explain moods, styles, and design details to others. In order to understand what influences how Hong Kong fashion designers define a good fashion design, Tam, Au, and Taylor (2008) employed a questionnaire survey. As a result, they discovered that design qualities, market values, and brand image were the major influential factors for creating a new line of products. In an interview study with professional fashion and textile designers, Laamanen and Seitamaa-Hak-

karainen (2014) investigated their ideation process. In particular, the authors observed the ways in which the designers utilize various sources of inspiration and insights from previous professional experiences. Four approaches to ideation were identified, namely, graphic, material, verbal and mental (Laamanen and Seitamaa-Hakkarainen 2014). Meanwhile, Ulla Ræbild (2015) studied the ways in which fashion designers employ design methods. Throughout a phenomenographic study described as “deep hanging out” with professional fashion designers, she discovered broader themes of body, collection and time that encompass their practice as distinctive features in comparison to other designers. As a tangible outcome of her doctoral dissertation, Ræbild (2015) constructed method cards based on her classification for fashion design methods. These studies illustrate the methodological and theoretical fragmentation in studying fashion design.

4.1.3. Fashion Thinking

More recently, similar to the application of the design thinking approach in broader fields beyond design research, several studies introducing the notion of fashion thinking have been published. However, these studies also demonstrated different intentions for contextualizing the notion of fashion. For this endeavor, four studies were identified: Sinha (2002), Nixon and Blakley (2012), Dieffenbacher (2013), and Pan et al. (2015).

Pammi Sinha (2002) investigated attributes of fashion designers in the management context and the ways in which companies can incorporate “designerly thinking” at the strategic level of management. As fashion designerly thinking, she identified kaleidoscope thinking,

in which fashion designers recognize certain patterns and assemble them, visual communication with other stakeholders to share their idea, contextual and intuitive knowledge, switching between divergent and convergent thinking to address issues, visual and spatial imagining through sample making, and favoring self-driven autonomous work. She argued that applying these approaches can be beneficial in effective decision making in reaction to increased marketplace competition (Sinha 2002).

In the study of Nixon and Blakley (2012), fashion thinking was introduced as methodological knowledge in the field of fashion design, or “fashion designerly ways of working” in other words. They discussed possibilities for employing fashion thinking with broader implications for business beyond the fashion industry. They identified its various features while merging “aesthetics, engineering and business strategy” (Nixon and Blakley 2012, 158). These features referred to “its engagement with temporal, spatial and socially discursive dimensions, as well as the priority it places on the articulation of taste and balancing commercial goals with artistic innovation” (Nixon and Blakley 2012, 157).

Fiona Dieffenbacher (2013) presented the notion of fashion thinking as a framework drawn from her practice in fashion design education. Her aim was to demystify the creative design process of fashion design for educational purposes, as fashion design students often lack the ability to reflect on their own methodological knowledge. Instead of the traditional linear model, “research – sketch – flat pattern/drape – fabrication – make” (Dieffenbacher 2013, 10), she underlined pluralistic approaches depending on the individual designer in question.

Differently from these studies proposing the notion of fashion thinking, Pan et al. (2015) reviewed sociological studies on fashion to conceptualize fashion thinking. They identified recurring qualities of fashionable goods, including newness, exclusivity and originality, and suggested emphasizing these qualities also in the development of new

digital products. This suggestion was made because digital devices resemble fashionable items. They argued that information technology and its devices have become an important part of everyday life similar to fashion (Pan et al. 2015). Rather than stressing the negative dimension of fashion-oriented design that encourages overconsumption, the authors examined the positive role of fashion in the consumption practice of personal digital devices.

Although the conversations emerged from various perspectives with the notion of fashion thinking, these attempts remained one-sided without identifying possible differences between subfields of design. In fact, directly applying research outcomes and theories from design thinking to fashion design involves limitations due to contextual differences residing in each subfield of design (Visser 2009; Badke-Schaub, Roozenburg, and Cardoso 2010). As an example of this issue, Swedish fashion researcher Lars Hallnäs (2009) shed light on how fashion design and other design subfields are different in terms of methods. He noted the absence of “a problem” to solve in the practice of fashion design, unlike in other subfields. In contrast to this problem-solving approach, fashion design tends to highlight “introducing a difference” as the foundational characteristic (Hallnäs 2009, 59).

In response to this critique, more recently, careful attempts have been made to acknowledge the methodological difference between fashion design and other subfields of design. While demonstrating the use of domain-specific knowledge as a fashion designer/researcher through an object analysis method, Finn (2014) discussed the importance of understanding disciplinary knowledge in fashion in order to adopt methodology from other research fields or invent a sound methodological framework. Similarly, in a study on fashion design methods, Ræbild (2015) identified four benefits of understanding fashion design methodological knowledge: supporting reflection on and understanding of the practice, enhancing influence on and autonomy within prac-

tice, supporting desired changes within practice, and sustaining commercial success within practice (Ræbild 2015, 11).

These approaches argued the difference between fashion thinking and design thinking, and proposed the potential expansion of fashion design due to its distinctive features, such as kaleidoscope thinking (Sinha 2002) and meaning-making (Hallnäs 2009). However, how and why these two modes of “thinking” are different are still unclear. Accordingly, an open-ended yet constructive discussion took place in order to explore the boundary of fashion thinking while critically sensing the difference. In 2016, several contributors presented possible directions for studying fashion thinking in the journal *Fashion Practice*, considering design thinking research as a “precursor” (Petersen, Mackinney-Valentin, and Riegels Melchior 2016). This was a result of academic dialogues emerging from the Fashion Thinking conference at the University of Southern Denmark in 2014. This special issue of the journal was an attempt to address the gap that overlooked the differences between subfields of design beyond the methodological angle. In particular, by adopting the cultural perspective of Lucy Kimbell (2011) on design thinking, the contributors attempted to explore various aspects of fashion thinking. The culture of design was advocated by Kimbell (2011) and Manzini (2015, 2016) to oppose the idea that one should only study the practice of individual designers due to the entanglement between the practice and the culture of design. This cultural turn on design practice offers theoretical backgrounds that add an important layer of contribution to the construction of fashion design thinking; thus, it will be further introduced in the following section.

4.1.4.

The Cultural Turn in Design Thinking

The cultural perspective on design that this substudy explored can be traced to Julier (2006, 2013). In opposition to viewing design through a lens of visual culture, Julier (2006, 2013) conceptualized the notion of design culture. He introduced design culture as a process, a context-informed practice, organizational or attitudinal, agency as well as pervasive but differentiated value. He proposed a conceptual framework of design culture that encompasses three domains: designer, production and consumption (Julier 2013). Each domain covers a wide range of disciplines, as ultimately this framework was presented to offer a broad perspective for studying the culture of design instead of limiting it to visual culture.

Adopting Julier’s approach to design culture, Kimbell (2011, 2012) reviewed the development of research on design thinking. Her attempt to provide an overview of design thinking is similar to the work of Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya (2013). However, she suggested revisiting the academic discussion on design thinking that separates designers from the real world (Kimbell 2011, 2012). This is due to the limitations of studying only the practice of individual designers. In order to fully understand and unpack the potentials of design thinking, she argued that design practice needs to be understood in relation to the cultural contexts in which designers are situated, such as systems, stakeholders, and social arrangements (Kimbell 2011). Thus, she highlighted the importance of acknowledging domain-specific culture while exploring design practice.

More recently, Manzini (2015, 2016) avoided limiting design to a certain practice of individual designers. Rather, he defined design as “a culture and a practice concerning how things ought to be in or-

der to attain desired functions and meanings” (Manzini 2015, 53). He referred to “culture” as a refined value and language shared in a specific domain of practice (Manzini 2015, 5). In comparison to Julier’s view, Manzini (2015, 54) differentiated his approach to design culture as “the culture of the designers themselves and of the communities in which they operate.” This approach stemmed from his effort to seek new values through open-ended collaboration between expert designers and other actors. Instead of considering design as either problem-solving or sense-making, this view enables seeing expert designers as community members who can expand their culture from the creative community to society.

These studies (Julier 2006, 2013; Kimbell 2011; Manzini 2015, 2016) commonly discussed the relationship between the practice of individual designers and the culture of design. The shared culture situates individual designers while their practice also constantly influences the formation of culture. In order to expand the roles of designers, these authors noted the importance of acknowledging the culture of design practice. Accordingly, a cohesive understanding on various cultural factors is required, as the culture influences and is influenced by the practice of individual designers.

4.1.5. The Culture of Fashion Design

The research on fashion design can apply the same argument from design culture. Similarly, several studies noted that the cultural dimension situates fashion design, whether directly or indirectly. In the following brief introduction to the cultural dimension of fashion design, the perspective of social psychology of clothing approaching culture with an anthropological sense was excluded from the scope due to the emphasis

of this substudy on fashion designers and their practice (e.g. Hamilton 1987; Kaiser 1996; Eicher, Evenson, and Lutz 2008).

Regarding the development of new design in fashion, Eckert and Stacey (2001, 14) referred to it as “the evolution of the contexts that designers create in.” This perspective is comparable to the discussion on design culture. They noted the significance of “the actions of professional participants in the fashion industry” (Eckert and Stacey 2001, 14) that communicate with the contexts. In their study on the design research process, Bertola, Colombi, and Conti (2005) proposed that the fashion sector is a unique and promising context for exploring innovative practices due to its particular languages and practices compared to other subfields of design-oriented sectors. They emphasized the codified and cultured planning process of the fashion industry. Active interactions with wearers in the sector was also acknowledged as a specific type of “user-centered design” (Bertola, Colombi, and Conti 2005, 6–9) that can contribute to design research. For a similar issue, but from the perspective of fashion research, while highlighting the lack of designers’ voice in fashion, Smal and Lavelle (2011) proposed various aspects of fashion design that are in need of further exploration, including fashion design practice, garment construction and culture in the development of fashion. These suggestions were drawn from seminal studies on design practice (e.g. Cross 1999; Manzini 2009). More recently, Bertola et al. (2016) remarked on the ways in which the design practice of fashion embeds the cultural dimension to drive symbolic innovation, rather than technology- and market-driven innovation. They exemplified this with fashion companies’ projection of “culture intensive goods” in exhibitions and retail spaces. The embodiment of culture in the practice of fashion design and the fashion industry resonates with the distinctive symbolic features of fashion design in enriching cultural diversity and authenticity. Thus, the potential contribution of a fashion design-driven approach to design research was emphasized due to cultural sensitivity (Bertola et al. 2016).

Similarly yet implicitly to the notion of culture, the study of Loschek (2009) suggested viewing fashion as a system that situates the creative practice of individual fashion designers. In her view, what fashion designers create is clothes because fashion is created through communicating with others. Adopting the systems theory of Niklas Luhmann (2012), Loschek (2009) argued that fashion is a social construct and investigated the ways in which clothes become fashion. In order to turn clothes into fashion as “a personal aesthetic perception in the collective” (Loschek 2009, 162), she argued that the task of fashion designers “is to recognize social processes and respond to them creatively” (Loschek 2009, 143). While designing with particular intentions to succeed in making fashion, designers employ creative strategies. Through an analysis of previous works presented at fashion shows during major fashion weeks in Paris, New York, London and Milan, she identified various strategies, including provocation, form, experiment, and deviation, among others. Loschek (2009) argued that fashion designers do not necessarily know how to describe their work, as their main intention is to communicate through clothes and accessories that have the potential to become fashion.

Based on these studies that have explored the cultural dimension of fashion design directly and indirectly, it can be argued that what makes fashion designers different from other designers is not simply their practice as individuals. Returning to the discussion on designers’ culture from Kimbell (2011) and Manzini (2015, 2016), what places fashion designers in a unique position compared to other designers derives from the level of culture. Drawing on Manzini (2015), the culture of fashion design can be considered a value and language shared among the community of fashion designers. In other words, the culture in which fashion designers are situated reinforces the idea of fashion design thinking. This cultural perspective can help illustrate distinctive features of fashion designers more clearly, thereby

explaining why fashion design thinking differs from design thinking. Figure 4.2 below depicts the relationship between the practice of fashion designers and their culture.



Figure 4.2. . A scheme for visualizing the practice of fashion designers and their shared culture.

Looking more concisely at the culture of fashion design that is entangled with the practice, fashion design thinking can be understood as not just an isolated concept but also deeper and contextualized knowledge that contributes to rediscovering fashion designers (see Aspers 2006). Applying the cultural perspective, design thinking is conceptualized in this substudy as an effort to embrace the practice and culture of professional designers in order to contribute to both differentiating and expanding the design profession. Hence, fashion design thinking refers to the practice and culture of professional fashion designers.

4.2. Theoretical Scheme for Fashion Design Thinking

From this theoretical scope for exploring distinctive features of fashion designers, a theoretical scheme for constructing fashion design thinking is introduced in this section as part of the findings of Substudy 1. While discussing the writing structure for grounded theory, Creswell (2013, 229–232) noted that the theory itself is the finding as it strengthens relationships among concepts and categories. Accordingly, relating to the main inquiry of this substudy, the entangled relationship between the individual practice and shared culture is discussed by gaining outside support from the literature on design practice (e.g. Schön 1983; Buchanan 1992; Lawson 2005; Cross 2006), fashion design (e.g. Sinha 2002; Loschek 2009; Nixon and Blakley 2012; Ræbild 2015) and different systems of fashion (e.g. Entwistle 2000; Aspers 2006; Skov 2006). The design practice takes place at the individual level even though possible differences between designers and the culture can be viewed as the macro-level shared values for the profession of fashion designers, as they are established and gradually disseminated over time. In the following, prior to the presentation of actual data from this substudy, the scheme for the three dimensions of individual fashion designers' dressmaking practice and the two dimensions of their shared culture is presented.

4.2.1. Three Dimensions for Fashion Design Practice

As this substudy seeks to rediscover the dressmaking practice of fashion design from individual designers, an attempt was made to discover its major categories. The search began from the data, and then moved on to codes and concepts in order to identify relationships between them; this resulted in categories. From the coding process, three categories of fashion design practice were identified: (1) continuity, (2) collection, and (3) context. While the continuity category was emphasized in the process dimension, the collection category was observed in the outcome dimension. In addition, the category of context emerged from the dimension of use. Each category consists of several key concepts. Following the typical phase of dressmaking practice from the designer perspective, the order of introducing the categories starts with the process dimension, then moves to the dimension of outcome and use. As these categories are related to fashion designers' practice, for each concept, the literature on fashion design is presented first, then expanded to the design literature.

-Dimension of Process: Continuity

The first category is related to the process dimension of dressmaking practice. Instead of simply adopting the linear process introduced by Lamb and Kallal (1992) and LaBat and Sokolowski (1999), this substudy intended to discover concepts describing features of fashion design. As a result of coding phases, in terms of process, the category of continuity emerged. The practice of fashion design tends to require both constructing a strong signature look and offering constant newness (e.g. Lipovetsky 1994). While balancing between these two, fashion design-

ers employ certain types of doing and thinking. Under this dimension, four concepts that support this category of continuity were found: (1) trusting personal vision throughout the design process, (2) mixing external sources of inspiration, (3) longitudinal evolution of design over collections, and (4) modifying a specific element of design.

Trusting Personal Vision. In a study on creativity in fashion, Sinha (2002) noted the importance of intuition in fashion designers' thinking. Sinha found that the intuition of designers serves as useful knowledge for decision making, while they also require rational decision making based on measurable factors, such as sales figures and perceived changes (Sinha 2002, 9). In comparison, Nixon and Blakely (2012) emphasized the strong role of the personal taste of fashion designers in judging what is aesthetically good or bad. In a study on the contextual knowledge of fashion designers, Aspers (2006) noted that this "gut feeling" or how to interpret available information to develop a new collection is based on "a stock of knowledge" constructed from the socialization process in designers' experiences, such as education and previous collections.

It is not difficult to find similar concepts in previous studies on design practice. The importance of trusting personal vision in the intuitive design process was emphasized by Schön (1983) as "reflective practice." Buchanan (1992, 13) explained that a designer's intuition is the ability to apply and modify useful sets of flexible design methods to a situation in order to create the final outcome. While introducing examples of expert designers, Lawson (2005, 133) also noted their ability to connect intuition with concrete outcomes.

Mixing External Sources of Inspirations. Eckert and Stacey (2000) conducted a systematic investigation on the sources of inspiration for designers in the fashion industry, especially knitwear designers. They noted: "designers' stocks of remembered previous designs and

other sources of inspiration enable them to use these combinations to imagine and reason about complex structures" (Eckert and Stacey 2000, 527). Their study also identified domains for the designers to apply collected sources, such as individual designs for styles and moods, in order to communicate with the designer oneself, fellow specialists, other designers, superiors, customers, and unknown audiences (Eckert and Stacey 2000). This tendency of mixing different sources of inspiration was also characterized as an attribute of fashion designers' creativity by Aspers (2006). He listed many sources of inspiration, including books, magazines, movies and music. Based on his research, he argued that creative fashion designers "copy, or at least sample, a lot from the history as well as from the contemporary scene" (Aspers 2006, 749) during the development of a new collection.

Schön (1983) noted that representations in design appear externally in a visual or material form and internally in a mental form. For him, this "conversation" between external and internal representations occurs throughout the design process. Aligning with this view, Buchanan (1992, 14) also characterized designers' ability "to discover new relationships among signs, things, actions and thoughts."

Longitudinal Evolution of Design. While exploring fashion design methods, Ræbild (2015) coined the canon metaphor, which she adopted from musical structure. She defined the metaphor as "structured staggered repetitions in an on-going flux of transformation" (Ræbild 2015, 222). It emphasizes the variation of design applied by fashion designers over time. In other words, she described that in the case of fashion design, this involves "a continued development of the existing, hence an ongoing exploration of a theme" (Ræbild 2015, 223).

Regarding this longer-period evolution of design, Schön (1983, 1988) explained that design concepts often emerge from one's own previous design works or the existing works of other influential de-

signers. Instead of simply transferring these works into a new situation, a new design concept is restructured in response to the conditions of the situation (Schön 2011). This evolution in the design process is also discussed by Lawson (2005) and Cross (2006).

Modifying a Specific Element of Design. The step of “fitting” was described by Ræbild (2015, 158) as a key method for three-dimensional ideation. Other methods were also identified as fashion design practice, such as directly shaping materials, using opposite elements, reducing and adding shapes on the body of a mannequin, scaling the size differently, deconstructing an existing element, among many others (Ræbild 2015, 237–244).

Similar to this concept that emerged in fashion design practice, Cross (2006) referred to the concept of modification as “mutation.” He argued that this mutation “involves modifying the form of some particular feature, or features, of an existing design” (Cross 2006, 53). In addition, with exemplary cases of expert designers, Lawson (2005) demonstrated how an early stage idea becomes a matured outcome through iterative modification.

-Dimension of Outcome: Collection

Closely related to the process dimension but with a distinction, the second category resides in the outcome dimension of dressmaking practice. Although the process dimension was discussed earlier in this study, the outcome can also be considered first during the practice of an individual designer (Dieffenbacher 2013). Regarding the outcome of design, the notion of collection was identified from the literature to support the findings of this study. For the profession of fashion design, each presentation of new design outcomes usually consists of a collection of items, rather than a single product. These types of items vary from a piece of garment to accessories, such as hats, bags, shoes, and

other accessories, and one collection includes approximately 50 looks (ensemble of items) and 120 items (Skov et al. 2009). In this category of collection, four concepts encompassing doing and thinking were identified: (1) building design concepts, (2) having a holistic view, (3) stressing the visual outcome, and (4) combining different elements.

Building Design Concepts. A fashion designer often develops a conceptual proposal to deliver certain experiences to potential wearers. This dialogue between wearers and designers via material clothes was described by Loschek (2009). She noted that a collection of individual dialogues can drive a new fashion to emerge. While fashion designers present “the assertion of an (innovative) collection” periodically based on their interpretation of social processes, the “acceptance” of this assertion is bound to the individual audience (Loschek 2009, 95–98). Then, the acceptance of this assertion by a group of individuals signals that it has become fashion for them.

From design practice, Schön’s notion of framing (1983) can be compared to this concept building process of fashion designers. He considered a frame as a conceptual window drawn on the world to make complex real world situations easier to address. Although the intentions of this framing and fashion designers’ concept building may be different, the cognitive activity that utilizes previous experiences, domain-specific knowledge and skills have a certain level of similarity. Additionally, while citing Bartlett’s (1932) work on the social psychology of memory, Lawson (2005) introduced the notion of “schema,” which refers to an internalized mental image. “This schema represents an active organization of past experiences which is used to structure and interpret future events” (Lawson 2005, 133–134).

Having a Holistic View. From the study of Ræbild (2015, 206–209), diverse classification systems for designing a collection were intro-

duced. This reflects the effort required from fashion designers in order to maintain a holistic view while creating a set of items. The items can be graded depending on garment proximity to the body from inner to outer; depending on temperature from cool to warm; and depending on design input from basic to complex. Various ranges of color, material, price and style also add complexity to presenting a coherent collection.

This holistic approach has also been portrayed by previous studies on design practice (e.g. Lawson 2005). In particular, Cross (2006, 16) argued that design thinking tends to be “multi-faceted and multi-leveled.” While illustrating examples of industrial designers, he noted that “the designer is thinking of the whole range of design criteria and requirements” (Cross 2006, 16). These criteria and requirements emerge not just from clients and external issues, including clients, technology and legislation, but also the designer’s preferences regarding aesthetic and practical decisions.

Stressing the Visual Outcome. Ræbild (2015) introduced several fashion design methods with visual-driven approaches, including creating a visual overview of items for a collection, and developing a look book that presents photographed styles for sales purposes. These methods exemplify the visual orientation of the dressmaking practice of fashion design. Additionally, Sinha (2002) acknowledged the ways in which fashion designers communicate visually in order to effectively present their design. In particular, fashion designers highlighted the role of drawing in their early-stage meetings with clients (Sinha 2002, 8-9).

This orientation on visual aesthetics can be also observed in the literature on design practice. Lawson (2005, 13) noted that “the end product of such design will always be visible to the user who may also move inside or pick up the designer’s artifact. [...] what is clear is that designers express their ideas and work in a very visual and graphical kind of way.” In particular, Lawson (2005) asserted the importance of

drawing, which designers often employ to communicate and to visualize their concept. Cross (2006) also argued that after all “a design” for a designer is a description for the client, which highly focuses on the end result.

Combining Different Elements. Loschek (2009) introduced various types of “crossing” that fashion designers employ in order to turn new clothes into fashion. By means of inclusion or fusion, explicitly or implicitly defined borders can be crossed. Loschek (2009) provided various examples, such as “art crossing” that applies art techniques to designing clothes, “fashion crossing” that combines old and new designs, and “multi-crossings” that mix a variety of styles (e.g. work-wear, sportswear, and military wear). Throughout these different crossings, fashion designers can come up with “an infinite generation of the new” (Loschek 2009, 135).

Regarding these various types of combinations, Cross (2006) noted regarding design practice that “creative design can occur by combining features from existing designs into a new combination or configuration” (51). More broadly, Buchanan (1992, 20-21) emphasized designers’ ability to carry out “new integrations of signs, things, actions and environments” to achieve more profound changes in order to deal with complex problems rather than resorting to a “technological quick fix.” He referred to this ability as “the new liberal art of design thinking,” which is very different from the approaches of natural science (Buchanan 1992).

