

# The Creative Wellbeing Economy

## **Mission Statement:**

The Creative Wellbeing Economy places people and planet in an interwoven symbiotic relationship: revaluing locality, creativity, and enhancing accessibility to transformative tools and opportunities as links in a newly formed chain of opportunity from cradle to grave. The Creative Wellbeing Economy places value in people thriving above them simply surviving.

## **The Creative Wellbeing Economy**

### **Fashion Roundtable's Vision: The Creative Wellbeing Economy (CWE) – A Living Document**

#### **Disclaimer:**

We cannot answer this research question or indeed make a systems change framework in such a short deadline, and nor should we. But what we can do is suggest the prevalent issues, the policy, social and creative landscape, and discuss why the Creative Wellbeing Economy is so timely as a new and exciting framework where creative leadership could be applied to solve the world's pressing social, environmental and economic problems. This is a living document, and will naturally continue to take shape.

#### **Written by:**

[Meg Pirie](#)

*Policy Researcher and Content Editor – Fashion Roundtable  
Policy Researcher: Fashion and Sustainability – Bath Spa University*

[Tamara Cincik](#)

*CEO – Fashion Roundtable  
Professor of Fashion and Sustainability – Bath Spa University*

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## Foreword by Fashion Roundtable's CEO and Professor of Fashion and Sustainability at Bath Spa University Tamara Cincik



Image source: [Dvora.Photography](#)

The world is a very uncertain and challenging place for many of its population to live above the poverty line, let alone thrive. This is a time of climate anxiety, global boiling, economic upheaval, and broken or overburdened support systems.

Here in the UK, homelessness, rising poverty and social imbalances across a number of key determinate lines, are all clear indicators of the lack of long term solutions to these impacts. From contending with the environment, to a lack of systemised support for those whose income does not meet their outgoings, and growing political and economic social unrest, these are all creating a polarity between surviving and thriving. What is needed is a long term vision and a holistic approach which accounts for cradle to grave inequalities, both in the UK and more globally.

A nation is assessed by metrics including GDP, a business is assessed by investors based on its growth in numbers. These statistics are a baseline which define success notionally as growth, and place wellbeing and sustainability as less important than growth at all costs. They place thriving as less valuable than growing. The stark reality is we cannot all grow our numbers and production volume all of the time. Someone, somewhere will be paying as we increase revenue, cut margins or reduce costs.

Meanwhile for women-led businesses to even obtain backing is nigh on impossible. In 2019 VCs funded all female teams for just 1p for every £1 of their investment portfolio.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> H M treasury (2021) *Investing in Women Code Annual Progress Report 2021*, HM Treasury. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/978515/2020\\_Annual\\_Investing\\_in\\_Women\\_Code\\_report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/978515/2020_Annual_Investing_in_Women_Code_report_FINAL.pdf).

Growth without sustainability and social justice as core drivers has been the story of the global economy. In the fashion industry, this is highlighted by tragedies such as Rana Plaza in 2013, where over 1134 garment workers were killed in a factory fire. Garment workers who had been employed in unsafe and abusive working conditions, which is all too prevalent in an industry-driven race to the bottom, to generate fashion items as cheaply as possible for both fast fashion and designer brands alike, died in this avoidable and sadly repeated tragedy.

Since the post-war drive to globalise business models, policy makers and politicians of the main political parties, have in the majority, led on an inversion of what makes good business, economic and socially just practice.

There is an alternative vision to the growth-growth-growth paradigm, which in itself goes entirely against the UN SDGs, the Paris Agreement and the UK's commitment to meet global net zero carbon targets. This growth paradigm is contrary to supporting levelling up and community cohesion in real terms. Until we make the case to change the baseline, to one which is more intersectional, inclusive and places wellbeing as the key determinant, above growth figures, we cannot change the system. And the system clearly isn't working for too many of its citizens and communities.

The current economic system deems success via an index which places profit above people and planet. This is in sharp opposition to meeting any of the targets discussed at a number of global forums, from the UN, to COP, to Davos. Clearly meeting growth targets comes at a cost, as it expends finite resources, drives the exploitation of people and planet, and impacts generations to come in the drive to meet investor and policy driven targets, which continue to support the prevalent growth narrative.

The Creative Wellbeing Economy will allow us to solve the world's pressing social, environmental and economic problems, and refocus the definitions of what is success, and what societies need, all through a creatively driven, wellbeing supportive agenda.

During the last 13 years, creativity has been pushed to the margins by policy makers. But the truth is, creative mindsets are needed to solve the massive challenges we face. Critical creative thinking at a policy level, creativity and how it helps us all to not only enjoy the act of creating, but also how it gives us the space and adaptability to problem solve, work in harmony learning skills based on instinctively learnt skills, either alone, or with a group of co-workers, building networks and associations, which help us to strategise and problem solve.

These concepts apply through how we approach education, work and wellbeing: from sewing at school, dancing in a play, growing food, dyeing fabric at the kitchen sink, painting portraits of those we love, filming a documentary about something important to us on our phone, writing a poem in the style of a rap artist, daring to dream big and work out how to achieve those ambitions.

As the climate and biodiversity crisis deepens, workplaces are now citing resiliency and creative thinking as a key attribute for future jobs. Creative Wellbeing poses the question of how we achieve that, alongside giving us the tools to realise our personal and society's potential.

The rise of populism and the disproportionate imbalance between the wealthy 1%, and those either struggling to meet rising costs, or the millions who have fallen below the poverty line has exponentially increased. The Resolution Foundation states that 400,000 UK children are set to be affected by absolute child poverty between 2022 and 2024.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Brewer and Murphy (2023) *The Living Standards Outlook 2023* • Resolution Foundation.

Further, foodbank usage is now at 3 million in the UK.<sup>3</sup> According to the Resolution Foundation, the percentage of people facing emotional distress has increased from 40% in 2021 to 47% in 2022.<sup>4</sup> Data from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities suggests that homelessness has risen by a quarter in one year.<sup>5</sup> Crisis cites that for those who are homeless, the average age for mortality in the UK is 46 for men and 43 for women, which equates to almost half that of the rest of the population, which is at over 81.<sup>6</sup>

Our daily news is filled with stories of climate and asylum refugees fleeing their countries, where extreme weather conditions, political unrest, and a lack of opportunity for their futures, are forcing many to make the most arduous sacrifices. The framing of this issue is all too often steeped in divisive tropes. Rather than seeing this as an opportunity to contend with domestic skills gaps in the short term, address our global consumption levels, and work as a community to contend with these systemic imbalances, instead we are seeing an escalation in uncertainty, a weaponising of identity and lack of cohesion, at how we solve these issues which are an existential, economic and a real threat to all our futures.

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<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-living-standards-outlook-2023/>.

<sup>3</sup> The Trussell Trust (2023) *Latest Stats - The Trussell Trust*.

[https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz8emBhDrARIsANNJjS60L78OkghubZ6lXWAofUynAu2mFhkN\\_ER-w0Pbe93lc8s-H5SD5JgaAgBxEALw\\_wcB&gclid=aw.ds](https://www.trusselltrust.org/news-and-blog/latest-stats/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz8emBhDrARIsANNJjS60L78OkghubZ6lXWAofUynAu2mFhkN_ER-w0Pbe93lc8s-H5SD5JgaAgBxEALw_wcB&gclid=aw.ds).

<sup>4</sup> Brewer and Murphy (2023) *The Living Standards Outlook 2023 • Resolution Foundation*.

<https://www.resolutionfoundation.org/publications/the-living-standards-outlook-2023/>.

<sup>5</sup> Davies, M. (2023) 'Homelessness in England rises by more than a quarter,' *The Times*, 1 March.

[https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/homelessness-in-england-has-risen-by-more-than-a-quarter-8wfkjbfcb?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz8emBhDrARIsANNJjS65HTku7aiKtf0y0QJOW\\_6Qmmii9idTuGhXmZ3AvLVefrblLTCCzToaAmRpEALw\\_wcB](https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/homelessness-in-england-has-risen-by-more-than-a-quarter-8wfkjbfcb?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz8emBhDrARIsANNJjS65HTku7aiKtf0y0QJOW_6Qmmii9idTuGhXmZ3AvLVefrblLTCCzToaAmRpEALw_wcB).

<sup>6</sup> Crisis UK (no date) *Homelessness: Causes, types and facts | Crisis UK*.

[https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz8emBhDrARIsANNJjS5QsorXKVbU08wMI0tkoSoa9IGR7dqRt0YpNP1y3EsLxTkBvZz8caAlQzEALw\\_wcB](https://www.crisis.org.uk/ending-homelessness/about-homelessness/?gclid=Cj0KCQjwz8emBhDrARIsANNJjS5QsorXKVbU08wMI0tkoSoa9IGR7dqRt0YpNP1y3EsLxTkBvZz8caAlQzEALw_wcB).

