

Fashion Micro-Enterprises In

LONDON

BERLIN

MILAN

Phase 2



This project is part of the AHRC funded programme titled CREATE, based in Glasgow University, Law School, with Goldsmiths University of London as a partner. For further information see www.create.ac.uk
The research on fashion micro-enterprises has been undertaken with further support from Goldsmiths University of London

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The second phase of work for CREATE, has entailed a new round of interviews, events and activities focusing on the impact of digital online transformations across the sector, especially in retail. Our intentions this time were to work with a smaller number of designers and companies in each city and seek to gain a clear sense of how the significant changes away from physical location selling (ie shops) to online retail were impacting on the sector, particularly the micro-businesses and those working in a start-up framework. Facing some obstacles, as ever, with questions of access to the big players we had hoped to involve in the Phase 2 work, we have nevertheless worked hard to pursue contacts with former employees, while also building a significant bank of secondary data with companies such as Asos and Farfetch in the UK, Yoox in Milan, and Zalando in Berlin. In the cases of Asos and Zalando we are still actively seeking personal connections with the companies which are global leaders in the field. Meanwhile we have been fortunate in gaining access to leading online fashion companies such as Not Just A Label which until a few months ago was based in London and has recently moved to LA. Likewise we have

been working closely with Marte Hentschel in Berlin who has made the move in the course of the research from heading up a producer services company (not-for-profit) to taking the lead in the digital platform (Sourcebook.com) specifically for fashion designers which she has founded and is now extending in a variety of ways see www.sourcebook.eu Once again one of our insights during the three years of research is that added research value lies in creating an active and engaged team-spirit especially from the networking events. The knowledge transfer here benefits participants in unexpected and unpredictable ways. This should become evident in the final part of this blog where we provide some bio-profiles which highlight the directions taken by our network members in the last 9 months. It seems that the CREATE project has helped some of our participants to crystallise interesting career decisions and manage to organise new directions in the field.

MILAN PHASE 2 EVENT:

However this blog really begins with our Phase 2 Milan event which took place on March 1st 2017. Here our intentions were to introduce our new and ongoing research on digital e-commerce in order to prompt discussion with the research community in Milan including some of the leading figures in the area such as Prof. Laura Bovone (Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore, and Dr Marianna D'Ovidio (Università di Bari). In addition we invited some young academics and post-doctoral researchers such as Dr Guilia Mentisieri, Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris) to join the conversations lasting into the evening and beyond (see planned publications below). We were provided generous space at the University of Milan in the magnificent hall (Sala Lauree) thanks to Prof. Adam Arvidsson whose students along with some Masters students from the Università Cattolica provided the audience for the afternoon event. We (the organisers Prof McRobbie, Dr Dan Strutt and Dr Bettina Springer) decided also on this occasion to give more time to the designers present to discuss the issues emerging from the e-commerce revolution in fashion design. Carlo Volpi an Italian by birth but also a graduate of Goldsmiths and the Royal College of Art and now working with partners in Milan spoke about the sheer hardship of trying to keep on top of his business with so many changes in the retail landscape. He also described the difficulties designers like himself who are visible, even well-known in the Vogue fashion world but who are still struggling to achieve any

kind of financial stability. While lucky to have workspace in London and access to the Italian market (including a current contract with a leading company in Florence) nevertheless Carlo Volpi felt all the stresses of being both an avant-garde designer and someone having to work in a hard-edged commercial world. The other designer who took part, Milan-based Ela Siromascenko talked at length about the more bespoke approach she had developed with individual clients who nowadays with her strong online presence came from different places across the world.

Figure 1. Poster for the event in Milan



The poster features logos for Goldsmiths University of London, Università degli Studi di Milano, CREATE, and Centro Studi Etnografia Digitale. It includes the event title, date, location, and a detailed agenda.

Goldsmiths UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

UNIVERSITÀ DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO
DIPARTIMENTO DI SCIENZE SOCIALI E POLITICHE

CREATE

Centro Studi Etnografia DIGITALE

SPACES OF FASHION: DIGITAL, TECHNOLOGIES, AND LABOUR PROCESS

MARCH 1ST 2017. MILAN UNIVERSITY, STATALE

Sala Lauree, Facoltà di Scienze Politiche, Economiche e Sociali,
Università degli Studi di Milano, Via Conservatorio 7. Milan.



2pm – 2.15 Introduction and Welcome: Prof. Angela McRobbie and Prof. Adam Arvidsson

2.15 – 3pm Reporting on CREATE Phase 2 Research: London, Berlin and Milan.
Dr Dan Strutt, Dr Bettina Springer and Dr Carolina Bandinelli. Chair: Adam Arvidsson.

