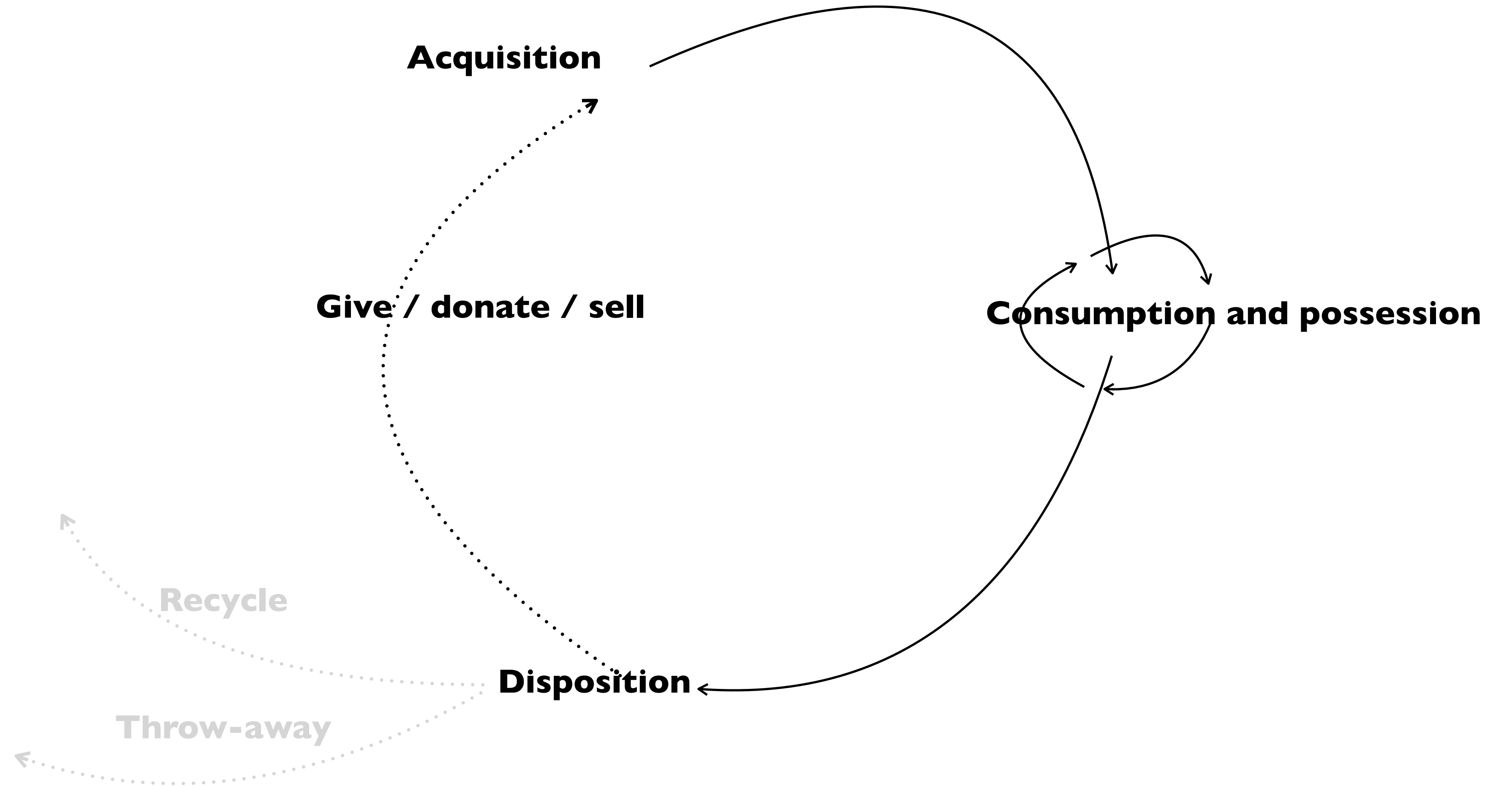


**BUYING, USING &  
DISPOSING FASHION**  
SOCIOLOGY OF CONSUMPTION & FASHION

**Linda Lisa Maria Turunen**  
Aalto University

# AGENDA

Structuring fashion consumption through consumption cycle:





A hand is shown reaching upwards from a large, messy pile of crumpled and discarded clothing. The background is dark and out of focus, suggesting an indoor setting. The overall mood is one of clutter and excess.