Populism in various forms has taken hold in many countries, and it needs a coherent counter narrative if we are to create a paradigm shift, which nurtures each of us, replenishes the earth and reinvests in our communities. This must support localism alongside global values, and place people and planet, community and creativity as central to economic, business and systems models. Populism is a range of political stances that emphasise the concept of 'the people' and often juxtaposes this group against 'the elite'. It is frequently associated with anti-establishment and anti-political sentiment and has taken hold in a number of countries, including arguably in the UK in stances such as the narrative on refugees and Brexit. It could be said that UK policy is amongst the most restrictive on policies towards refugees of any comparable country. Yet research by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR), found that allowing all asylum seekers in the UK to work could add £1.6bn to the UK's annual GDP.<sup>7</sup>

If we cannot make the case for a deeper, more long term reconnection with core values across the whole of our lives – education, housing, business practices and community – then we run the risk of allowing populism to grab control of the narrative, where failed linear economic business models which crash and burn the economy and our climate, only to profit the very few with short term goals and gains, at the expense of 99% of us.

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<sup>7</sup> Blackall, M. (2023) 'Allowing asylum seekers to work in UK would add over £1bn to economy as cross-party MPs back change,' *inews.co.uk*, 25 June.  
<https://inews.co.uk/news/allowing-asylum-seekers-work-uk-economy-cross-party-mp-change-2198216>.

We at Fashion Roundtable call this the Creative Wellbeing Economy. Creative leadership will solve the urgent economic, environmental and social issues with critical creative thinking leading to critical creative systems and critical creative education and work. This starts with a paradigm shift to support new frameworks. These frameworks explore the fundamental difference between surviving and thriving.



Image source: Meg Pirie

**Meg Pirie, Fashion Roundtable’s Researcher and Content Editor said:**

"The Creative Wellbeing Economy turns the 'growth-at-all-costs' paradigm on its head and reimagines something much deeper, that offers communities an opportunity to thrive outside of the current system.

"This focuses on long-term policies which put people and the planet first – valuing localism, food and fibre sovereignty, the preservation of cultural heritage and hyper-local placemaking. This is a living document and will forever evolve, but is the first step to a much-needed system's change within the fashion sector."

## The Creative Wellbeing Economy

The Creative Wellbeing Economy disrupts legacy thinking, amplifying alternative solutions which centre creativity and wellbeing as central to their framework. This work requires fresh analysis, new data, collaboration and thought-leadership as central tenets, to shape these concepts, definitions and strategies, in order to countermand the dominant economic and business models, with a bold alternative system and approach.

Fashion Roundtable with our partner the NCfFS holds a pivotal place at the nexus of policy, business, interdisciplinary and academic partnerships, is best placed to deliver this collaborative systems change approach to drive structural, cultural and institutional change via analysis, network building and new frameworking.

We face an exciting but challenging opportunity to rethink, reimagine and rebuild business models, based entirely on regenerative frameworks, which place the planet and people first. Now is the time for businesses, industries, investors and nations to design and implement new systems that decarbonise, transition to net zero, protect nature, nurture creative talent, and support collective progress.

Libertarian linear economic business models are creating a 'crash and burn' mindset and outcomes in the global economy, with the real risk of recessions on repeat across the world, overuse of finite resources, placing people and planet in jeopardy, leading to the consequential issues of poverty, rising social and sustainability crises, and an escalating climate and refugee emergency, forcing many into poverty. These issues are seen within the prism of the fashion industry, but are replicated across multiple sectors worldwide and nationally.

The urgency to address and solve these issues at scale, is borne out daily by the news of climate boiling, economic unrest and community disintegration. If we are to really transform the current industry business model to become more focused on new priorities, we must shape future economic, social and business systems in a holistic and interwoven scale.

Circularity alone will not fix the mess we are in. The danger is the circle simply becomes larger, leading to more consumption and greater exploitation of people and planet, generating larger volumes of waste being offshored to the Global South, as seen in the current textiles waste crisis in a number of countries and highlighted by the Or Foundation, based in Ghana, calling for more justice for those impacted by the overconsumption waste model of the globalised fashion industry.

It requires bold thought leadership and an organisation which has the vision, networks and talent to take these ideas forward, and the resources to support work which researches and evidences what is a stark but necessary paradigm shift.

We are seeking to create a long-term systems change solution, by generating data, evidence and creating unique research to make the case for a Creative Wellbeing Economy, exploring the wider issues from materiality, consumption, environmental, social, sustainability and financial impact, to generate a holistic policy solutions driven financial and economic framework and roadmap.

In a world facing a climate emergency, well documented social justice issues in the fashion and wider supply chains, and the need to embed regenerative business practices with



future-facing innovation, our thought leadership helps to navigate these challenges to meet the growing demand for ethical and environmental solutions.

We do so through our well-respected data collation, events, roundtables and reports. Our focus on a move away from linear business models to regenerative and inclusive business practices, shines a light on opportunities to support local economies, thought leadership on climate and biodiversity and new economic systems.

The Creative Wellbeing Economy places people and planet in an interwoven symbiotic relationship, revaluing locality, creativity, and enhancing accessibility to transformative tools and opportunities, as links in a newly formed chain of opportunity from cradle to grave.

The Creative Wellbeing Economy is not simply a methodology for the fashion industry, it is much larger than this: it is a new systems approach, which revalues and reeducates, to redefine success and place, a central theme of opportunity and access for all, meaningful and rewarding work, as vital links in an economy which views thriving citizens as central to its success and longevity. It places craft, creativity, community, intersectionality and inclusivity as central tenets to support all of us to realise our potential and create access to opportunity.

The 'crash and burn' linear model has clearly caused too many casualties, repeatedly overinflated, then tanked our economy and thrown too many people on the scrap heap, through no fault of their own. The Creative Wellbeing Economy is a paradigm shift away from linear to interdisciplinary, regenerative away from throwaway, creativity working with data, community above conflict.

## What is Wellbeing?

The World Health Organization defines a state of wellbeing as the ability where the:

“individual realizes his or her own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community”.<sup>8</sup>

With this in mind, here in the UK, the measurement of wellbeing is done via the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) 'Measuring national well-being (MNW) programme'.<sup>9</sup> This data slice aims to bring together how people are doing on a personal level, as well as in their respective communities, and an overview of the nation's wellbeing as a whole.

The latest data shows that from January to March of this year, 5.8% of adults rated their life satisfaction as low. This shows a decline in life satisfaction when compared with 4.6% of adults in 2018. Further, between 2020 to 2021, 23.7% of adults in the UK reported feelings of anxiety and depression. Again this shows a clear decline compared with 17.8% between 2015 to 2016.<sup>10</sup>

Interestingly, the figures show an improvement in people in England engaging with arts in person has increased in the short term to 89.7% of adults in 2023 compared with 86.9% in

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<sup>8</sup> World Health Organization. Promoting mental health: concepts, emerging evidence, practice (Summary Report) Geneva: World Health Organization; 2004.

<sup>9</sup> Office for National Statistics (2023). UK measures of national well-being dashboard, UK Measures of National Well-being Dashboard - Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/ukmeasuresofnationalwellbeing/dashboard>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

2022. It could be argued that this spike in people interested in the arts comes from a general feeling of low life satisfaction.<sup>11</sup>

It is important to note that data from the MNW programme is mainly used to enlighten public discussion rather than to develop specific policy.<sup>12</sup> It is also important to note that this is not in contrast with the desire for the government to continue its focus on GDP and in fact it aims for a pluralistic approach and both data on economic growth and also wellbeing can be found within the same data set.<sup>13</sup> There is much to be gained from assessing income generated via GVA rather than GDP. GVA assesses the value added to a region<sup>14</sup> whereas GDP<sup>15</sup> purely measures the monetary value of goods or services. GVA allows for greater data capture to quantitatively analyse the creative wellbeing economy.

What cannot be ignored within this data set however, is the evidence of the decline in wellbeing.

## Why we need the CWE framework

The current political climate is one of unrest. Here in the UK, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak recently announced a u-turn on a number of key policy proposals for net-zero measures.<sup>16</sup> This comes despite the recent IPCC 'Climate Change 2023' Synthesis Report, citing that "global surface temperature has increased faster since 1970 than in any other 50-year period over at least the last 2000 years."<sup>17</sup>

A large-scale study of 10,000 children and young people globally, showed that future generations are suffering from climate anxiety and are deeply concerned about governmental inertia.<sup>18</sup> Of the participants who took part, 75% said that they felt the future was frightening and rated governmental responses to climate change as inadequate.<sup>19</sup> Researchers felt that this perceived failure by governments to respond to the climate crisis was causing increased distress and needed to be validated by taking urgent action on climate change. This correlates to the data within the UK Office for National Statistics (ONS) 'MNW Programme' which highlighted that 70% of those surveyed felt that they had no say in what the government does in Great Britain.<sup>20</sup>

Evidence, moreover, confirms the wider social and psychological benefits of environmental action as countries which do better in terms of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are ranked higher in happiness and wellbeing.<sup>21</sup> In 2021, our Cleaning Up Fashion report

<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Hand (2017). New Statistics For Old?—Measuring the Wellbeing of The UK, Journal of the Royal Statistical Society Series A: Statistics in Society, Volume 180, Issue 1, January 2017, pp. 3–43, <https://doi.org/10.1111/rssa.12188>

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Office for National Statistics (n.d.). Gross Value Added (GVA). Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueaddedgva>

<sup>15</sup> IMF (2019). Gross domestic product: An economy's all, IMF. Available at: <https://www.imf.org/en/Publications/fandd/issues/Series/Back-to-Basics/gross-domestic-product-GDP>

<sup>16</sup> Environmental Audit Committee (2023) 'Letter from the EAC Chair to the Prime Minister regarding net zero policy, dated 29 September 2023'. <https://committees.parliament.uk/publications/41599/documents/205404/default/>

<sup>17</sup> IPCC (2023) *Climate Change 2023 Synthesis Report: Summary for Policymaker*, P. 4

<sup>18</sup> Hickman et al., (2021) 'Climate anxiety in children and young people and their beliefs about government responses to climate change: a global survey', *Lancet Planet Health*, 5, p. e869. <https://www.thelancet.com/action/showPdf?pii=S2542-5196%2821%2900278-3>

<sup>19</sup> Ibid

<sup>20</sup> Office for National Statistics (2023). UK measures of national well-being dashboard, UK Measures of National Well-being Dashboard - Office for National Statistics. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/articles/ukmeasuresofnationalwellbeing/dashboard>.