-Dimension of Use: Context

As a theoretical scheme, the notion of context, the last category for the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers, derived from the dimension of use where their creations are represented and reinterpreted by wearers in the real world in order to become

fashion (Loschek 2009). In ordinary circumstances, most human beings need to dress in something regardless of their personal interest toward fashion (Buckley and Clark 2012, 2017). Thus, the aspect of being used or worn is essential for fashion designers as it provides a specific context for designing. Four concepts that support this contextual thinking and doing of fashion designers were discovered: (1) articulating personalities, (2) setting placements of the design, (3) negotiating the physicality in use, and (4) creating sensorial experiences through materials.

Articulating Personalities. The view of Loschek (2009) on fashion as a system of social communication supports this concept. She argued that individual personalities coexist in fashion:

The individual understands himself or herself (or is observed) as a single being within an entirety. In turn, this overall constellation has a defining impact on one's individuality. This corresponds to the definition of fashion as a personal aesthetic perception in the collective. (Loschek 2009, 162)

From this quote, an analogy can be drawn that one aspect of the dress-making practice of fashion designers is to help the individual realize his or her personal aesthetic perception through their creative interpretation of society in its temporal context.

From the perspective of design research, based on Lawson (2005, 94), this consideration of personal expression is further discussed in the field of fashion design, as a garment is often used in a specific context. However, Lawson (2005, 176) also mentioned that “this idea of creating a product with a ‘personality’ to express some features of the lifestyle of its owner” is one of the guiding principles of design practice. In fact,

most artifacts are designed for specific groups of people. Hence, he argued that “designers must understand something of the nature of these users and their needs” (Lawson 2005, 13).

Placements of the Design. As Loschek (2009) introduced earlier, in order for fashion designers to join a conversation to create meaning, they need to specify a conversant, rather than having overly broad audiences. She noted that: “Which of the products are accepted and become fashion is determined by the society, a group within society or a single community” (Loschek 2009, 134). The ways in which fashion designers identify audiences differ from physical spaces, such as a city or a region, to genders, ages, lifestyles, and subcultures, among many others (Loschek 2009).

From the perspective of design practice, Buchanan's (1992) concept of “placement” explains this process of contextualization. For him, placements are flexible boundaries for designers to include various conditions of a specific situation while developing new ideas of design. This placement can be compared to Schön's (1983) notion of naming and framing. He noted that designers define a problem that they choose to address (naming) and formulate possible solutions to explore further (framing). Throughout this process, designers can set boundaries to employ their design practice and impose relevant solutions to deal with problems.

Negotiating Three-Dimensional Forms. Ræbild (2015, 199–206) presented the body as one of the main themes identified in her study on fashion design practice. She noted four settings: (1) a design by three-dimensional drawing based on past personal bodily experiences with clothes, (2) a design by testing on designer's own body, (3) a design by testing on user's body proxy, including model's body and dummy, and

(4) a design by “handing,” a bodily practice of touching and moving with the hands. In these diverse design settings, fashion designers interact with the three-dimensional shape of the body.

Although the scale of artifacts varies, fashion design shares certain similarities with architecture. Particularly, regarding the users of architecture, Lawson (2005, 169) noted that “users are all different and likely to make differing demands on the final design. The different kinds of users involved in buildings often makes this extremely complex.” Additionally, regarding the practical aspects, he listed examples of various “technological problems” of producing, making or building the design (Lawson 2005, 103). Various types of designers from architects to graphic and product designers need to consider these problems for not only the construction of objects but also their working life in use.

Offering Sensorial Experiences through Materials. Ræbild (2015, 163–167) pointed out the ways in which fashion designers attempt to “own” the material. In order to understand and create proper materials, they apply diverse techniques in a “transformation process,” such as washing, crinkling, tearing, laddering, patchwork, embroidery, stitching and tumbling. These techniques take place on the surface level of fabric or when the garment is constructed. Besides understanding the material in relation to the touching sensation, designers’ consideration of color was acknowledged, as the visual sensation can affect the personal aesthetic perception of clothes.

Similarly, Cross (2006, 9) explained that designers “understand what messages objects communicate, and they can create new objects which embody new messages.” He argued that this ability to “read” and “write” through materials is at the core of their thinking. Buchanan (1992) also wrote about how design involves material objects but also has deeper experiences to offer. Traditionally, the view on design is more concerned with the form and visual aesthetic of everyday prod-

ucts. For Buchanan (1992, 9), this view has expanded to include “a more thorough and diverse interpretation of the physical, psychological, social, and cultural relationships between products and human beings.”

4.2.2.

Two Dimensions for Fashion Design Culture

These three dimensions of the dressmaking practice present intrinsic features for fashion design with corresponding categories. However, as Kimbell (2011) and Manzini (2015, 2016) noted, these categories are inseparable from the larger context described as the culture of design. Simply investigating the practice of individual designers ignores the culture that both influences and is influenced by the designers. In other words, the practice of fashion design closely communicates with the shared culture of fashion design while influencing each other. Therefore, cultural factors surrounding the dressmaking practice of fashion designers need to be understood.

Additionally, from the discovered three categories, certain similarities between fashion design and general design practice are found, as noted by the conceptual study of Visser (2009). Although these categories may be more emphasized in the case of fashion design practice, they can be easily related to general characteristics in design practice (e.g. Schön 1983; Buchanan 1992; Lawson 2005; Cross 2006). For instance, an iterative design process, coherent thinking on the outcome and considering the context of use are vital for most designers. In other words, these categories are not exclusive to fashion design practice. Accordingly, the culture of fashion design can offer a clearer distinction in order to rediscover the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers.

As a theoretical scheme that supports findings from the data, this section aims to identify the cultural factors in which fashion design practice is situated. Interlinked with three categories of fashion design practice, two categories of culture were identified: (1) objectives of designing and (2) production system. These categories are comparable to Lawson's (2005, 92-102) internal and external constraints for design but require further understanding on the dual system of immaterial fashion and material clothes. The spectrum of the fashion system is flexible to encompass the production of material clothes and meaning (Kawamura 2005; Loschek 2009). Kawamura's approach (2005) resonates with this perspective. She viewed fashion as an institutionalized system "in which individuals related to fashion [...] engage in activities collectively, share the same belief in fashion and participate together in producing and perpetuating not only the ideology of fashion but also fashion culture which is sustained by the continuous production of fashion" (Kawamura 2005, 39). Similarly, Loschek (2009, 22) described fashion as a system involving "the immaterial process of communication, fired by the material clothing." This view acknowledges the entanglement of the economic production of clothes and the symbolic and social production of fashion. While fashion designers' practice has a direct link to the construction of clothes, the production of fashion requires understanding factors from the meaning-making. In other words, the individual practice of fashion designers is intertwined with not only the material production system of clothes but also the symbolic and social production system of fashion. The dressmaking practice is not separable from either of them, yet can help in explaining the internal and external aspects of the shared culture of fashion designers.

Placing the designer and his/her practice in the middle, the internal aspect is related to the objectives of designing while the production system is referred to as the external aspect. To generalize, while introducing a different meaning or value, fashion designers intend to make sense of something. Externally, other factors from the produc-

tion system communicate with the practice of the individual designer. What they aim at making sense of and what other factors from the production system are involved have not been explored, especially in relation to their practice. Moreover, due to its broad spectrum, unfolding all aspects of the culture is impossible. Thus, based on the coding process, the introduction of a theoretical scheme, including the most relevant and recurring factors, for the culture of fashion design is the main intention of this section. It will focus on demonstrating the complex relationships between the practice and the culture of fashion design throughout the literature in fashion research. Due to the orientation of the two categories described as the internal and external aspects of fashion design culture, the objectives of designing are introduced first, followed by the category of the production system.

-Dimension of Meaning: Objectives of Designing

Regarding the objectives of designing as the internal aspect of fashion design culture, one point needs to be made: the designer is not a machine that works to fulfill an order placed by someone. A fashion designer makes his/her own choices based on certain criteria. In other words, a designer performs an action of fashion design with a particular intention to turn clothes into fashion, as Loschek (2009) remarked. In contrast, design thinking is often associated with the idea of problem-solving (e.g. Dorst 2011). For this difference, despite a possible limitation from the simple binary approach, Manzini (2015, 33-37) offered a useful distinction to understand two types of design: problem-solving and sense-making. Design as problem-solving is associated with simple daily issues that are entangled with global matters in the physical and biological world. Meanwhile, design as sense-making emerges from the social and cultural world, constructing meanings and conversations for producing certain values. Manzini (2015) argued that these two types coexist. In this respect, adopting the notion of "introducing a difference" by Hall-

näs (2009), it can be argued that fashion design is generally closer to sense-making although a certain level of problem-solving is also identifiable. The various objectives of designing identified in the data support this distinction. The making of material clothes can be partially considered as problem-solving due to their involvement in the larger system of production and consumption. In fact, there are many points of problem-solving in the practice of individual designers, such as the ways in which fashion designers iterate the previous design in their design process; combine contrasting styles to present as one collection; and develop a pattern that can comfortably fit different types of body shape. Meanwhile, the shared culture of fashion designers is associated with the idea of fashion, which they intend to transform clothing into. Thus, it is more relevant to consider the culture of fashion design as sense-making because clothes can only become fashion through social dialogues (Loschek 2009). From the coding phases, five concepts describing objectives that fashion designers consider while designing are discovered: (1) usefulness, (2) everyday life, (3) wearer, (4) designer him/herself, and (5) temporality.

Usefulness. This concept is supported by Tam, Au, and Taylor (2008) who studied factors influencing fashion design. They noted the emphasis on wearability and comfort of clothes in the evaluation stage while the image of the particular collection or brand is considered throughout the design process (Tam, Au, and Taylor 2008). Based on Loschek (2009, 167–171), this factor of wearability separates fashion design from fine art, although some exceptions can be found in *haute couture* collections. For Aspers (2006), this duality of fashion design is related to creativity, requiring not just the production of novel ideas but also perceived usefulness to potential wearers, as the economic aspect of fashion design is infused with the artistic. Barnard (2007, 105–108) also explored the entanglement of fashion and function, which is related to

the distinction between fashion and clothing. The socially constructed system of fashion can be less functional or even uncomfortable but material clothing has to be carefully concerned with its function. However, with the emphasis on fashion designers' intention to make a difference, designing clothes needs to embrace other factors, which will be discussed in the following.

Everyday Life. This concept of fashion design culture is relevant when designers think of the outcome and the use of their work. The designed clothes have to make sense for potential uses in various everyday life situations. However, this choice of uses is not dependent on the designers and they can only make suggestions (Loschek 2009). Relating to this, Buckley and Clark (2012, 2017) explored fashion in terms of this notion of everyday life. They argued that fashion is “a manifestation of routine daily lives that remains with people over time” (Buckley and Clark 2012, 19). They placed a special emphasis on diverse social groups who interpret fashion constantly. They also explained that the everyday dress of one person can be a “fashion statement” for another, depending on the context. In fact, this point is closely related to the following concept of wearer for understanding the internal aspect of design objectives.

Wearer. This notion of wearer in fashion design offers a clear distinction compared to the user-centered approach described in design thinking (Bertola, Colombi, and Conti 2005). The idea of fashion emerges upon dressing the human body. Loschek (2009, 26) noted:

The meaning of the observation of clothing (which is not a system in itself, but only the form on which fashion is founded) is fixation on the human body. [...] In addition to this, the vestimentary fixation on the body is prescribed by a community's communicative agreement on morality.

The body of the wearer is a personal and intimate place to be dressed or worn. It is different from the objective and anonymized idea of user discussed in other subfields of design (e.g. Norman 2013). In relation to the creation of clothes, Barnard (2007, 267) noted that “the body may be covered or adorned by fashionable clothing; more or less stylish and fashionable clothes are worn on the body.” However, the ways in which the body is dressed evolve gradually due to constant changes in the social system of fashion. The study of Entwistle (2000) deepened this particular notion of the fashioned or dressed body. While acknowledging the significance of clothes, she introduced various studies exploring fashion in relation to the body. As much as the idea of fashion, the social presentation of the body evolves concurrently due to the daily involvement of individual wearers in society. This co-evolution of fashion and the body explains why it is vital for fashion designers to consider this cultural factor (Entwistle 2000).

Designer Him/Herself. As introduced in the studies of Lindqvist (2013) and Almond (2016) on creative pattern cutting, exploratory and experimental ways of developing new designs are an essential part of fashion designers’ life. They continuously seek meanings and pleasures in their work throughout the process. Additionally, the notion of “flow” was introduced by Min, DeLong and LaBat (2015) in relation to the apparel design process. They argued that flow can have a positive impact on the life and productivity of creatives, such as apparel designers, as it increases happiness and satisfaction while they are involved in their creative process. Particularly, the importance of the early development of the flow state was emphasized to enable novice designers to learn how to enjoy the design process as their career develops further.

Moreover, the design outcome has to make sense to the designer’s body itself. In other words, they design to dress themselves or design something that they want to wear. Meanwhile, during the de-

sign process, they often try the clothes out themselves to understand the ways in which the item works on the body. Relating to this factor, Ræbild (2015) introduced a method of creation in fashion design practice. She noted the ways in which fashion designers utilize their body to test a prototype during their development process (Ræbild 2015, 200).

Temporality. Regarding this fashion designers’ interpretation of temporality, the study of Loschek (2009) provides a supporting explanation. She argued:

The task of design is to recognise social processes and respond to them creatively. This means that the designer imagines his [her] way into the demands and lifestyles of his [her] target group, and he [she] must avoid designing past them for commercial reasons. (Loschek 2009, 143)

Additionally, from the analysis of fashion thinking, Nixon and Blakley (2012) identified three approaches: acknowledging and utilizing the past (“retrospect”), attempting to understand their potential wearers to comprehend the present (“now”), and anticipating the future (“prospect”). These stances of retrospect, now and prospect help fashion designers navigate the constantly changing system of fashion.

-Dimension of Material: Production System

Relating to the external aspect of fashion design culture, a broader spectrum of factors needs to be considered surrounding the practice of individual designers from the material dimension. Different from objectives of designing relying on the social and symbolic production of fashion, the production system is relevant for the materiality of clothes, as fashion designers need to engage in social communication in order to turn clothes into fashion (Loschek 2009). However, the production

of clothes is as important as the meaning production of fashion because this aspect situates the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers in the physical world. In order for fashion designers to produce many pieces of clothes and other items as a collection and for the clothes to be worn and to finally become fashion, many efforts are required due to the complexity of the clothing industry. This complexity in the system of fashion, supported by the production and consumption of clothes, was described by Aspers and Skov (2006) with the notion of “encounters.” They offered an explanation of it:

The concept of encounters shifts focus away from individuals and entities and allows us to zoom in on interaction, negotiation and mediation between people and products, buyers and vendors, but also between different professions and different nationalities, and ultimately also between economy and aesthetics. (Aspers and Skov 2006, 803)

This view helps in understanding the entanglement of the practice of individual fashion designers and their shared culture. However, for this substudy seeking to theorize fashion design thinking, these encounters were viewed from the perspective of fashion designers, especially in regard to their practice. This attempt is supported by five concepts discovered from the coding process as relevant cultural factors, which situate the practice of fashion designers in the production system. These factors are: (1) the coexistence of globalism and localism, (2) multiplicity of actors, (3) speed, (4) seasonality, and (5) plural feedback.

Coexistence of Globalism and Localism. Fashion designers’ constant efforts to produce a new collection of clothes requires utilizing sources from both the global and local scale. In a study of Hong Kong fashion

designers, Skov (2001, 2002) illustrated the ways in which they mediate the West with the East and the global and local context. She noted the fact that fashion designers’ position between the production and consumption of clothes allows them to play the role of cultural intermediaries. Skov (2001) introduced how the field of fashion (“fashion world”) has developed together with global fashion (“world fashion”). The term global fashion encompasses clothes from their cosmopolitan form to their globalized production. However, as explored from the experience of Hong Kong fashion designers outside the local area through the production and consumption of clothes, global fashion consists of many locally produced items due to its widespread yet closely linked value chain. She exemplified this “industrial coherence” with the American brand Tommy Hilfiger (Skov 2001, 3–4). For instance, once the design is delivered from its New York studio, some clothes of the brand are produced in southern China, but the quality is examined in Hong Kong, and the clothes are then shipped to retailers in North America, Europe and other Asian countries. Skov (2006) also exemplified this coexistence of globalism and localism through fashion trade fairs. She noted that these fairs “have been detached from a regional production base, and function increasingly as nodal points in geographically dispersed production systems” (Skov 2006, 771). Moreover, the development of “sample,” which is “a minimal material presence of the manufactured product at the fair” (Skov 2006, 772), has contributed to detaching the location of production from the final products. These fairs tend to follow international standards and conventions although they take place in a specific region. Thus, this mixture of the local place with foreign visitors also reinforces the culture of fashion designers to embrace both the global and local scales for their practice.

This complexity in the global and local production of material clothes was further discussed by Crewe (2017), who explored the ways in which fashion is performed, produced and consumed in space. She not-

ed the importance of understanding fashion in different scales of space due to its hybrid relations and connections to other places through the clothing industry (Crewe 2017). This cultural factor is also interlinked to the following factor describing the multiplicity of actors.

Multiplicity of Actors. In a study of fashion designers and photographers, Aspers (2006, 754–755) introduced one important condition of contextual knowledge as “networks of actors.” He remarked that the knowledge of fashion designers is often relevant for the network in which they are situated. This is because the collective production of clothing characteristically involves “a multitude of actors, inside and outside the firm” (Aspers 2006, 750). He explained:

the knowledge that is needed to produce (for a specific firm and specific markets) is not something that is concentrated in one person, but is a result of the cooperation of the members of the network. This means, in other words, that one person’s knowledge can only be used if backed by others. (Aspers 2006, 755)

The variety of actors involved in the material production of fashion is also explored through trade fairs (Skov 2006). By participating in different types of international fairs in the global fashion business, such as *Premiere Vision* in Paris, the *Copenhagen International Fashion Fair*, and *Hong Kong Fashion Week*, Skov (2006) discovered their roles for trading, networking, and creating and disseminating knowledge amongst various actors. Thus, for fashion designers, these fashion fairs are crucial events to attend or present their collection to signal which network they want to be part of. Due to their significance to fashion designers, the fairs set another cultural factor, *speed*, that situates their practice and which will be further introduced in the following.

Speed. Due to the limited timeframe for garment production within a single season, fashion designers are discouraged from seeking to create an ideal outcome even if they have an innovative idea or intend to reach perfection. In other words, they cannot design everything they planned initially and have to choose what they can do within the given timeframe. Based on Skov (2006), this speeding up of the fashion cycle appeared in the late 20th century. She noted two reasons to explain the emergence of this acceleration:

First the risk that consumer tastes may change is minimized in a short production cycle. Second, frequent deliveries of new goods ensure that customers need to return to the shop regularly, and they have to make up their minds about whether to make a purchase instantaneously, when they cannot come back for the same item a few weeks later. (Skov 2006, 775)

Under this intensified speed of the fashion cycle, the dependency of fashion brands and designers on a global network of suppliers has increased drastically. Thus, the dressmaking practice of fashion designers is constrained to a quick interval between seasons that other actors follow. In order to maintain the choreographed production of clothes with other actors, fashion designers have to “catch the train” by delivering their work on time, instead of making a more complete design. Then, how can fashion designers actually develop their design ideas? The next concept can provide the answer to this question.

Seasonality. This factor of seasonality allows fashion designers to create a new meaning or to revisit their previous works in order to develop them further. In a study of international fashion trade fairs, Skov (2006) introduced the development of the fashion convention that di-

vides fashion collections into two seasons. She noted that the biannual structure of fashion originated from the cosmopolitan lifecycle of the upper classes in the West; thus, it corresponded to the actual production and consumption of clothes (Skov 2006). However, this cycle was accelerated by global producers of clothes to minimize the risk involved in predicting their sales and consumer tastes. Although buying no longer takes place at biannual fashion fairs, this seasonality continues to exist with an emphasis on the symbolic dimension of observing fashion trends and networking (Skov 2006).

Plural Feedback. Direct or indirect feedback from wearers and clients to fashion designers often hints at possible directions for their next collections. Both positive and negative feedback can guide their work onto new paths for designing a new collection. The study of Ræbild (2015) supports this factor; she introduced the ways in which fashion designers embrace feedback from multiple channels, including clients, production and mentors, in different stages of their practice. Nixon and Blakley (2012, 163–164) also identified “multidimensional feedback loops” as one of the particular characteristics of fashion thinking. Beyond the traditional interactions between producers and consumers of fashion, they also emphasized the growing importance of utilizing social media due to the social construction of meanings in the system of fashion. They argued that the new media help fashion designers communicate directly with their target groups and understand what they want (Nixon and Blakley 2012). In fact, how to turn this overloaded information into knowledge is the vital issue for fashion designers. Aspers (2006, 751) noted that there “is plenty of information available in this industry, but to know how to interpret and how to put the different pieces together is the real problem that designers and photographers face.” Careful interpretation is required due to the uncertain nature of final consumers’ interest toward fashion. Accordingly, the feedback from

buyers and merchandisers who understand their targeted consumers is vital for designing new clothes in order to maximize possibilities to turn clothes into fashion. For Aspers (2006, 756–757), this cultural factor is seen as contextual knowledge of fashion designers about the final consumer market. This is also related to the fact that fashion designers are usually located at a distance from the targeted market; thus, the local context is difficult to understand.

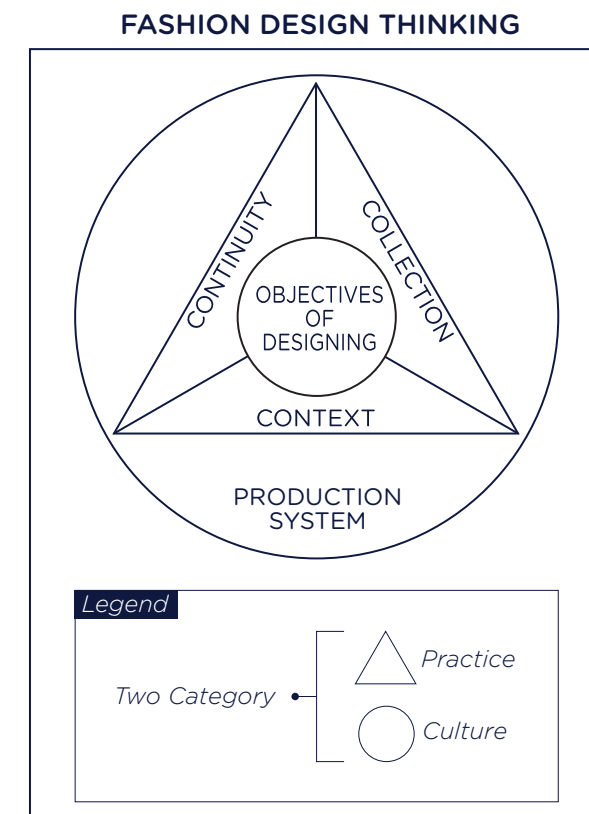


Figure 4.3. A scheme for fashion design thinking, including the practice and the culture of fashion design.

Figure 4.3 visualizes the theoretical scheme of fashion design thinking. The three categories explaining the dressmaking practice of individual designers are surrounded by internal and external aspects of shared culture. It depicts the necessity of understanding fashion design thinking through the cultural perspective beyond the individual designers in order to fully rediscover their dressmaking practice.

4.3.