# **FASHION CONSUMPTION - WHAT IS IT?**



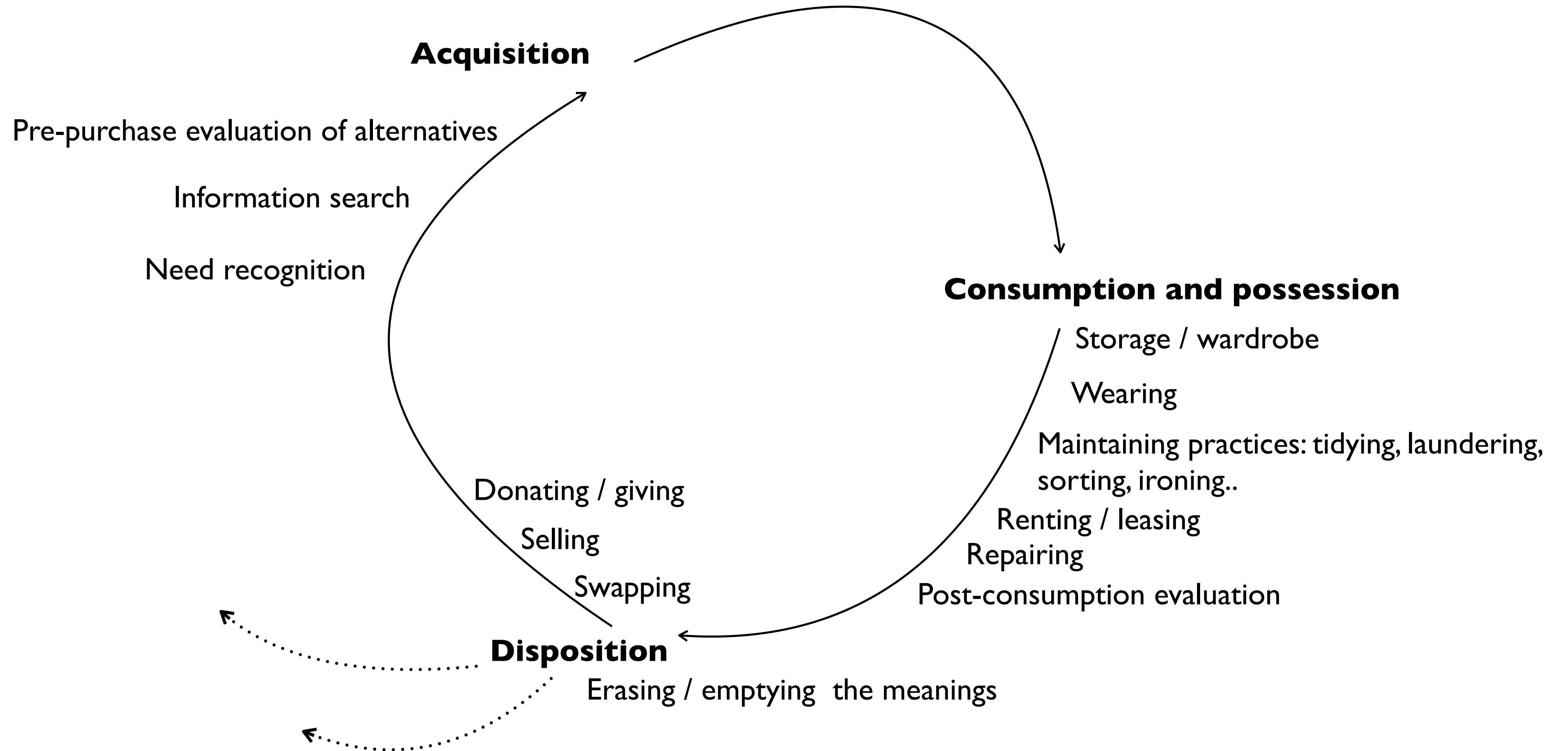
# 'PRODUCTION' OF FASHION

Fashion is in particular cultural industry: practices of cultural production are not shaped only industry's "internal" fashion production & meaning creation, but also in relationship to the seemingly "external" activities of fashion consumption.

*How are consumers interacting with garments?  
How are consumers involved in "production" of fashion?*



# CLOTHES & CONSUMPTION CYCLE



(Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Blackwell et al. 2001; McCracken, 1986)



A photograph of a fashion boutique interior. The room features several wooden clothing racks filled with various garments, including coats, dresses, and trousers. In the center, there is a plush, tufted red sofa and a matching ottoman, both resting on a large, light-colored rug. The background shows a window with a view of a city street. The overall atmosphere is elegant and sophisticated.

# PURCHASING FASHION



# WHY DO PEOPLE BUY FASHION?

- For **experiential** reasons: entertainment, hedonism, feeling of empowerment, to enjoy the shopping experience?
- For **expressive/symbolic** reasons: to belong, to differentiate?  
*(NOTE: This often relate to possessing & usage phase, 'to consume' fashion)*

Why do people buy *clothes*?

- For **functional** reasons: To be warm, to cover oneself? *(usage & wearing -phase)*

# FASHION SHOPPING AND PURCHASING LITERATURE IS EXTENSIVE...

There exist an extensive body of literature related to purchasing and shopping fashion:

**shopping attitude** (e.g. Shim & Eastlick, 1998; Zhang & Kim, 2013)

**shopping motivation** (e.g. Arnould & Reynolds, 2003; Kang & Park-Poaps, 2010; Wagner & Rudolph, 2010; Nwankwo et al., 2014)

**shopping styles /orientations** (Turunen & Pöyry 2019; Eastman et al., 2013; Babin et al., 1994)

**decision-making** (e.g. Häubl & Trifts, 2000; Bakewell & Mitchell, 2003; Riley et al., 2004; Cowart & Goldsmith, 2007)

**atmospheric effects & context** (e.g. Turley & Milliman, 2000; Bitner, 1992; Mattila & Wirtz, 2001)

**online/offline purchasing, retail experience** (McCormick & Livett, 2012; Pettinger, 2004; Blázquez, 2014; Kautish & Sharma, 2018)

....