<sup>21</sup> World Happiness Report (2020). Chapter 6: Sustainable Development and Human Well-Being <https://worldhappiness.report/ed/2020/sustainable-development-and-human-well-being/>

signalled the need for a more holistic approach to support transition away from purely economic measures of business success and towards a 'wellbeing economy', which prioritises care at all levels of society.<sup>22</sup>

To embed the benefits of a wellbeing economy requires incentives that focus on the social as well as economic benefits of, for instance, design for longer product lifetime, reuse and repair, extended producer responsibility, and consumer education. The research around the wellbeing economy and placing creativity as central to this methodology is at odds with the current political system, but offers us an opportunity to develop a roadmap which reframes the narrative toward a more regenerative, purpose driven and community minded economy.

While climate change is a thematic issue throughout our report, this inertia extends itself to the fact that far too many of us are existing in the vulnerable reality of survival mode, facing a cost of living crisis, economic uncertainty, career stagnation and social anxiety in the current economic and policy climate. This extends itself to a lack of value shown by the government towards adopting a STEAM education curriculum and a future proofing of creative jobs and skills, with wellbeing at its very core. A curriculum which embeds key skills and critical creative thinking as the backbone of a long term vision supporting a values system based on thriving, not just surviving.

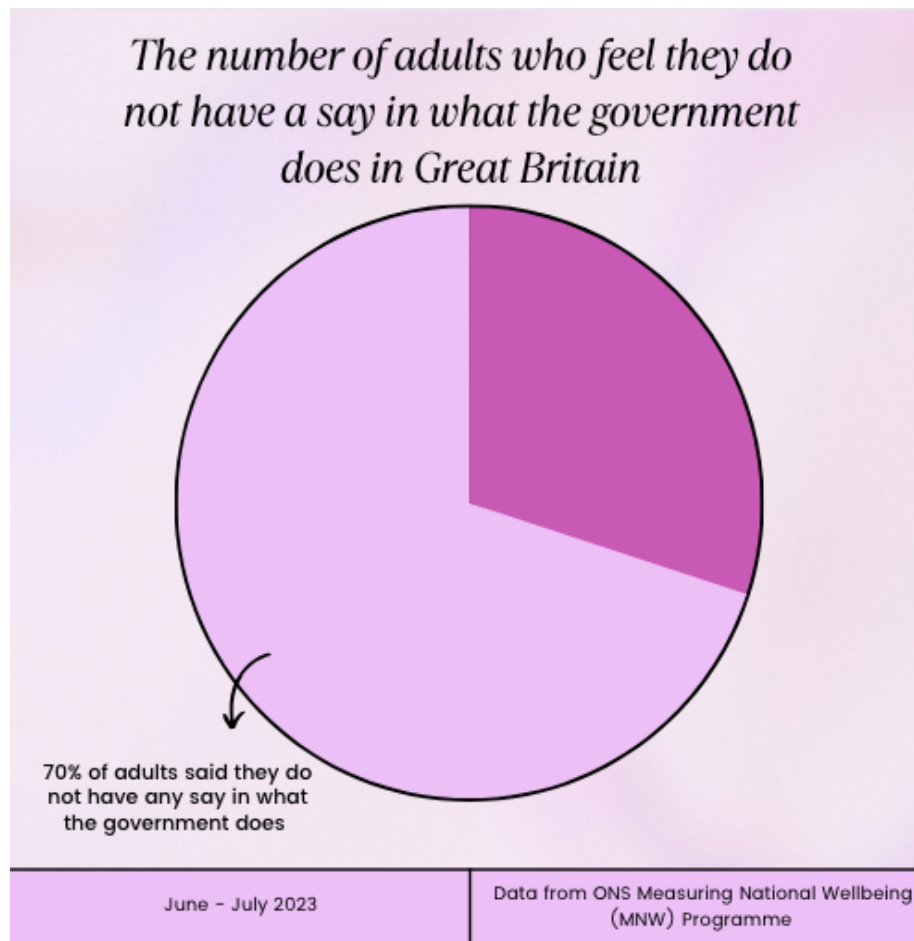


Figure 1: Author's interpretation of data taken from ONS MNW Programme

<sup>22</sup> ESF APPG (2021) *Cleaning Up Fashion*. P. 6.

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60ec3d173ba7d954d567ee0d/1626094876047/FR\\_ESF\\_Cleaning+up+Fashion\\_Report\\_2021.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60ec3d173ba7d954d567ee0d/1626094876047/FR_ESF_Cleaning+up+Fashion_Report_2021.pdf)

## What does fashion have to do with it?

According to figures by Fashion United, the fashion industry is worth around £1.65tn globally.<sup>23</sup> To the UK economy, data released by Statista, cites the revenue of the apparel industry in the UK was just under £55 billion, and expected to reach more than £65 billion by 2026.<sup>24</sup>

Despite the urgent need to mitigate climate change, the fashion sector has continued on an escalating, unsustainable and wasteful trajectory. Fashion is cited as a major contributor to climate change, producing an estimated 1.2 billion tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> (Co<sub>2</sub>e) per year.<sup>25</sup> Further, across the full lifecycle of clothing globally, the industry has an annual carbon footprint of 3.3 billion tonnes CO<sub>2</sub>e.<sup>26</sup>

If demographic and lifestyle patterns continue as they are now, global consumption of apparel will rise from 62 million metric tons in 2019 to 102 million tons in 10 years.<sup>27</sup> Every year a half a million tons of plastic microfibres are dumped into the ocean, the equivalent of 50 billion plastic bottles.<sup>28</sup> The danger of this is that microfibres cannot be extracted from the water and they can spread throughout the food chain. Less than 1% of used clothing is recycled into new garments and the Ellen MacArthur Foundation estimates that every year some USD 500 billion in value is lost due to clothing that is barely worn, not donated or recycled through the correct channels, often ending in landfill.<sup>29</sup>

To date there has been a disappointing governmental response to the Environmental Audit Committee's 2019 report *Fixing Fashion: Clothing Consumption and Sustainability*.<sup>30</sup> All 17 recommendations were rejected or not acted on, despite 4 changes to the role of Prime Minister and 4 to the Secretary of State for the Environment since 2019. By not building on the Committee's recommendations, it could be argued that the consistency has been avoiding the issue.

Yet, in spite of this data, fast-fashion brands such as Shein have continued to grow in revenue and in 2022 were valued at \$100 billion, far more than fast-fashion industry leaders such as Zara and H&M combined.<sup>31</sup> Environmental and social issues are endemic in outsourced supply chains such as these and, with policy initiatives in this space currently undeveloped, much onus falls on the consumer to make decisions around sustainability with little information or transparency to assist in this.

<sup>23</sup> Fashion United (2021) *Global Fashion Industry Statistics, Statistics*. Available at: <https://fashionunited.com/global-fashion-industry-statistics>.

<sup>24</sup> Statista (2022) *Apparel market in the United Kingdom (UK) - statistics & facts, Consumer Goods & FMCG, Apparel & Shoes*. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/topics/3348/apparel-market-in-the-uk/#topicOverview>

<sup>25</sup> Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2017) <https://ellenmacarthurfoundation.org/a-new-textiles-economy>

<sup>26</sup> Environmental Audit Committee (2018)

<http://data.parliament.uk/writtenevidence/committeeevidence.svc/evidencedocument/environmental-audit-committee/sustainability-of-the-fashion-industry/written/88396.html>

<sup>27</sup> Environmental Audit Committee (2019) *Fixing fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability*. rep.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1952/1952.pdf>

<sup>28</sup> Ellen MacArthur Foundation (n.d.) *The New Plastics Economy: Rethinking the Future of Plastics*.

[https://emf.thirdlight.com/file/24/\\_A-BkCs\\_skP18l\\_Am1g\\_JWxFrX/The%20New%20Plastics%20Economy%3A%20Rethinking%20the%20future%20of%20plastics.pdf](https://emf.thirdlight.com/file/24/_A-BkCs_skP18l_Am1g_JWxFrX/The%20New%20Plastics%20Economy%3A%20Rethinking%20the%20future%20of%20plastics.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Ellen MacArthur Foundation, (2017). A new textiles economy: Redesigning fashion's future.

[https://emf.thirdlight.com/file/24/uiwtaHvud8YIG\\_uISTauTIJH74/A%20New%20Textiles%20Economy%3A%20Redesigning%20fashion%E2%80%99s%20future.pdf](https://emf.thirdlight.com/file/24/uiwtaHvud8YIG_uISTauTIJH74/A%20New%20Textiles%20Economy%3A%20Redesigning%20fashion%E2%80%99s%20future.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> Environmental Audit Committee (2019) *Fixing fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability*. rep.