3pm – 3.30 COFFEE BREAK

3.30 – 4.15 Designer roundtable discussion with Carlo Volpi and Ela Siromascenko.
Chair: Dan Strutt and Carolina Bandinelli

4.15 – 5.45 PANEL: FASHION ECONOMY IN THE DIGITAL ERA Chair: Angela McRobbie

- Dr Marianna D'Ovidio (University of Bari) 'Current Issues of Fashion and Urban Creative Economy'
- Giannino Malossi (Milan) 'State of Fashion Economy in Digital World',
- Prof. Laura Bovone (Università Cattolica Milan) 'Sharing Fashion: A New Responsible Creativity'
- Guiditta Passini (Fashion Consultant) 'Fashion and Sustainability: re-shaping the fashion industry in the digital era'.

5.45 – 6.15 Plenary and Comments: Angela McRobbie, Adam Arvidsson and Laura Bovone.

6.15 – 7.30 Aperitivi in the bar.

8.30pm Dinner for speakers and guests

The first panel of the day comprised 20 minute presentations from the CREATE team working on Phase 2 interviews. Dan Strutt presented an overview of findings so far with particular emphasis on the NJAL work and their platform profiling the work of up to 200 designers from across the world. Bettina Springer updated the work she has been doing on the Berlin-based company Zalando, and Carolina Bandinelli demonstrated once again her strong ethnographic skills discussing her meetings with young Italian designers and how they recounted the impact digital fashion was having on their working lives. Later in the afternoon we had presentations from Marianna D'Ovidio where she discussed the conceptual framing within urban sociology for her longitudinal studies of fashion labour in Milan. This was followed by Laura Bovone who described the very original work she has been carrying out with fashion alternative groups in Milan who make extensive use of social media, and finally, fashion consultant Guiditta Passini discussed her own expertise in regard to bringing sustainable issues to the foreground with the companies who are her clients in Milan and elsewhere in Italy. Giannino Malossi, who has worked as a senior researcher for the CREATE research from the start, focused on the wider issues which were bringing a new kind of expertise into fashion and also challenging the authority of the leading companies, as well as the well-known magazines such as Vogue. Malossi argued that in effect 'the cultural factor' was returning

to fashion undermining the strong and increasingly bland commercial image of recent years. The day then ended with a plenary debate which included a representative from London College of Fashion Dr Alessandra Vecchio along with Laura Bovone, Adam Arvidsson and Angela McRobbie. Overall this afternoon event helped to clarify the direction of the final phase of our project. It confirmed a sense that the fashion industry is undergoing substantial transformation and that one aspect of this is that it is being opened up to newcomers from different, non-elite and non-standard entrance points. The top-down managerialism of recent years and the leading positions held by the best-known figures and the leading companies has somehow been undermined at least partly by the participatory dynamic of digital technology and social media. We will summarise this shift as the return of a 'socio-cultural fashion imagination'.

Figure 2.
Carlo & Ella at
CREATE Event in Milan





Figure 3, 4.
CREATE designers
at Milan event

Sharing fashion: a new responsible creativity

Laura Bovone
Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore
Milano



Figure 5-7.
Laura Bovone & Gianni
Malossi during the
CREATe Event in Milan

The main activities following the Milan event have involved consolidating the outcomes and planning dissemination as we head towards the conclusion period of the CREATE project. In addition we have each spend time preparing academic papers for presentation at conferences (see below). Having realised after the Milan event that there are colleagues in France and Italy as well as in Germany investigating similar themes of precarious work in and around the edges of the urban fashion design industry and also undertaking research on digital labour in the sector we have proposed a Special Issue of the Journal of Urban Cultural Studies to include some of the already existing CREATE team and also two of the wider network. The proposed issue will therefore include an Introduction written by Prof Angela McRobbie followed by articles by Dr Bastian Lange and Prof Ares Kalandides (both CREATE collaborators), Dr Marianna D'Ovidio writing from an urban sociological perspective about Milan, Dr Guilia Mentisieri writing about precarious fashion workers in Paris, and finally Dan Strutt looking at digital labour in 'fashion tech' in London. This is a peer-review journal but with time for planning and previewing the articles we very much hope to see all four pieces into print for late 2018.

