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## Adorned in dreams

# Reversing the gaze: From the look of fashion to the lens of the wardrobe

### ABSTRACT

*In this article, I investigate the wardrobe as a possible explanatory framework and methodology for studying and analysing the relationship between people and what they wear. Since I have previously elaborated on the human–object–time relationship in my concept of the biographical wardrobe (Skjold 2016), here I wish to elaborate on the human–object–space relationship. This implicates decoding and analysing the kinds of stylistic references people make use of when they build up their personal collection of garments and accessories in their wardrobes over a lifetime, and what these references carry with them in the form of institutionalized rituals, institutions, values and practices that the individual co-creates and reproduces. Based on this, I end up concluding how the discourse of fashion – as a set of values, practices and driving institutionalized rituals – cannot explain fully what goes on when people dress. Instead, I point to some coexisting discourses that I found to be represented in the wardrobes of my informants as carriers of alternative or even contradictory values and practices.*

### KEYWORDS

wardrobe method  
dress style  
fashion  
dress practice  
user-centred design  
research  
example-led research

The title, borrowed from Wilson's ([1986] 2003) book, captures the way in which people channel dreams and aspirations of whom they wish to be through what they wear. However, this article will investigate how the dream of *fashion* – or being fashionable – tells only a small part of what goes on between wearer and garment, building on what Fletcher (2014) has termed *the deep landscape* of the wardrobe (Fletcher in Fletcher and Tham 2004: 22).

Since the early 1990s, the wardrobe has met an increased scholarly interest. In my perspective wardrobe research represents a bridging between two areas, which, as suggested by Taylor (2002), have largely been unfortunately divided. Firstly, the area of fashion studies research represented largely by scholars of cultural studies and sociology (from Simmel and Veblen [both in Carter 2003]) and to Kawamura (2005) or Entwistle (2000). The overall concern within this area of research has been to contribute to the understanding of fashion as a socio-economic system; what kinds of social mechanisms that drive fashion (trends); how the system of fashion has emerged and developed; and what kinds of power structures that define and drive it. Secondly, ethnographic or anthropological approaches to people's daily routines and practices, as well as the museological eye for the dress objects in themselves (see for example, Skov and Riegels-Melchior 2010). Wardrobe research tries to encompass both these perspectives; the actual garments, the micro-level of individuals and their daily routines, dreams and sense-making, coupled with the macro-level of societal structures that affect the norms, values and ideals in a given societal context.

As such, wardrobe research has developed alongside similar currents within particularly sociology (e.g. Gherardi 2009; Turner 2008; Caldwell 2012) and design research, focusing on ways in which people understand, co-create and re-enact broad structures in society through day-to-day practices that involve interactions with objects, time and space. Within design research, so-called *participatory design* (Schuler and Namioka 1993) has metastasized into a myriad of approaches as discussed by, for example, Sanders and Stappers (2008) in their article *Co-creation and the New Landscapes of Design*, who emphasizes how participatory design generally represents a bottom-up shift in interest from centre to periphery, from leaders to followers, and not least, from static human-object relations to a processual human-object-space-time relation (see e.g. Shove et al. 2007).

In order to qualify this in my own research, I will first introduce my methodological approach to wardrobe research and the actual studies I have conducted, alongside arising examples from my findings. Next, I will discuss how opening up the macro-structural scope of wardrobe research might contribute to a more complex, diverse and inclusive understanding of dress practice that goes beyond and across some of the above-mentioned scholarly borders.

## METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH AND RESEARCH DESIGN

During my Ph.D. studies, I became involved with a network of British, Scandinavian and Dutch scholars of dress and fashion (see e.g. Hansen 2003; Fletcher and Tham 2004; Turney and Harden 2007; Woodward 2007; Ulväng 2013; Warkander 2013) who all sought to develop pioneer work in this area (see e.g. Kleine et al. 1995; Guy et al. 2001; Raunio 2007). We took great interest in Hansen (2000), who had explored ways in which individuals appropriate Western dress objects into local value sets of dressing on the second-hand market in Zambia, or the way Tarlo (1996) understood similar

*dressing dilemmas* of young students in India, who also navigated between Western and local norms for dressing. These scholars in particular heavily influenced my approach in the sense that I became very interested in the outside parameters that affect the dressing practices of individuals. Not only what is at a given time in fashion, but also local norms and values, ideas about bodily gestures, ideal silhouettes, colour combinations, and stylistic combinations – all that are encompassed in Eicher et al.'s (1995) concept of 'dress', which includes not only dress objects but all elements that combined form the appearance of individuals. In that sense, one could say that I see the wardrobe as a place where people manage their appearance – as a connecting point between what Goffmann has termed 'back-stage' and 'front-stage' activities; a literal metaphor he makes use of to explain how individuals transform their bodies into cultural bodies through the use of garments, posture, hair style, make-up, etc., just like actors who dress up behind stage, so that they can perform as their character on stage. Continuing with the metaphor of the theatre, Goffman defines how *props* – that is, dress objects, styling, hairdo, make-up, gadgets, bodily gestures or tone of voice – help the individual to be appreciated and understood by their 'audience' defined as work colleagues, friends and family, or more remote acquaintances. He also defines how such 'props' help them connect with their own understanding of their 'inner' self (Goffmann [1959] 1990). As such, I find it interesting to study how dress objects help people join their daily routines and practices with overall aspirations and dreams about who they wish to be, and how they wish to appear in front of others. In order to understand this more deeply, I became interested in the example-led approach used by Garfinkel and his famous study of the transgendered individual 'Agnes'. In this study, Garfinkel ([1967] 1984) shows how 'Agnes' makes use of dress objects, styling, gestures, voice modulation, etc., in order to *pass* for a woman. What appealed to me in this study was how these 'props', in a Goffmanian understanding, helped Agnes become appreciated and understood in her setting as a woman. When undertaking my own research, this line of thinking framed the way I approached wardrobe interviews. I wanted to know more about how respondents' appearance helped them 'pass' as the person they aspired to be at the moment of the interview, and how stylistic references to symbolic discourses of dress supported these efforts. Thus, what I wish to highlight in this article is the way my respondents all seemed to have developed some kind of *formula* for dressing, constituted of particular dress objects that they wore repeatedly during the period of time I interviewed them.

So far, my studies have been exemplars that build on the study of Garfield. Perhaps typical of Scandinavian fashion and dress research (see Riegels-Melchior et al. 2016), my interviews have been contextualized in cross-disciplinary literature and methodological approaches from fashion studies, business and management studies, and design research. Whereas the first two areas of research to a large degree helped me analyse and frame my findings, my research design was an immersion of wardrobe research as defined above, and so-called 'innovative' research methods from design research (Hanington 2003 in: Mättelmäki 2007: 30) – more precisely, from the field of *participatory design research*. This meant that I applied *designerly ways of thinking and knowing* (Cross 2001) in my interview technique to promote material, symbolic and sensory aspects of dress practice. I have done so as a non-designer following what Kimbell calls a *design-as-practice* approach, highlighting how:

Using a practice approach re-conceives of design activity as linking both what designers do, know, and say, with what end-users and other stakeholders do, know, and say, acknowledging the materials and objects that are part of these activities and at the same time attending to the discursive practices that make possible particular ways of doing, knowing, and saying, but exclude others.

(Kimbell 2012: 144)

As such, I have perceived the practices of my respondents – or end-users – as discursive, tapping into various stylistic references of particular symbolic discourse, *and* I have perceived the materials and objects represented in the wardrobe as ‘part of these activities’. On the basis of this, I have adopted a widely-used practice from design studios called ‘clustering’ in my interview technique. As described on method card 32, which is part of *Co-Creation Cards* (Friis 2015), ‘clustering’ is a:

...visual way of sorting large amounts of information into categories in order to create clarity and discover new relations.

This is done in the following manner:

Clear a space on a wall or on a desk to exhibit the information that you have previously collected or produced. It might be in the form of photographs, words, or pieces of text...you can do this intuitively – establishing relationships and creating clusters by moving the pieces of information around...you can also organise the information according to one or several of the following five pre-defined methods; 1. Location...2. Alphabet..., 3. Timeline, 4. Category...and 5. Hierarchy....