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1952/1952.pdf>

<sup>31</sup> Perry, P (2022) *Shein's sudden rise: The human cost of fast fashion, Inclusive Economies*. Available at: <https://www.context.news/money-power-people/opinion/sheins-sudden-rise-the-human-cost-of-fast-fashion>.

## Competing goals

As far back as 2009, the Stockholm Resilience Centre published its first report on the climate crisis warning of disastrous consequences for people and the planet without mitigation.<sup>32</sup> As the climate debate is maturing, the opposition to the standard growth model seems to be split into two camps: people who argue growth and socially responsible consumerism are incompatible (degrowth theory) and those who argue it is possible to continue to grow the economy through socially responsible investments (e.g. carbon credits). This has led to a struggle with competing goals in the pursuit of economic growth, amidst planetary boundaries.

In this light, Professor Tim Jackson offers:

“The state itself is deeply conflicted, striving [...] to encourage [...] freedoms that lead to growth [...] and defend ecological limits.”<sup>33</sup>

Therefore the role the government has in providing opportunities for its citizens is somewhat at odds with ecological limits. To this point, Jackson suggests the government sends damaging signals that, “... success is counted in terms of material status”.<sup>34</sup> This could be seen as problematic in a capitalist society, which has created a culture of a globalised industry, something which is described as globalisation.

With a clear lack of government policy, particularly in the fashion sector currently, NGO's, brands and communities alike are aiming to pioneer their own set of standards without government intervention. With this in mind, we will discuss two examples of this in action. The first is the rise in renew, repair and reuse initiatives, which look to extend garment life and also frameworks being targeted at fashion journalists and communicators.

## Renew, Repair, Reuse

The UK is lagging behind other territories such as the EU and California who are leading on policies which support better end-of-life practices for textiles and fashion. Here in the UK we have faced a disappointing response from DEFRA who have not included fashion and textiles as part of their current Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) plans.<sup>35</sup> In stark contrast, the European Commission continues to place an increasing demand on textile and fashion businesses to demonstrate that their businesses continue both sustainably and ethically. For example, Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) for textiles in the Netherlands has now been launched to ensure that textile manufacturers and importers will be co-responsible for the management of waste from products sold.<sup>36</sup> This is set to encourage social enterprises to benefit from the collection and treatment of textiles to boost second-hand textiles; produce research and development opportunities in relation to fibre-to-fibre recycling; as well as ensuring that illegal exports are acted upon. Similarly, in France, the government has announced a collaboration with Refashion. The collaboration is part of the government's 'repair bonus' – which allows people to claim between €6 - €25 of

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<sup>32</sup> Jackson, T., (2017). *Prosperity without growth: Foundations for the economy of tomorrow* 2nd ed. Abingdon, Oxon : Routledge. P. 17.

<sup>33</sup> Jackson, T., (2012). 'Prosperity without growth', in Black, S. (ed.). *The Sustainable Fashion Handbook*, New York, NY: Thames & Hudson. pp 150.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid

<sup>35</sup> House of Commons. (2023). Oral evidence. Environmental Audit Committee. *The environmental protection policies of the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs*, HC 478. <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/12680/pdf/>

<sup>36</sup> European Commission (2023). *Circular economy for textiles: taking responsibility to reduce, reuse and recycle textile waste and boosting markets for used textiles*. [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip\\_23\\_3635](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_23_3635)

the cost of mending clothes and shoes at workshops and cobblers affiliated with the scheme.<sup>37</sup>

From a brand perspective, Nudie Jeans, are currently offering free lifetime repairs on all of their jeans. While this is an excellent initiative which certainly looks to extend garment life and might go some way to act as a demonstration to the rest of the economy, they are certainly a minority. This rise in mending initiatives is not only uptaken by brands, but also now regularly resurfaces in community initiatives. Notably there was a rise in crafting and making during lockdown, with companies like John Lewis noticing a steep incline in haberdashery sales.<sup>38</sup> However, mending still feels at the very outer extreme of the fashion industry and although it makes a lot of sense, particularly as we face a global economic crisis, it's something that still carries some psychological barriers.

Here in the UK, founding member of Fashion Revolution and partner in the Right Project and co-founder of the Mend Assembly, a local sewing and community hub in Totnes, Joss Whipple said:

“As mothers and as professionals, creating places where we can contribute to our local communities, use our hard earned skills and expertise, and continue with a balance around mothering, is really exciting and interesting and satisfying. We are providing much needed after school classes and if we are not all mothers, as women we are often the primary carers.

“For instance two of our community members recently lost their fathers, so in the Mend Assembly as a community of practitioners with a focus on localism, we are looking at how we support each other through these life stages. It is a feminine, unconventional approach to how we do business, and how we organise our work.

“It feels really empowering, nurturing and it feels right, providing new job roles for ourselves and other women. In Totnes alone we have generated 7 jobs for women that are flexible, meaningful, and work around their other commitments. We need to centre women's work around the value in her life, not just the gender pay gap, but in all the other aspects of her life and work as well.”

Repair is often thought of as a separate entity to design and production, however opportunities do exist for building future resilience into articles of clothing, something which Fletcher and Grose say is suited well to:

“expensive ‘classic’ pieces [...] when these innovative approaches are fused with emotional durability, design for disassembly and adaptability, their application has potential to reach far beyond this niche to many more markets and people.”<sup>39</sup>

Therefore, policy makers have a responsibility to ensure that these practical skills are kept alive and as Professor Dilys Williams at the Centre of Sustainable Fashion recognises, should be mandated as part of the National Curriculum at Key Stage Levels 1, 2 & 3.<sup>40</sup> Opportunities for training and apprenticeships in the fashion and textile industry are also highly recommended and would allow a build up of UK manufacturing, particularly post

<sup>37</sup> Willsher, K. (2023) 'Stitch in time: France to help pay for clothes to be mended to cut waste,' *The Guardian*, 17 July. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2023/jul/12/stitch-in-time-france-to-help-pay-for-clothes-to-be-mended-to-cut-waste>.

<sup>38</sup> Frost, K. (2023) 'John Lewis reveals rise in haberdashery sales as customers adopt 'make do and mend' approach,' *Prima*, 17 January. <https://www.prima.co.uk/craft/sewing/a42530592/john-lewis-reveals-rise-in-haberdashery-sales/>.

<sup>39</sup> Fletcher, K., & Grose, L., 2021. *Fashion & Sustainability: Design for Change*. 1st ed. London: CPI Group (UK) Ltd. p. 101.

<sup>40</sup> Environmental Audit Committee (2019) *Fixing fashion: clothing consumption and sustainability*. rep. <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201719/cmselect/cmenvaud/1952/1952.pdf> p. 40

Brexit. Finally, Extended Producer Responsibility must be taken into account for textiles and fashion by DEFRA.

## Greenwashing

Sainath suggests that where once journalists and communicators had readers and audiences, now the practice of communication focuses on the number of clicks,

“an incredibly diverse, incredibly heterogenous planet, we seek to cover [...] with an increasingly homogenous and narrow media”.<sup>41</sup>

While digitalisation has led journalism and communication as a practice into a new paradigm, so has the ongoing global economic and climate crises, something which incites new models of working.<sup>42</sup> In a study of the practice of journalism as a type of campaigning the researchers indicated that it is in the pursuit of journalistic values of excellent reporting and writing that differentiates this style of journalism from other forms, with the objective to make complex realities understood by the public, “the more the public know about the world, the more they can understand and emphasise with it”.<sup>43</sup>

Fashion is indeed a sector where misinformation and greenwashing are ubiquitous and provide a significant challenge to decipher. As sustainability has grown as a selling point, all manner of vague and inflated claims have appeared across advertising, marketing, media, packaging and beyond. Here in the UK, in September 2021, the Competition Markets Authority (CMA) published their Green Claims Code to aim to tackle greenwashing by brands. This focused on any exaggeration of positive environmental impacts or statements which are untrue or implied, and came about after CMA found that 59% of sustainability claims by European fashion giants were misleading and unsubstantiated.<sup>44</sup> This shows that fashion is a sector where misinformation and greenwashing are ubiquitous and provide a significant challenge to decipher.

Retail Week recently released a report based on a survey which lifted the lid on how UK consumers truly felt about sustainability. It stated that of those who participated, 55% were more likely to buy from a retailer or brand with a strong ethical and sustainable ethos. However, there was a disparity between what consumers believed and these values did not correlate to the brands consumers thought were sustainable.<sup>45</sup> For example, 49% of participants believed that paper bags were more sustainable and so considered fast-fashion giant Primark to be the most sustainable brand due to its use of paper bags.<sup>46</sup> In fact, Primark was named amongst the top five most sustainable brands by consumers, which also included H&M, Nike, Amazon and M&S.<sup>47</sup>

As sustainability has grown as a selling point, a new playbook by the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) talks directly with fashion’s communicators. Written for marketers, brand managers, imagemakers, storytellers, media, influencers and beyond, ‘The Sustainable

<sup>41</sup> Sainath, P. Rural Reporting: Opening Spaces for the People’s Voices. *Media Asia*, vol. 43, no. 3-4, 2016, pp. 127, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01296612.2017.1290385>.

<sup>42</sup> Fahlenbrach, K., Klimke, M. & Scharloth, J., 2020. *Protest cultures: A companion*, Oxford : Berghahn Books.