# FASHION AS A CONTEXT OF PURCHASING

- Continuously evolving and changing offerings. Fashion cycle: creating new desires, new seasons, redefining what is “in fashion”
- Rhythm of fashion purchases; to what extent fashion purchasing is tied to seasonality? What is the impact of micro-seasons?
- *“The essence of fashion in clothes is that it compels us to discard a garment before it has outlived its usefulness”*  
(Du Gay, 1997: 121)



A photograph of a closet with a wooden rack filled with various clothing items. The items include sweaters, blouses, and jackets in different colors and patterns. The text "USING AND POSSESSING" is overlaid in the center in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

# USING AND POSSESSING

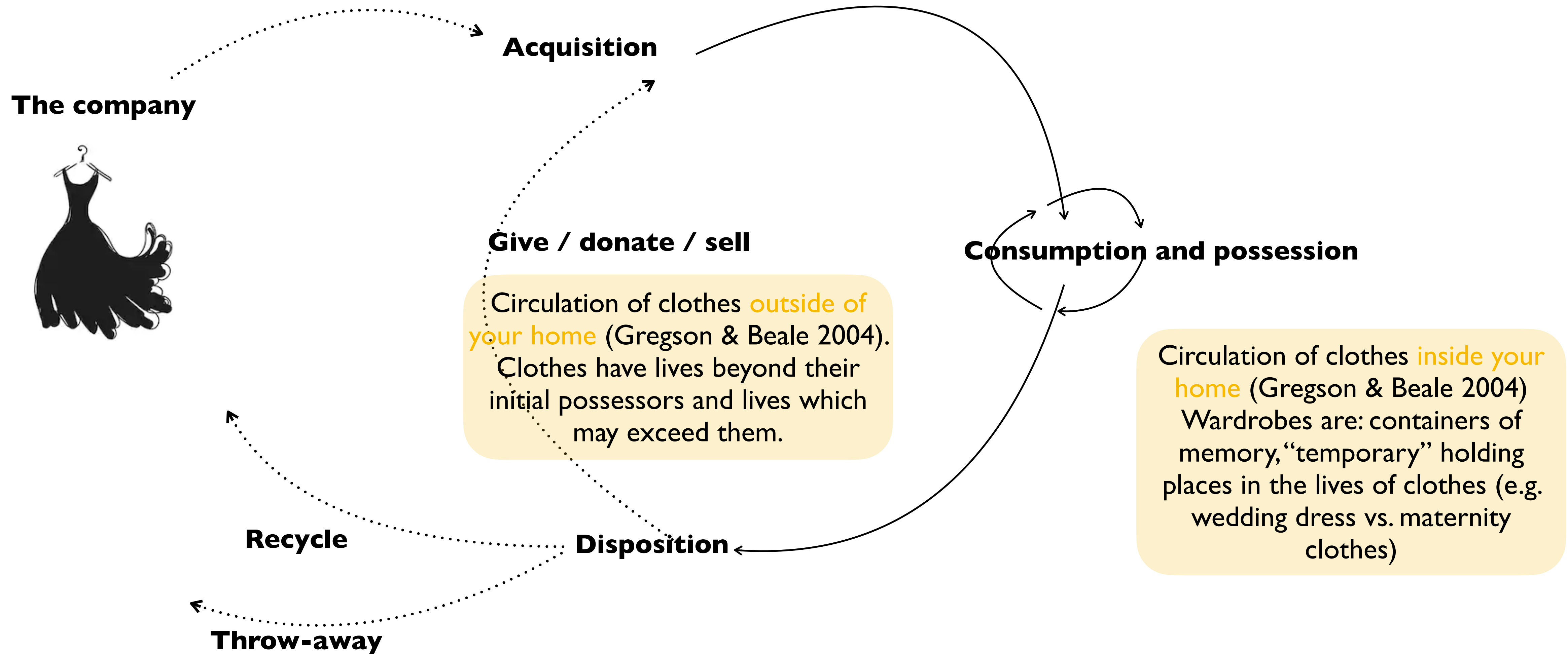


# YOU ARE WHAT YOU WEAR?

**Using and possessing** fashion have received the most attention in previous fashion literature:

- **Identity, self and fashion**  
(role in identity construction - signalling to self / signalling to others)
- **Belonging & differentiating** (tribes, subcultures etc. )
- **Meanings of specific artifacts; life transitions**  
(e.g. Gregson & Beale 2004; Turunen et al. 2020; Mellander & Peterson McIntyre 2021)
- **Ritualistic dimensions / practices of usage**  
(e.g. possession rituals & grooming rituals by McCracken 1986; Cwerner 2001)

# CIRCULATION OF CLOTHING



(adapted: Arnould & Thompson, 2005)



# CLOTHES AT REST

## CWERNER 2001

Wardrobe refers to...

- 1) the total set of clothes that an individual person has
  - 2) the constructed physical space where clothes are stored
- Clothes are used and worn, they are *in movement*
  - Clothes are stored, they are *in rest* (most of their time)

Wardrobe related practices (choosing, changing, caring for, washing, ironing, storing....) are inseparable part of fashion consumption. Through spatio-temporal practices we build relationship with our clothes.



Publication is more than 20 years old. Anything you would question today?