When undertaking interviews, I would primarily apply timeline, category and hierarchy as three defining ways that respondents could intuitively place the dress objects in their wardrobe. Instead of a wall or a desk, I would make use of the floor, a sofa or a bed in the person’s home, where ‘clusters’ of dress objects would be piling up as the interview progressed. The process would be a result of a shared dialogue, to where I would steer the conversation:

- categories of dress objects that are connected in some way defined by the respondent
- hierarchies of objects within each category defined by the respondent
- date of when a given object was purchased (for establishing timeline)
- reflections on future purchases and discarding of old
- utilitarian purpose
- emotional value
- sensory experiences

Subsequently, I would view each wardrobe as a private collection of objects always in flux, and thus my interviews became what Sanders sees as a *momentary flash, taking place in time, triggered by previous experiences and future dreams* (Sanders in: Mattelmäki 2007: 46). As such, my research design could be illustrated as depicted below (Figure 1).

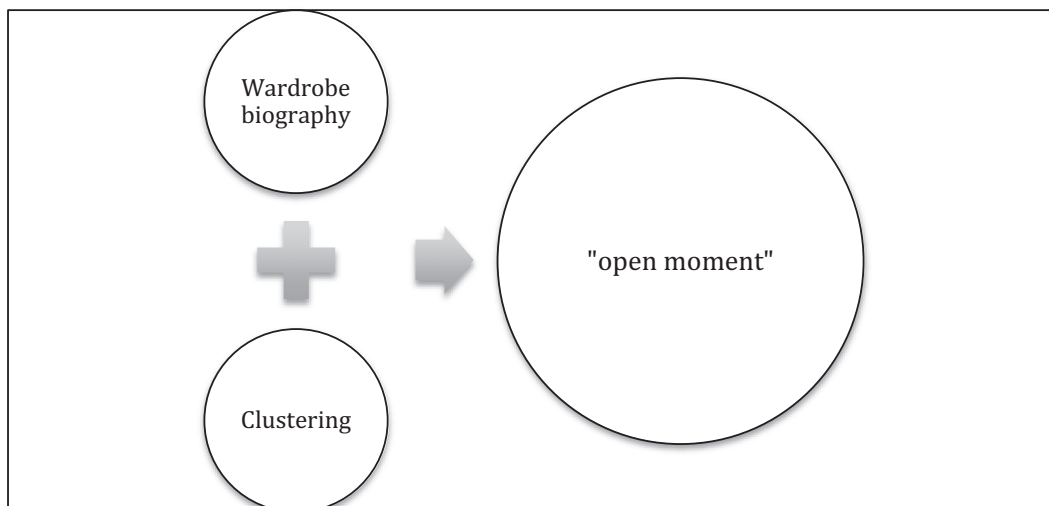


Figure 1: My research design as an 'open moment' constituted of a timeline perspective – the biographical wardrobe – and a discursive perspective, fostered by sorting exercises of categories and hierarchies of dress objects (figure previously displayed in Skjold 2014a: 63).

## IN THE WARDROBES

From 2010 to 2015 I have conducted three different wardrobe projects based on this overall understanding. In 2010–11, I conducted six interviews with Danish men aged 40–50 from the so-called 'creative class'<sup>1</sup> for my Ph.D. thesis *The Daily Selection* (Skjold 2014a). In 2012, together with textile designer Helle Graabæk, I conducted four interviews with Danish men and women from the same age group about their shoes (Frederiksen 2013). In 2015, I conducted five interviews with Danish women aged 30–50 about inherited fur garments (Skjold et al. 2016). These interviews will inform the discussion here.