<sup>43</sup> Sabaté-Gauxachs, A., Micó-Sanz, J-L., Díez-Bosch, M., 2019. Is the new “new” digital journalism a type of activism? An analysis of “Jot Down”, “Gatopardo” and “The New Yorker”. Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra: Communication & Society, Vol.32 (4), p.173-191. <https://doi.org/10.15581/003.32.4.173-191>

<sup>44</sup> Competition and Markets Authority (n.d.) *Green Claims Code*. <https://greenclaims.campaign.gov.uk/>.

<sup>45</sup> Retail Week (2022) *Green is the new black*. <https://reports.retail-week.com/green-is-the-new-black/index.html>.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

Fashion Communication Playbook’ from UNEP and UN Climate Change, provides a much needed framework when policies around how to communicate environmental claims increasingly come into force.<sup>48</sup>

On this point, Rachel Arthur, the UN Environment Programme’s Sustainable Fashion Advocacy Lead and author of the playbook, told us:

“The current marker of success for communication teams to drive conversions and increase sales is at odds with the necessary reduction in consumption that will be required to help meet sustainability targets.

“Balancing this tension with the sustainability mandate will take a combination of both creativity and critical long-term thinking from leadership. The ultimate goal is to decouple value from volume growth, as identified in UNEP’s Roadmap report.”

Fashion is a sector which has the ability to lead the march for a more equitable, just and sustainable future. This is not only due to its ingenuity and creativity, but also its storytelling and culture-shaping abilities. This is powerful, and harnessed in the right way, could shift patterns in unsustainable production, consumption and patterns, towards reimagining a more sustainable fashion future which aligns with its sustainability targets. This naturally benefits consumers by championing transparency as a core remit.

## Human rights violations

The fashion industry competes predominantly on costs and convenience of access, and we regularly hear that this has led to widespread practices of undercutting labour standards. We were told that a spectrum of exploitation is going on at garment factories on Britain’s streets from non-payment of the minimum wage or holiday pay to more serious cases of debt bondage and potential trafficking.

The University of Nottingham’s Rights Lab pointed out that while not all exploitative conduct will meet the threshold for human trafficking and modern slavery, there was some evidence of extreme forms of labour exploitation taking place in the fashion industry, including trafficking within the UK.<sup>49</sup> The Modern Slavery Helpline, established by the NGO Unseen reported in its ‘Annual Assessment 2019’ that both retail and manufacturing, including clothing, are in the top 15 sectors for labour exploitation.<sup>50</sup>

Still, the reported cases remain low and when we spoke to Dame Sara Thornton, the UK’s Anti-Slavery Commissioner, for our Cleaning Up Fashion report, she highlighted the need for improving identification of victims of modern slavery, encouraging more extended term support – housing, health and employment, developing the local authority response and exploring a public health approach to modern slavery as opposed to a criminality approach.

<sup>48</sup> United Nations Education Programme (2023) *The Sustainable Fashion Communication Playbook*. <https://www.unep.org/interactives/sustainable-fashion-communication-playbook/>.

<sup>49</sup> ESF APPG (2021) *Cleaning Up Fashion*. P. 22.

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60ec3d173ba7d954d567ee0d/1626094876047/FR\\_ESF\\_Cleaning+up+Fashion\\_Report\\_2021.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60ec3d173ba7d954d567ee0d/1626094876047/FR_ESF_Cleaning+up+Fashion_Report_2021.pdf)

<sup>50</sup> Unseen (2019) *Modern Slavery and Exploitation Helpline*.

[https://www.unseenuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Unseen-Helpline-Annual-Assessment\\_2019final\\_web1.pdf](https://www.unseenuk.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/Unseen-Helpline-Annual-Assessment_2019final_web1.pdf).



Zinthiya Ganeshpanchan, founder of The Zinthiya Trust – a Leicester-based charity that offers support to women from disadvantaged backgrounds – cited explicit reports of dire living and working circumstances from the casework that she had examined when speaking to women working in garment factories in the Leicester area. Examples included victims:

- Being paid little or nothing;
- Illegal deductions from wages;
- Instances of debt bondage;
- Furlough fraud where the employee did not receive wages;
- Suffering verbal abuse, being degraded and humiliated;
- Not having access to personal protective equipment;
- Working long hours;
- Not receiving annual leave or statutory sick pay;
- Having little or no breaks during the working day.<sup>51</sup>

While we have focused on UK issues, textile production, particularly in the fashion sector, involves raw materials being transferred and processed globally—passing through a convoluted and lengthy supply chain, before arriving on the hanger as a finished product. As a result, there is a knowledge gap as to where fibre comes from, how it has been made, and who has made it.<sup>52</sup> From a social standpoint, the recent Uyghur humanitarian crisis in China which is connected to cotton, should offer concern over fibres' connection to exploitative supply chains, particularly those lacking in transparency.

The Guardian reported that, Uyghur Forced Labour Prevention Act (UFLPA) is now assuming that any product, whether partly or wholly made in north-west China, Xinjiang region, is directly linked to labour camps in this region—where it has been reported that as many as 1 million Uyghurs have been forcibly detained since 2017.<sup>53</sup> To this point, Grose states that the standard response to material flows offers, “incomplete and insufficiently relational lens, for sustainability problems are also sociocultural, moral and ethical and, [...] demand [...] we look more broadly for solutions.”<sup>54</sup> Fletcher concurs that today's production systems offer little in the way of support for, “a sense of relationship either between people or nature [...] or the speed with which they are consumed.”<sup>55</sup>

In addition, for the Cleaning Up Fashion Report, Fashion Roundtable, as Secretariat for the Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion All Party Parliamentary Group (APPG), held an evidence session on the subject of the Uyghur crisis, during which it was made clear the role of the industry in perpetuating and tacitly supporting human and labour rights abuses globally, with a specific focus on the cotton industry. During the session, the APPG heard clearly how involved the fashion and textiles industries are in the use of forced labour in Xinjiang.

Chrisitna Hajagos-Clausen, Textiles and Garment Industry at IndustriALL Global Union informed the group that:

<sup>51</sup> ESF APPG (2021) *Cleaning Up Fashion*. P. 21.

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60ec3d173ba7d954d567ee0d/1626094876047/FR\\_ESF\\_Cleaning+up+Fashion\\_Report\\_2021.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60ec3d173ba7d954d567ee0d/1626094876047/FR_ESF_Cleaning+up+Fashion_Report_2021.pdf)

<sup>52</sup> Burgess, R., & White, C. 2019. *Fibershed: Growing a movement of farmers, fashion activists, and makers for a new textile economy*. Chelsea Green Publishing. pp. 7.

<sup>53</sup> Britten, F. (2022) 'US ban on cotton from forced Uyghur labour comes into force,' *The Guardian*, 21 June.

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/jun/21/us-ban-on-cotton-from-forced-uyghur-labour-comes-into-force#:~:text=The%20fashion%20industry%20has%20been,to%20forced%20labour%20in%20China>.

<sup>54</sup> Grose, L., 2015. 'Fashion as Material', in Fletcher, K. and Tham, M., (ed.) in *Routledge handbook of sustainability and fashion*. 1st ed. Oxfordshire: Routledge. pp. 225

<sup>55</sup> Fletcher, K., 2008. *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys*. 1st ed. London: Earthscan. pp. 127

- Xinjiang produces 80% of China's cotton, and the USDA estimates that 75% of China's exported cotton comes from Xinjiang.
- China accounts for over 22% of the world's total cotton production, a vast majority of which was produced in Xinjiang.
- China exports cotton fabric to over 120 countries, accounting for over 30% of global trade, and this fabric ends up in key garment production states such as Bangladesh, Vietnam and the Philippines.<sup>56</sup>

As of October 10th the UN Human Rights Council elections have taken place and China once again has one of four of the Asia-Pacific State seats. The day before the election, the Uyghur Human Rights Project took to Twitter to plead for the General Secretary to leave the seat empty amidst concerns of their ongoing exploitation of Uyghurs.<sup>57</sup>

Ultimately, the burden of responsibility must fall upon government(s). There is a need for government action, rather than individual corporate responsibility. A vast number of global corporations are continuing to source goods from the region, and the scope of the problem is endemic. For those not acting to improve their transparency and responsibility and end their complicity in the crimes in Xinjiang, the UK government needs to make such actions illegal via legislation.

Tamara Cincik was recently interviewed by the BBC about TEMA, as the researcher at the BBC is following revelations that Uyghur workers are being exploited by the brand. These issues need to stop being the sector marking its own homework, and move to government legislation in combination with a redefining of business models and markers of success for brands and value for consumers. Therefore, community and a values system approach is central to the Creative Wellbeing Economy.

## Homogeneity in global systems

Turning now to discuss the homogeneity within globalised systems. Hassi and Storti pose the question whether globalisation and its flow of goods and services, as well as people, could create a more standardised and unique universal culture globally.<sup>58</sup> In this view of homogenisation, global flows are seen to be strong, while diversity, local cultures and knowledge become weaker.<sup>59</sup> This suggests convergence and that in this form of uniformity local cultures are inevitably shaped by the more powerful forces at play. They cite that where human intervention occurs, there is often a progression to focus solely on monocultures or homogeneity.