Alongside this the core CREATE team have been meeting regularly to discuss the contents and structure of the monograph /book

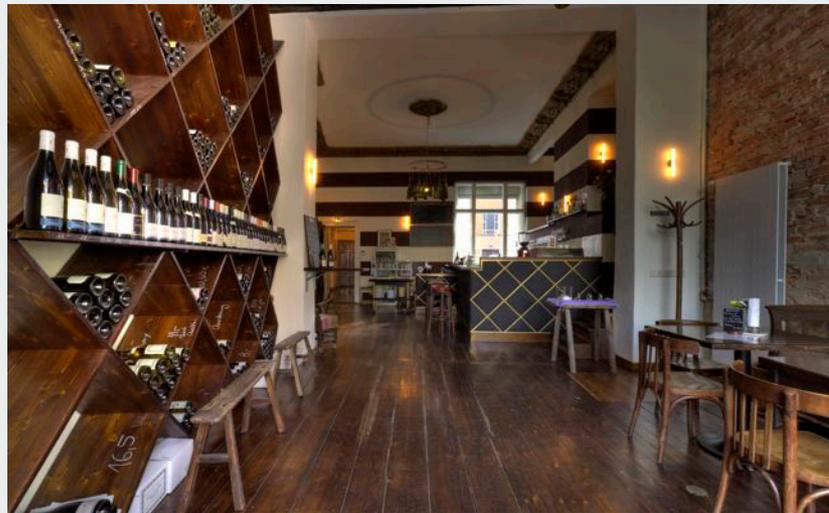
which will be written in the next nine months. From the start of 2017 other invitations have also come our way, including one to take part in a seminar on Design and Inequality hosted at the LSE International Inequalities Institute (British Sociological Association Event, Design and the Social February 7th 2017). Since then Angela McRobbie has been invited to submit an overview article from the CREATE work for a projected Special Issue of Sociological Review (currently under consideration).

We have also been working on the data we have gathered finding the best way of archiving it and putting it into a format which will allow easy access for when we embark on writing the monograph. Inevitably we have tried to update and refresh some of the interviews and we have established a 'catch-up' by regular email and also face-to-face meetings with almost all of our respondents. This has been labour intensive and time consuming, but it also has an ethical dimension insofar as one of our aims has been to develop a sense of reciprocity with our respondents. The regular meetings and face-to-face conversations are just two of the ways in which there is constant sense of knowledge exchange. For the very final stages of the project such meetings assume greater importance as this allows us to more fully understand the changing socio-economic landscape in which these creative workers are operating.

JUNE - AUGUST 2017:

The key work for the project in the last three months has involved preparation for the Berlin Vernissage event hosted on 4th July at Les Climats, a wine-bar and restaurant near to Kurfurstenstrasse in Berlin (See FIG. 8, 9).

Figure 8.
Les Climats
Berlin



The idea here was to open out our work and activities over the last three years not just to the designers and the team but to some of the key cultural policy-makers in the city as well as to those involved in UK and German cultural exchanges such as the British Council. The event was judged to be very successful indeed with 38 of 40 people invited attending, also at a busy time of year and on the opening day of Berlin Fashion Week. (For example Melissa Drier, German Editor of Womens Wear Daily, also Hannah Pilarzk from Spiegel Online, and award winning designer Esther Perbandt (Fig. 10-13), as well as Stephan Dietzeldt (Fig. 14-16).

Figure 9.
Invitation to
the July 4th
event

Goldsmiths  **CREATE**
UNIVERSITY OF LONDON

INVITE TO LES CLIMATS: JULY 4TH



Dear Friends and Colleagues,

On behalf of the CREATE Goldsmiths team, we would like to invite you to a summer network/party/event, as a finale to our 2013-2017 fashion micro-enterprises research project to which many of you were valued contributors, and to look forward to some future collaborations.

French cuisine, French wine from vineyards of Burgundy, conversation, and we hope lovely weather

DATE: 4TH JULY 2017,

TIME: 18- 21 UHR,

PLACE LES CLIMATS WEINBAR,
POHLSTR. 75, 10785 BERLIN

RSVP a.mcrobbie@gold.ac.uk,
daniel.strutt@gold.ac.uk,
bettina@espace-surplus.com





Figure 10. ESTHER PERBANDT. SOURCE: <http://estherperbandt.com/>

Figure 11. ESTHER PERBANDT'S STUDIO. SOURCE: <http://estherperbandt.com/>

Fig. 12, 13. ESTHER PERBANDT SUMMER/AUTUMN 17/18. SOURCE: <http://estherperbandt.com/>



Figure 14. STEFAN DIETZELDT'S STUDIO. SOURCE: <http://directorscut.biz/>
Figure 15. CLOTHING: STEFAN DIETZELDT. SOURCE: <http://directorscut.biz/>
Figure 16. CLOTHING: STEFAN DIETZELDT. SOURCE: <http://directorscut.biz/>