The significance of the 'clustering' method is evidenced in the testimony of K-H, who, in a discussion about inherited fur garments, recalled her grandmother's silver fox fur coat. As the interview progressed, she took out other inherited dress objects and placed them on her sofa. While doing so, she explained what these objects mean to her, how she feels when wearing them, how she has appropriated her grandmother's style of dressing into her own, what she has let go of that is no longer in her wardrobe, and what kind of style she aspires to wear at the time of interview (see Figure 2a–2d). She is the only one in the family with a body type similar to her grandmother's, and these inherited objects evoke particular emotional value as they make her feel chosen and special. Being a trained textile engineer, she is the only one in her family who values the high-quality materials and the craftsmanship that these objects represent. She is the only one in the family who wears handed-down or second-hand clothing. And she is the only one in the family who has the actual body proportions to fit her grandmother's garments. All of which make her feel especially connected to this person. As the objects pile up on her sofa, she tells me how she has very strict rules for purchasing new clothes, and she makes great efforts to maintain, repair or redesign dress objects to prolong

1. When referring to 'creative class' I hereby link to the way the term was initially defined by Richard Florida in his book of 2002: *The Rise of the Creative Class: And How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life*. New York, Basic Books.



Figure 2 : From top left to bottom right: K-M first started talking about her inherited fox coat (a), then went on to a fox jacket (b), then took out her absolute favourite coat (c), and then showed me what other inherited dress objects she was still storing (d). This way the interview came to be a lot about how to appropriate another person's style into one's own, and about K-M's ideas about quality and craftsmanship, and sustainable consumer behaviour.

their lifetime. As such, she concludes how the inherited dress objects are in line with her ideal about being a sustainable consumer. In terms of stylistic references, the objects go well with her job situation and her circle of friends who wear a similar style, and who value second-hand items as something positive, unique and rewarding. In the case of the inherited fur garments, the grey 1980's style fox coat is her favourite (see Figure 2a). She describes it as a 'conversation starter' because it always stirs attention because of its voluminous silhouette, and since it is a bit difficult to tell what kind of animal the fur comes from. Also, this dress object reminds her of her grandmother who wore it in her later years, and K-M remembers the smell and feel of it, and associates it with something positive. At a later point she takes out another inherited garment, a short, body tight red fox jacket, which dates back to the 1970s (see Figure 2b). This one, she says, does not evoke the same kinds of emotions for her, because she cannot remember her grandmother wearing it. This way, the comparisons made by respondents due to the clustering technique in my interviews can help highlight various hierarchies in a given wardrobe collection; why some garments are more loved than others; why some garments feel better to wear than others; or why some garments simply do not work, or do not work anymore.



Figure 3 : From top left to bottom right: M's inherited fur coat (a), her second-hand fur fox collar (b), her 'boyish' Persian fur coat (c), and her dotted women's blazer (d).

Another respondent from the same project could be M, who sees her inherited fur coat as part of her navigation between what she calls 'masculine' and 'feminine style'. M's entire wardrobe is largely black and white with very few exceptions, and quite minimalistic in style. The inherited fur coat is presented as part of her 'feminine' style (see Figure 3a). M explains how this has to do with the voluminous shape and rosy coloured lining of the garment, which in her mind places it in the same category as, for example, a second-hand white fox collar (Figure 3b) that still bears the scent of Chanel No. 5 and face powder, which makes her say how:

I can even wear this with my pyjamas underneath and still feel extremely feminine and glamorous

As she stands right next to her wardrobe closet during the interview, I ask her if she has any other garments in the same category of 'feminine'. Here she pulls out garments such as a shirt with ruffles in a very thin and see-through material in a rosy colour reminding of the coat lining of her fur coat, as well as some other shirts with similar details, materials and light colours (mostly white or white-ish). On the other hand, she has a lot of what she defines as her 'masculine' garments, which are mostly in black. As an example of this, she presents her Persian coat that she calls an 'everyday fur' (see Figure 3c). She

2. A body therapist is a person working in the area of so-called 'somatic experience' therapy, defined commonly as: *a form of alternative therapy aimed at relieving the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and other mental and physical trauma-related health problems by focusing on the client's perceived body sensations (or somatic experiences)*. Source: Wikipedia.