This can be noticed when walking down a city or town high street, where multinationals take the spaces previously filled by local independent stores and an example of this is often seen in agriculture with boundless fields of arable crops such as wheat, "most human endeavours, unless checked by public dissent, evolve into monocultures."<sup>60</sup> Klein agrees that larger agricultural processes favour mono-cultured crops as a means to operate at scale.<sup>61</sup> This homogenous approach to agriculture could be perceived to affect native ecosystems and knowledge of indigenous plants and wildlife —particularly as it is cited that in 92% of cases

<sup>56</sup> ESF APPG (2021) *Cleaning Up Fashion*. P. 28.

[https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60ec3d173ba7d954d567ee0d/1626094876047/FR\\_ESF\\_Cleaning+up+Fashion\\_Report\\_2021.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/60ec3d173ba7d954d567ee0d/1626094876047/FR_ESF_Cleaning+up+Fashion_Report_2021.pdf)

<sup>57</sup> Uyghur Human Rights Project (2023). <https://twitter.com/UyghurProject>.

<sup>58</sup> Hassi, A. & Storti, G., 2012. Globalization and culture: The three H scenarios. *Globalization - Approaches to Diversity*, pp.8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5772/45655> [Accessed August 20, 2022].

<sup>59</sup> Ibid p.8.

<sup>60</sup> Monbiot, G., 2014. *Feral: Rewilding the land, sea and human life*, London : Penguin Books. P. 153.

<sup>61</sup> Klein, N., 2014. *This Changes Everything*, United Kingdom: Penguin Books. P. 135

in the decline of wildlife, farming was cited as the predominant cause.<sup>62</sup> Further, a recent report by The Alliance Trust suggested farmers should use their least productive land as a means for it to act as a carbon sink and its most productive land as a means to produce food, thereby diversifying land as a means to boost incomes<sup>63</sup>. Therefore, offering the view that supporting nature to thrive in unproductive land might provide a solution to farmers' financial struggles and also the cited decline in wildlife. In this light, Clark writes that this requires a certain level of responsibility, "whether this [...] entails a chastened withdrawal from human interference in ecosystems or a creative intervention in them".<sup>64</sup> Thus offering the complexity in that a custodian role is required of farmers, to not only produce food to increase food security, but also to diversify their land to support nature. A further line of enquiry therefore might be to look at how the government intends to support this further as a matter of priority.



Figure 2: Author's depiction of what prosperity looks like under the CWE framework

<sup>62</sup> UK National Eco Assessment, 2016, chap. 20, fig. 20.11. *Threats to biodiversity in Wales*. Available at: <http://uknea.unep-wcmc.org/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=StRD4fVq72c%3D&tabid=82> [Accessed August 22, 2022].

<sup>63</sup> Elliott, J., Collas, L. & Benton, D., 2022. The Green Alliance Trust. *Land of opportunity: A new land user framework to restore nature and level up*. <https://green-alliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/08/Land-of-opportunity.pdf>

<sup>64</sup> Clark, T. 2019. *The Value of Ecocriticism*. Cambridge University Press. p. 37

## A long-term vision

With this in mind, the Creative Wellbeing Economy focuses on putting wellbeing and the creative industries at the heart of its plans for economic growth. This focuses on hyperlocality which looks specifically at the cultural needs of a particular place with community wellbeing at its core.

This requires long-term vision and national renewal and not short-termist policy decisions. Currently we're failing, not thriving and the need for wellbeing, creativity and culture are not being prioritised. What we need is longer term solutions starting in early years, through education and into jobs creation and the wider workforce.

So long as economic growth looks to GDP as a marker for success, short-term economic thinking will prevail. This tendency to support and reinforce this needs a complete systemic overhaul, which instead places the government in a position to look to deliver long-term policies based on social and environmental wellbeing, by putting people and the planet first.

Tim Jackson argues that dismantling the current system requires offering people, “viable alternatives [...] is vital.”<sup>65</sup> The focus of this argument, to which we concur, is that this requires keener policy attention on how communities, social participation and wellbeing can be allowed to flourish. Policy must therefore have at its heart a meaningful and lasting prosperity, building on how people and communities can thrive outside of the current system. Under the CWE framework, this prosperity looks like:

- Supporting social mobility
- A STEAM education for all
- A revaluing of skills and community
- Cultural and heritage preservation
- Placemaking with hyperlocality in mind
- Food and fibre sovereignty
- Growing the green economy

The shortcomings of utilising GDP as a key driver have already been well-documented in this report, and investing instead in the social good via social infrastructure sends a clear signal that common good and empathy is valued.

Here we will outline what this looks like, a long-term vision, starting with a support system for social mobility.

## Supporting social mobility

A report by The Sutton Trust gives way to the hope that education can in itself act as a “great social leveller” and instead cites that in life prospects between the rich and poor, education does not consistently reduce attainment gaps.<sup>66</sup> Instead, this views education as a counter-balance to what is happening outside the education setting. Further, it is cited that

<sup>65</sup> Jackson, T., 2017. *Prosperity without growth: Foundations for the economy of tomorrow* 2nd ed. Abingdon, Oxon : Routledge. P. 204.

<sup>66</sup> Eyles, A., Lee Elliot and Machin, S. (2022) *Social Mobility - Past, Present and Future*, The Sutton Trust. The Sutton Trust. <https://www.suttontrust.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Social-Mobility-%E2%80%93-Past-Present-and-Future-final-updated-references.pdf>. P. 17

children's home environment factors significantly on their future outcomes and that large gaps by background remain in the likelihood of climbing the income ladder.<sup>67</sup>

All children must be equipped with the very basic skills for prospering. While the gaps in educational attainment are often the first to be unpicked in data observations, the social and cultural divides between the most and least deprived children are an interesting point of reference.

Data taken from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) 'Taking Part in the Arts' cross-sectional survey highlights just this. The below graph shows that of respondents living in the most deprived areas, 59% had engaged with the arts at least once in the last 12 months, while for those living in the least deprived areas, this equated to 83%.<sup>68</sup>

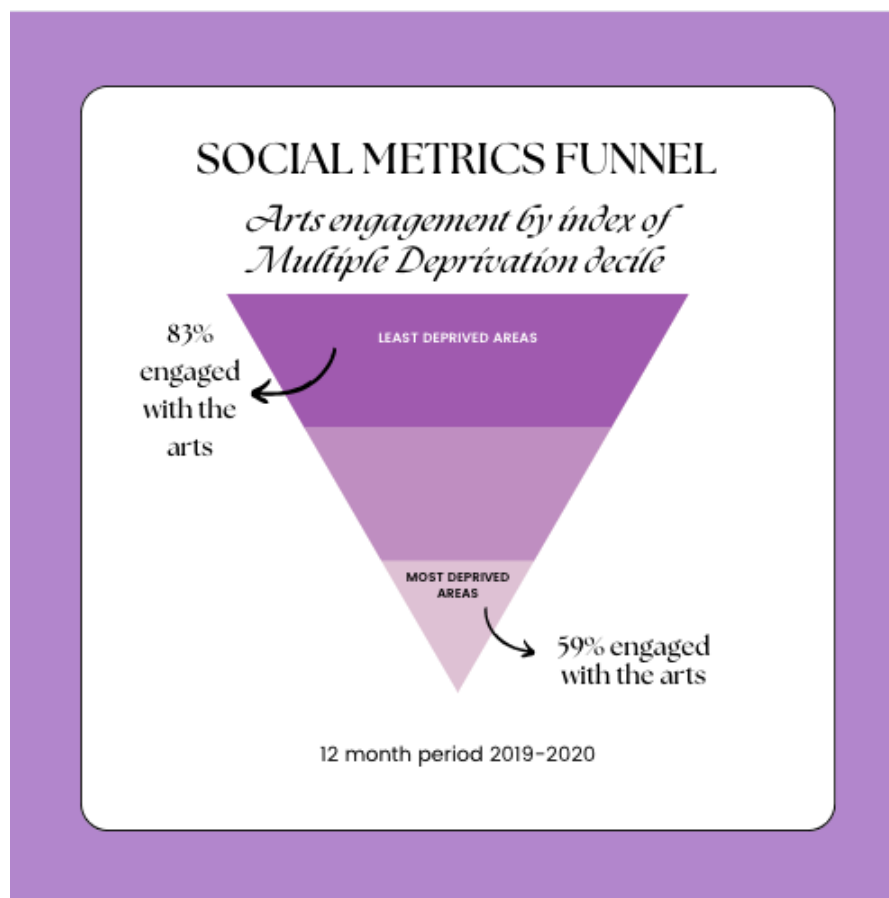


Figure 3: Author's depiction of data from the DCMS 'Taking Part in the Arts' Survey

This was also the case when ethnicity was the main factor. The data showed that those of white or mixed ethnicity engaged with the arts far more (78-81%) than those of Black or Asian ethnicity (61-63%).<sup>69</sup>

To further this point, research from the Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) who Fashion Roundtable supported with this research by helping them source interviewees and scoping out key policy points, highlighted that while more than two million people in the United Kingdom work within the creative industries, 52% of this workforce

<sup>67</sup> Ibid

<sup>68</sup> The Department for Culture, Media and Sports (2020). *Arts - Taking Part Survey 2019/20*  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/taking-part-201920-arts/arts-taking-part-survey-201920#fn:2>.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid

comes from high socio-economic backgrounds, which could be seen as a prominent figure in comparison to 38% across all industries.<sup>70</sup> Data by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) based on a longitudinal study, backs this up, finding that 16.4% of creative workers born between 1953 and 1962 had a working-class background, but that had fallen to just 7.9% for those born four decades later.<sup>71</sup>

Nadine Dorries, then the Secretary of State for Culture, spoke in the House of Commons in 2021, outlining her fears. She said:

“When I grew up in the ’60s, somebody I grew up with on my very deprived council estate in Liverpool went on to be Cher’s music producer, and people went into the theatre. If you wanted to, you could.