# PRACTICES RELATED TO USING AND POSSESSING OF FASHION

- **Wearing & using** (often relates to identity, signalling, belonging etc.)
- **Care & maintaining practices** (laundering, tidying, folding, ironing, repairing etc.)
- **Storage & wardrobe** (spatial practices, e.g. delimiting and organising)

*“Clothing is intensely intimate and thus a consumer good with high potential for emotional attachment.”* (Mellander & Peterson McIntyre 2021, 344)

# NOT OWNING, JUST USING

## Alternative to possessing:

Fashion as a service, e.g. short/longterm renting

- How does the meaning of the garment change?
  - \* Functional / usage value: why to possess if the value comes from usage? “Disposal” gains different meaning.
  - \* Status & signalling: possibility to use apparel & accessories that might not be otherwise available > “You are what you can access” (Belk 2014)
  - \* Emotional / personal attachment?
- Sustainability: company possess the garment, and take care of the garment’s lifecycle

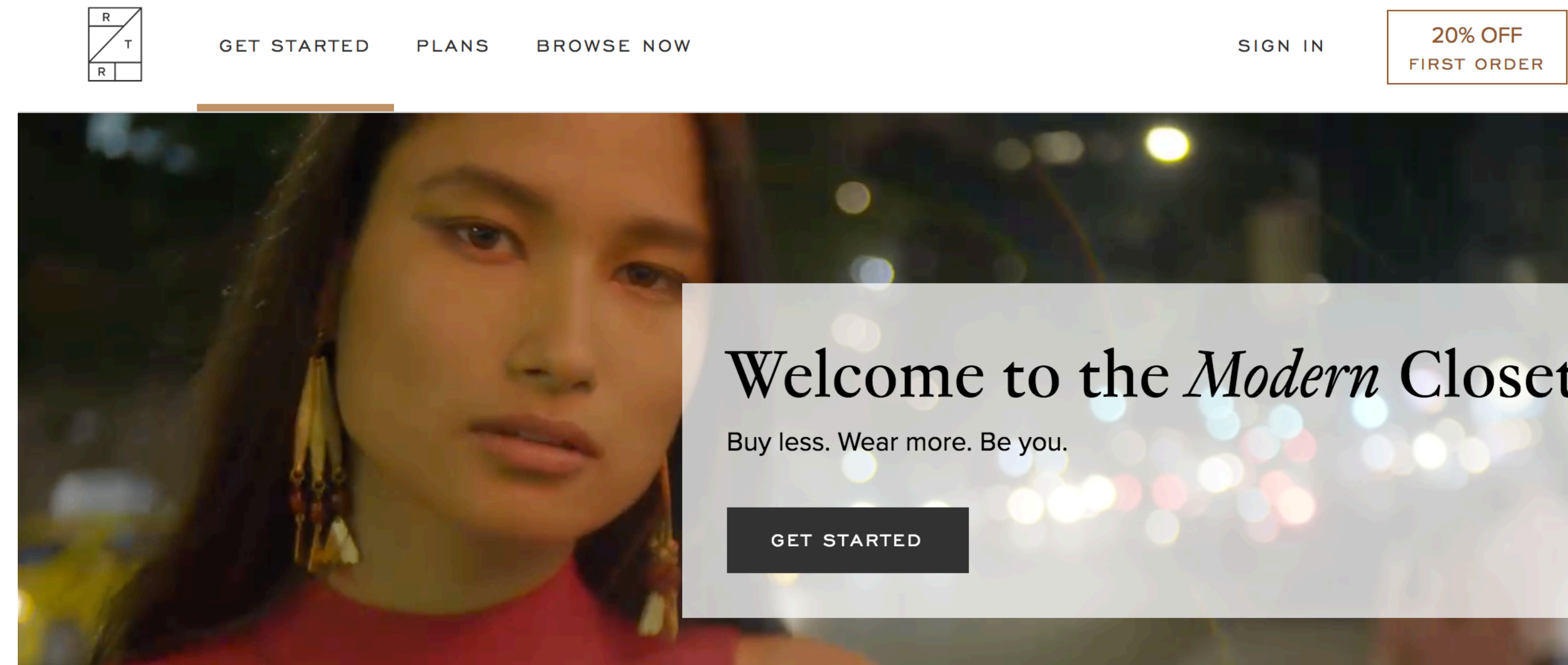


THE BUYERARCHY  
of NEEDS  
(with apologies to  
Maslow)



# ACCESS VS. OWNERSHIP

- The importance of ownership, once the symbol of success and accomplishment, is on the wain (e.g. Bardhi & Eckhardt, 2017)
- The meaning of possession is changing in many industries — streaming in music & film industry, renting in fashion industry, car-share etc..
- The changing role of possession opens up the door to the possibilities offered by a shared economy (e.g. AirBnB, Uber..)



## Three Ways to Access the *Dream* Closet



RENT RESERVE

starting at \$30/rental

RENT UPDATE

\$89/month \$69 trial month

RENT CURATE

\$159/month \$99 trial m

**To what extent and how can technology liquidise our fashion consumption?**

# POSSESSING: WHY DO WE KEEP CLOTHES THAT DON'T FIT?

Bye & McKinney, 2015:

“Wardrobe is a materialisation of the identities of a woman.”

“Garments hold value well beyond their ability to be worn.”