Fashion Design Thinking from the Data

In the previous section, as the first part of the findings from Substudy 1, the theoretical scheme for constructing fashion design thinking was introduced. This section now introduces the results relating to the dressmaking practice of fashion designers and their shared culture with direct quotes and/or photographs from the data set.

4.3.1.

Dressmaking Practice of Individual Fashion Designers

Following the structure of the theoretical scheme, three categories, namely, continuity, collection and context, will be presented with corresponding concepts. For each concept, relevant quotes from the interviews are introduced first. The concepts are further strengthened by photographs from the observations.

-Continuity: Trusting Personal Vision

As they accumulate experiences in the field, fashion designers learn how to trust themselves and what they have made. Respondent 6 not-

ed that while designing, “You really have to just trust yourself because the customer is not always right” (interview, March 1, 2016). Instead of being too calculating and only relying on feedback from their customers, fashion designers reflect on their taste and intuition during the design process. Related to this, Respondent 4 explained, “You need to approve of what you have done” (interview, February 23, 2016). Figure 4.4 below depicts the non-calculating and emergent aspect of the design process.



Figure 4.4. Based on material samples, colors and sketches, Respondent 3 is in a discussion with a collaborator to develop a new collection (observation, May 23, 2016).

-Continuity: Mixing External Sources of Inspirations

Fashion designers use a wide range of external sources of inspiration throughout their design process, including a certain group of people, books, photos, art pieces, specific materials, structures, silhouettes and social media platforms. Respondent 13 said, “I try to do at least some kind of research and I have my Pinterest board as well. [...] It is like references” (interview, April 8, 2016). They often build their own archive of various items. “From form to details, there is a lot of ways that [designers] can use what [they] have collected” (Respondent 4, interview, February 23, 2016) and they frequently return to these various sources of inspiration to create new collections. Numerous respondents (Respondent 1, 6, 12 and 13) emphasized that they drew inspiration from the strong sensations elicited by touching, seeing and feeling the material. Figure 4.5 shows one way of doing visual research for inspiration.



Figure 4.5. Respondent 5 scraps various visual materials to get inspiration for developing a new collection (observation, February 24, 2016).

-Continuity: Longitudinal Evolution of Design

Fashion design has a deep breadth of practice. The practice of fashion designers evolves from season to season. Throughout this evolution, they refine certain items or styles, which often comprise what is referred to as the “signature look” of the designer. Respondent 9 explained that “iteration exists throughout collections. If I have an item that is not good and I try to make it better for next time” (interview, March 18, 2016). Meanwhile, the conflict of continuity during the long-term process is also observed. “I may think that it is an old piece already but if I think from the perspective of buyers or audiences, no one has seen it” (Respondent 9, interview, March 18, 2016). From a designer’s perspective, the evolution of design over multiple seasons can be seen as the repetition of their old work, but for the customers, this gradual development still provides newness and continuity with small changes (see Figure 4.6). Thus, the coexistence of two approaches was observed in the case of many respondents (Respondent 3, 5, 8, 10, 12, 16, and 18). Designers develop a “classic” line reinforcing their signature style alongside a “trendy” line presenting new styles for a particular season.



Figure 4.6. The shape used in the chest has evolved throughout seasons from Respondent 10 and can be found in various items from a dress to a sweatshirt (observation, April 1, 2016).

-Continuity: Modifying a Specific Element of Design

During the process of designing a new item for a collection, fashion designers employ different types of iteration. Respondent 10 said, “I do not change the pattern. I only change materials [but] it comes in totally different looks” (interview, April 1, 2016). Fashion designers often sketch out a specific element of design, such as color, print, material, length and fit (see Figure 4.7). However, making a prototype or mock-up also helps them transform a two-dimensional drawing into a three-dimensional garment. Additionally, this formgiving happens concurrently with other tasks. In other words, designers do not seek to modify or improve only one design element; rather, they make changes to multiple elements at the same time. Through these quick modifications, fashion designers can minimize their efforts in designing new items in the limited time available and become more productive. The vital moment for such modifications occurs when the designers hold a “fitting” event with models. Near the end of the design process, designers often arrange this event to examine the fit of clothes on the actual human body.¹⁸

18. The use of fashion models can vary broadly depending on the type of clothes designers create and the context of uses. These various conditions are not the main focus of this substudy and will thus not be explained in detail (see, however, Entwistle 2009).

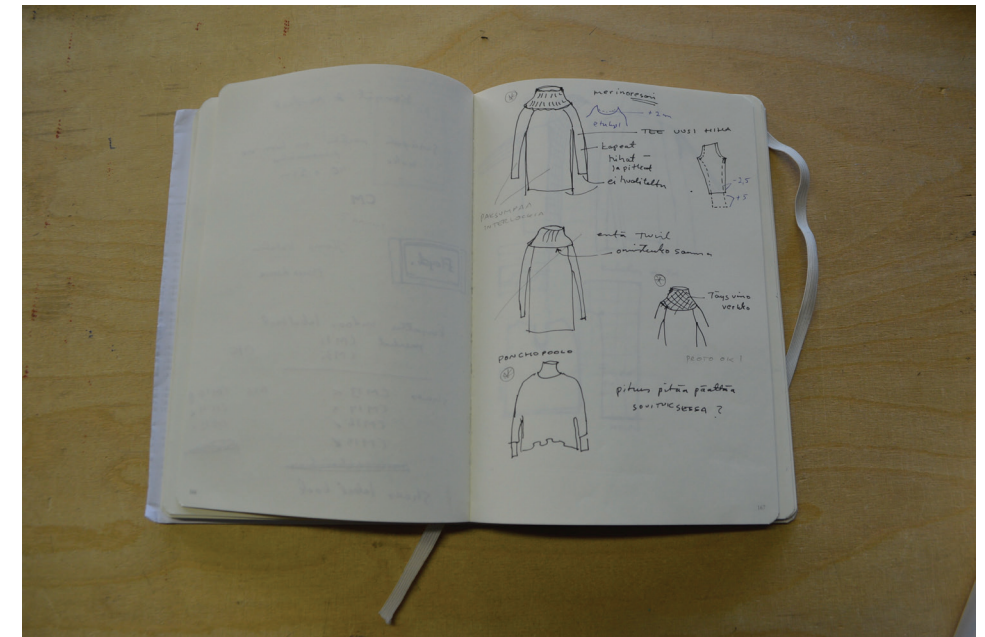


Figure 4.7. Respondent 1 sketched a number of versions of the neck detail (observation, February 3, 2016).

-Collection: Building Design Concepts

Fashion designers commonly stress the importance of building strong design concepts. By creating design concepts, they propose an “ideal world” for projecting their own values (see Figure 4.8). Respondent 12 said the concepts are “coming from the values that I hold dear in my life [and not just from] fashion—what is cool, what is new and what is amazing in this world” (interview, April 7, 2016). In other words, the concepts are proposals of designers to their audiences or a way to convince why the particular audience needs to accept the proposals. Respondent 11’s comment supports this description:

It is important to create concepts because that way you convince and make the people understands why to maybe buy the weirdest coat you have. Because they trust the concept, they get the idea and then inspired by it. (interview, April 6, 2016)



Figure 4.8. Respondent 12's presentation of a new proposal for international guests, including journalists and buyers (observation, May 25, 2016).

-Collection: Having a Holistic View

The fact that fashion design outcomes usually consist of many pieces encourages fashion designers to think holistically while designing. They tend to think of a “complete package,” or a collection, and develop it as a whole gradually, instead of completing one piece and then moving to the next. “It is about the bigger picture, also seeing what is lacking” (Respondent 4, interview, February 23, 2016). This comment of Re-

spondent 4 illustrates how fashion designers pay attention to presenting a coherent aesthetic, or “feeling,” through various items in their collection (see Figure 4.9). Accordingly, the pieces all have to be aligned to provide an orchestrated theme. Respondent 1 explained, “When I make a collection, I think there are certain pieces that go together” (interview, February 3, 2016). Coherence can emerge on many levels, including materials, colors, shapes, and prints, among many others. However, this does not mean designing identical items for a collection. Creating a collection of different yet harmonized items is essential for the dressmaking practice of fashion designers.



Figure 4.9. A part of a lookbook showcasing different outfits by Respondent 9 in one collection (observation, March 18, 2016). Photography: Respondent 9.

-Collection: Stressing the Visual Outcome

“[While designing a collection,] I am thinking about styling, which is actually the end result” (Respondent 9, interview, March 18, 2016). As Respondent 9 commented, the visual aesthetic was discovered as a crucial

factor for fashion designers. From styling for a photoshoot to a press presentation and a runway show, fashion designers highlighted the ways in which their design outcomes are seen and adopted by others. At the same time, multiple designers noted that this visual orientation of fashion design also makes the field more superficial. This occurs as their proposals are judged and visual presentations need to be attractive before being worn and ultimately becoming fashion (see Figure 4.10).



Figure 4.10. A presentation of Respondent 17's collection that took place in an art gallery in Helsinki (observation, May 15, 2017).

-Collection: Combining Different Elements

Complex layers of fashion design offer room for designers to play with different elements. They often try to combine contrasting elements to create unexpected results. For instance, Respondent 2 explained: “a

combination of two, like the technical part and then artistic, I try to combine” (interview, February 5, 2016). Contrasting approaches can be adopted in one collection due to a wide range of items and the aesthetic taste of the designer. More specifically, Respondent 5 expressed: “I want to have something loose and stiff. So, I can get different feelings” (interview, February 24, 2016). Various elements, including proportions, colors, shapes and materials, can be used to present different feelings in one collection, but this flexibility has to make sense as a whole (see Figure 4.11).



Figure 4.11. The coexistence of varying styles and items in one collection from Respondent 9's studio (observation, March 18, 2016).

-Context: Articulating Personalities

The practice of fashion design emerges through a conversation between two personalities, that is, the designer and wearer. While the designer is the creator who constructs a piece of garment, the collection cannot exist unless he/she considers the wearer who actually uses the garment.

The following two comments illustrate this relationship between two personalities. Respondent 9 highlighted that “actually the person is the main thing. The garment is an aid or tool for that person to express his/her personality. It is actually about his/her personality and what he/she sees in the garment and what makes him/her want to wear it” (interview, March 18, 2016). Moreover, Respondent 8 stated: “I keep in mind our target group and where and when she [the wearer] would wear it. Also, the fact that we want to make items that are wearable, easy to wear and care [for]” (interview, March 18, 2016). Accordingly, fashion designers constantly think about the needs and interests of the wearers. The garment becomes a medium that enables the wearer to express his/her own personality throughout continuous uses. This effort of designers is often featured in sales or promotional publications, as seen in Figure 4.12.



Figure 4.12. Respondent 8’s brochure for introducing a new collection includes a description illustrating a certain personality of wearers (observation, March 18, 2016). Photography: Ossi Gustafsson.

-Context: Placements of the Design

“In fashion, you have to think even more about the things that are going on now” (Respondent 11, interview, April 6, 2016). As this comment by Respondent 11 demonstrates, fashion designers need to understand topical issues of the moment, as the use of their artifacts will reflect on those issues once they are presented. The collection is a proposal for potential uses; thus, the designed items have to be relatable to the particular context of potential audiences. In order to understand the context of use, designers identify a place or situation and condition where they can construct their design (see also Figure 4.13). For instance, Respondent 7 explained, “I am thinking the colors in Helsinki [are] different than colors in Japan” (interview, March 16, 2016). Instead of having complete freedom for designing, this restriction of context offers designers a useful boundary to focus on and to differentiate in comparison to other designers.



Figure 4.13. Respondent 12’s lookbook for a collection visualizes a specific mood and attitude rather than presenting only the clothes (observation, April 7, 2016). Photography: Nick Hudson.

-Context: Negotiating Three-Dimensional Forms

The space that fashion designers have on the intimate and private body of individuals gives opportunities and poses challenges. Due to the shape of human bodies that they deal with, fashion designers have to think about how to transfer a flat pattern onto a three-dimensional item (see also Figure 4.14 for other items, such as shoes). Respondent 1 commented: “[Designing a garment] is never just a sketch. I have to think three-dimensionally and make patterns” (interview, February 3, 2016). Moreover, body types are very different individually and ethnically. Respondent 18 said, “Women’s [bodies are] very different from each other” (interview, November 30, 2016). In fact, the size of clothes in Finland and Japan cannot be the same due to the difference in the average body size. Designers also need to consider the gender difference of the physical body, which adds complexity to designing.



Figure 4.14. Respondent 7 demonstrating the design of shoes that require understanding the three-dimensional structure of feet (observation, March 16, 2016).

-Context: Offering Sensorial Experiences through Materials

Respondent 1 commented: “When I see new fabrics then I have the ideas what I could do out of them” (interview, February 3, 2016). Similarly, for many fashion designers, fabrics are the starting point of designing. Finding a new fabric immediately sparks new ideas as soon as they sense the texture of the fabric. Beyond the material being a source of inspiration, the sensation of touching is closely connected to the experiences that they want to offer through the use of their design (see Figure 4.15). Besides the texture, designers also consider many other elements, such as comfort, color and weight, depending on their use of materials. Combining different materials can provide a new sensorial experience for wearers. This is an essential feature that offers unique experiences to the wearer beyond visual aesthetics. Thus, the quality aspect of materials is often emphasized. Naturally, understanding the properties of materials is vital in order for fashion designers to create what they intend to offer to their potential wearers.



Figure 4.15. Respondent 6’s detailed embellishment on a dress that gives unique sensorial experiences when it is worn (observation, March 1, 2016).

DIMENSION	CATEGORY	CONCEPT			
		Abstract	Tangible
Process	Continuity	Trusting Personal Vision	Mixing External Sources of Inspirations	Longitudinal Evolution of Design	Modifying a Specific Element of Design
Outcome	Collection	Building Design Concepts	Having a Holistic View	Stressing the Visual Outcome	Combining Different Elements
Use	Context	Articulating Personalities	Placements of the Design	Negotiating the Physicality in Use	Creating Sensorial Experiences through Materials

Table 4.2. Summarizing three categories of dressmaking practice of fashion designers.

Table 4.2 summarizes various concepts that are used in constructing three categories of fashion design practice. This summary demonstrates

the fact that fashion design practice requires a complex set of actions. In other words, the practice of fashion design involves diverse actions at both the abstract and tangible levels. Depending on the level of tangibility, each concept is placed in the table. More abstract-level actions are presented on the left side while more tangible-level actions are positioned on the right. Through the careful coordination of these actions, the dressmaking practice is conducted by individual fashion designers. However, the level of employment of each concept can be varied depending on the individual designer's condition and preferences.

4.3.2. Shared Culture of Fashion Designers

Building on the same structure of the theoretical scheme, this section presents two categories for fashion designers' share culture, namely the objectives of designing and the production system, with corresponding concepts. In comparing the format of each concept from the dressmaking practice, photographs taken during studio visits and presentation participations unfortunately had limitations in providing support to the concepts relating to the shared culture of fashion designers. Thus, only quotes from the interviews are presented in this section.

-Objectives of Designing: Usefulness

From the data, a clear discovery was made that fashion designers primarily aim to create something wearable and comfortable. They are aware of the importance of ensuring that their creations are useful for wearers. However, this does not mean they ignore the design aesthetic. Fashion designers

do not need to compromise their visual aesthetic for the sake of wearability. Respondent 6 commented: “It is very important for me that the designs are also practical even though they don’t have to look practical [...] you can mix to make them practical but still looking very nice” (interview, March 1, 2016). This duality is achievable because fashion designers tend to create numerous items as a collection and also each item can embrace contrasting features. Also, the consideration of the context of use helps them balance between aesthetics and wearability.

-Objectives of Designing: Everyday Life

The data revealed that fashion designers understand that what they design has to represent the personality of wearers due to the connections of the garment to daily life and a specific occasion that requires a certain type of clothes. A piece of garment that a person chooses to wear can be influenced by many personal and external conditions, such as personal preference, emotion, dress code and weather. The following comment by Respondent 8 supports this finding:

They [clothes] have different meanings for people. They are like second skin; thus, have to be able express their feelings, their kind of opinions, their personality through clothes. So, they are much more personal items than for instance furniture. [...] if you decide to buy a dress you have to be also [able] to carry it with you and be able to present yourself in that item to different kinds of people in different situations. (interview, March 18, 2016)

-Objectives of Designing: Wearer

The data also revealed that dressing the body of wearers is an important factor for fashion designers. In other words, fashion designers consider their collection to be incomplete if it is unworn or unaccepted by someone. For instance, Respondent 1 noted the importance of wearers:

It is much more what [the] customer [wearer] can do. He has his own other garments he has before or something new and he creates his own look out of those garments. That’s always much more than I could design when somebody starts wearing actual garments. (interview, February 3, 2016)

As emphasized above, fashion designers highly value the interpretation of their artifacts performed by wearers. When one item from a collection is used by a real person, the designer is satisfied, as the item, his/her personal proposal, is accepted and finally becomes a meaningful product for someone. Thus, they attempt to understand what wearers need in their lives, as Respondent 17 described: “My most important source of research is always the real people” (interview, October 5, 2016).

-Objectives of Designing: Designer Him/Herself

As creatives, fashion designers tend to derive pure enjoyment from the process of designing. Respondent 4 explained:

I get bored of it [outcome] easily. But the process, I can always look back and I can always talk about it. [...] I want to make myself happy by producing something that pleases me. Then hopefully and simultaneously someone will enjoy my creation. (interview, February 23, 2016)

A number of designers emphasized that designing clothes itself is the essential content of their life (Respondent 4, 6, and 9). Without any intention to develop a new collection, they simply sketch randomly for their own pleasure, but these rough sketches can become a starting point for a new design in the future.

Additionally, fashion designers often design clothes for themselves. Respondent 15 described: “It is really hard to buy anything as I design and think so much in detail. Then, why not [do] it by myself?”

(interview, August 31, 2016). However, whether the item is for him/herself or not, the body of the designer is often used in the process of making, as it becomes a convenient place to test the early sample that he/she develops.

-Objectives of Designing: Temporality

Several fashion designers remarked on the importance of paying attention to current topical issues in order to predict the future. For instance, Respondent 11 noted: “I think in fashion you have to think even more about what is going on now, the lifestyles, or psychological point of view” (interview, April 6, 2016). This interpretation of “nowness” tends to be personal. The following comment of Respondent 9 highlights this: “I just keep going back to them [my notes] and seeing if there are any common denominators for whatever I am interested in at the moment” (interview, March 18, 2016). In other words, they interpret the present to propose a possible future by designing a new collection. However, the notion of nowness changes constantly and this affects what comes next. Thus, the practice of fashion design tends to be temporal.

-Production System: Coexistence of Globalism and Localism

From the data, a factor of fashion design culture was discovered: Fashion designers need to act globally as the local area has limitations to meet their needs in producing clothes while sourcing different types of materials and selling final products. At the same time, they commonly expressed that the production is often done in a specific region due to environmental, technical and financial issues (Respondent 2, 8, 10, 12, 14 and 16). The following comment by Respondent 2 illustrates this factor:

I work with companies in Italy and India. In India, they are doing embroideries for me. I was designing the patterns for them for embroideries. [In] Italy, they do digital prints according to my file I send to them. In some cases, I order solid fabrics and then I paint here in Helsinki on top of those solid fabrics. (interview, February 5, 2016)

-Production System: Multiplicity of Actors

Relating to the global production of clothes in accordance with the previous factor, the cooperation among various actors in the production system seems to be vital due to the many steps involved in garment production. For example, Respondent 2 commented: “There is a huge team that has to understand what I want to achieve” (interview, February 5, 2016). Thus, many designers highlighted making the instructions as clear as possible in order to help them communicate with other actors in the production, such as patternmakers, cutters, fabric buyers, sample makers, and many others. Respondent 5 noted possible tensions while working with other actors: “Even though they [sewing factories] read my specification, they could think ‘this is too big. Let’s do it this way. This is better’” (interview, February 24, 2016). Thus, fashion designers need to communicate with other actors in order to build trust. Respondent 10 emphasized this matter: “It is a lot about chemistry between you and the person who you want to work with because you are working with the production every single day. So, it has to be [someone] you can trust” (interview, April 1, 2016). Building trust can be achieved through mutual respect over time.

-Production System: Speed

Time is the resource that fashion designers always lack. This issue occurs because of the large number of pieces they have to create for every collection. Accordingly, designers have to plan wisely and prioritize what they can do within the given time. Respondent 9 remarked on this:

Fashion designers would design several items like somewhere between 30 to 50 different products and after 6 months, design another set of 30 to 50 products; after 6 months, another. It is just getting so much faster and so much aggressive even. (interview, March 18, 2016)

Within the limited time available, in order to develop a new design, fashion designers have to consider if it is worth taking the risk to allocate the time to it. Under the circumstances, they can either design something entirely new or refine items from previous collections. In the data, a number of fashion designers (Respondent 1, 5, 8, 10, and 12) noted that they employ both approaches, creating “classic” and “trendy” lines, and this helps them deal with the speed between collections.

-Production System: Seasonality

“Schedule and structured seasons for buying and selling your collection make the fashion design different from other fields” (Respondent 14, interview, February 23, 2016). As seen in this comment by Respondent 14, following the natural change of time from spring/summer to autumn/winter, fashion has constructed the system of seasons. During the interviews, most fashion designers noted that they have attended seasonal fashion fairs in different countries, such as London, Paris, New York, Copenhagen and Helsinki. They explained that these fashion fairs, especially fashion weeks, typically involve various events for buying and selling collections with international visitors, such as buyers and journalists. Thus, participating fashion designers are strongly encouraged to plan their work schedule according to this system. Due to its resemblance to seasonal change in the real world, “fashion can follow time more,” Respondent 1 commented (interview, February 3, 2016). Thus, introducing clothes continuously in new seasons allows fashion designers to develop their designs over time in it-

erative modifications. Respondent 16 explained: “Sometimes there is a version of something. There is a dress version and now for the next season, there will be a maxi dress version. There will be a short version for the summer season” (interview, September 9, 2016). Throughout this iteration, they can experiment and refine their design regardless of the limited time available for each season.

-Production System: Plural Feedback

The last cultural factor of fashion designers is plural feedback. Fashion designers pay attention to feedback they receive from diverse channels, including buyers, customers and sales agents. Listening to the feedback from their customers and clients and applying it to a new collection was a recurring feature (Respondent 8, 13, 16 and 18). Unintended ways of dressing in the garment by their customers are also considered a form of indirect feedback. Respondent 9 described these plural channels for receiving feedback:

I actually meet the buyers who make the final decisions. So, I can just talk to them. [...] But you always learn a lot when you see your garment worn by somebody. That is another form of feedback. It is not verbal but the way it is transmitted is visual. But I guess it is just [that] you get more information about what you have done when you see it on some person [and it] create[s] a surprising end result. You get more information about the garment itself and that sparks new ideas in your mind. (interview, March 18, 2016)

DIMENSION	CATEGORY	CONCEPT				
		Meaning	Objectives of Designing	Usefulness	Everyday Life	Wearer
Material	Production System	Globalism and Localism	Multiplicity of Actors	Speed	Seasonality	Plural Feedback

Table 4.3. Summarizing two categories of fashion designers' shared culture.