explains to me how it is cut like a man's overcoat, very straight in the lines and with a typical overcoat collar, and how that plays well with all of her trousers, blazers or flat dress shoes with laces. M is very interested in this interplay of what she sees as 'masculine' and 'feminine'. She is into details such as the fact that on a seemingly classical black blazer, duplicated from a menswear blazer in style, there are small dots woven into the texture of the fabric (see Figure 3d). When I interview her, I am not quite certain how she makes these distinctions, or what exactly makes a particular garment 'feminine' or 'masculine'. What is real is that this is how she feels, and this is how she manages and navigates in relation to various references. As such, it is not important for her how I as a researcher might define the stylistic reference of a given object; what is important is the way in which the pieces of her own wardrobe collection all represent *her* idea of 'masculine' or 'feminine', which help her *pass* as the type of women she feels like, and wishes the world to see her like.

These are both examples of the way a wardrobe conversation can go from focusing on a single dress object to opening up to overall reflections as the interviewee brings more objects into play. Through sorting, comparing, touching, reflecting and talking, the 'open moments' with respondents can highlight reflections of a bodily as well as a discursive nature.

In the case of these two women, the stylistic references they engaged with were relatively controlled and limited. However, this was not so with all of respondents. J (from my first study of Danish creative class men; Skjold 2014a) called himself *the chameleon*, expressed various references at play, each represented through items of dress that he would wear for particular purposes and particular audiences. For example, at the time of the interview he had two jobs that he combined with various freelance consultancies. During interviews, he would place a heap of dress objects on his bed for his different jobs, elaborating how this or that object would match the expectations for the respective context. Also, he had separate categories worn in private and at parties. All categories were somewhat distinct in relation to materials, colour palette, style and fit. Most were represented in his collections of shirts; one heap would be for 'very formal' occasions where he would need to dress up. These shirts were high-quality, classic dressy shirts in white only (Figure 4a). Another would be what he called 'architect shirts'. He considered them semiformal in style, why he would wear them for days at more formal and important meetings where he needed to go out for cocktails and dinner later together with clients. These shirts were typically white or white-ish with checks or minimalistic ornament-like print, except a denim shirt he would find appropriate for this purpose as well (Figure 4b). The third heap shown here was for meetings that were more informal where he wished to look 'fashionable'. They were typically not white, but still not too 'noisy' in colour or pattern, so that he would find them suitable for work situations (Figure 4c). The fourth example is a shirt he still stores from the time he worked in Africa, a safari-like style and colour. That one is part memorabilia, partly for private occasions (Figure 4d). Other categories could be corporate uniforms (jackets, T-shirts, caps) from one of his freelance jobs as a salesman in a larger company, or soft T-shirts with texts or slogans for his other job as a body therapist.<sup>2</sup> Going to parties, he would wear wigs, a genuine astronaut suit from his time at the *U.S. Space Academy*, a genuine vintage chauffeur uniform, or a shiny silver suit. In his private life, he prefers a brown colour palette, lots of leather and nice woollen pullovers, and sneakers. These were just some of the categories of stylistic references he would take out of his wardrobe collection.





Figure 4: From top left to bottom right: J's categories of this figure: formal shirts (a), semiformal shirts (architect style) (b), informal shirts (fashionable) (c), and private wardrobe (Africa memorabilia) (d).

As such, one might say that all of these three respondents have each their way of managing and navigating in relation to stylistic references in their wardrobes, as part of their identity work. In the case of J, it seems the Goffmanian parallel to the theatre is highly appropriate as he *performs* various versions of self in various settings. In the case of M or K-M, there were other kinds of *formulas* – rules, categories and hierarchies – through which they defined themselves through their appearance. Actually, in all the wardrobes I have investigated, a more or less fixed set of references would be at play, which all meant a great deal as guiding principles for what to keep, what to discard and what to aspire to in the future. References carried with them not only meanings and practices, but also preferences, for example particular colour palettes, material qualities, types of cut or perceptions about comfort. What also interested me was the way in which each respondent seemed to attach particular sets of values to particular stylistic references, which made sense to them but not necessarily to others. I have elaborated on this in previous work (see Skjold 2014a).