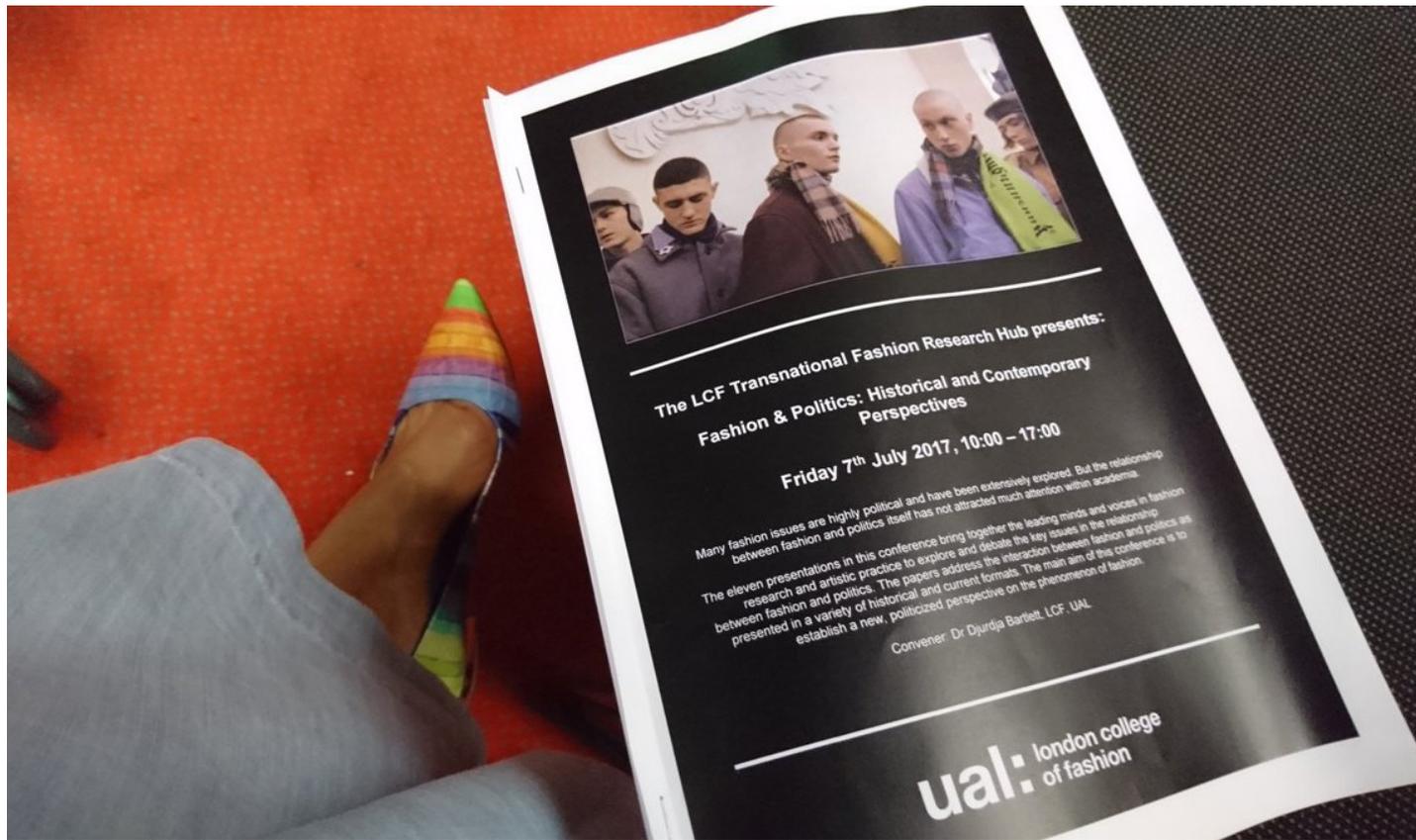


Figure 17. 7th July 2017 Fashion and Politics Conference at LCF

During this time Angela McRobbie was also preparing to present a number of academic papers drawing on first stage analysis of the CREATE work at a number of conferences, the first of which was 7th July 2017 Fashion and Politics Conference at London College of Fashion. Angela McRobbie presented a keynote paper at the above-mentioned event titled The Emerging Political Economy of Fashion: Micro-enterprises in London, Berlin and Milan (See Figure 17).