Table 4.3 summarizes the two categories that emerged and the corresponding concepts as the shared culture of fashion designers. The concepts are horizontal and equally important to understanding the shared culture in both the meaning and material dimensions, yet closely interlinked. The concepts of usefulness, everyday life, wearer, designer him/herself, and temporality are all vital to understanding the social construction of fashion through constant dialogues between individual fashion designers and wearers. From the perspective of fashion designers, a piece of clothing needs to be both wearable and attractive for potential wearers. However, as the author of creative practice, they also enjoy the development of clothes that become a container of meaning based on reflections. In the meantime, the concepts related to the production system of clothes reflect the complexity of the physical and material world. The intensified biannual structure, also known as fashion week, for showcasing fashion collections triggers the rapid production and cooperation of fashion designers with other actors at the global and local scale. At the same time, diversified feedback loops support the development of new collections.

4.4. Conclusion to the Chapter

The objective of this substudy was to rediscover the dressmaking practice of fashion designers in order to expand their social role. While critically examining the literature on design and fashion research, an empirical study with professional fashion designers was conducted to construct fashion design thinking through a dialogue between the literature and the findings. As noted earlier, the absence of fashion designers' voice in the study of design practice was identified as a gap, which motivated this substudy. This substudy argues against this generalization and proposed a careful translation of fashion design in order to fully understand how fashion design can be viewed in relation to design thinking discourses (Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya 2013). However, instead of isolating the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers, this substudy pays attention to the relationship between the individual practice of fashion designers and the shared culture among them.

Through the grounded theory coding process, three dimensions of fashion design practice were discovered: process, outcome and use. Corresponding to these dimensions, three categories were identified, namely continuity, collection and context. Several concepts in each category were also identified. These recurring concepts and categories from the practice of individual fashion designers revealed one main category of fashion design thinking. However, as Kimbell (2011) and Manzini (2015, 2016) suggested rethinking design thinking in the broader scope of culture, the overall results indicated that these three categories may vary depending on the condition of individual designers. Thus, arguing that they are exclusive features of fashion design practice has limited applicability.

A more interesting finding emerged from the second question this substudy posed regarding the shared culture of fashion designers. The question is answered by the two categories of design objectives and the production system. These categories were discovered as the internal and external aspect of the culture that surrounds the practice of individual fashion designers; thus, they can be viewed as the macro perspective. Five concepts contributed to identifying each category of the culture in relation to the practice. In other words, the data unfolded how these ten cultural factors are entangled in the practice of fashion design.

In conclusion, based on these findings, the definition of fashion design thinking reflects both sides of fashion design. It is proposed as iterative, holistic and contextualized activities of individual fashion designers while communicating with a specific section of the audience to turn material clothes into immaterial fashion.

As noted in Chapter 3, the results of Substudy 1, the construction of fashion design thinking, lay the foundation for Substudy 2, which intends to recover the meaning of the fashion design profession by expanding the role of fashion designers. Compared to the meaning-making aspect, the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers has been ignored due to the image-making tendency of the fashion system (McRobbie 1998; Kawamura 2005). As mentioned earlier about the difficulty of understanding every aspect of design knowledge (Cross 2001; Friedman 2003; Wang and Ilhan 2009), due to the complex entanglement of the practice and the culture of fashion designers, the complete unfolding of fashion design thinking is nearly impossible. However, in this substudy, the forgotten aspect of fashion design practice, the dressmaking tradition, has been partially uncovered and rediscovered through a systematic investigation as the warp of woven fabric for this dissertation. This expansion can be compared to earlier mentioned discourses on design thinking, especially management discourse (e.g. Kimbell 2011; Johansson-Sköldberg, Woodilla, and Çetinkaya 2013). It

has helped enable designers to gain attention from broader fields due to the dissemination of handy tools used by designers in their creative methods to non-designers, such as managers. However, it failed to both continue the accumulated academic endeavor in design and introduce further applications of design practice (Badke-Schaub, Roozenburg, and Cardoso 2010). Accordingly, the investigation into the expanded role of fashion designers should embrace both categories of fashion design thinking: their dressmaking practice and shared culture. Thus, it can be argued that the construction of fashion design thinking provides a vital part of knowledge in order to answer the main research question of this dissertation (how can the role of fashion designers be conceptualized to understand their contribution to society as a profession?). In the following chapter, on top of this constructed warp, the ways in which fashion designers are involved in the expanded domain will be demonstrated with an explanatory case.

05

*THE WEFT:
EXPANDED
ROLE OF
FASHION
DESIGNERS*

On the foundation of Substudy 1, which constructed the notion of fashion design thinking, a new thread is added as the weft to provide a new mood to the whole fabric woven together with the warp. The weft may not provide a main structure for the fabric but can offer a rich texture and a character. The second substudy, which aims at recovering the meaning of the fashion design profession and expanding the role of designers, serves the same function as the weft. For this reason, the case study approach was employed for this substudy to describe the ways in which fashion designers are involved through Pre Helsinki, a recently launched designer-driven platform seeking to internationalize Finnish fashion talents. As mentioned in Chapter 3 as advantages of the location of Helsinki, this case study was conducted concurrently with the dynamic evolution of the platform and the Finnish fashion scene, which correspond to the discussion on designers' new involvement in the spatial dimension in the study of design (Julier 2013; Manzini 2015). This condition motivated this case study to focus on placemaking as one of the potential expansions for fashion designers to apply their fashion design thinking, among other possibilities.

In order to further contextualize this substudy while continuing this design discussion and comparing it with previous studies in fashion, this chapter will first introduce the theoretical foundations of placemaking. As findings of this substudy, practical descriptions of the Pre Helsinki case, characteristics of the platform and diverse involvements of fashion designers will be explored in relation to the placemaking practice of fashion design. It concludes with the clarification of the results of the case study.¹⁹

19. A significant number of texts in this chapter were published in relevant journals (Chun, Gurova, and Niinimäki 2017; Chun and Gurova 2019). The publications were co-authored with senior researchers but I played the role of primary investigator. The co-authorship took place in the form of investigator triangulation while evaluating this substudy (Patton 2002).

5.1. Theoretical Foundations: Placemaking of Fashion Design

To explore the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers in the Pre Helsinki case, previous studies on placemaking in fashion need to be reviewed further. The sociological discourse found in fashion studies can broaden discussions on designers' new practice in terms of both physical and symbolic places (Julier 2013; Manzini 2015), as it adds the perspective of fashion design. In fact, the relationship between fashion and place has been examined through different lenses, such as how fashion education and policy shape place, what particular styles are linked to certain places, and what roles production and consumption play in place development (e.g. McRobbie 1998; Skov 2001; Niessen, Leshkovich, and Jones 2003; Lerner, Molloy, and Goodrum 2007; Potvin 2008; Crewe 2017). Among the many possibilities to connect fashion with the notion of place, this substudy pays special attention to the idea of making a meaning of place throughout fashion activities.

Placemaking, the key concept of this substudy, is adopted mainly from the study by Skov (2011). Expanding on her earlier studies on fashion in East Asian contexts, such as Japan and Hong Kong (Skov 2001, 2003), Skov examined industrial, cultural and governmental issues in the evolution of local fashion scenes in Europe. She argued that global fast fashion companies, such as Zara and H&M, have recently taken the role of dressing the public from fashion designers and introduced their expanded role in the spatial dimension of nations. She conceptualized placemaking as an ability of fashion design that "fills a cosmopolitan form with local content through displays and events associated with a heightened sense of here-and-now" (Skov 2011, 138). According to Skov, placemaking practice is relevant to a specific region, as it contrib-

utes to the promotion of the local culture and industry. In particular, she emphasized the role of young fashion designers in placemaking due to the co-evolution of their own practice and the local development. In the shift towards “fashion pluralism and polycentrism” (Davis 1992) and the modified role of fashion designers, Skov (2011, 150) posed the question, “What do fashion designers produce that is significant for the nation?” Rather than directly answering this question, she highlighted the intertwined relationships between nations and fashion, and then suggested three chief criteria for evaluating the success of rising fashion initiatives: economic performance, global connectivity, and the quality of the local dynamics.

Similar to Skov’s study, Norma Rantisi (2011) also discussed the notion of placemaking to highlight fashion designers’ contribution to a spatial dimension. However, she differentiated place-making from place-marketing (or place-branding). In placemaking, she noted the dynamic interaction and coordination between local actors in the fashion industry beyond “localized capabilities.” These capabilities refer to the presence of key activities in the local industry, including utilizing traditional techniques, production, design, promotion and distribution. By reconnecting these available capabilities, the placemaking practice of fashion design can mobilize diverse resources to transform a region. Meanwhile, regarding place-marketing or place-branding of fashion design, Rantisi (2011) noted that it is associated with a top-down governmental policy that tends to restrict dynamic possibilities for bottom-up development from local actors. This distinction between top-down and bottom-up approaches can be traced to her previous study on Montreal fashion in which she investigated the interaction between fashion designers and cultural intermediaries, such as showrooms and buyers (Rantisi 2010).

The study of Simona Segre Reinach (2011) that explored the “dressed power” of fashion is relevant to understanding the notion of

placemaking. She argued that fashion design has an ability to increase the visibility of national identity in a similar way as in place-marketing (Rantisi 2011). From this perspective, the symbolic dimension of international recognition is more often discussed in the creation of a new regional identity through fashion. While introducing the notion of the “catwalk economy” (Löfgren and Willim 2005), Segre Reinach (2011) noted that fashion design encourages countries to exchange various resources from business to culture through a refined form of presenting novelty. Thus, the strategic use of fashion design was suggested in promoting a positive national identity.

Development trajectories of fashion in Scandinavian countries, including Denmark, Sweden and Norway, were introduced by Marie Riegels Melchior (2011) as additional examples of government-driven branding efforts in small nations. By comparing their approaches, she illustrated the ways in which the three countries have transformed their images from design nations to fashion nations. Strong partnerships between governments and local fashion actors have contributed to the renewal of their national identity, making it more attractive and forward-looking in order to be accepted in the global dialogue of fashion.

Differently from these studies discussing the influence of fashion design at the national scale, McRobbie (2015) explored a smaller-scale neighborhood. She introduced a case of Berlin-based fashion designers as another example of placemaking practice. It was part of her studies exploring creative professionals in different contexts. Based on the study (McRobbie 2015), Berlin can be considered as a city with a preference for less commercial and more artistic approaches to fashion. In a small neighborhood of the city, a number of female fashion designers reinterpreted this tendency by creating socially engaging stores. Their stores functioned as a platform that supports the employment and economic independence of a social minority in a particular neighborhood in Berlin. By making fashionable items, the

designers also acted as activists to initiate a new grassroots movement to reinforce the social fabric.

Based on these studies, the notion of placemaking can be characterized in terms of the following three themes. The first theme is the involvement of diverse actors in the implementation of placemaking, including young designers, fashion stakeholders and governmental organizations. The involvement refers not just to production activities but also to support provided at many levels, such as finance, media, facilities and personal networks. All previous studies noted the importance of a dynamic interplay between stakeholders in the local fashion scene for placemaking, but two particular aspects were discovered. For instance, Skov (2011) and McRobbie (2015) highlighted the active role of young fashion designers in placemaking. Meanwhile, Rantisi (2011) suggested that governmental organizations should play a supportive role to fully encourage the placemaking practice of fashion designers, rather than government-driven initiatives. Second, fashion design contributes to both the development of a region and its international recognition through symbolic and economic productions. The previous studies all shared these contributions of fashion design, beyond the conventional approach of dressing the public. Second, the contribution of fashion design varies in terms of scale from a neighborhood to a nation. Previous studies by Skov (2011), Rantisi (2011), Riegels Melchior (2011) and Segre Reinach (2011) explored the impact of fashion design at the scale of nation and city. In comparison, the study of McRobbie (2015) introduced a neighborhood-scale case. This theme notes that fashion design can achieve placemaking at flexible scales.

Adopting these approaches, this study defines placemaking as the ability that derives from the collaborative efforts of diverse local actors to contribute to the development of a local fashion scene while creating a meaning for place to be recognized in the global fashion context.

It is achieved through robust creation of bottom-up fashion activities at varying scales from neighborhood to nation.

As discussed earlier, this substudy set out to examine the question raised by Skov (2011, 150), “What do fashion designers produce that is significant for the nation?” In order to not just continue but also expand this question, this substudy revisited it in the form of two minor questions: (1) how does the expanded role of a fashion designer as a placemaker emerge through the platform of Pre Helsinki? And (2) how is this role of placemaker implemented via the platform? By answering these questions, this substudy sought to present practical descriptions of the case and the expanded role of fashion designers regarding the placemaking practice. Table 5.1 below presents the relationship between the questions and findings.

NO	RESEARCH QUESTION	FINDINGS	INTENDED OUTCOME
1	How does the expanded role of a fashion designer as a placemaker emerge through the platform of Pre Helsinki?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Background - Origin - Activities - Main actors 	Practical descriptions of the case
2	How is the role of placemaker implemented via the platform?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Characteristics of the platform - Involvements of fashion designers 	Demonstrating the expanded role of fashion designers

Table 5.1. Relationships between research questions, findings and intended outcomes.

The first set of findings involves constructing practical descriptions of the Pre Helsinki case while the second set of findings is linked to the demonstration of fashion designers being placemakers. However, in order to understand the various involvements of fashion designers in the platform, its characteristics were used as stages to provide relevant contexts for analyzing the data. In other words, the ways in which fashion designers were involved were understood in relation to these characteristics. Thus, five characteristics of the platform were identified first and, corresponding to each characteristic, the involvement of fashion designers was further examined. The presentation of the twofold findings follows: the practical descriptions of the case and the demonstration of active involvements of fashion designers relating to the characteristics of the platform.

5.2. The Past and Present of Pre Helsinki

In order to empirically investigate the ways in which Pre Helsinki emerged and how fashion designers from the platform have influenced the development of the local fashion scene, unpacking key aspects of the case is imperative. Thus, this section will provide the following findings related to the platform: background, origin, activities of the platform, and main actors. The following section begins with the recognition of two disconnects existing in Finnish fashion and presents two solutions that the co-founders of Pre Helsinki utilized to overcome these disconnects. Additionally, two approaches to implementing the solutions are presented. Lastly, three main groups of actors—organizers, designers and external partners—are introduced. Regarding the themes of placemaking, an articulated explanation based on the analysis of data is presented first, followed by a discussion of the relevant themes of place-

making. Altogether, the case of Pre Helsinki functions as a window to viewing the ways in which it has constructed the meaning of Helsinki and Finland as places for fashion internationally.

5.2.1. Background: Two Disconnects in Finnish Fashion

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Finnish fashion has recently experienced success in certain areas, especially in international fashion design competitions, where the artistic side of Finnish fashion has been particularly noted. This is comparable to the golden era of Finnish design, when it gained a reputation as a design nation through its successful promotion at international fairs. However, until the 2010s, one of the major issues—the global recognition of Finnish fashion—had not been fully resolved. In this section, two disconnects that prevent this recognition are discussed: (1) a domestic-level disconnect between the design and business sides of Finnish fashion as well as (2) an international-level disconnect between the Finnish fashion scene and the rest of the fashion world. These disconnects were the drivers behind the emergence of Pre Helsinki.

The first disconnect arose from the domestic level, especially the business side of Finnish fashion. Based on the data, several gaps that influenced this issue were observed from education to business. Regarding the educational side, university-level courses on fashion marketing and branding are recent in Finland, and it is still challenging for fashion design students to apply abstract knowledge to the practice of everyday business. In an interview, business expert and educator Pekka Mattila noted that, “We have relatively [recently] developed the fashion design discipline. It’s getting stronger constantly if we look at the international

standard. But we didn't have many commercial people, business studies or business educators" (interview, March 15, 2016). On the business side, large numbers of fashion designers in Finland are self-employed (Lille 2010; van Eynde and Wiinamäki 2012) and struggle for many reasons: lack of financial resources and skills to manage a business and difficulties in building a team and delegating tasks. Mattila also commented that: "They [Finnish fashion designers] want to retain control 100% even if giving some of the control away would give some of necessary resources for scaling up" (interview, March 15, 2016). However, the prominent designer and fashion educator Tuomas Laitinen noted in an interview: "We don't need just designers but business people with fashion thinking" (interview, March 15, 2016). In contrast to Mattila's point, Laitinen's comment represents the perspective of fashion designers. As this substudy investigates the case of Pre Helsinki, which is characterized by a designer-driven approach, Laitinen's perspective resonates with the case. In fact, while young fashion designers have expanded their success stories through global fashion competitions, very few business professionals in Finland have attempted to utilize the localized fashion design capability. In other words, while the importance of training fashion designers to be business-minded was proposed, a more significant issue was identified in the lack of fashion-friendly business expertise that can maximize the potential of Finnish fashion designers.

The disconnect between the Finnish fashion scene and the broader context was readily apparent in recent years, because domestic events, such as the Gloria Fashion Show and Helsinki Design Week, have been organized with the aim of promoting the fashion collections of local designers. These events have been either targeted mostly toward the local press or have focused on the broader design sector instead of specializing in fashion. The small domestic market hindered the efforts of Finnish fashion entrepreneurs to grow internationally due to

the limited support available to them (Lille 2010; van Eynde and Wiinamäki 2012). Moreover, in the interview, Laitinen pointed out that the Finnish fashion scene lost touch with the mainstream fashion landscape during the 1990s and 2000s. This became problematic due to the fact that Finland is relatively isolated from the global industry not only geographically but also in terms of business mindset and sensitivity to market trends. These conditions restricted the possibilities of Finland to become better recognized on the global fashion stage.

In relation to the progression of Finnish fashion, the influence of two relatively recent historic events was identified in an interview with Finnish design historian Pekka Korvenmaa. First, the development of new Finnish fashion accelerated after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (see also van Eynde and Wiinamäki 2012). Despite being short, this history of new local fashion provided freedom to explore something innovative and unique. Before the collapse, Finland was an important supplier of various goods to the Soviet Union, especially textiles. After the collapse, the Finnish garment and textile producers lost their biggest and most stable client. Second, Finland's accession to the European Union in 1995 challenged the local industry. Due to intensified competition from other European countries, Finnish business owners needed to revise their approach to face the drastic change.

Besides these two events, the competition between developed and developing countries in producing garments at a lower cost was an additional factor forcing Finnish fashion actors to rethink their future directions. As a result, the scale of domestic production of garments was decreased significantly, and small design-oriented firms with strengths in craftsmanship began emerging in Finland around the 2000s (Korvenmaa 2010; Hohti 2011). In an interview, prominent Finnish designer Vuokko Nurmesniemi noted that having a strong tradition in artistic approaches to design and material knowledge from

workshop-based practice, Finland possesses a firm foundation for building a new wave of fashion as a distinctive national product on the global fashion market. Despite this promising potential, this stage of Finnish fashion only confirms the absence of relevant activities for placemaking. These domestic- and international-level disconnects restricted the growth of the local fashion industry, while also providing a foothold for a new initiative to step into.

5.2.2.

Origin: Two Solutions for Reconnecting

The absence of diverse crucial factors for internationalizing Finnish fashion was observed, including fashion-oriented business expertise in Finland, networking beyond the local community, and fashion-specific promotion efforts to reach broader markets. In an effort to overcome these disconnects, Pre Helsinki was formed as a collaborative platform to address two particular issues: increasing the international visibility of Finnish fashion and developing the business side of local fashion to be more fashion-friendly.

Originally the idea of Pre Helsinki emerged as a startup business by three master's level fashion design students from Aalto University (Satu Maaranen, Sofia Järnefelt and Vilma Pellinen), who later became co-founders of the platform. In early 2012, they participated in the Fashion Business program organized by Aalto University Department of Design in partnership with the Aalto Center for Entrepreneurship. Finnish fashion educator Pirjo Hirvonen, who was involved in the program, explained in an interview that the program was a special competition to “spin out new ambitious fashion-based startups” that would provide more visibility for Finnish fashion business and entrepreneurship (interview, November 13, 2016). During the program, the students

received coaching sessions with influential experts from the local industry and identified gaps and opportunities to be filled. That was the moment when the idea of Pre Helsinki originated. The following quote is from an interview with Satu Maaranen, one of these three fashion students, and it illustrated well the departure point of the platform:

So the basic research was done for fashion week but then the result was that we don't want to have the fashion week because if a small place like Helsinki would start [a] fashion week, then no one will take it seriously in the fashion industry because the world is full of fashion weeks. We wanted to have something else, deeper and more indie, something that can give [a] better experience. It is to stimulate different senses. [During the] fashion week, people are running from place to place. It is super hectic and you never have time to focus on anything; so we felt that there is a gap. And something that should be done to really be able to spend time to see the clothes, meet the designers, get to know them and also learn about [the] history and background of the design industry in Helsinki. (interview, February 5, 2016)

Apart from the fact that many fashion weeks have already been established around the world, they realized that Helsinki is a small city for holding such an event. They also recognized that during conventional fashion weeks, participants and visitors have a hectic schedule, running between fashion shows and other events organized by different fashion houses. In contrast to this fast-paced schedule, the students wanted to offer a different experience: more personal and relaxed, in order to provide visitors with the opportunity to better understand the quality of designers' work and the idea behind the

design. They aimed to create an engaging fashion event where the visitors can spend time to see the clothes carefully, meet and get to know the designers, and learn about the history and background of Finnish design in Helsinki. In order to achieve this, they needed to collaborate with experts who understand the business of fashion.

While participating in this program, the three students met two marketing experts (Miia Koski and Martta Louekari) who worked for the office of World Design Capital (WDC). In fact, 2012 was a very important year for many local stakeholders of design beyond fashion as the city of Helsinki was selected as the WDC. For this reason, the WDC Helsinki office organized a wide spectrum of events around design, some of which focused on fashion and aimed to introduce a fashionable side of the city to international visitors. These events included the Aalto University fashion show held by students and alumni as well as Marimekko's public fashion show. Based on this experience in 2012, both the design and business sides recognized not only a strong need for collaboration but also an opportunity for developing an international platform that can promote Finnish fashion design globally.

As a result, in May 2013, three fashion designers who graduated from Aalto University and two marketing experts who worked for the WDC office joined forces to create something new for the city: the first Pre Helsinki program. Koski, one of the co-founders, explained the dual meaning of the name in an interview:

“Pre-” means something is coming. There was no expectation about Helsinki but suddenly it is becoming the fashion city. The other one is related to time. In the fashion calendar, the time [for Pre Helsinki] was during the “pre-collection” season in April and May. So we took it from those two. (interview, March 30, 2016)

As the explanation conveys, the name evokes both the ambition of Helsinki to become a fashion city and the timing of the event, which coincides with the pre-collection season in the fashion calendar. Through this new platform, both the internationalization of Finnish fashion and the establishment of local cooperation between fashion design and business were partially addressed. Accordingly, the interviewed experts (e.g. Mattila and Lindberg-Repo) noted that, soon after its launch, it was considered to be the first internationally recognized fashion event from Finland, as it offered an opportunity for Finnish fashion designers to network beyond local media and actors. This early stage of Pre Helsinki shows placemaking at the domestic level as a preparation for reaching the global.

As earlier studies presented (Rantisi 2011; Segre Reinach 2011; Skov 2011; McRobbie 2015), the symbolic and economic contributions in the development of a local fashion scene are key attributes in the placemaking practice of fashion design. The story of how the platform originated presents its primary contribution in the symbolic dimension through active promotion of Finnish fashion talents. Although the importance of the economic contribution was not initially emphasized, the cultivation of fashion-specific local business expertise is a noticeable factor. An issue relating to the commercial implications of this platform will be introduced further in the following sections.