Why do we  
keep clothes  
that don't fit?

Weight  
management

Aesthetic  
value

Investment  
value

Sentimental  
value





# FASHION DISPOSAL



# DISPOSAL BEHAVIOR

- Disposal has defined through two-step process:
  - First step: consumer stop using the garment that still maintains its ability to function (Hanson 1980; Paden & Stell, 2005)
  - The second step: consumer discard the garment through a disposal method (Jacoby et al. 1977)
- Product-disposal has implication for consumers, businesses, society and the environment (Cruz-Cárdenas & Arévalo-Chávez, 2018).
- Disposal activities are closely associated with purchasing new products (ibid.)
- Consumers' disposal methods determine whether the product continues to circulate among other consumers or becomes relegated to garbage / landfills (Bianchi & Britwistle, 2010; Gregson & Beale, 2004)



# CONSUMERS' MOTIVATIONS TO DISPOSE FASHION

Lee et al. (2013) categorized the disposal motivations into three groups:

Individual attributes	Product attributes	Situational attributes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• lack of psychological fit / physical fit</li><li>• financial need / economic interest</li><li>• desire to buy new</li><li>• downsize the wardrobe</li><li>• habit (fall/spring cleaning)</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• condition of the item</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• new trend / unfashionable</li><li>• external stimuli</li><li>• lack of storage</li><li>• transition in life (e.g. maternity clothes)</li></ul>



# DIFFERENT METHODS TO DISPOSE THE UNWANTED FASHION ITEMS

1. repurposing (converting it to new purpose) / extending product's lifetime / storage
2. swapping / lending
3. selling
4. donating / giving
5. throwing away / recycling

Disposition process depends about the individual characteristics, type of the product, the condition of it, and the circumstances (Hanson, 1980; Jacoby et al., 1977).

# WHY IS IT HARD TO DISPOSE?

- Discarding unwearable clothes is not logical process, due to **personal connections, and emotional reasons** (Mellander & Peterson McIntyre 2021)
  - Clothing may be a communication tool, basis for self-representation and carrier of personal meanings

McCracken (1986 p. 80) suggest that divestment rituals play a central role in the disposition process:

- 1) "First, divestment ritual takes place when the individual is about to dispense with the good, either giving it away or selling it. The consumer will attempt to erase the meaning that has been invested in the good by association."
- 2) "When the individual purchases a good that has been previously owned , the ritual is used to ease the meaning associated with the previous owner. (...) It can be cleaning or re-decorating, something that free up the meaning properties of possession."



# HOW DOES FASHION DISPOSAL RELATE TO FASHION CONSUMPTION?

- Disposal is the last phase of consumption cycle
- Consumers' disposal behaviour determines whether the lifetime is extended, if the product circulates to next owner / it is recycled to fiber to become new material / it is thrown away = burned/landfill.
- Disposal behaviour may lead to new purchases

One method to dispose is to **sell**

- New market & market dynamics, second cycle
- New role of consumer: *disposer* > *seller*


## The Consumption Problem

OVER 1/3 OF  
WOMEN WEAR AN ITEM

≤ 5  
times before  
getting rid of it



43%  
of all purchases  
are "impulse buys"