Because Berlin has been such a focal point for the research led by a social agenda, Angela along with Oliver Macconnell, Bettina Springer and Alexandra Manske are preparing

an article hopefully to be published in the FAZ (Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung) later in Autumn 2017. On September 6th Angela is invited to join a discussion about fashion, crafts and regional initiatives at the UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport, London, and on 7th September 2017 Angela will present at keynote also drawing on the CREATE work at the CAMEo Conference University of Leicester conference title is (Mediating Cultural Work: Texts, Objects, Politics) . From October through to December there will be an intensive focus on reviewing and revising as well as updating the data so that concentrated writing for the book / monograph can begin in earnest in January 2018.

BIOS:

BETTINA SPRINGER

Having worked as an urban researcher and art curator for the past decade she has recently founded her own business in the beauty industry thus combining her experience in aesthetics with creative and fashion industries.



DAN STRUTT

Dan Strutt is a lecturer at Goldsmiths engaging in research in digital creativity in both practice and theory. Aside from the CREATE fashion project he is currently a researcher for the AHRC's Creative Economy Champion project at Royal Holloway University. He is also engaged as a digital producer with Malta's only contemporary Dance company Zfin Malta, on an outdoor immersive dance performance for Valetta 2018 European City of Culture, and is working on his own book on digital image culture for Amsterdam University Press.



ALEXANDRA MANSKE

Alexandra Manske, Dr. habil., is a sociologist. Her research focuses on cultural and creative work. She received her PhD (Dr. phil.) from the Humboldt University Berlin with a work on entrepreneurship in the IT industry. In 2016, her second book ('Habilitationsschrift') was published at Transcript Verlag. It explores cultural work in societal change and was published as 'Kapitalistische Geister in der Kultur- und Kreativwirtschaft. Kreative zwischen wirtschaftlichem Zwang und künstlerischem Drang' (,Creatives between economic compulsion and artistic urge'). She has taught and researched at various universities, among others Columbia University / New York City and was most recently a professor for sociology at the University of Hamburg.



GIANNINO MALOSI

In late 2015, as Partner of Blumine Srl, a Milan based organization that helps textile and fashion companies to reach a better sustainability in their production, Gianino Malossi contributed to the formation of WEARSustain, an international consortium of seven organizations, which in 2016 won a ITC 36 HORIZON 2020 Grant. WEARSustain started in January 2017 and will run till December 2018. Meanwhile, focusing on his own interest in digital transformation, his past editorial work and design, Gianino founded a new company, DIAMAT Srl. Diamat will experiment and develop native digital content for the cultural industry.



ARES KALANDIDES

Ares Kalandides is the Founder and Director of the fashion social enterprise NEMONA in Berlin. In the past two years NEMONA passed on to a new stage. It is now part of the "Neukölln business network" where fashion is one part. The goal in this (final stage) for NEMONA is to link production with retail, including pop-up shops, cooperation with shopping centres, department stores etc. Ares has recently been appointed Professor of Place Management at Manchester Metropolitan University.



PROF. OLIVER MACCONNELL

Prof. Oliver MacConnell directs the Program of Fashion Management at the bbw University in Berlin and is founder of the Fashion Practice Academy Berlin (www.fpa-berlin.de), a Think Tank dedicated to providing the framework for addressing the complex demands of the textile industry. He advises designers and companies and teaches his expertise at universities in Germany, Great Britain and Switzerland. The promotion of creative talents and the customer focused Implementation of design processes are the key points of his work.



AGNES ZELEI

Agnes Zelei is a Goldsmiths BA graduate based in Berlin and she has helped with the organisation of several CREATE events in the city. In the last 18 months she has been busy supplying vintage garments for a couple of Berlin based vintage shops as well as working in music (freelancing for a music company Native Instruments) working in their event team (supporting external and internal events) In the coming year she hopes to have her own vintage shops, as well as working on her sewing skills to be able to alternate specific pieces herself.



CAROLINA BANDINELLI

Carolina Bandinelli has recently been appointed Lecturer in Media Studies at the University of Lincoln. Previously, she was Teaching Fellow in Digital Humanities at King's College. She holds a Ph.D. from Goldsmiths College. Currently, she is working on a monograph based on her doctoral dissertation, titled 'Social Entrepreneurship: Sociality, Ethics and Politics'. Her most recent publications include: Gandini, A. Bandinelli, C. and Cossu, A. 'Collaborating, competing, coalescing, coworking: artists, freelancers and social entrepreneurs as the new subjects of the creative class', in Graham, J. and Gandini, A. (eds) Collaborative Production in the Creative Industries (Westminster University Press); Bandinelli, C. and Gandini, A. 'Creative hubs versus creative networks', in Gill, R. (ed.) Creative Hubs (Forthcoming, 2018).