5.2.3. Activities: How It Works

The two solutions to overcoming this challenge of connecting the local and the global were identified when viewing the ways in which Pre Helsinki has been operated. The main activities of the platform include a set of events in which a number of Finnish fashion designers participate. The events differ in format. The platform organizes showcases of

designers in Helsinki and abroad (e.g. Paris and Shanghai) as well as design workshops and a pop-up store for the general public. Thus, it serves as a platform that relies on the work of fashion designers and leverages resources from different Finnish sectors to develop a series of events to increase the visibility of the Finnish fashion talents domestically and, more importantly, globally.

Two approaches were observed that linked the scale of place-making to the platform. For the annual program that invites international guests to Helsinki, the city has been utilized to represent the Finnish fashion scene not only because it is the capital of Finland, but also because it has the densest cluster of stakeholders and local resources. Thus, by organizing programs in the city, the platform has been able to increase the visibility of Helsinki and of Finnish fashion to professionals in the global fashion business. Conversely, for the programs that bring designers to other fashion events outside the country (e.g. Paris and Shanghai), Pre Helsinki has acted as an active agent in promoting the city and the new identity of Finland as a fashion nation. This latter approach also serves to attract international visitors, especially fashion journalists and buyers, to Helsinki.

Since the first program in 2013, the promotion of young Finnish fashion designers has been the main goal of the organization, instead of direct sales of products from designers. While this absence of sales has allowed a new initiative to emerge more recently, its focus on the symbolic promotion of Finnish fashion through the global media has helped the platform to partially achieve its goal. To differentiate Pre Helsinki from other fashion events in Finland and nearby countries, diverse events that can maximize the experiences of the international fashion press have been organized (c.f. Rantisi 2011; Skov 2011). The interviewed co-founders (Maaranen and Koski) noted the importance of organizing events in Helsinki to increase the visibility of local fashion. This is also supported by a comment from branding expert Kirsti Lindberg-Repo:

“They created not just Pre Helsinki to take place in Helsinki but also a new world around fashion Helsinki” (interview, June 9, 2016). In other words, experiencing Finnish fashion in the city can have a positive impact on the overall experience of international guests. Pre Helsinki has changed its program annually but the central idea has remained the same. Since its launch, the platform has created its own activities, such as presentations by designers and a pop-up store. The participating designers have tailored these activities for the international guests with a view to demonstrating the unique approach of Finnish fashion (see Figure 5.1). To be able to invite highly influential guests, such as fashion editors from the international editions of *Vogue* and *Elle*, among others (PreHelsinki 2016), the organizers have cooperated with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These visits by foreign journalists and their articles in renowned global media have been considered as the measure of success in achieving the goal of global recognition.



Figure 5.1. Interactions among guests, designers and models outside the presentation location during the Pre Helsinki 2016 program. (observation, May 26, 2016)

Alongside this hosting program in Helsinki, Pre Helsinki has also offered its designers opportunities to reach out to other markets. Taking its designers abroad is another way to increase the visibility of Finnish fashion. For instance, group presentations during Paris Fashion Week and outreach programs to Asian cities, such as Shanghai and Hong Kong, have been organized annually since 2013. Paris Fashion Week is crucial for the platform to present its designers to influential journalists and buyers in the global fashion scene attending the event. Meanwhile, the outreach program has offered “matchmaking” services to individual designers of the platform. This program is usually conducted after understanding their particular needs based on meetings with individual designers. From itineraries to meeting arrangements with potential clients, the platform has provided individually catered services to increase the possibility of exporting and exposing Finnish fashion design globally.

In line with the studies by Skov (2011) and McRobbie (2015), this case shows a possibility to utilize the placemaking practice of fashion design at multiple scales from city to nation. Pre Helsinki has contributed to the recognition of Finnish fashion at the local level by coordinating and developing various events aimed at attracting visitors under one roof. It has also contributed to the global recognition of Helsinki as a city for artistic fashion designers and Finland as a fashion nation through closely engaging with international visitors, such as fashion journalists, recruiters and buyers. This dual approach of Pre Helsinki, embracing the city and the nation as well as the local and the global contexts, introduces a strategy for emerging places to maximize the opportunities that fashion design offers beyond dressing the public. By balancing between scales, Pre Helsinki has demonstrated an alternative yet carefully curated approach to reimagining places via fashion design.

5.2.4. Main Actors: Organizers, Designers and External Partners

To achieve the goal of internationalizing Finnish fashion talents, Pre Helsinki has been built on a complex relationship of three groups: organizers, designers and partners, each supporting different dimensions of Pre Helsinki. This section will further introduce the main actors involved in the platform as well as how they qualify to operate or support it. Lastly, the contribution of the platform will be reviewed in regards to its influence on local actors to the placemaking of Helsinki/Finland and the involvement of local actors in both participating in and supporting the platform.

Including both the design and business sides of fashion has allowed the co-founders to construct Pre Helsinki with a holistic perspective. To develop and operate a series of programs, diverse tasks were required. Thus, fully utilizing expertise from different fields has been important. Through the interviews and the official website, the roles of the four organizers were identified, including the creative director, treasurer, PR (public relations)/marketing director, and production/branding director. The creative director is responsible for the design side of the platform. Therefore, understanding the ways in which fashion designers and the fashion industry work is the key consideration for this job. The PR/marketing director works to communicate externally, especially with international visitors, while the production/branding director is usually involved in coordinating partners for diverse programs of the platform. During the program in Helsinki, the production/branding director also takes responsibility for overseeing activities that require constant coordination. Lastly, the treasurer manages the overall finances and administrative tasks for its activities. This internal organization of the platform demonstrates its strong intention to support its designers, especially by emphasizing PR and marketing

expertise. It also addresses the previously discussed issues of Finnish fashion, including the disconnect between design and business at the local level as well as the disconnects between local and global fashion.

The second important group of actors for Pre Helsinki is fashion designers. As it aims at internationalizing Finnish fashion talents, the ways in which the platform selects participating designers have been a crucial issue. Maaranen emphasized: “They are the center of everything that surrounds us, including the Pre Helsinki organization, guests coming from abroad, and when we bring them to other cities like Paris. Everything starts from the designers” (interview, June 23, 2016). The platform originated from the alumni fashion show of Aalto University in 2012 during the WDC. Naturally, in the earlier stage, the participating designers were mostly from Aalto University. The recent success at several international fashion competitions is also tied to this university. As the platform evolved towards supporting Finnish fashion as a whole rather than a specific group of designers, the organizers developed selection criteria for designers. The key rule is that a candidate must have a connection to Finland and some international visibility with a relevant personal network that can contribute to the platform. Through this selection, the platform both reinforces the reputation of Finnish fashion, which is often associated with artistic and textile-driven works according to the interview with Koski, and introduces new breeds of designers continuously. On the one hand, selected designers present their works in multiple programs, such as Sasu Kauppi, Ensæmble, Lepokorpi and Juslin Maunula (see Table 5.2). This helps both the designers and the organization to show the development of their work as well as continuity through consistency. On the other hand, partial changes on the list of participating designers help the platform to avoid stagnation. Laitinen’s comment supports this: “The same press can’t be flown here to see the same people for three years in a row. They need to see these designers evolve into something else. [...] Its new breed keeps the interests of the press as well” (interview, March 15, 2016).

TYPE	PERIOD	LOCATION	DESIGNERS / LABELS (TOTAL NUMBER)
Hosting	May 2013	Helsinki, Finland	Ensæmble, Heikki Salonen, Laitinen, Marimekko, R/H, Lepokorpi, Sasu Kauppi and Siloa & Mook (8)
Outreach	September 2013	Paris, France	Sasu Kauppi, Ensæmble, Siloa & Mook, Lepokorpi and Satu Maaranen (5)
Outreach	February 2014	Paris, France	Osma Harvilahti, Sasu Kauppi, Ensæmble, Siloa & Mook and Lepokorpi (5)
Hosting	May 2014	Helsinki, Finland	Ensæmble, Lepokorpi, Samuji, Satu Maaranen, Sasu Kauppi, Siloa & Mook, R/H and Marimekko (8)
Outreach	November 2014	Shanghai, China	Ensæmble, Satu Maaranen and Siloa & Mook (3)
Hosting	May 2015	Helsinki, Finland	Lepokorpi, Sasu Kauppi, R/H, Samuji, Ensæmble, Juslin Maunula, Satu Maaranen and Elina Määttänen (8)
Outreach	August 2015	Paris, France	Satu Maaranen, Juslin Maunula and Lepokorpi (3)
Outreach	November 2015	Shanghai and Hong Kong, China	Ensæmble, Satu Maaranen, Juslin Maunula and R/H (4)
Hosting	May 2016	Helsinki, Finland	Hanne Jurmu & Anton Vartiainen, Satu Maaranen, Sophie Sälekari, Mannisto.co, Sofia Järnefelt, Ensæmble, Lepokorpi, Sasu Kauppi, Siiri Raasakka, Achilles Ion Gabriel, Juslin Maunula and Tiia Sirén (12)
Outreach	September 2016	Paris, France	Aamu Salo, Hanne Jurmu, Juslin Maunula, Lepokorpi (4)
Hosting	May 2017	Helsinki, Finland	AALTO International, SSSU by Sasu Kauppi, Hanne Jurmu, Satu Maaranen, Aamu Salo, Ella Boucht, Lepokorpi, Achilles Ion Gabriel, Sophie Sälekari, Sofia Järnefelt, Siiri Raasakka, Self-Assembly, Juslin Maunula and Tiia Sirén (14)

Table 5.2. A list of fashion designers who participated in Pre Helsinki programs between 2013 and 2017.

External partners have also been an important group of actors in supporting Pre Helsinki. Establishing an internal organization with both the design and business sides of fashion provided a foothold for the platform, but in order to develop this cooperation further, larger-scale external support was vital. For this study, partners from the latest program, held in May 2016, were investigated to exemplify the case. According to interviews with the three organizers of the 2016 program and the official website, key partners were identified, including Aalto University, Marimekko, funding agencies in Finland as well as local companies. It was observed that each partner had a different relationship with the platform.

Aalto University has been the most important partner for Pre Helsinki. Not only did the idea of the platform originate from the university, but also many participating designers graduated from it. Before the launch of Pre Helsinki, the student fashion show of Aalto University (*Näytös* in Finnish, see Figure 5.2) had already attracted international guests due to both the recent success of Aalto University fashion students in winning international competitions and the strong network of Tuomas Laitinen. Since 2010, Laitinen has been at the university as a lecturer but his personal connections were built through previous experiences from his studies at Central Saint Martins in London and work as a fashion designer in Paris. Besides his current role at the university, he has also worked as a fashion editor at *SSAW* magazine since its launch during WDC in 2012. For these reasons, it has been natural for the platform to include the Aalto University fashion show as one of the main activities in its program.



Figure 5.2. The Aalto University student fashion show in 2016, which has grown in scale annually since its first presentation to international guests in 2012. (observation, May 25, 2016)

Marimekko has joined the Pre Helsinki program annually. The brand has been considered as the representation of Finnish fashion since its golden era in the 1950s and 1960s (Ainamo 1996). More recently, its annual public fashion show has become a festive tradition for Helsinki to celebrate the beginning of the summer season since its first introduction in 1992. Due to the importance of the label within the Finnish fashion scene, the platform has been including Marimekko's public fashion show in its annual program. The brand is not only symbolically important, it has also provided opportunities to young local designers, including several designers from the platform, to gain professional experience.²⁰

20. In December 2017, Satu Maraanen was appointed by Marimekko as Head Designer of ready-to-wear, bags and accessories. Thus, a stronger relationship between Pre Helsinki and the brand is expected. Previously, she had worked for the brand as a freelance designer for five years.

Other than these two symbolic partners of the platform, governmental and private funding agencies in Finland have recently provided practical support. With the goal of internationalizing Finnish fashion talents, Pre Helsinki has been awarded grants from funding agencies, such as the Finnish Cultural Foundation, since its launch and has received support from governmental organizations, especially the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This result signifies that these actors began recognizing the efforts of Pre Helsinki and its potential as a vehicle for promoting the country and its culture through fashion. What is noticeable in this case is the limited government support for the platform in comparison to other cases, such as Danish fashion where the government developed a coherent supporting program for fashion (Riegels Melchior, Skov, and Csaba 2011).

Additionally, in 2016, numerous local partners have shown their support during the program in Helsinki. For instance, Artek, a Finnish furniture manufacturer of iconic products, offered its flagship store in Helsinki as a pop-up store to showcase products by Pre Helsinki designers together with Artek items. The local branding agency Duotone was also involved in the 2016 program, producing high-quality multimedia footage, including video clips and photographs, to distribute to the international press.

These various support activities demonstrated the impact of the platform in initiating dynamic interaction among different actors at the local scale in order to enable regional actors to realize Helsinki and Finland as places for fashion and collaborate while sharing its vision (Rantisi 2011; Riegels Melchior, Skov, and Csaba 2011). Figure 5.3 illustrates the dynamic relationship among the three main groups of actors. Through different forms of lines, it depicts how the type of the relationship differs between them.

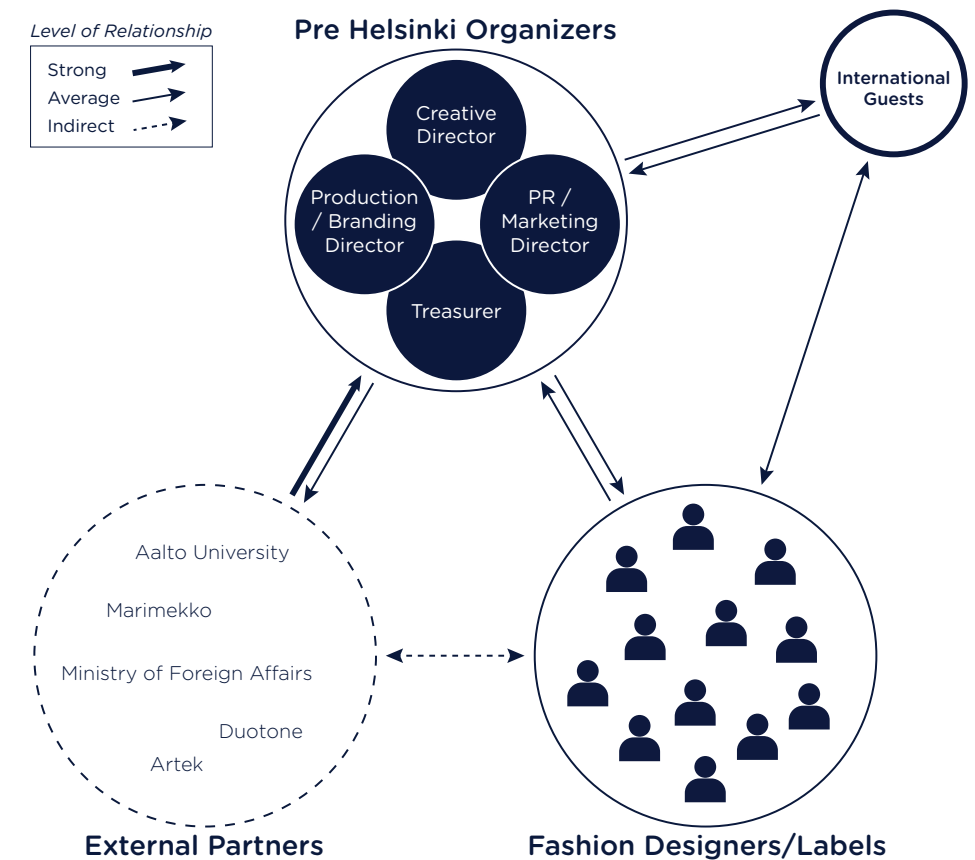


Figure 5.3. A visualization of main actors in Pre Helsinki and their interrelationships.

As depicted in the figure, it can be argued that this development of the local fashion ecosystem has been a by-product of the platform. Previous studies on placemaking have emphasized the importance of cultivating the active involvement of local actors (Rantisi 2011). It is clear that, ever since its launch, Pre Helsinki has mobilized local actors in different fields, such as educational, governmental, cultural and cor-

porate organizations. Through its programs in and outside Finland, it has bridged actors striving to internationalize Finnish fashion talents. Moreover, it has reconnected existing capabilities in Finland through its programs. By strengthening the relationship among the local actors, the platform has also contributed to the local ecosystem to realize the potential of Finnish fashion beyond its design heritage.

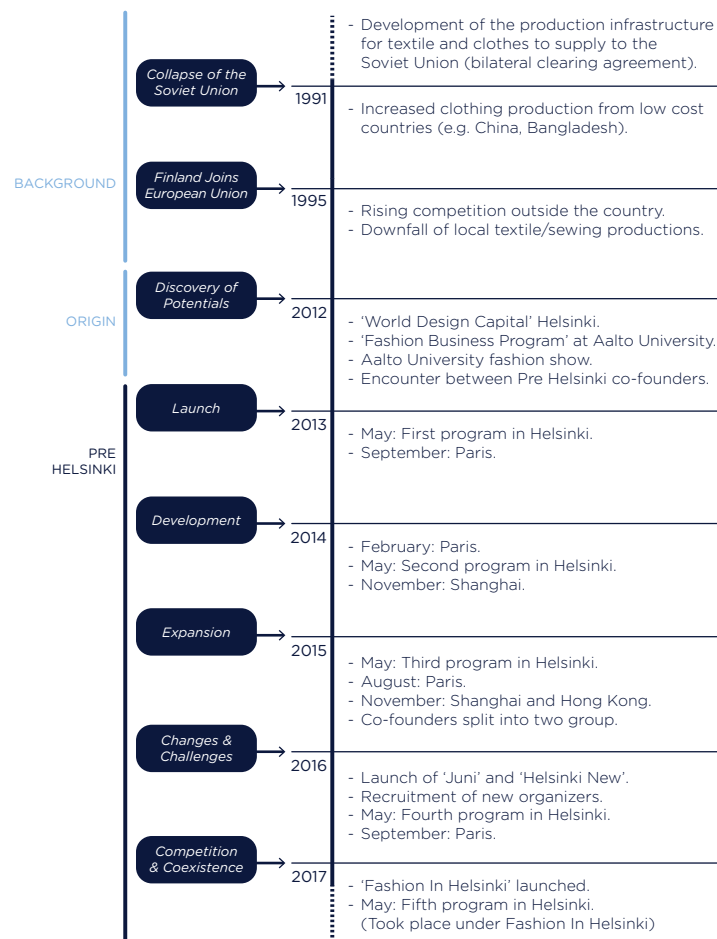


Figure 5.4. A timeline for the Pre Helsinki case in the development of Finnish fashion.

Figure 5.4 was developed as a result of analysis of the practical descriptions of the case. From the condition before Pre Helsinki to its launch, annual key events throughout its development, the timeline provides a chronological summary based on the findings of the case, especially the practical descriptions of the platform.

5.3. Fashion Designers as Placemakers

This case was investigated in detail with particular attention to its background, origin, how the platform works and its main actors. It was argued and shown that the emergence of the platform was a response to two disconnects that are peculiar to the Finnish fashion context: the disconnect between fashion design and business and the disconnect between the local and global fashion scenes. Pre Helsinki addressed these tensions by offering a set of activities aimed at promoting Finnish fashion internationally. The objective of identifying these aspects of Pre Helsinki was to view how the concept of placemaking works in the case. Then, the second question remained: how is the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers implemented through the platform? In order to answer this question, the next two sections will unfold the distinctive characteristics of the platform and corresponding involvements of fashion designers.

5.3.1. Characteristics of Pre Helsinki

From the data, five characteristics of Pre Helsinki were identified. These characteristics are: (1) cultivating a collaborative mindset among the designers, (2) designer-centered approach, (3) creating experiential fashion activities, (4) developing a new category of fashion week as well as (5) promoting Finnish fashion design globally. These characteristics are not isolated; rather, together they illustrate the role of Pre Helsinki in placemaking of Helsinki and Finland.

-The Cultivation of a Collaborative Mindset among Designers

The first characteristic is the cultivation of a collaborative mindset among designers. Participating fashion designers in Pre Helsinki communicate intensively to create various activities in collaboration with each other. Maaranen described their relationships with designers: “We have said to our designers that ‘let’s be very open and when new things come then we always have to talk about it together’” (interview, June 23, 2016). In fact, having organizers, such as Maaranen who is a fashion designer but also works as its creative director, has significantly helped Pre Helsinki to establish its horizontal relationship with the designers in mutual trust. Maaranen noted: “We [fashion designers] work in a group so I am not alone. We always have a long conversation together and I ask them before making decisions” (interview, February 5, 2016). As individual designers are scattered in multiple locations, organizers constantly communicate with them via diverse media platforms, such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Skype, but without interfering too much in their self-organized conversations.

-Designer-Centered Approach

The second characteristic of Pre Helsinki is its designer-centered approach. Pre Helsinki was jointly founded by designers and has been mainly run by designers. The following comment by Maaranen sheds light on this approach:

They [fashion designers] are in the center of everything. I think they are the most important part. [...] everything starts from the designers in a way. We don’t want to restrict them too much. I think it is important for each designer to have a space to show their best. (interview, June 23, 2016)

As an organization, Pre Helsinki has provided access to essential resources, especially international media and networks, to enable young Finnish fashion designers to be recognized internationally. Koski, another co-founder with marketing expertise, said that: “Vilma and Satu are fashion designers and they had a perspective from their sides, especially what [the] fashion design community needs” (interview, March 30, 2016). As the organizers understand the fashion design community, the platform can develop catered programs to promote its designers.

-The Creation of Experiential Fashion Activities

The third characteristic is the creation of experiential fashion activities. Maaranen highlighted: “Telling a story, that is what we want to do” (interview, February 5, 2016). To offer engaging experiences to visitors, Pre Helsinki has developed multiple activities, such as pop-up stores, designers’ presentations and workshops, while coordinating its partners’

events during the program. Creating such activities under a coherent story or theme “helps [Pre Helsinki] make the experience somehow not just better but more exciting” (Maaranen, interview, February 5, 2016). Instead of simply curating independent works by different designers, they have designed a series of actual contents that allow visitors to fully experience the work of designers (see Figure 5.5). During the activities, visitors can interact with designers and engage with their work on a personal level. In an interview, Lindberg-Repo (June 9, 2016) noted that, due to this engaging experience, Pre Helsinki activities ultimately offer excitement to the visitors.



Figure 5.5. An experiential setting from the presentation of designers in Pre Helsinki 2016. (observation, May 26, 2016)

-The Development of a New Category of Fashion Week

The fourth characteristic is the development of a new category of fashion week. Since its outset, Pre Helsinki has aimed at innovating the fashion week model. In fact, introducing Helsinki as a new location for a fashion week and scheduling it at the end of May, an unusual time, provided opportunities for Pre Helsinki. Regarding this aspect, Lindberg-Repo noted, “They created a new category with the thinking how to invite journalists and people here to see the fashion. [...] They created a new world around fashion Helsinki in May” (interview, June 9, 2016). Moreover, the ways in which designers work for its program is very different, as they collaborate more to present a coherent theme. Its art director Väinölä noted that, regardless of the level of expertise from the industry, “It was a new thing to do for most of [the] designers. For all the new designers we had, they have never done something like this before” (interview, June 23, 2016). Compared to this curated approach adopted by Pre Helsinki, conventional fashion weeks tend to simply curate a series of events that are operated by independent designers and brands. Therefore, the themes of the collections are very different from each other.