“I remember my drama teacher, Mrs Lyons, getting me an audition at the Elliott-Clarke school of dance and drama and telling me about it on a Saturday morning, but I couldn’t go because I didn’t have the bus fare; but if you had the bus fare, you could move on.

“Now, kids from where I grew up would never dream of being a journalist. They wouldn’t think there was an opportunity for them. Theatres are not places that they go to—or museums, or any element of the creative industries or the arts. They just don’t think that those opportunities of employment or enjoyment are open to them.”<sup>72</sup>

To this point, a study in 2022 found that those who grew up in professional families were four times more likely than those with working-class parents to be in creative work.<sup>73</sup> This shows a pattern of unequal access and if this is not challenged, there is potential that this might affect the overall cultural narrative and disconnect the experiences of working-class people. The study concluded that,

“the pattern of absolute social mobility into creative employment over the long term is marked by a rise in people from more advantaged class backgrounds and a commensurate fall in recruitment from those who grew up in working-class homes.”<sup>74</sup>

This lack of fluidity over the last fifty years, only highlights the, “pervasive structural class inequalities present in the creative sector, in a context where issues of gender and ethnicity also compound inequalities of access.”

Further, the Guardian highlights the BBC’s struggle to attract younger viewers from less privileged backgrounds, highlighting the scale of the social problem.<sup>75</sup> With fewer film directors, authors or songwriters to describe the experience of growing up in a working-class household, some creatives fear their stories are being squeezed out of culture or confined to

<sup>70</sup> Carey, H., O’Brien, D. and Gable, O. (2021) *Social mobility in the Creative Economy Rebuilding and levelling up?*, Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. ISBN: 978-1-913095-46-8. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. <https://creative-pec.files.svdcn.com/production/assets/publications/PEC-report-Social-mobility-in-the-Creative-Economy-Sept-2021.pdf>.

<sup>71</sup> Brook, O., Miles, A., O’Brien, D., & Taylor, M. (2023). Social Mobility and ‘Openness’ in Creative Occupations since the 1970s. *Sociology*, 57(4), 789-810. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385221129953>

<sup>72</sup> House of Commons. 2021. Oral evidence. Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee Oral evidence: Work of the Department, HC 44. <https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/3054/pdf/>

<sup>73</sup> Carey, H., O’Brien, D. and Gable, O. (2021) *Social mobility in the Creative Economy Rebuilding and levelling up?*, Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. ISBN: 978-1-913095-46-8. <https://creative-pec.files.svdcn.com/production/assets/publications/PEC-report-Social-mobility-in-the-Creative-Economy-Sept-2021.pdf>.

<sup>74</sup> Brook, O., Miles, A., O’Brien, D., & Taylor, M. (2023). Social Mobility and ‘Openness’ in Creative Occupations since the 1970s. *Sociology*, 57(4), 789-810. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00380385221129953>

<sup>75</sup> Tapper, J. (2022) *Huge decline of working class people in the arts reflects fall in wider society*. <https://www.theguardian.com/culture/2022/dec/10/huge-decline-working-class-people-arts-reflects-society>.

“poverty porn”.<sup>76</sup> A similar issue faces the fashion industry with barriers to learning the skills required to work in the sector, barriers to education, compounded by cliched perceptions of talent versus the reality. An example is someone like Alexander McQueen who was raised on an East End council estate, whose work transcended class barriers and whose legacy in his eponymously named brand now turns over between €700/800m.<sup>77</sup>

An example of long-term policy vision in this space is provided in the recent speech at the Labour Conference 2023 by the Labour Party’s Shadow Secretary of State for Culture and Media and Sport, Thangam Debbonaire MP.<sup>78</sup> In her speech, she relayed Labour’s plan for the ‘Space to Create’ initiative, focused on creating an integrated and intelligence-driven map of all of the cultural spaces within the UK, from commercial galleries and museums to performance spaces, to better make informed decisions. This will allow those in decision making capacities to be able to ensure an increase in social mobility; link transport opportunities; and better enable opportunities for investment and development space to create teams around the country providing guidance, training, learning and networking. This is a long-term vision that puts the creative sector at the forefront of a governmental plan for economic growth, while offering a wealth of opportunities in the process. This shows a holistic national level strategy, where access to the arts, culture and education, skills development are common practice. Required is deep-rooted reforms in career support and under the CWE, this leads us to discuss the need for a STEAM education for all, which will be discussed below.

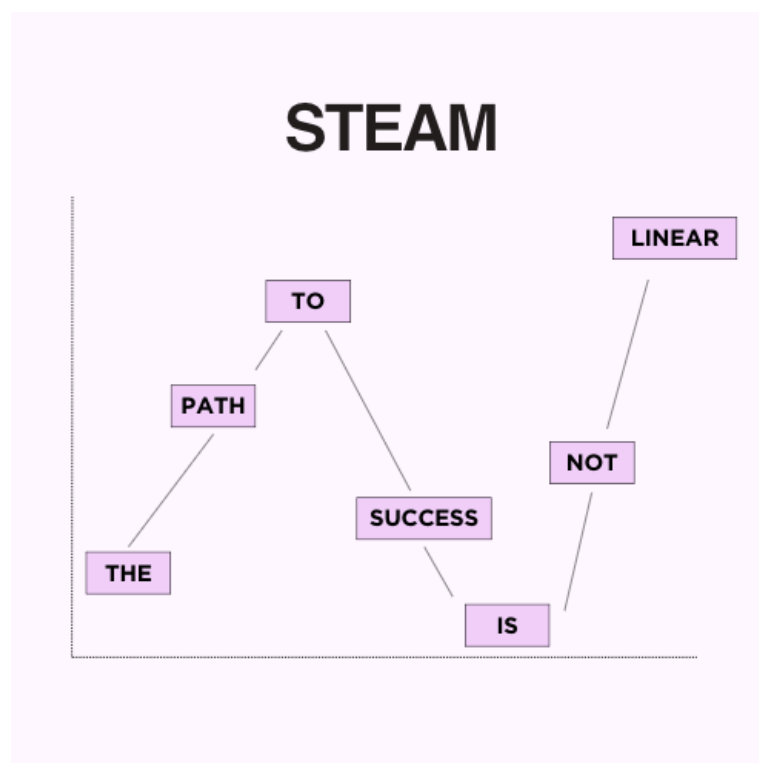


Figure 4: Author’s interpretation of how STEAM education supports wellbeing

<sup>76</sup> Ibid

<sup>77</sup> Guilbault, L. (2022) ‘Alexander McQueen “suspends” McQ line,’ *Vogue Business*, 20 June. <https://www.voguebusiness.com/companies/alexander-mcqueen-suspends-mcq-line#:~:text=Alexander%20McQueen%20has%20been%20one,Balenciaga%2C%20Brioni%20and%20jewellery%20houses.>

<sup>78</sup> TD Office (2023) *My speech from the Labour Party Conference 2023, in Liverpool.* [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSUgtyHkzfY.](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSUgtyHkzfY)

## #STEAMNOTSTEM – Creativity for all children

“There is something wonderfully perverse about the audience that values deeply the risks in handcrafting but wants to be shown only the polished outcome of that undertaking; like steak lovers averse to knowing too much about butchering.”<sup>79</sup>

The Conservative Coalition 2014 curriculum reform is said to have accelerated the decline of Art, Craft and Design (ACD) through a strong focus on STEM core subjects and compulsory assessments.<sup>80</sup> This has led to creativity being vastly reduced, or largely expunged, from the state school system leading to a STEM education agenda in England in state schools.

A rapid evidence review shows that the recent loss in England of younger people taking up Design and Technology qualifications at secondary school level and in 2012, “GCSEs in Art and Design Technology had been withdrawn from 14% of schools respectively.” Further, the report cites that ‘A’ level art fell by 29%<sup>81</sup> and craft-related GCSEs were down by 25% between the period 2003 - 2013.<sup>82</sup>

This has created a ‘Downton Abbey’ effect in the mindset and skill set of those making our movies, creating our clothes, designing our media, journalism and creative landscape.<sup>83</sup> As those from private schools have enjoyed a STEAM education system their whole academic life, while the vast majority who attend state schools have not.

Prior to Brexit the creative industries were the fastest growing in the UK economy with 11% year on year growth.<sup>84</sup> Valued at over £117bn, with fashion the largest of the sectors in the creative industries, it was employing pre Brexit and Covid 880,000 UK residents and generating over £32bn for the UK economy.<sup>85</sup> This outstrips automobiles, pharmaceuticals and aviation altogether. This contribution is primarily filtered through retail and manufacturing, which are the 6th and 7th largest contributors to the UK economy, according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS).<sup>86</sup> The UK was the fifth largest exporter of creative services and the seventh largest exporter of creative goods in 2020.<sup>87</sup> To date, there has been a failure to recognise and capitalise on this potential.