70%  
of the average  
woman's closet  
goes unworn







# SECOND CYCLE OF FASHION CONSUMPTION



# SECOND-HAND, PRE-USED, VINTAGE, PRE-LOVED, THRIFT...

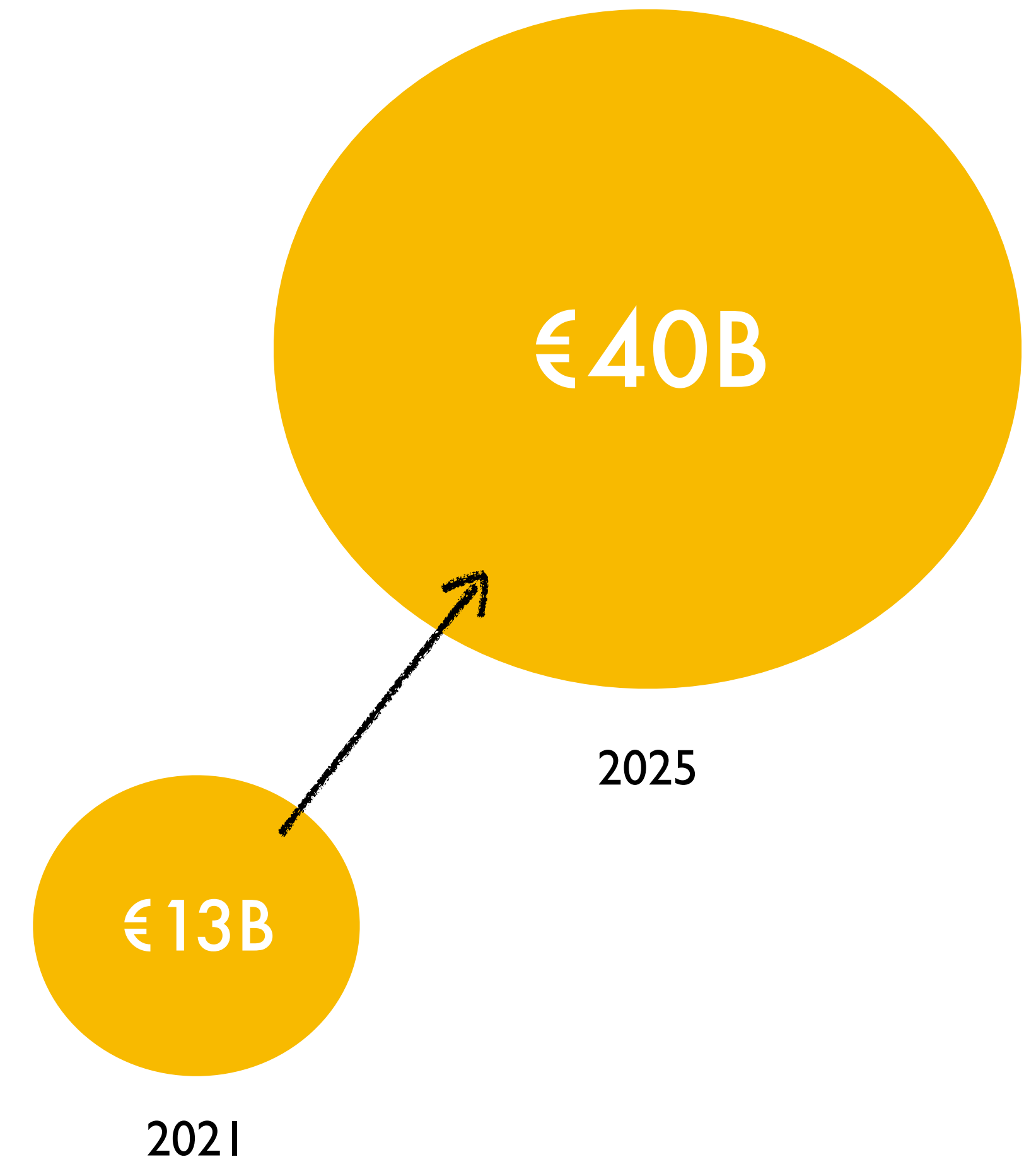
- Resale is expected to grow rapidly for the next years (ThredUp 2022)
- Second-hand has become socially acceptable and even 'fashionable' (Brooks 2019; Ferraro et al. 2016)
- New businesses are entering to market, various ways to implement resale services as part of offering are arising

## Why?

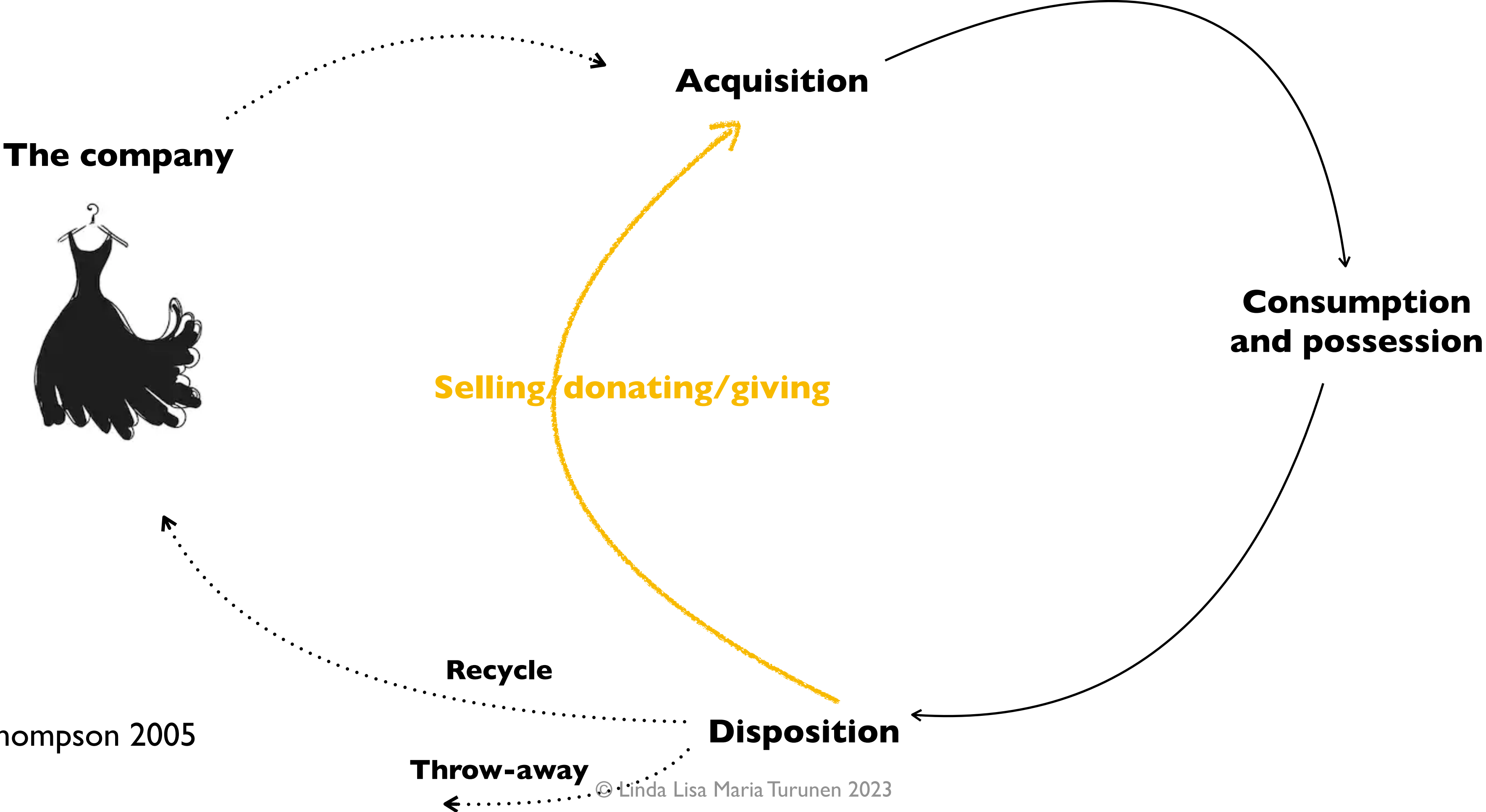
**Digitalization** — empowered & engaged consumers > easy to buy & sell