-The Global Promotion of Finnish Fashion Design

The last characteristic of Pre Helsinki is the global promotion of Finnish fashion design. For this, the organizers chose designers who construct what Finnish fashion design means: a highly artistic approach and knowledge of materials. As Koski stated, “There is a definitely high artistic level in the design and very good knowledge about materials [...]” (interview, March 30, 2016). In terms of distinctive aesthetic styles, PR and marketing director Juutilainen also pointed out, “It doesn’t make sense to compete with Swedish or Danish brands and what they are doing. We have [our] very own aesthetic and Pre Helsinki designers represent the very peak talent of that” (interview, June 23, 2016). Thus, in

order to reinforce this status, the platform carefully presents the most relevant Finnish fashion designers to the global media representatives and international markets through various events which they organize.

These characteristics both summarize how Pre Helsinki works and illuminate how placemaking is implemented through this platform. However, as mentioned earlier, each characteristic constructs a separate “stage” in which the fashion designers of Pre Helsinki are involved in different ways. Five involvements of the designers arose from the five characteristics.

5.3.2. Involvements of Fashion Designers in the Pre Helsinki Case

By analyzing further the five characteristics of Pre Helsinki, this section aims to identify the involvements of fashion designers to conceptualize the ways in which fashion designers actually contribute to turn Helsinki and Finland into places for fashion. Depending on the condition, the involvements were grouped in three locations of action: inside, outside and both sides (in and out) of the Pre Helsinki platform. Thus, the five involvements will be analyzed according to these three types. The five corresponding involvements that arose from the five characteristics are: (1) community members, (2) active agents, (3) storytellers, (4) innovators as well as (5) identity builders.

-Community Members

The involvement of fashion designers as community members takes place within the platform and it is related to the characteristic of cultivating a collaborative mindset. While communicating openly and

sharing resources to achieve their goal, designers have become active members within the community of Pre Helsinki. This has been achieved through the connections between designers and organizers of Pre Helsinki from their educational or professional background. In fact, from the origin of the platform to its current operation, Pre Helsinki has been established to sustain a sense of community by means of the exchange of resources and potentially useful information. For instance, including certain designers in a series of programs continues their established relationship, while adding new designers also brings a new combination to the organization and its program, enabling the creative community to avoid stagnation. In this way, the “senior” designers can guide newcomers and the newcomers can also provide new inputs. Due to the shared understanding and membership, a stronger bond among Pre Helsinki designers has been built from the inside of the organization.

-Active Agents

The involvement of fashion designers as active agents takes place both inside and outside the platform and it is related to the characteristic of the designer-centered approach. Pre Helsinki has made significant efforts to internally consider the diverse needs of designers during the planning phase. New programs have been developed to fulfill the needs. In the different events of Pre Helsinki, the works of designers have been presented as unique competencies of the platform to its international guests. In other words, fashion designers and their needs are the driver for the evolution of the platform, and giving them autonomy allows them to both construct creative outcomes in the collective and be responsible for their work (see Sinha 2002). Their wide range of participation in the platform is observable from the planning stage to the development of overarching themes and the actual development of collections, the coordination of different events and the final presentation. Having designers serve as organizers has helped the platform incorporate all different types of activities with designers.

-Storytellers

The involvement of fashion designers as storytellers takes place both inside and outside the platform and it is related to the characteristic of creating experiential fashion activities. For each Pre Helsinki program, designers have created a new theme to construct their conceptual world. For the visitors, designers have created experiential and experimental activities through their in-depth material knowledge and artistic work under a specific theme. For instance, the Pre Helsinki program in 2016 was built around the theme of house and it was presented in three ways. Firstly, as the main presentation was held at the historic Manor House of Meilahti, the space naturally provided the meaning. Secondly, independently yet jointly developed collections for the presentation formed the meaning of house to the designers. Lastly, by displaying their products at the Artek flagship store, they added the meaning of house, as the store already features various home-related products, such as chairs, tables, carpets and lamps (see Figure 5.6).



Figure 5.6. An installation at the Artek flagship store in Helsinki, 2016. (observation, May 23)

-Innovators

The involvement of fashion designers as innovators takes place from the outside of the platform and it is related to the characteristic of developing a new category of fashion week. As part of various events of Pre Helsinki, including pop-up stores and presentations, designers have developed engaging contents for the visitors to interact with. For instance, for the 2016 program, they developed collections under a common theme that are presented in individually different interpretations of collection and settings, such as an installation, a performance with dancers, and a lighting installation. These events were designed to maximize visitors' direct interactions with the designers and their works. With these individual yet collective works, fashion designers as both organizers of the platform and participants have reimagined the conventional mode of a fashion week.

-Identity Builders

The last involvement of fashion designers as identity builders takes place from the outside of the platform and it is related to the characteristic of promoting Finnish fashion design globally. As a result of the recent recognition from the international fashion scene, young Finnish fashion designers have been associated with particular aesthetics, including artistic approaches and material knowledge. In order to both reinforce their reputation and introduce new aspects continuously, the designers included in Pre Helsinki have been selected carefully. The interpretation of "Finnishness"²¹ can vary from one designer to another. However, as they orchestrate their work through constant communication, the visual and material interpretation of Finnish fashion identity can appear to be collective. However, the designers have shared their tendency to engage in artistic work in the programs. This is partially explained by the aim of Pre Helsinki to present the potential of individual designers to the guests. Developing artistic fashion, rather than commercial

21. The goal of this substudy is not to define the identity of Finnish fashion. Thus, it was not elaborated further.

clothing, can unleash the maximum level of creativity (McRobbie 1998). As the designers share certain values arising from social processes, the foreign visitors can see similarities in the visual aesthetics of their work.

In fact, these involvements did not take place separately, but instead are interconnected and influenced by each other. For instance, the involvement of designers as community members is enforced by their other involvement as active agents. Additionally, as storytellers advocating experiential fashion activities and a new category of fashion week, the designers were able to act as identity builders to enhance the value of Finnish fashion design during the events. This interplay of multiple involvements of fashion designers demonstrates the significant contribution of fashion designers to the placemaking of Helsinki/Finland. Figure 5.7 below visualizes the ways in which fashion designers from the Pre Helsinki case contribute to the global recognition of Helsinki/Finland as places of fashion.

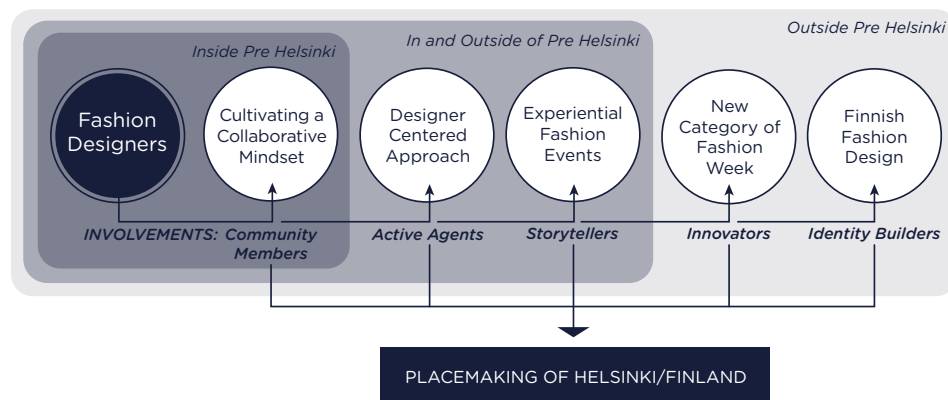


Figure 5.7. A visualization of the relationship between the involvements of fashion designers from the Pre Helsinki case and characteristics of the platform.

5.4. Discussion of the Chapter

This last part of the chapter further discusses challenges that have recently emerged for the Pre Helsinki platform and their implications for this doctoral dissertation, which provide specificity as the weft.

5.4.1. Challenges: Internal and External Tensions

This section is devoted to the problems faced by Pre Helsinki. As the platform has the status of not just a trailblazer but also a startup, it is natural to encounter diverse challenges. One of its initial goals, to increase the international visibility of Finnish fashion, has been addressed through joint efforts by local stakeholders, which can be observed in the growing coverage of Finnish fashion in international media. Recently, major fashion magazines, including *Vogue Italia*, *W Magazine*, *i-D*, *Dazed and Women's Wear Daily*, introduced young Finnish designers and Pre Helsinki (Bottenghy 2016; Gush 2016; Stansfield 2016; Voight 2016; Wynne 2016). However, the economic growth of Finnish fashion has been restricted due to the stagnant exports of its fashion goods (Lille 2010; van Eynde and Wiinamäki 2012). These two contributing dimensions, the symbolic through increased global recognition and the economic through increased sales and exports, are equally relevant for making Helsinki/Finland into places of fashion. Accordingly, major tensions have been perceived from the business side of the platform, both internally and externally.

In regards to internal tension, the first issue arises from the difficulty to self-sustain. As several experts noted, the lack of strong

business orientation is a threat to the Pre Helsinki format. Its strong reliance on external funding and absence of direct sales compel the organization to evolve. In consequence, the second issue stemmed from this call for change. After the 2015 program, the platform experienced organizational changes as two founding members with marketing, PR and communication backgrounds left their positions. With the newly recruited organizers, strategic developments are expected to be initiated in the years ahead.

During this internal change, a strong competitor arose externally. Juni, a consulting company, was launched in 2015 to support the broader cultural industry in Finland, including fashion and design. The two members who left Pre Helsinki founded the company; thus certain similarities between the two organizations were observed, such as the format, activities and partners. However, its goal is different: to provide financial success for Finnish fashion and design clients. Koski, co-founder of Juni, commented on the distinction: “We work with a much broader set of companies in order to have real business. [...] Our goal is to create this broader framework where different kinds of designers and companies all benefit. We want to help the Finnish fashion industry at large” (interview, March 30, 2016). To achieve this, Juni launched Helsinki New, a showcase of local fashion companies. It includes a broad range of companies in addition to a selected group of artistic fashion designers/brands. While coordinating diverse events independently organized by participants, the Helsinki New showcase attracted a larger number of international guests, especially from the Asian market.²² The showcase also organizes a series of events outside Finland for Finnish designers and brands to export their products to emerging markets, especially East Asia. With this competitor, the approaches developed by Pre Helsinki have faced challenges.

22. Martta Louekari, one of the co-founders of Juni, has a personal network in East Asia from her previous work experiences.

These internal and external changes will surely influence the programs of Pre Helsinki with a view to developing and improving its business agenda in the future. Based on Falay et al. (2007) who studied multiple cases of Finnish design-intensive firms, the partnership between design and business experts is crucial to sustaining their competitiveness while growing internationally. Moreover, such partnerships are especially important once the initial stage of establishment is achieved and the second stage of growth is required. Similarly, the changes from the initial stage of Pre Helsinki were a sign to prepare for the next stage, not just to sustain its current achievements but also to develop further. The overhaul of its internal organization will initiate a new phase of the platform with stronger business implications at the same time as its foundational value, to support the Finnish fashion talents, stays the same. Its competition with Juni will encourage the organization to identify new strategies to differentiate itself from the Helsinki New showcase or, alternatively, consolidate the efforts of the two platforms.

5.4.2. Implications of the Case: Alternative Scenario

Reflecting on the ongoing development of Pre Helsinki, it remains uncertain what role this platform will perform for the Finnish fashion scene in the future, despite its contribution to placemaking. According to the study by Riegels Melchior, Skov, and Csaba (2011) on the development of Danish fashion, four stages are identifiable and may be useful in predicting the next step for the platform. These stages are: (1) problematization (adjustment to deindustrialization and the emergence of a designer fashion sector); (2) interessement (government’s

gradual reinterpretation of the cultural sector, especially fashion as an innovative industry worthy of support); (3) enrolment (stabilization of networks and establishment of a leading institute); and (4) mobilization of allies (leading politicians' promotion of local fashion). Reflecting on these stages, it can be seen that the current transitional stage of Finnish fashion is between the second and the third stage since the government has started recognizing the value of the Finnish fashion industry while local actors have managed to mobilize and organize Pre Helsinki. Compared to Denmark, Finland still lacks a leading institute capable of unifying all local actors in order to further promote the Finnish fashion scene; thus, local collectives may be able to collaborate to create such an institute.

However, Finnish fashion does not necessarily follow the same development trajectory as Denmark because the local fashion ecology, such as production facilities, the size of the domestic market and educational emphasis, is distinct from the Danish context. While navigating and embracing the specific context, Pre Helsinki and its activities represent the unique path that Finnish fashion has constructed and has recognized pluralistic scenarios for increasing international recognition. Although the platform has faced challenges due to internal and external changes, it can be argued that this unsettled and evolving status of the platform resembles the nature of fashion. Surfing on the ephemeral in fashion (Lipovetsky 1994), its process of making a place is still in progress. Whether Finnish fashion becomes the next fashion nation or not, the case of Pre Helsinki has already contributed to global fashion by demonstrating an alternative possibility with its distinctive designers-first approach.

In this chapter, two research questions were posed to view fashion designers as placemakers. They were: (1) how does the expanded role of a fashion designer as a placemaker emerge through the platform of Pre Helsinki? And (2) how is this role implemented via

the platform? Corresponding to these questions, two sets of findings were presented. Practical descriptions of Pre Helsinki, including its background, origin, activities, and main actors, were introduced as a response to the first question. The second question was addressed by identifying its characteristics and the involvements of fashion designers. Altogether, these answers contribute to demonstrating fashion designers' expanded role as placemakers, which was the intention of this substudy. The proposed contribution of designers in placemaking was noted by Manzini (2015). However, by bringing the perspective from fashion research on placemaking (Rantisi 2011; Skov 2011; McRobbie 2015), this substudy explored how fashion designers can also expand their role as placemakers in a unique way by utilizing the platform of Pre Helsinki as a specific case.

Beyond this explanatory case, the ways in which distinctive features of fashion designers materialize while making the place need to be further investigated. In the following Chapter 6, the results of the two substudies—the weft and the warp—are woven theoretically. In other words, the concepts and categories comprising fashion design thinking will be applied to the case of Pre Helsinki in order to examine the ways in which fashion designers are actually involved while playing the role of placemaker.

06

TWO STUDIES WOVEN TOGETHER



Throughout Chapter 4 and 5, the warp and weft of this dissertation were presented and prepared to be interwoven. This chapter is designed to not just connect findings from two substudies but also further articulate their application in a conceptual level.

6.1. Application of Fashion Design Thinking in Placemaking

The findings of the two substudies were presented in the chapters dedicated to them. However, further investigations on their entanglement are required in order to address the objective of this dissertation, namely, to rediscover the practice of fashion designers for expanding their social role. This further clarifies how fashion designers can play the role of placemakers.

In Chapter 4, the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers was categorized in the three dimensions of process, outcome and use, while another set of findings was grouped as the meaning and material dimensions of their culture. Several concepts supporting each category were further presented in the review of relevant literature on design practice and fashion. In order to strengthen the connection between the substudies, the application of these categories and concepts needs to be synthesized and further articulated in relation to five involvements identified from Chapter 5, which were related to the characteristics of the Pre Helsinki platform. In the following, the ways in which fashion design thinking is applied to the identified involvements of fashion designers from the Pre Helsinki case will be analyzed. The synthesis takes place theoretically, utilizing the model from Chapter 4 (see Figure 4.3). This approach was conducted to clearly present the original contribution of this dissertation. In this section, by applying

fashion design thinking from the internal to the external, the analysis of each involvement will be introduced. In other words, the explanation begins with the internal aspect of fashion design culture and moves to the three dimensions of fashion design practice. Then, it concludes with the external aspect of the culture. However, it is important to emphasize that this may not be the actual order of occurrence. In fact, this model is neither linear nor procedural, but is adopted to describe the application of fashion design thinking more conveniently. Figure 6.1 below visualizes the process of theoretical analysis.

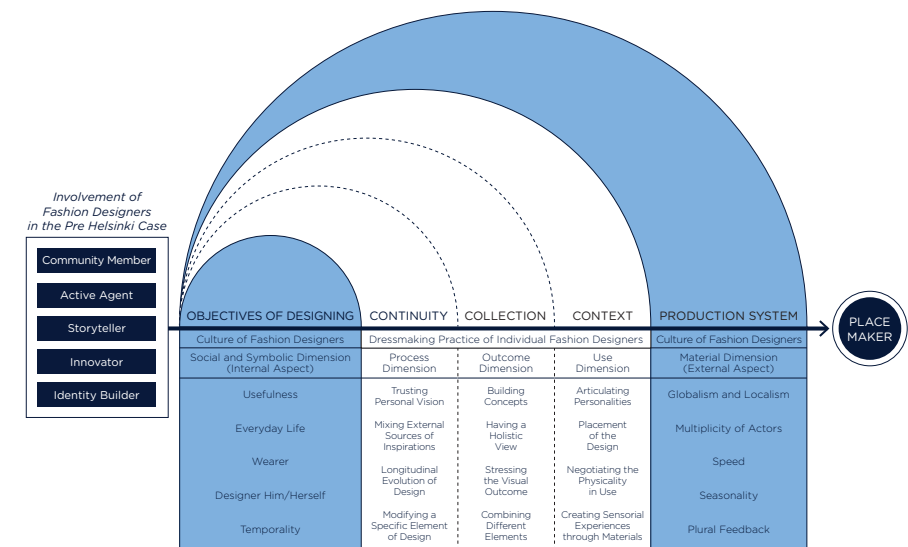


Figure 6.1. A model for applying fashion design thinking to fashion designers' involvements in the Pre Helsinki case.

First, the involvement of fashion designers as community members in the Pre Helsinki platform (I1) strongly supports the perspective that the profession of fashion design creates a sense of community by not just cultivating and sharing a domain-specific culture but also strongly being influenced by it.

- Regarding the internal aspect of shared culture addressing the objectives of designing, fashion designers in the Pre Helsinki case communicate with each other constantly for a number of reasons, including improving the usefulness of their designs, embedding a certain meaning into their items to be used in everyday life, dressing potential wearers with their items, deriving their own pleasures and benefits through experimentation, and providing the relevance of their designs to the moment. Although individual designers may take different approaches in their dressmaking practice, the Pre Helsinki designers, by means of discussing various topics, create a strong sense of community and a shared culture situating their work.
- Regarding the dressmaking practice, the collaboration among designers encourages the exchange of personal visions and sources of inspiration in the design process. For example, through mobile communication media, including Facebook, Skype and WhatsApp, the designers share information and various sources of inspiration during the development of their designs. For the outcome, they also share similar concepts while seeking harmony among themselves to create an overarching theme together. They also aim to present their works as a collective through coherent visual aesthetics. In other words, in the programs they seek the coexistence of a harmonized theme and the unique design of each designer. In their contextual thinking, designers pay more attention to the ways in which they can create sensorial experiences through the development of unique materials incorporating their concept as a collective.

- Regarding the production system, fashion designers deal with a number of factors. The coexistence of globalism and localism is observed from their global production and local presentation in Helsinki. Moreover, fashion designers interact with diverse actors of the production system not just as individuals but also as a group. An individually different condition to produce and present the collection defines the level of participation in the platform although designers in the same activity may go through a shared timeline in the development of their work. Lastly, as the aim of Pre Helsinki is to help fashion designers go international, which is achievable through direct and indirect interactions between the local designers and foreign visitors, especially fashion journalists, buyers and recruiters, the emphasized focus on gathering diverse feedback is identified at both the individual and the collective level.

Second, the involvement of fashion designers as active agents (I2) explains two features of fashion designers from the Pre Helsinki case: main users and products of the platform. As the users, they utilize their participation in the platform in order to increase their visibility in the global fashion context. As the products, however, they aim at achieving the best performance. Due to this twofold intention that places designers in the center, overall, the stronger emphasis on the work of designers and themselves is found for this involvement rather than the wearer.

- Regarding the objectives, designers balance between the two features of being main users and products of Pre Helsinki. However, in order to sustain the efforts of the platform to support their internationalization, they have to be cooper-

ative with the activities organized by Pre Helsinki. Thus, as the main products of the platform, they consider all factors of design objectives while a stronger emphasis is placed on the factor of designer him/herself due to their other intention of acquiring global recognition via the platform.

- For the dressmaking practice, fashion designers of Pre Helsinki employ individually different approaches in order to be recognized by influential international guests, such as buyers and recruiters. Thus, the tendency to focus on relevant activities for presenting uniqueness and newness is observed. For instance, trusting personal vision throughout the design process helps them build strong design concepts that encompass their collections. In particular, highlighting bold and memorable visual outcomes appears to be important to stand out during the presentation. From the use dimension, the designers aim to cater to the interests of influential visitors. Thus, their intention is to demonstrate tastes that the visitors seek. This can materialize in the personalities articulated by the designers, contextualization of their work, and careful use of materials presenting specific sensorial experiences.
- The production system also influences fashion designers in terms of this involvement. In particular, they primarily use this platform to get various forms of support, such as marketing, finance, and insight, among others, for dealing with the overwhelming global ecosystem of fashion while grounding themselves more strongly in the familiar local condition of Helsinki. These forms of support are useful for them to both navigate the complex relationships with multiple actors in the global fashion business and maximize possibilities to collect robust feedback through direct interactions with influential journalists, buyers and potential wearers.

Third, the involvement of fashion designers as storytellers (I3) is noted due to their excessive application of their dressmaking practice. Due to their symbolic and social production of fashion through imaginative stories, the clear presence of factors relating to the shared culture of fashion designers was also observed.

- As the objectives of designing, fashion designers in this involvement are mostly concerned with the relevance of the story they intend to deliver through clothes and other items. Their design may not be necessarily considered practical by everyone, as individual preferences are different, but other factors are related to this involvement, as the constructed narrative has to make sense in everyday life to existing and potential wearers and to the designer him/herself, while materializing the idea in the form of wearable items.
- Dressmaking practice directly contributes to the construction and presentation of story, and this applies to this involvement of fashion designers. From the process dimension, they embrace intuitive thinking and diverse sources of inspiration, then connect them to their previous designs while iterating a certain element, such as silhouette, color, and texture. As creative authors, the collection of items that fashion designers present are powerful media for telling a story, but they need to understand their target audiences. They need to inscribe the message carefully in their items in order to tell a coherent story. The symbols are first communicated visually, before the wearer internalizes the story, but the symbolism occurs in various media, including music and lighting, and has an effect as a collection of different types of items, including clothes, accessories, and shoes. To build a story, fashion designers have to think of the dimension of use, as the story needs to be targeted at a particular

audience. They consider what impacts their story can have and to what occasions it can be matched while addressing the physical form of the human body through materials. Through these iterative, holistic and contextualized practices of individual designers, a stronger story can be written and communicated via the Pre Helsinki platform.

- From the production system, to increase the relevance of the story, understanding the coexistence of globalism and localism is vital. In other words, it is important for fashion designers to be sensitive to the audiences and actors that they deal with globally and locally. In addition, designers apply the collected feedback to author a new story or revise an old story. The feedback helps the designers write more intriguing stories for their audiences.

Fourth, the involvement of fashion designers as innovators of the fashion week (I4) is more relevant for the production system of material clothes while the actual practice is performed by individual designers in order to introduce innovative outcomes and to increase the impact on the influential visitors.

- The primary intention of this involvement is to innovate the format of presenting designers' work. Thus, the factor of their audiences (the wearer) is relevant for the objective of designing. The Pre Helsinki designers may have their own individual agendas but can achieve their shared goal as a collective.
- In terms of dressmaking practice, the outcome dimension, which is dependent on the format of presentation, is noted as being more relevant for their involvement as innovators.