## DISCUSSION

In the following, I will show how I tried to analyse and understand my findings in the context of theoretically bound explanatory frameworks dealing with people's relationships with dress objects and design objects in general.

From where does M get the idea that her fox collar is 'feminine' and glamorous? On what basis does J make adjustments of his appearance between

various jobs and leisure activities? Why does K-M believe her fur coat represent 'sustainable' values? One might surmise that all seem to draw from discourses of dress available to them, from which they select and adjust. American sociologist Swidler (2001) writes about cultural scripts as 'repertoires' that people re-enact and combine in their daily practices. In her study of how people talk about love, she has deciphered the values, routines and practices of her respondents through a rough grid based on various available 'scripts' that involve perceptions of love such as new age spirituality, Christianity, or local norms and values (Swidler 2001). In much the same way, I understood the aspirations, dreams and practices of my respondents as based on well-known 'cultural scripts' for dressing such as *fashion*, *sportswear*, *classical menswear* or *subcultural style*, as well as local/societal norms concerning, for example ageing, gender, work life or social class. In my analysis, I saw these scripts as distinct discourses that each implies his or her own values, practices and institutionalized rituals. I did this as I saw how my informants seemed to select and combine references from well-known repertoires of dressing. In that sense, I am not only interested in the fact that they do so; I am interested in *how* they do it. In order to understand this, I made the attempt of mapping what kinds of discourses of dress are described in literature, and how they matched the practices and values of my respondents.

Looking at fashion studies literature, I began mapping out existing kinds of perceptions and discourses. Firstly, Rocamora (2009: 56) states how *fashion* seen as a discourse is reproduced not only as symbolic sign, but also as practices. These practices, she concludes, are inherently embedded in the idea of the Parisian young woman, and of values and practices coinciding with industrialism and modernity (Rocamora 2009: 28). Following further the understandings within sociology, both Barthes (1983) and Kawamura (2005) have contributed to the understanding of the fashion discourse as a *system* in which meaning is co-created by a web of gatekeepers, institutionalized rituals and symbolic signs (e.g. the catwalk, the seasons, the model or the fashion magazine). In literature that defines the kinds of values and meanings entailed in the fashion discourse, Wilson ([1986] 2003) describes how these are aligned with democratization and Western socio-economic development and the idea of *the new* as a core value.

This perception is echoed by Lipovetsky (1994: 108) who supplements how the discourse of *anti-fashion* is inherently linked to fashion as representative of an oppositional style; *anti-fashion* stands as the interlinked antithesis to fashion itself. This means that anti-fashion as a discursive system mimics ideals about democratization, but counters ideas about newness and 'conspicuous consumption' in line with the critical perception of Veblen (Carter 2003). That way, the discourse of anti-fashion is more representative of the concept of style, which develops much slower and more organically than fashion (Barthes [1967] 2006). Still, the overall value embedded in anti-fashion is the perception that new styles are created by avant-garde frontrunners, often young people, who through their spectacular looks engage with what Hebdige ([1979] 1988: 105) saw as *semiotic guerrilla warfare*, or in what Craik (1994: 27–29) has defined as *style war*. This way anti-fashion resembles the way in which fashion as discourse is oriented towards young creators of trends, whereas it is less concerned with fashion followers. Apart from this, there seems to be two more important discourses at play in fashion literature, which is firstly *non-fashion*, defined by Lipovetsky (1994: 108) as classical menswear, as the menswear discourse carries with it far more static cycles than

novel-seeking fashion. Secondly, there is Gibson (2000: 80) who defines the 'own sartorial rules' of elderly in Western society as the discourse of *the unfashionable*. Returning to Lipovetsky (1994: 15), all of these mentioned discourses seem to be in some way interlinked with the fashion discourse as described above, and thus with the Western 'cult of fantasy and novelty'. Counter to this, Lipovetsky (1994: 18) places so-called 'primitive societies' that 'reject dynamics of change' and therefore are unable to engage with fashion logics and practices. In fact, one might say that such societies are 'out of category' within fashion literature. I have developed a model, which roughly captures these above perceptions (Figure 5).