**Sustainability** — extending lifecycle > good, but...

1. second-hand does not erase the root-cause (unsustainable production / low quality)
2. easiness to sell > increasing purchases? (ThredUp 2018)
3. environmental aspects are often post-rationalisations (Turunen et al. 2020)



# SECOND-HAND = FIRST OWNER/USER OF THE PRODUCT IS NOT THE LAST



Adapted Arnould & Thompson 2005  
Turunen et al. 2018

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The second-hand market is dependent on active consumers; consumers who dispose and sell, and those who buy.

(Turunen, Cervellon & Carey 2020)



# MEANINGS RELATED TO ARTIFACT / PROCESS OF SELLING



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## Selling second-hand luxury: Empowerment and enactment of social roles

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### ARTICLE INFO

#### Keywords:

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### ABSTRACT

Consumption of luxury goods is morphing into a diverse proposition where consumers are actively adopting new roles: besides buyers and users, they are sometimes becoming sellers of luxury branded products. This paper examines meanings and values attached to the process of selling luxury goods. To investigate this issue, eighteen women who had previously sold luxury branded items were interviewed. The findings demonstrated that the act of selling luxury goods challenges and shapes conventional meanings attached to luxury: Firstly, there is an alteration to the symbolic value of the item. The process around selling strips luxury items down to the object of a financial transaction hereby empowering the consumer. Secondly, consumers who sell luxury items engender change in their social role. For some, the act of selling used luxury items enabled a perceived higher social status, and for others it contributed to the boosting of their role as a sustainable consumer.

## Luxury fashion items

### INDIVIDUAL:

- financial empowerment
- perceived higher social status
- pursuits to be regarded as “eco-conscious” consumer
- product contains personal meanings

### PRODUCT:

- resale value: “playing against system”
- extending the lifetime, environmental choice

### SITUATIONAL:

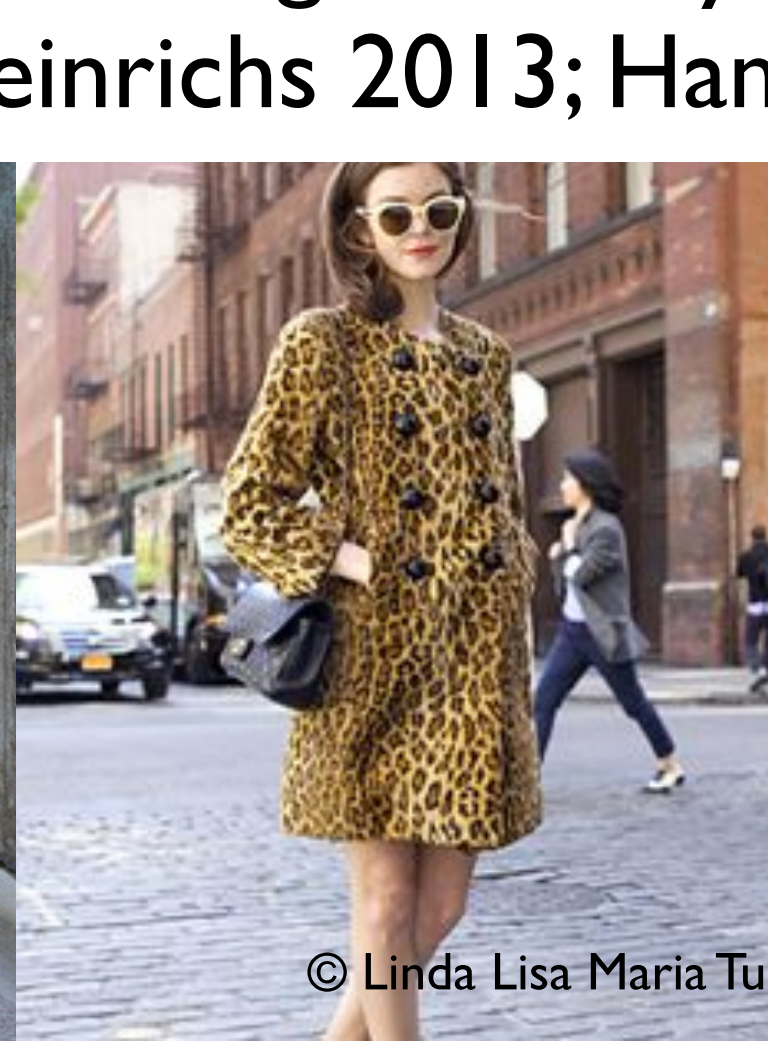
- product becoming too “mass”, not in fashion anymore
- lack of storage



# FASHIONABLE SECOND-HAND?



New and old blends of fashion are intertwined with new forms of sense- and identity-making in which phenomena such as second-hand, recycling and the 'sharing economy' are making more and more inroads all over Europe (Heinrichs 2013; Hamari et al. 2016).