From the coherent design concept to the visual outcome, often using contrasting design elements within a single presentation, Pre Helsinki designers fully utilize their collections with a particular theme to construct a new type of fashion week. Meanwhile, a certain level of consideration of the use dimension is also found, as designers' innovativeness has to be accepted by the audiences. For instance, due to individual preferences for wearing a particular piece of clothing, the placement and creation of sensorial experiences need to be planned carefully. This is to ensure that the audiences do not just understand their proposal, but also endorse and further spread it.

- Various perspectives from the material dimension of fashion are applied in this involvement. The platform mobilizes local resources and actors to increase the global recognition of Finnish fashion design. It disrupts the conventional concept of seasonality by hosting the guests in a "pre" season of the fashion calendar. However, special attention is paid mostly to maximizing possibilities for receiving positive feedback from multiple channels regarding the work of fashion designers. In particular, coverage from international media, such as *Vogue*, *Elle* and *Women's Wear Daily*, is crucial to amplify the unique quality of Pre Helsinki to the broader audiences in the global context.

Fifth, the involvement of fashion designers as identity builders for Finnish fashion (I5) takes place in the process and outcome dimensions of dressmaking practice while they reflect on Finland's past in order to propose new aesthetics for the global fashion context.

- Pre Helsinki designers' objectives are clearly presented as being to interpret the Finnish culture, tradition and natural resources and to propose them as a possible future using fashion as a medium. Thus, fashion designers in this involvement have a tendency to not just look back at the past glory of Finland, especially Finnish design heritage from iconic designers in the 1950s and 1960s, but also project what elements can be further expanded and applied in different contexts beyond the country. For instance, in the 2016 program, the Pre Helsinki designers presented their collections under the theme of house, which implies commonly shared Finnish values, including comfort and wellbeing.
- In order to build a new meaning for Finland, fashion designers apply all the concepts emerging from the process and outcome dimensions. Throughout the continuous process of designing a collection, the designers attempt to infuse their personal approach to embodying Finnish cultural values implicitly or explicitly. For instance, the iterative application of local resources, including fur and reindeer leather, was observed as well as a utilitarian approach to marrying functionality with a minimal aesthetic. The textile-driven artistic fashion of the Pre Helsinki designers is also distinctive, resembling the applied arts tradition of Finnish design.
- From the external cultural aspect of the production system, fashion designers' concerns for applying local approaches to the global context are observable in multiple approaches, such as visual aesthetic, craftsmanship and techniques. Their active interactions with non-Finnish guests in order to internationalize these approaches are found in this involvement as identity builders.

As a result of this theoretical analysis, Table 6.1 below presents the relevance of the various concepts of fashion design thinking to the five involvements of fashion designers in the case study of Pre Helsinki.

FASHION DESIGN THINKING			INVOLVEMENT				
CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	CONCEPT	11	12	13	14	15
Culture (Internal)	Objectives of Designing (Meaning)	Usefulness	■	■			
		Everyday Life	■	■	■		
		Wearer	■	■	■	■	
		Designer Him/Herself	■	■	■		
		Temporality	■	■	■		■
Practice	Continuity (Process)	Trusting Personal Vision	■	■	■		■
		Mixing External Sources of Inspiration	■		■		■
		Longitudinal Evolution of Design			■		■
		Modifying a Specific Element of Design					■
	Collection (Outcome)	Building Design Concepts	■	■	■	■	■
		Having a Holistic View	■		■	■	■
		Stressing the Visual Outcome	■	■	■	■	■
		Combining Different Elements			■	■	■
	Context (Use)	Articulating Personalities		■	■		
		Placement of the Design		■	■	■	
		Negotiating the Physicality in Use			■		
		Creating Sensorial Experiences through Materials	■	■	■	■	
Culture (External)	Production System (Material)	Coexistence of Globalism and Localism	■	■	■	■	■
		Multiplicity of Actors	■	■		■	
		Speed	■				
		Seasonality				■	
		Plural Feedback	■	■	■	■	■

Table 6.1. A summary of the relationship between fashion design thinking and the involvements in the Pre Helsinki case.

To generalize, the involvements identified in the case of Pre Helsinki are implemented through both the dressmaking practice of individual designers and their shared culture. Depending on the involvement, it was noted that fashion designers utilize different factors from fashion design thinking and altogether, as placemakers, they contribute to making Helsinki and Finland into meaningful places for fashion.



07

*DISCUSSION
AND
CONCLUSION*

With the previously presented interpretations, the application of fashion design thinking into the Pre Helsinki case was examined. This concluding chapter aims at completing the dissertation as a woven narrative. It includes a summary of this dissertation, reflections in relation to the literature, contributions, limitations, assessment of the research quality, and future implications.

7.1. Fashion Designers Re(dis)covered

With the main research question—how can the role of fashion designers be conceptualized to understand their contribution to society as a profession? —the departure point of this dissertation was the possibility to expand the role of fashion designers’ learning from design thinking discourses (e.g. Schön 1983; Buchanan 1992; Lawson 2005; Cross 2006). However, in comparison to this discussion in design, the fact that the practice of fashion designers remains relatively lesser known and their performance is mostly judged in terms of market-oriented values, such as sales, triggered this doctoral research to investigate the distinctive features of what fashion designers actually do, beyond image-making. Additionally, the misrepresentation of the fashion design profession was problematized. When people picture a typical fashion designer, they usually think of the very exclusive group of fashion designers serving as chief designers at global fashion houses. However, most fashion designers are actually unnoticed and do not have a voice. Thus, this misconception confuses what it really means to be a fashion designer. The uncovering of fashion design practice, especially from those who are actually not famous “star” designers, was essential in order to recover the meaning of the fashion design profession influenced by the mystification of their contribution and the previously mentioned prej-

udices regarding the profession (e.g. Nixon and Blakley 2012). In other words, the precondition for recovery was the rediscovery of fashion design practice and these two aspects conceptualize the role of fashion designers in this dissertation.

The two substudies interweaving dressmaking and placemaking together answer the main research question. The question was reformulated with a dual meaning, as seen in the dissertation title: re(dis)covering—rediscovering and recovering—fashion designers. The rediscovery of fashion designers refers to the dressmaking practice of fashion designers while recovery is related to the meaning of their profession in society. The former was discussed mainly in Chapter 4 through building the notion of fashion design thinking. The latter was explored through the case of Pre Helsinki in Chapter 5. The two substudies were interwoven theoretically to demonstrate the ways in which fashion designers are re(dis)covered. In other words, the distinctive contributions that fashion designers can offer were first explored by theorizing fashion design thinking. Then, its application was examined and demonstrated with the case of Pre Helsinki, in which fashion designers were involved in turning Helsinki and Finland into places for fashion. Throughout the case, how the unique practice of fashion designers, embracing both the material production of clothes and the social and symbolic production of fashion, supports them in playing the expanded role of placemakers was demonstrated.

In conclusion, this doctoral dissertation addressed the above-mentioned question with two substudies interweaving fashion design thinking as a warp and the case of Pre Helsinki as a weft to construct a piece of woven fabric. This fabric can be useful not just for the research domains of design and fashion but also for patchworking the gap between them. Altogether, it accomplished its aim of conceptualizing the role of fashion designers by re(dis)covering them.

7.2. Reflections on Design and Fashion Research

Continuing from the summary, detailed reviews on the results of this dissertation are presented in relation to the research objectives and the literature. The reflections begin with a discussion on the research domains of design and fashion, and then end with the findings of each substudy.

7.2.1. On Research Domains

In the context of the research domain, this dissertation intended to weave the neighboring yet isolated domains of design and fashion research. These domains may be perceived to be in communication with each other but, as presented earlier, a clear gap between them was identified due to prejudices regarding the idea of fashion and the hierarchy of the design profession (e.g. McRobbie 1998; Nixon and Blakley 2012; Julier 2013). Thus, this dissertation identified this gap and constructed potential connections between the domains. To invite a dialogue between the two domains, it was necessary to both investigate fashion design from the perspective of design research and emphasize design practice while studying fashion designers. These attempts can be observed throughout this research. For example, the key findings of this dissertation, including fashion design thinking and the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers, were investigated to create conversational spaces for these domains to communicate.

In order to navigate these research domains, a methodological framework embracing features from multiple strategies was developed

(Creswell 2013). This was intended to demonstrate the possibilities of a multi-methodological approach for studying fashion designers in constantly changing research conditions (Granata 2012; Finn 2014; McRobbie 2016). This dissertation was built upon two strategies of qualitative research, namely grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin 1998) and case study (Yin 2014). There were three reasons for this: (1) the challenging research conditions for studying fashion designers, in which the difficulty of accessing and gathering proper sources has increased (McRobbie 2016), (2) the interdisciplinary nature of the research domain of design (Margolin 2002) and fashion (Kawamura 2011; Granata 2012), and (3) the different intentions of the two substudies, theorizing fashion design thinking and investigating the placemaking practice in a single case. In particular, different approaches to data analysis—grounded theory coding and thematic analysis—were employed corresponding to the intention of each substudy. These reasons reflect the methodological discussion in the research domain that explores fashion design (Granata 2012; Finn 2014; McRobbie 2016). Previous studies have commonly emphasized both the importance of developing domain-specific methodology and the challenge posed by changing and complex research conditions in the domain. Building on the discussion, this dissertation demonstrated the possibility of employing a multi-methodological approach to explore the complex topic, especially in the intersection of design and fashion research. At a practical level, the triangulation strategy was employed to overcome methodological challenges for studying fashion designers, such as the blurred division between primary and secondary sources and accessibility to relevant samples (McRobbie 2016). Additionally, this methodological challenge was further addressed with the metaphor of weaving. The *weaving metaphor* was strategically developed in order to more effectively deliver the logic of multi-methodology stemming from two substudies in one doctoral research. Considering narratives as a product of qualitative research, the

metaphor also functioned to weave two narratives into one. Therefore, this metaphor supported this dissertation in achieving its goal on different scales from broad to specific, while embracing terms familiar to the members of the domain, such as woven fabric, weft and warp, to facilitate effective communication.

Besides these reflections on the broader scale, the two findings—fashion design thinking and the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers—emerged corresponding to the two inquiries of this dissertation. In the following, these findings are further reviewed in relation to particular research streams or topics, including the practice of designers with the notion of design thinking, the entanglement of practice and culture of fashion designers, and the culture of fashion designers embracing both the symbolic production of fashion and the material production of clothes, the role of fashion designers as dressmakers and placemakers, and placemaking in the polycentric world of fashion.

7.2.2. On Fashion Design Thinking

Regarding the findings on fashion design thinking, the first reflection is related to the initiation of a dialogue between design and fashion research. As one of the key findings of this dissertation, the notion was constructed in order to bridge the two domains. Its definition not only expands design thinking discourses from design research into fashion but also introduces the shared culture of professional fashion designers to design research. In the discussion on design thinking, especially the research stream exploring design practice (Schön 1983; Buchanan 1992; Lawson 2005; Cross 2006), a critical question was posed with regard to concerns about overgeneralizing design and in order to explore the contextual difference in each subfield of design (Visser 2009; Kimbell 2011; Badke-Schaub, Roozenburg, and Cardoso 2010). Further expand-

ing this question, this dissertation investigated distinctive features of fashion design in comparison to design practice characterized by design thinking discourses while giving voices to professional fashion designers whose perspectives are often absent in design research. In other words, empirical studies on fashion designers were conducted in order to construct the notion of fashion design thinking instead of simply adopting the research outcomes from previous studies on design practice to analyze fashion design practice as a theoretical study (e.g. Lamb and Kallal 1992; LaBat and Sokolowski 1999). Furthermore, this construction of fashion design thinking returns the dressmaking practice of fashion designers to the center of the profession. From the fashion industry and fashion education perspective, the dressmaking tradition has been ignored intentionally both to disassociate the field from manual domestic labor and to package the practice of fashion designers as image-making (e.g. McRobbie 1998). The definition of fashion design thinking that emphasizes the dressmaking practice celebrates the forgotten yet vital tradition of fashion designers. Thus, the definition empowers them to realize their social contribution, similar to design thinking discourses that have questioned the boundaries of designers by exploring designers' skill and knowledge.

Second, fashion design thinking identified the entangled relationship between the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers and their shared culture. Various aspects of fashion design have been introduced from the design process to inspiration sources, influential factors, ideation and design methods (e.g. Eckert and Stacey 2000; Au, Taylor, and Newton 2004; Seitamaa-Hakkarainen 2014; Ræbild 2015). Through empirical studies with professional fashion designers, this dissertation not only continues these previous efforts to demystify fashion design but also revisits the dressmaking practice of fashion designers through the data-driven inductive approach in Substudy 1. A more obvious connection of this finding can be made with recently emerged studies on fashion thinking (e.g. Nixon and Blakley

2012; Dieffenbacher 2013; Pan et al. 2015). The notion of fashion design thinking is neither a simple adoption of design thinking nor a theoretical concept solely developed through a conceptual investigation. Rather, it was constructed through rigorous fieldwork and then refined through the critical review of previous studies on design practice and fashion design. Concepts and categories of fashion design identified from the empirical data provided concrete evidence for building the strongly grounded knowledge of fashion design thinking. In addition to the articulation of fashion thinking, this finding acknowledged how the individual practice and shared culture communicate with each other to offer distinctive features of fashion designers. This identification of the entanglement between the practice and the culture of fashion designers is in line with the literature on design practice highlighting the cultural dimension, which is inseparable from the individual practice of designers (Kimbell 2011; Manzini 2015, 2016). Throughout the acknowledgement of entanglement, the finding provides a language to articulate the practice and the culture of fashion designers (Manzini 2009).

Continuing from this, the third point of reflection on fashion design thinking is specifically related to the acknowledgement of the shared culture of fashion designers, encompassing the two dimensions of material and immaterial production in the fashion system. In fact, fashion designers' perspective is often absent from the research domain of fashion, especially the social psychology of clothing. This research stream tends to explore the interaction between material clothes and culture or the influence of culture while forming a new fashion (e.g. Hamilton 1987; Kaiser 1990; Eicher, Evenson, and Lutz 2008). Conversely, with fashion design thinking, this dissertation emphasizes the aspect of designing for studying fashion (Finn 2014). Thus, studying the culture from fashion designers' perspective further expands broader studies on fashion.

7.2.3. On Fashion Designer's Expanded Role as Placemakers

The demonstration of expanding the dressmaking practice of fashion designers through the placemaking practice with the case of Pre Helsinki adds more points of discussion for bridging the two research domains of design and fashion. First, this finding regarding the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers addresses the disconnected discourse on placemaking from design and fashion. In the research domain of design, the discussion on the new role of designers in the physical and symbolic dimensions of place was proposed by Julier (2013) and Manzini (2015). Similarly, yet separately from design research, the notion of place has been discussed in relation to fashion design (e.g. Rantisi 2011; Skov 2011; McRobbie 2015). Thus, this finding on fashion designers' expanded roles as placemakers invites a dialogue between the two domains. Throughout the interwoven findings of fashion design thinking and placemaking, this dissertation demonstrated how fashion designers can contribute to the construction of places with their practice and culture, incorporating the material and symbolic production of fashion, differently from other designers. This is intended neither to devalue the application of design thinking nor to draw a line between design research and fashion research. Rather, acknowledging the particular contribution of fashion designers supports the dynamic interplay between design and fashion research. As addressed earlier by Hallnäs (2009), fashion designers tend to seek to make a difference rather than solve a problem. Thus, the case showed the ways in which fashion designers were involved in the production of a meaning for Helsinki and Finland as places for fashion through their fashion design thinking.

Second, the finding further introduces the distinctive context of Helsinki and Finland to the research domain investigating the relationship between fashion and place (e.g. McRobbie 1998; Skov 2010; Nielsen, Leshkovich, and Jones 2003; Crewe 2017). Although it was viewed through the lens of Pre Helsinki, this case study is the first systematic analysis of the Finnish fashion scene to present its specificity compared to other contexts, such as Swedish, Danish, and Belgian fashion (e.g. Gimeno-Martinez 2007, 2011; Hauge, Malmberg, and Power 2009; Riegels Melchior 2010, 2011; Riegels Melchior, Skov, and Csaba 2011; Teunissen 2011; Hauge 2012). In particular, with the notion of placemaking, the case was explored while acknowledging the polycentrism of the global fashion business (Rantisi 2011; Skov 2011). This plural perspective on contemporary fashion recognizes the coexistence of traditional fashion capitals, including Paris, London, Milan and New York, and emergent centers, such as Copenhagen, Stockholm, and Seoul, among others. In this respect, the question that Skov (2011, 150) posed and investigated, “What do fashion designers produce that is significant for the nation?,” is deepened and updated through the case of Pre Helsinki, which demonstrates a designer-centered approach. Thus, thanks to the finding regarding fashion designers’ expanded role as placemakers, the case expands the research stream investigating the relationship between fashion and places.

7.3. Contributions of the Dissertation

Adopted from the reflections on the literature, Figure 7.1 below visualizes the contributions of this dissertation in various areas. It summarizes different layers of weaving conducted in this dissertation. To further explain this figure, the contributions are listed, moving from the broader scale of research domain to the two main findings.

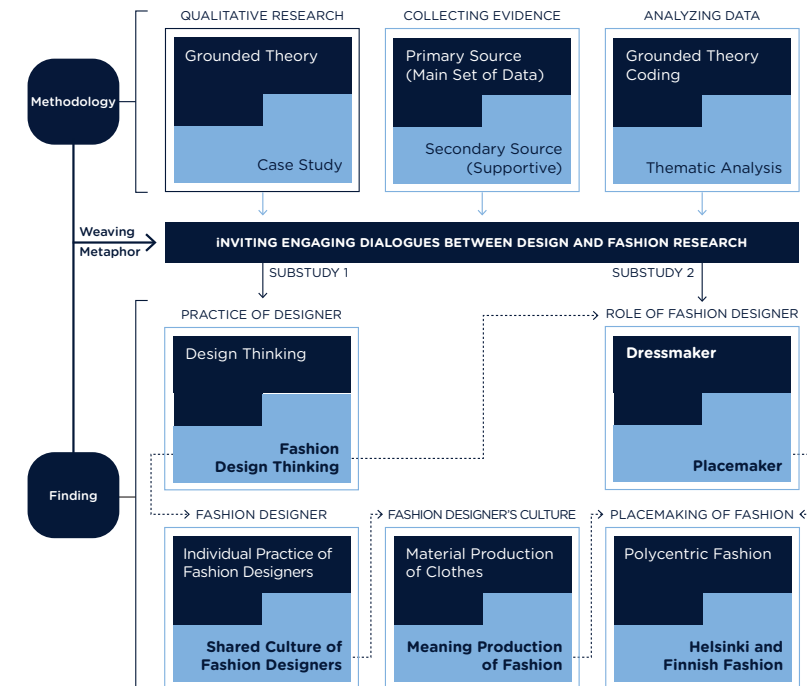


Figure 7.1. Visualized contributions of this dissertation in various areas and their relationships.

As a broader scale, this dissertation contributes to:

- identifying the gap between design and fashion research and constructing potential connections for the domains; and
- the discussion on methodological challenges for studying fashion designers.

Regarding fashion design thinking, it contributes to:

- the initiation of a dialogue between design and fashion research by creating a conversational space around the academic discussion on design thinking;

- the identification of the entangled relationship between the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers and their shared culture; and
- the acknowledgement of the shared culture of fashion designers encompassing the two dimensions of material and immaterial production in the fashion system.

Regarding the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers, it contributes to:

- addressing the disconnected discourse on placemaking from design and fashion; and
- the introduction of the distinctive context of Helsinki and Finland to the research domain investigating the relationship between fashion and place.

7.4. Something Left between Rediscovery and Recovery

Between the rediscovery and the recovery of fashion designers, a number of factors remain obscure. This section seeks to acknowledge limitations and provide clarifications. The limitations are: (1) fashion designers' application of fashion design thinking while encountering other actors in the fashion system, (2) the distinction of collaboration types in the global fashion business, (3) the use of particular theoretical perspectives to explore fashion design thinking, (4) the absence of actual residents in the placemaking process, and (5) the ongoing development of Pre Helsinki as a case.

The first factor is related to the ways in which fashion designers actually work together with other actors while utilizing their fashion design thinking. In Substudy 1, the dressmaking practice of individual fashion designers and their shared culture were rediscovered and this demonstrated the complex relationship with other members of the fashion system, including wearers, sewers, and buyers, among many others. As this dissertation primarily intended to investigate fashion designers, relationships with other actors were left aside. However, as Aspers (2006) noted, their contextual knowledge from these relationships is inscribed in fashion design thinking. Complementing previous studies on the sociological and methodological perspective of fashion designers (e.g. Aspers 2006; Aspers and Skov 2006; Ræbild 2015), the points of cooperation or “encounters” were conceptualized. This contextual knowledge of fashion designers was demonstrated through Substudy 2. In contrast to Substudy 1, their contextual knowledge from the entangled relationship was shown in the practical descriptions of forming and operating Pre Helsinki and its characteristics and involvements of fashion designers. In summary, despite the lack of discussion on various encounters, the notion of fashion design thinking includes the strong presence of contextual knowledge stemming from fashion designers' relationship with other actors in the system of fashion.

Second, relating to the notion of encounters (Aspers and Skov 2006), collective works in fashion invite further clarification. Particularly, the notion of collaboration²³ is often found while describing the nature of the global fashion business (e.g. Stoppard 2017). However, different types of “collaborative encounters” need to be acknowledged, namely horizontal and vertical collaborations (Manzini 2015, 93–118). The former is characterized by cooperative relationships among ac-

23. From management discourses to sociology, more studies can be found on the distinction among coordination, cooperation and collaboration (e.g. Denis 1999; Gulati, Wohlgezogen, and Zhelyazkov 2012; Sennett 2012).

tors and their active participation through creating a shared value. The latter refers to distributed responsibilities among actors in order to achieve a specific agreed-upon goal. Thus, an implicit hierarchy among the involved actors can be found, influenced by the intention of each actor and their agreement. In this respect, the collective production of material clothes can be described as vertical rather than horizontal collaboration due to its tendency of conditional and hierarchical relationships among actors involved in the production. Conversely, as seen from Substudy 2, fashion designers involved in the platform of Pre Helsinki shared their mutual goal by engaging in continuous discussions with each other in horizontal relationships. Accordingly, their active and collaborative involvements were presented as distinctive characteristics of the platform in Chapter 5. However, as the main intention of this dissertation is to focus on fashion designers, these notions were not elaborated deeply.

Third, regarding these complex entanglements of the fashion system and the contextual knowledge of fashion designers, possibilities for applying particular theoretical perspectives emerged during the development of this doctoral research. For instance, Entwistle (2016a, 2016b) advocated that actor-network theory has a greater potential to include the cultural and natural dimensions to view fashion production. She argued that this perspective enables seeing the ways in which the fashion product as “a cultural/natural hybrid” moves between different actors and practices beyond the clothes as outcomes of the production system (Entwistle 2016a, 18–19). In fact, this account can be relevant for this dissertation, especially Substudy 1, aiming at exploring the individual practice of fashion designers while being sensitive to the shared culture and context that they are situated in. However, the main intention of the substudy was to discover recurring features of fashion designers, which can be a foothold to identifying their authentic contribution to society. Accordingly, for this dissertation, exploring the entanglement of the practice and culture of fashion designers through

the data-driven approach was prioritized in order to open up new possibilities for studying fashion design. These results can be integrated to support other studies utilizing different theoretical perspectives, such as actor-network theory.