This model could be developed further and made more specific, but this is not the point I want to make here. My main point is how fashion as discourse is directly linked to the idea that when people dress, they are always oriented towards the spectacular and mostly young, Western trendsetters whom followers idealize and aspire to become. If not, their practice is negated as a 'non'-practice (*non-fashion*), or simply 'out of category' (*the unfashionable*). In other words, this view identifies the majority of people as what I have previously called *fashion's others* (Skjold 2014b).

However, what if one reverses this view, and instead of *fashion* places the single individual in focus? Then, we could base our mapping on various parameters and available discourses that seem to affect the wearer in much more complex and subtle manners.

In Figure 6 I have tried to map the parameters affecting a male respondent in my first study. Taking this 'bottom-up' approach where the individual is placed centrally, a much more organic, faceted and flexible explanatory framework can emerge in which various complementary, even contradictory 'cultural scripts' for dressing can coexist and supplement each other. For example, the respondent in question in Figure 6 ('Torben': Skjold 2014a) had only vaguely registered changes of fashion trends, whereas he was much more oriented towards the dress style deriving from the punk music scene in the late 1980s. He had felt a pressure from his surroundings to wear more 'adult'-like dress objects when he stopped studying and entered the job market, which meant

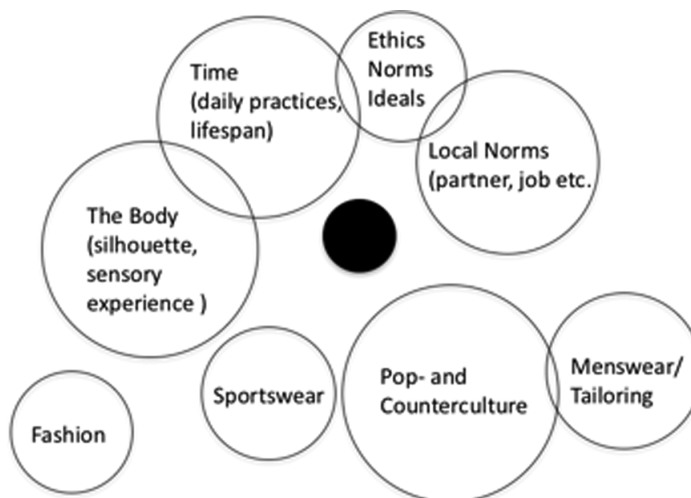


Figure 5.

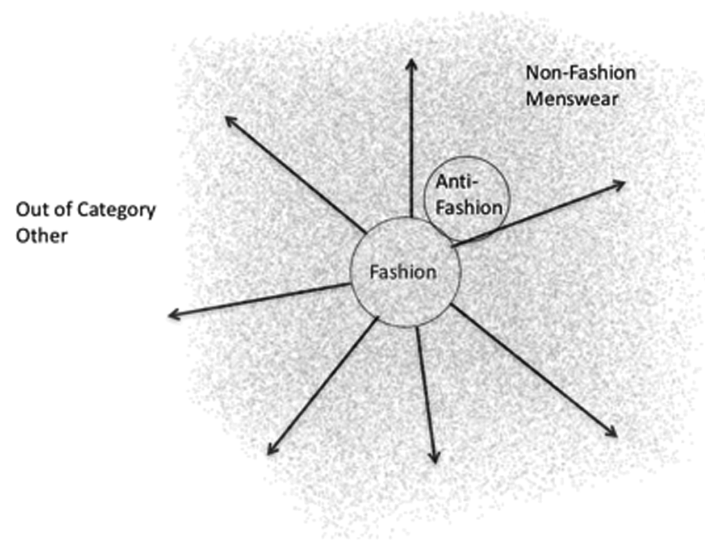


Figure 6.