# ONE'S TRASH, ANOTHER'S TREASURE?

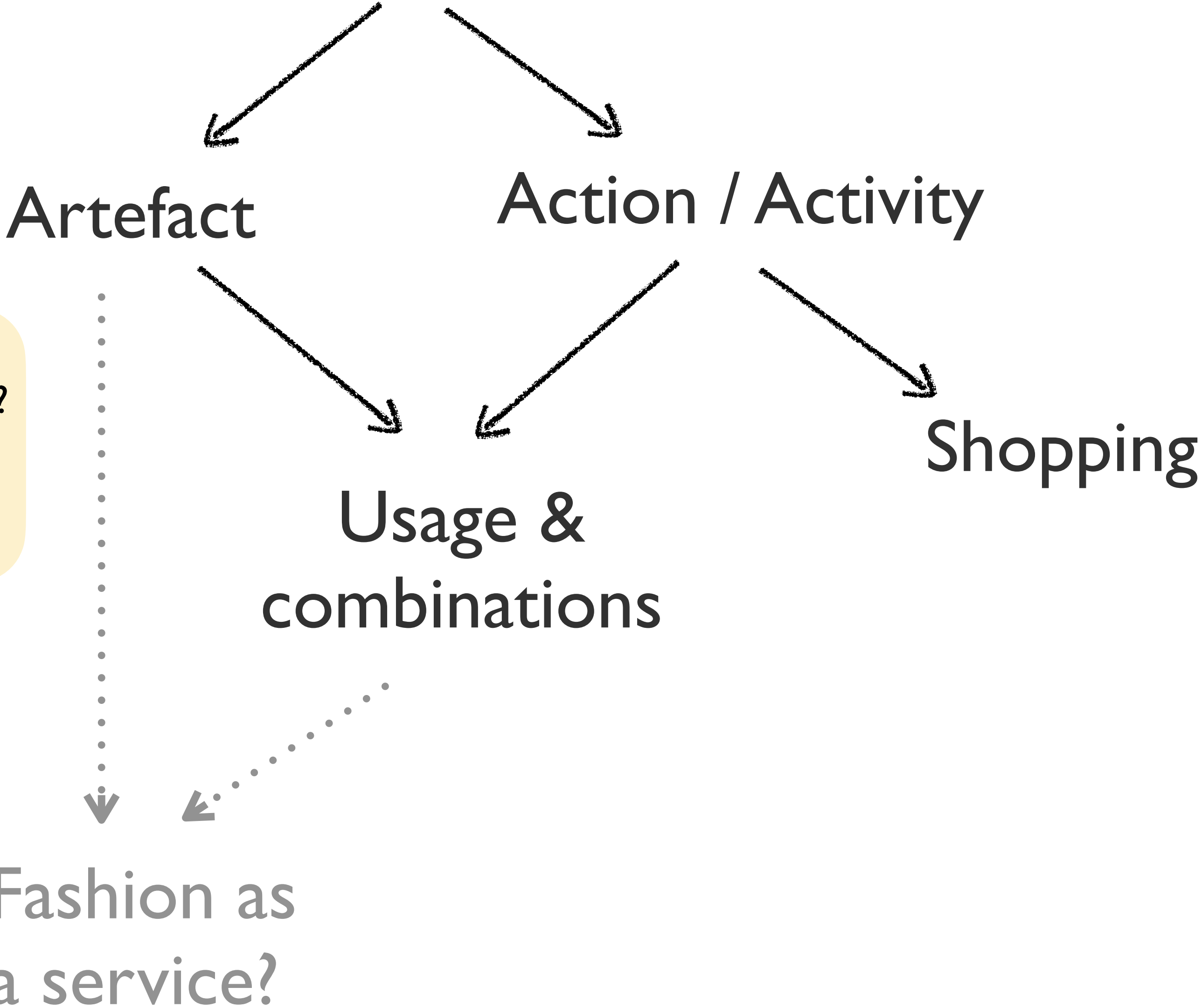
Second-hand market contains variety of products you cannot find from the market — something unique and different (see e.g. Belk 2019; McCracken 2009).

Requires more effort and devoted attitude.

- 
- One of the kind — treasure in terms of size, quality, condition.
  - Authentic (& quality) pieces from 90's - vs. re-produced fast fashion
  - Creation of personal style > creative and unpopular choices, avoidance of similarity (Cervellon et al. 2012).
  - Archiving is trendy.



# FASHIONABLE SECOND-HAND



What is second cycle's role in how "fashion is produced" and consumed?  
Is it shaping *fashion*, how?  
Who are the key actors involved influencing on it?

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**Thank you.**

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