Fourth, more relevant for Substudy 2, another important aspect needs to be noted: The actual local residents of the place do not directly participate in the process of placemaking. From the discourse on placemaking from urban studies (e.g. Silberberg et al. 2013), the construction of strong relationships between places and communities is emphasized; thus, the direct participation of people who actually live in the place in question is vital for the placemaking process. However, the analysis of this dissertation demonstrated the ways in which fashion designers mediate the potential context and wearer as well as the local and the global by embracing both the material production of clothes and immaterial production of fashion. Based on the first substudy on fashion design thinking, individual fashion designers create material clothes while considering the context of being worn or observed. Fashion designers tend to collect as much relevant information as possible from multiple feedback channels, either directly from the wearers or indirectly from the clients and salesperson (Aspers 2006). In this respect, the participation of actual people in the making of place appears through a certain level of mediation. Thus, from the case of Pre Helsinki, it can be argued that fashion designers involved in the programs perform this mediation between the context, including a specific physical space, and the potential wearers. Regarding the meaning production of fashion, as the social communication takes place with the local community (the residents of Helsinki and Finland) and the audience (the international visitors), fashion designers from the Pre Helsinki platform bridge both ends corresponding to Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of cultural intermediaries. By balancing between places and people, fashion designers are capable of performing the placemaking practice in a unique way, especially in comparison to the approach from urban studies.

The last point concerns the ongoing development of the Finnish fashion scene. This is particularly relevant to Substudy 2, because the case of Pre Helsinki is in constant flux as the platform is still in the stage of establishing itself within the local and global context. As a startup, its unsettled condition resembles the ephemeral nature of fashion (Lipovetsky 1994). As mentioned earlier, McRobbie (2016) discussed this matter of change in her methodological reflections on studying fashion designers. Thus, while studying the rapidly changing case, the intention was to explore the case and understand its specificity through a systematic analysis. The results from the case can be further interpreted and inspire other emerging places of fashion as one of several alternative possibilities rather than as a generalizable model to be applied directly in other contexts.

7.5.

Assessment of the Research Quality

Other factors still require further clarification. However, an assessment of research quality can address the remaining doubts. As noted in Chapter 3, this doctoral dissertation displays significant relevance to Creswell's study (2013) on qualitative research due to the employment of two corresponding strategies from his approach, namely a grounded theory study and a case study. Accordingly, his account regarding standards of validating qualitative research is adopted for the assessment.

After reviewing various approaches to examining the quality of qualitative research, Creswell (2013, 250) selected the term "validation" to highlight the process dimension of research rather than "veri-

fication," which connotes a quantitative approach, or historically used terms, such as "trustworthiness" and "authenticity." He identified a number of strategies for qualitative validation that are relevant for this dissertation (Creswell 2013, 250-253).

First, as a researcher who investigated fashion designers in a foreign country, the strategy of prolonged engagement and persistent observation was crucial in this doctoral dissertation to build trust with research participants and learn their local culture through constant interactions. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the smaller scale of Helsinki provided accessibility, making the application of this validation strategy more convenient. Additionally, throughout continuous participation in Pre Helsinki programs in Helsinki from 2014 until 2017, the relationship between the research participants and the researcher has also developed in a reciprocal manner.

Second, triangulation was one of the major validation strategies that this dissertation employed. The multidimensional triangulation was designed in order to address previously presented methodological issues of studying fashion or fashion designers (e.g. Granata 2012; McRobbie 2016). At the structural level, a multi-methodological approach was used. This approach incorporating both grounded theory and case study can be considered unconventional but, as Creswell noted (2013, 53), mixing multiple strategies can be useful in order to address a complex topic. Accordingly, to achieve the intended goal of re(dis)covering fashion designers in this dissertation, features from both strategies were employed with the metaphor of weaving. In each substudy, the triangulation of data was employed to present well-balanced narratives instead of telling a one-sided story (Patton 2002). For instance, in Substudy 1, the main data were collected from interviews and observations. However, secondary sources, including news media, were also employed to support the main data. Similarly, in Substudy 2, the main data were collected from interviews and observations. The supportive

data were also gathered through interactions with physical artifacts during the observations and documents from the events. By diversifying data, the interpretative narratives were constructed for the reader to have engaging experiences of “being there.” Additionally, the triangulation of investigators was employed through co-authoring academic publications for relevant conferences and journals (Patton 2002). With a similar intent, after the documentation of research outcomes, the results were reviewed by research participants to avoid possible bias or misinterpretation and to enhance the validity (see Appendix 4 to view the list of academic activities during the doctoral research, including research seminars, conference participations and publications, that offered opportunities to get peer reviews throughout the development of this doctoral research).

The third strategy of validation is relevant to the “knowledge transfer” aspect of qualitative research. Due to the intention of discovering distinctive features of fashion designers in the globally connected cosmopolitan nature of contemporary fashion, the findings from Substudy 1 were developed systematically while balancing between the data and previous studies on related topics. In comparison, the descriptions in Substudy 2 were constructed to provide rich descriptions from the case contextualized in Helsinki, reflecting on the discussion of the polycentrism of fashion (Skov 2011). Thus, besides the main finding of the substudy—the expanded role of fashion designers in the case—the background, origin, activities, main actors, distinctive characteristics and challenges of the Pre Helsinki platform were explored to provide the case-specific context. The detailed descriptions of the case were developed to understand the ways in which fashion designers were actively involved in playing the role of placemakers. Due to their specificity, these findings are unlikely to be applicable to other contexts, yet can illustrate an alternative trajectory from the emergent Finnish fashion scene as a response to the center-periphery perspective on global fashion.

Besides these validation strategies, Creswell (2013, 253–255) also introduced the perspective of “reliability” as another common aspect for evaluating qualitative research. The enhancement of reliability is achievable through transparent practice for collecting and managing data, such as consistent notetaking during the fieldwork, transcribing the recorded data, memoing during the coding phases, comparing the results of coding with another researcher, and systematically organizing the data. Corresponding to this perspective, the systematic practice of collecting, analyzing and managing datasets was addressed throughout the research. For instance, while the data for this dissertation were collected in their entirety by the researcher during actual engagement in the field, all recorded data from the interviews in both substudies were transcribed. In particular, almost all transcripts were written by the researcher (approximately 90%). During the coding phases of Substudy 1 and thematic analysis of Substudy 2, both analytic procedures were partially supported by using the software Atlas.ti. However, fine-tuned analysis for constructing narratives was conducted manually with thorough documentation. Numerous versions of narratives and manuscripts are stored in multiple devices to prevent the loss of raw data. The overall research was conducted in an ethical and transparent manner in order to enhance reliability.

7.6. Future Implications

While the previous sections indicated multi-angled contributions and limitations of this dissertation, they also hint at possible directions for future studies. In the following, implications of this dissertation for the academic and practical contexts are further discussed.

7.6.1. Academic Implications

In the academic context, additional studies need to be conducted in order to strengthen the dialogue between design and fashion research. Continuing the effort to acknowledge the original contribution of fashion design to design and vice versa (e.g. Bertola, Colombi, and Conti 2005; Smal and Lavelle 2011; Finn 2014), testing and expanding the notion of fashion design thinking is required to deepen the dialogue between the domains. The emerged notion is in fact an “icebreaker” for more engaging future conversations. In particular, as noted in earlier studies (e.g. Volonté 2012; Bertola and Colombi 2016; Bertola et al. 2016), the cultural dimension of fashion design can be further examined both theoretically and empirically in order to strengthen the findings of this dissertation.

Throughout this dissertation, the placemaking practice of fashion designers was investigated as one application of fashion design thinking. This proposes a new perspective for design research to embrace fashion design thinking while fashion research can also adopt design thinking discourses in order to expand the discussion on building a place. With the expanded role of fashion designers as placemakers, additional case studies can be followed in various locations of emerging local fashion scenes, such as Seoul in South Korea, Sydney in Australia and São Paulo in Brazil, to compare with the Pre Helsinki case from Finland. Conversely, case studies in fashion capitals, such as New York and London, can be conducted as well to observe different applications of fashion design thinking in a larger and more established condition.

Continuing and expanding this perspective, other applications of fashion design thinking need to be explored. As described with the weaving metaphor, in order for a woven fabric to be strong and rich, more wefts are required beyond the placemaking practice. The ways in which the application of fashion design thinking were assessed and

presented through Table 6.1 in Chapter 6 can be adopted or reinterpreted to identify other roles for fashion designers to play in different domains. To maximize its potential application, conditions for expanding the roles of fashion designers need to be explored. In particular, as acknowledged in this chapter as having been excluded from this dissertation, diverse types of collaborations involving fashion designers can be further investigated. In both design and fashion research, this notion of collaboration is often used to describe the work of designers and fashion designers (e.g. Aspers 2006; Manzini 2015; Stoppard 2017) but again without critical reflection on the term used by the two research domains. In design research, the ways in which industrial designers can contribute to “scientific” research through collaboration were explored by Driver, Peralta, and Moultrie (2011). They carefully investigated potential barriers and enablers for such collaboration through interaction with designers and scientists as well as explorative case studies with them. Similar to this effort, suggesting possible contributions of industrial designers while collaborating with scientists, from the perspective of fashion, Sams and Black (2013) introduced a number of projects on interdisciplinary collaborations between fashion and science. However, compared to design research, the contribution of fashion design while collaborating across disciplines has not been developed sufficiently due to the complexity of the fashion system, such as the relationships with multiple actors and its speed, among many others (Sams and Black 2013). The notion of fashion design thinking and its factors presented in Table 6.1 provided a potential way to address such complexity. Thus, utilizing the table, further studies are required to identify what factors encourage or discourage fashion designers to be involved in multidisciplinary horizontal collaborations. Extended investigations can help them expand their role beyond the contemporary fashion system. In this regard, the notion of fashion design thinking can be useful as it provides an overview for the material/immaterial production of fashion designers.

Moreover, adopting the perspective of Entwistle (2000, 2015), the notion of place can be revisited to relocate the focus from geography to the human body, which is one of the key characteristics of fashion. This can be viewed as an expansion of placemaking but on a smaller and more private scale compared to its bigger scales, such as nation, city and neighborhood. Entwistle (2000, 2015) discussed the ways in which the individual human body is dressed with clothes, which can become fashion through social dialogue and acceptance. The notion of the human body as a place was further explored theoretically while situating the dressed body in the social world through several angles, such as gender and dress code, among others. In particular, Entwistle emphasized the perspective of Merleau-Ponty (1976, 1981) viewing the body as forming a “point of view on the world” (1976, 5) rather than passively being objectified. She noted that “our body is not just the place from which we come to experience the world; it is through our bodies that we come to see and be seen in the world” (Entwistle 2000, 334). This view of Entwistle (2000, 2015) invites further thoughts to explore the expanded role of fashion designers. This can deepen the understanding of fashion design thinking and its application to a more personal and thus more meaningful place for individuals. By introducing this contribution, fashion designers can fully overcome the prejudice that they are frivolous because individuality in the collective has become more important in the neo-liberal society (Lipovetsky 1994). Thus, their ability to directly communicate with human bodies can be celebrated and the distinctive contribution from the profession of fashion design will be fully acknowledged. With these wefts that add possibilities to the warp, the meaning of woven fabric can become more substantial to society.

7.6.2. Practical Implications

Besides these academic implications, this dissertation also has three practical implications. First, for professional fashion designers, the results of this dissertation can guide them to broaden their roles. The ways in which design thinking discourses contributed to expanding the practice of designers were significant, and many unconventional domains have begun embracing design practice as a form of either expert design or diffused design (Manzini 2015). As demonstrated in this dissertation, the contribution of fashion designers can be more impactful in certain domains. Thus, the introduction and expansion of fashion design thinking can empower professional fashion designers to be more confident in breaking out of their comfort zone and exploring other domains. For instance, in the study of design culture, Julier (2013) introduced design activism as a necessary step for designers to follow. Similarly, Manzini (2015, 2016) proposed that expert designers should play an active role in collaborating with other members of society to address complex issues. For adopting these suggestions, Table 6.1 from Chapter 6 supports fashion designers to rediscover their own practice and culture. Thus, it can be utilized to come up with expanded applications of their fashion design thinking in society beyond the fashion industry. Additionally, this table can be further applied to reshape the ways in which the potential of young fashion entrepreneurs is evaluated and a strong emphasis is placed on image-making in fashion education.

Second, for the Finnish fashion scene, this dissertation hints at possible directions for further development of the local fashion scene to establish a presence for it in the global fashion landscape. Both comparing it with a similar model, such as Danish fashion (Riegels Melchior, Skov, and Csaba 2011) and reflecting on the development of Finnish design (Davies 2002; Korvenmaa 2010; Solitander 2010),

the development of Finnish fashion needs to be followed by relevant policy making while fashion designers continue experimenting and expanding their practice. This is not to blur the specificity of Finnish fashion, which is characterized by its designer-driven approach, but to reinforce its strengths, such as artistic fashion through material development, while supporting its weakness, especially financing and marketing. Relying on international fairs and a small community of fashion designers has its limitations. Further forms of support are required to seize the momentum.

Third, this exemplary case involving the placemaking of Helsinki and Finland can inspire fashion designers in other emerging places to either adopt a similar strategy or invent their own. The vivid presence of professional and conceptual fashion in Finland and the design-driven approach of the Pre Helsinki case were introduced. In the polycentric world of fashion (Skov 2011), the model of Finnish fashion can encourage other smaller and lesser known places to rethink their approaches to utilizing fashion design both symbolically and economically while critically evaluating the lessons from the case. The development of new alternative models needs to be followed to challenge the conventional system of fashion.

Overall, these implications indicate that a certain responsibility applies to the profession of fashion design, inviting their more active and visible engagement in society instead of avoiding issues that reside inside and outside of the contemporary fashion system. The rediscovery of fashion design practice and the recovery of the meaning of the profession call for fashion designers to take action to make a meaningful change beyond the seasonal presentation of new looks.

7.7. Concluding Remarks

For the closing section of this dissertation, the following quote of a fashion designer who participated in this research summarizes why re(dis)covering fashion designers is relevant:

Even nowadays, when journalists [from popular magazines] write about fashion, it is often seen from a point of view as entertainment, instead of professionalism. [...] I am professional and very serious about my work. Then, they come in and ask question[s] like “so what is the coolest color for the next spring?” (respondent 9, interview, March 18, 2016)

After all, this dissertation is about fashion designers. It began with an episode involving the famed French fashion house Balenciaga but ends with a story from an anonymized designer. This shift is intended to properly illustrate the issue that the majority of those in the fashion design profession face in the contemporary fashion system due to the mystification of their capabilities and social contribution.

Altogether, this dissertation offers a new perspective to better recognize the original contribution of fashion designers beyond image-making. The rediscovery of dressmaking and the discovery of fashion design thinking can significantly influence the other members of society, such as policymakers and the general public, among others, to reimagine what fashion designers can do and how they can contribute when they actually expand their role. It recovers the meaning of what it is to be a fashion designer regardless of the next coolest color and one's social status. More importantly, they no longer need to chase illusions from the past, such as Balenciaga, but can reorient their efforts to crit-

ically reflect on how to extend their fashion design thinking both as an individual and as a collective. This re(dis)covery celebrates a difference that fashion designers will introduce in unexpected ways. This is an invitation for change from the future-able now, which demands active participation from all members of society.



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09

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. An Informed Consent Form



Doctoral Research on Fashion Thinking 1 (2)
Consent to Participate
Researcher Copy

Consent to Participate in a Doctoral Research on Fashion Thinking.

I, _____, have been clearly informed on the purpose and procedures of the doctoral research led by Namkyu Chun at Aalto University of Arts, Design and Architecture, Helsinki, Department of Design and have shown interest in participate in the studies developed by the student cited above. I am aware and understand the contents of the research and how my participation will occur.

This research includes

interview

other field works including office/studio/store visits, meeting/presentation participations, etc.

I agree to participate I do not agree to participate

Date and Place

Name of Participant

Signature of Participant

Signature of Researcher

Contact Information
Namkyu Chun
namkyu.chun@aalto.fi
Tel. +358 45 180 0471

I volunteer to participate in the studies. I may choose to rescind or abort my participation in the studies at any time during the studies, by informing the student cited above. Rescinding or aborting my participation will not affect my position at any point in time. I may also revoke this consent to participate in the study, in which case information pertaining to me will not be used in the studies. Research results pertaining to me may be used in scientific reporting (e.g. publications), but only in a form in which individuals are not identifiable. This study follows the responsible conduct of research, legislation and guidelines available at <http://www.tenk.fi/en/responsible-conduct-research-guidelines>

Appendix 2. Interview Guide for Substudy 1 and 2

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR FASHION THINKING RESEARCH (NAMKYU CHUN)

Date _____ Participant _____

Note _____

Background

Background (educational, professional) of the person _____

International experience _____

Background of the company / brand (history, size, scale..) _____

Design Practice

How would you describe your design practice in general (the way you work/think)? _____

What's the first step you do? _____

Process or steps you work? _____

Do you have any overlapping practice bet. collections (schematic practice)? _____

Any evidence/example that supports your explanation? _____

How would you describe general fashion design practice? _____

Particularities of Fashion Practice

What aspects of fashion design practice are different from other design subfields, including industrial design, graphic design, architecture...so on? Or how do you characterize fashion design? Or what characteristic and features of fashion design special?

Any evidence/example that supports your explanation? _____

In comparison to other design practices, how would you describe the strength and weakness of fashion design practice?

Particularities of Fashion Practice in Helsinki

In terms of fashion practice, how do you think Helsinki is different from other conventional and emerging fashion centers in the world?

-How would you describe Helsinki fashion scene? _____

-How have your international experience influenced your work in the context of Helsinki?

-Any evidence/example that supports your explanation? _____

Others

Then, how would you describe your design practice (the way you work and think)? to revisit the first answer (articulation)

INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRE HELSINKI RESEARCH (NAMKYU CHUN)

Date _____ Participant _____

Note _____

Overview

How do you think about the fashion scene of Helsinki/Finland in general? _____

Pre Helsinki

What was your involvement in Pre Helsinki? _____

How do you personally see Pre Helsinki?

Future

How would you define success for Pre Helsinki?

How do you see its future? _____

Others

Appendix 3. A List of Interview Respondents for Substudy 1
(in the alphabetical order of the last name)

Arela, Anni
 Hyötyläinen, Ilona
 Hänninen, Piia
 Juslin, Laura
 Kauppi, Sasu
 Kettunen, Milla
 Koski, Samu-Jussi
 Lepokorpi, Saara
 Leskelä, Niina
 Lille, Kirsi
 Maaranen, Satu
 Mikama, Camilla
 Otsamo, Mert
 Sarén, Hanna
 Riiheläinen, Hanna
 Ruohonen, Anna
 Uotila, Marjut
 Yat

Appendix 4. A List of Activities during the Doctoral Studies

TYPE	NAME	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
Publication Academic	The Design Journal	2017	Not applicable (N/A)	Rethinking the Roles of Fashion Designers: The Case of Pre Helsinki. Co-authored with Olga Gurova and Kirsi Niinimäki.
	Fashion Practice	2018	(N/A)	Place-Making the Local to Reach the Global: A Case Study of Pre-Helsinki. Co-authored with Olga Gurova.
Publication Non- Academic	Fashion Studies Journal	2016	(N/A)	Critical Thinking and Making on Fashion: Dead Fashion Designers Society. Co-authored with Julia Valle-Noronha.
Conference	Fashion Thinking	10/2014	Kolding, Denmark	Fashion Intelligence in Interdisciplinary Collaboration: Towards the New Fashion Intelligence.
	Fashion Colloquia	06/2015	São Paulo, Brazil	Towards Practice beyond Fashion Design: Studying Fashion Design Research in Brazilian Higher Education. Co-authored with Julia Valle-Noronha.
	European Academy of Design	04/2017	Rome, Italy	Rethinking the Roles of Fashion Designers: The Case of Pre Helsinki. Co-authored with Olga Gurova and Kirsi Niinimäki.
Visiting Research	University of Southern Denmark	06-07/2017	Kolding, Denmark	Collaborated with Professor Trine Brun Petersen.
	Universidade do Estado de Minas Gerais	07-09/2017	Belo Horizonte, Brazil	Collaborated with Professor Maria Regina Alvares Correia Dias.
Teaching	Critical Thinking and Making on Fashion	09/2016-08/2017	Helsinki, Finland	An experimental teaching for fashion-oriented master's level design students at Aalto University.

TYPE	NAME	DATE	LOCATION	DESCRIPTION
Lecture/ Talk	Fashion Revolution Day	04/2015	Helsinki, Finland	Talk on alternative fashion at Aalto University.
	Alternative Modes of Fashion	03/2017	Helsinki, Finland	Invited lecture on Rethinking the Role of Fashion Designers at Aalto University Learning Centre.
	Design and Culture Course	04/2017	Helsinki, Finland	Lecture in class on Rethinking the Roles of Fashion Designers: The Case of Pre Helsinki to master's level design students at Aalto University.
	New Issue Launch	08/2017	Belo Horizonte, Brazil	Opening talk for the new issue launch of Fashion Studies Journal at Casa Ramalhete.
	Centro de Estudos da Asia Oriental	09/2017	Belo Horizonte, Brazil	Invited lecture on Beyond Gangnam Style: Korean Culture and Fashion at Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais.
	Métodos & Processos de Criação	09/2017	Belo Horizonte, Brazil	Invited lecture on fashion design thinking at Museu de Artes e Ofícios.
Panel Discussion	ArclnTex Conference	11/2017	Helsinki, Finland	Panel discussion on connecting theory and practice in fashion and textile research at Aalto University.
Presentation	Winter School	02/2014	Helsinki, Finland	Presentation on the early research plan to colleagues at the Department of Design (Aalto University).
	Research Seminar	09/2014	Helsinki, Finland	Presentation before participating the Fashion Thinking conference to colleagues at the Department of Design (Aalto University).
	Winter School	02/2015	Helsinki, Finland	Presentation on the revised research plan to colleagues at the Department of Design (Aalto University).
	Researchers Breakfast	03/2015	Helsinki, Finland	Presentation on the doctoral research topic to the broader research community of Aalto University.
	Summer School	06/2016	Helsinki, Finland	Presentation on the research methods to colleagues at the Department of Design (Aalto University).
	Research Seminar	11/2016	Helsinki, Finland	Presentation before participating the European Academy of Design conference to colleagues at the Department of Design (Aalto University).
	Research Seminar	11/2017	Helsinki, Finland	Presentation before submitting the paper to the journal Fashion Practice to colleagues at the Fashion/Textile Futures research group (Aalto University).
	Doctoral Colloquium	06/2017	Helsinki, Finland	Presentation on the overall doctoral research to researchers in Designschool Kolding and University of Southern Denmark.
	Research Seminar	03/2018	Helsinki, Finland	Presentation on Substudy 1 (fashion design thinking) to colleagues at the Department of Design (Aalto University).



Namkyu Chun is a designer/researcher who has been studying and working in a spectrum of fields from fashion merchandising to journalism, non-profit fundraising, design research and consulting for fashion/design companies. This motivated him to study in the Transdisciplinary Design program at Parsons School of Design, The New School for a Master of Fine Arts. During his studies, he was engaged with newly emerged discourse and practice on design and this encouraged him to rethink his previous studies in Fashion Design and Business Administration, which he had completed as a dual bachelor's degree at Sungkyunkwan University, South Korea. Following these cross-cultural exposures, he developed a research interest in interweaving design and fashion research discourse on design practice and culture. Besides his research, he has been passionate as both a mentor and a colleague about sharing his experience of breaking boundaries with a younger generation of design practitioners.