that he would adopt single objects from classical menswear such as the shirt, or the blazer. Much the same way, he had made adjustments in his wardrobe when he met his wife as she disliked his torn and shabby-looking second-hand style (which he found bohemian and cool). Thus, he had discarded many of these second-hand objects at the time of the interview and had replaced them by objects that he purchased from new, which she liked better. Part of his wardrobe was all about sportswear and being sporty and working out, but as he worked full time and had recently become a father, he did not have time to exercise. Hence, this part of the wardrobe was relatively passive (he felt too chubby to wear it). Interestingly, his way of re-enacting various 'cultural scripts' for dressing such as sportswear, classical menswear, subcultural style or fashion was echoed in his daily dress practices, as well as in the way he purchased new and discarded old; for example, he disliked shopping very much, and was therefore eagerly hoarding dress objects he really appreciated. He knew of the risk that if he found something he really liked, it would probably go out of fashion, and then he would not be able to find it again. He had experienced this several times, and just like other respondents he expressed great sorrow and regret when he talked about favourite dress objects that he had worn out, which he could not replace since they were no longer on the market. This way, his dress practice is much aligned with the inherent values and practices of the menswear discourse, which is about continuity and sameness (Hollander 1994), whereas it is very distanced from the values and practices inherent in 'fashion' such as novelty-seeking and differentiation. In much the same way I could have mapped out the respondents mentioned in this article: The way M re-enacts values and practices of fashion celebrity culture when she feels feminine and glamorous in her fox collar, and combines this with dress objects referring to her idea of menswear, and high-quality avant-garde designerwear. Or the way J re-enacts the values and practices of *disco* as a subcultural style when he dresses up in a space suit, a sequin cap, an afro wig or a silver suit, and at the same time balances references to classical menswear, sportswear and fashion.

## CONCLUSION AND PERSPECTIVES

Contemporary fashion discourse is tied to a Western, industrialist/modernity logics that favours the same model for all, universal and democratic standardized and reproducible just like the Model Ford T, a mass-disseminated standard. Reversing your gaze and looking through the lens of the wardrobe emphasize how you cannot understand dress practice as representative of fashion-related logics only.

Studying people through their wardrobe, it becomes clear how there are many overlapping discourses at play that affect how people dressed in the past, how they dress now, and how they aspire to dress in the future. What I have discovered in my analysis and understanding of wardrobe research is how productive it is to separate fashion as a distinct and highly situated discourse that entails a very definite set of values, practices and institution-alized rituals, in order to open up to a view and understanding that is more de-standardized and diverse. This does not mean discarding fashion as a valuable driver of fantasy and adornment, but rather a displacing of fashion as the main explanatory framework for dress practice. I currently see this approach as key to pursuing the following research perspectives:

- As indicated by Woodward (2014: 131) who has phrased how wardrobe research is *accidentally sustainable*, as pointed out by Fletcher (2016) who sees people's *craft of use* as key to post-growth consumer behaviour, or as stated by Klepp (2010) how favourite objects in the wardrobe are *inherently sustainable*, I equally see more research on people's dress practices as vital to develop a more sustainable garment sector. Most research on fashion and dress focuses on the systems and leaders of fashion, yet we need a bottom-up approach that focuses more on differentiation and diversity than on idealized standards. This implicates moving the scope from Western to global, from youth to other age groups, and from seeing people as followers to seeing them as co-creators. All this is representative of what I term *fashion's others* whom research on fashion and dress up have largely ignored until now as they were largely considered 'out of category'.
- Such reversed gaze, based on deep studies of various dress practices, has the potential of supporting and constituting a renewed garment sector in deeper correspondence with not only actual user experiences, but also a dawning economic paradigm built on differentiation rather than standardization, on ethical, user-oriented logics rather than mere growth logics (Gardien and Gilsing 2012; Gardien et al. 2014). Taking wardrobe research into the scholarly field of design management, as done in the project with Copenhagen Fur (Skjold and Lønne 2016), means in practice that deep user understanding becomes central in exploring new formats for producing, communicating and consuming garments together with industry.

As such, research on wardrobes offers a potential for revitalizing the general understanding of how we manage our appearance, and how that interlinks with socio-economic and cultural structures in society. Above I have pointed out some strands of interest that I am currently engaging in but in principle there are many more. Basically, wardrobe research offers perspectives of how we are adorned not in a single dream but in many coexisting ones that we have yet to explore and understand.

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