For the UK to take advantage of new economic opportunities, there is a need for young people to be adequately prepared for a changing jobs market. This requires a fusion of arts, sciences and technologies through the talent pipeline.<sup>88</sup> This focus on STEAM is about having a vital interplay between these areas to allow for a creative workforce that can take

<sup>79</sup> Leeman, J., & Stratton, S., 2017. ‘Circling Back into That Thing We Cast Forward: A Closing Read on Gestures of Resistance’, in Felcey, H., Ravetz, A. & Kettle, A., (ed.) *Collaboration through craft*, London: Bloomsbury Academic. pp 225

<sup>80</sup> Adams, J. The English Baccalaureate: A new philistinism?. *iJADE* 32(1): 2-5; Richmond, T. (2019) A step Backwards: Analysing the impact of the ‘English Baccalaureate’ Performance Measure since 2010. EDSK; Greevy et al. 2013. Revised: The effects of the English Baccalaureate. Ipsos MORI; Mason, R. and Steers, J. (2006) The impact of formal assessment procedures on teaching and learning in Art and Design in secondary schools. *iJADE*, 25(2): 119-133.

<sup>81</sup> Cultural Learning Alliance (2019) *Further drop in arts GCSE and A level entries for 2019*. <https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/further-drop-in-arts-gcse-and-a-level-entries-for-2019/>.

<sup>82</sup> Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value: Enriching Britain. (2015): p. 44

<sup>83</sup> Aakaer, C. (2018) ‘Idealized Nationalism in Downton Abbey: A study of the Identity of Englishness in Heritage Film,’ *Leviathan: Interdisciplinary Journal in English*, No. 3, 6-17. <https://doi.org/10.7146/lev.v0i3.107775>.

<sup>84</sup> Fashion Roundtable (2021) *Brexit: The Impact on the Fashion Industry, Fashion Roundtable*. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/63309ffbfdcdec6661dbcc7e1/1664131009325/Fashion+R+oundtable\\_Brexit+FollowUp+Report\\_060521.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/63309ffbfdcdec6661dbcc7e1/1664131009325/Fashion+R+oundtable_Brexit+FollowUp+Report_060521.pdf).

<sup>85</sup> Ibid

<sup>86</sup> Statista (2022) *Apparel market in the United Kingdom (UK) - statistics & facts, Consumer Goods & FMCG, Apparel & Shoes*. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/topics/3348/apparel-market-in-the-uk/#topicOverview>

<sup>87</sup> Creative UK (2023) *Labour National Policy Forum Consultation 2024: Submission by Creative UK*. [file:///Users/meg/Downloads/creative\\_uk\\_labour\\_submission\\_progressive\\_trade\\_policy.pdf](file:///Users/meg/Downloads/creative_uk_labour_submission_progressive_trade_policy.pdf)

<sup>88</sup> Cultural Learning Alliance and Nesta (2017) *STEAM: Why STEM can only take us so far*. <https://culturallearningalliance.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/CD405-CLA-STEAM-Briefing-Teachers-Notes-08.pdf>



an interdisciplinary approach to the issues of the future. A report by PEC suggests that 93% of 16-18 year olds found that studying a creative subject impacted positively on their mental health and wellbeing.<sup>89</sup>

Wales has recognised this and has already taken this approach. In a qualitative interview, a Welsh Government Spokesperson told us:

“Both STEM and Expressive Arts are critical to learners’ development as individuals. The Curriculum for Wales recognises this, which is why both Science and Technology and the Expressive Arts are recognised in law as Areas of Learning and Experience. Children and young people will now learn about both of these until they leave school.

“The Curriculum for Wales empowers schools to explore the links between subjects, rather than teaching them in isolation, so children and young people better understand the interconnectivity and breadth of their learning. For example, pupils learning about science can benefit from the creative process they would learn about in the Expressive Arts.

“Learners will also explore the close links between the Expressive Arts and Science and Technology where both Areas rely on similar methods of discovery and ideas, for example, enabling them to use their skills to better understand the relationships between science, government actions and economy behind the Climate Emergency.”

This requires institutional buy-in to ensure that STEAM is taken up across the country and not just in devolved nations. The Labour Party has pledged that it will bring back a STEAM education system for the whole of the UK, but the decline in numbers of those studying art, design, and creative subjects at GCSE and A Level in the last decade, as seen above, has left the largest growing sector pre Brexit on the back foot.<sup>90</sup>

When asked about the links between the education system and the decline in crafts, Daniel Carpenter, the Operations Director of the Heritage Crafts Association agreed that this is rooted in the current curriculum favoured by Westminster, Daniel said:

"There's a wider social aspect. Crafts and all practical and creative subjects have been pushed out of the schools' curriculum over successive decades with a focus on core subjects like English, maths, science and IT. But that's all based on a very narrow definition of economic productivity of the jobs the government wants people to go into."

In contrast, at University level in 2020, UK Arts and Humanities research activity was 49% higher than the global average.<sup>91</sup> According to a report, these statistics indicate the value of degrees that develop the talents and skills needed for a wide range of careers, many of which we are not yet even able to imagine and provides non-STEM graduates with longer-term resilience within the workforce.<sup>92</sup>

However, the creative industries are increasingly vulnerable to global fluctuations, as we have seen with the impact of the US writers and actors strike on UK film production across

<sup>89</sup> Williams, J. et al. (2022) *Enhancing creative education*.

[https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/enhancing-creative-education.Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. https://creative-pec.files.svdcdn.com/production/assets/images/PEC-report-Enhancing-Creative-Education-FINAL.pdf](https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/enhancing-creative-education.Creative%20Industries%20Policy%20and%20Evidence%20Centre.https://creative-pec.files.svdcdn.com/production/assets/images/PEC-report-Enhancing-Creative-Education-FINAL.pdf)

<sup>90</sup> Labour Policy Forum (2016). *STEAM not STEM / Early Years, Education and Skills (Archived) / Policy Commissions / Labour Policymaking* <https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/commissions/commissions/education/steam-not-stem>

<sup>91</sup> Thain, et al., (n.d.) *The Humanities in the UK Today: What's Going On?* Higher Education Policy Institute.

<https://www.hepi.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/The-Humanities-in-the-UK-Today-Whats-Going-On.pdf>

<sup>92</sup> Ibid

2023.<sup>93</sup> Without a strategy to boost domicile production by increasing the TV licence, or setting quotas for UK made for UK screens; as raised by Tamara Cincik recently at a Creative England meeting. This is reducing the economic and creative outcomes from across all of the population, not just those who have access to paid for learning. Of course those most vulnerable to these fluctuations are the working class members of the industry. The film industry, alongside music, theatre, gaming, video and fashion offer a portfolio of work opportunities for creative talent with designers often working for music clients, theatre dressmakers working in film and offering hybrid skills sharing and career development.

Not only is it vital for the holistic development of all children to have access to an education which is rounded and grounded in creative practice, vital to develop critical, creative, solutions oriented thinking, it is also limiting the interdisciplinary approach that arts policymakers have long been advocating for: as music supports maths, sewing supports surgery, art supports problem solving. It is also clear to us that for education to be successful, it requires more than academic attainment, it must challenge, develop and create lasting building blocks and opportunities, as those students enter adulthood and the workforce.

## Meaningful jobs

Under the CWE framework this means transitioning from a winner-takes-all culture to collective success. New data collected from 18 countries gathered by the Policy Institute at King's College London, has shown that the UK ranks 12th for the statement that hard work in turn offers a better life.<sup>94</sup>

Of the study, Bobby Duffy, director of the Policy Institute at King's College London, said:

“The UK is among the least likely from a wide range of countries to say work is important to their own life, that it should be prioritised over spare time, that hard work leads to success, or that not working makes people lazy.

“Attitudes to work are important to understand, but we need to avoid simple but wrong explanations that suggest they are responsible for relatively low productivity levels seen in the UK, which will be much more about skills development, technological and other investment, and availability and use of national assets.”<sup>95</sup>

This correlates to the feeling of a lack of decent and rewarding jobs within the UK. However, the Creative sector places a prominent value on creative thinking across a multitude of sectors, in its ability to allow for interdisciplinary approaches and a cross-fertilisation of knowledge and ideas, which are known to develop new perspectives and ways of working across different industries. This is a role in which the government must play in promoting knowledge-sharing and devoting greater attention towards creative thinking in the curriculum.<sup>96</sup>

Building on from the curriculum, generally speaking, the government should consider investment to grow the creative skills system. This requires a local institutional infrastructure

<sup>93</sup> Khomami, N. and Bartholomew, J. (2023) 'Already vulnerable': UK film and TV workers feel the pinch from US strike,' *The Guardian*, 20 September. <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2023/aug/13/already-vulnerable-uk-film-and-tv-workers-feel-the-pinch-from-us-strike>.

<sup>94</sup> King's College London (2023) 'UK public among least likely to place importance on work,' *King's College London*, 6 September. <https://www.kcl.ac.uk/news/uk-public-among-least-likely-to-place-importance-on-work>.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid

<sup>96</sup> Gaspersz, Jeff, *Compete with Creativity* (April 2007). NRG Working Paper No. 07-05, Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=983934> or <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.983934>

and bodies from varying sectors of the creative industry, such as screen to heritage crafts. This network strengthens the links from schools to industry and employer engagement and meets the needs for meaningful jobs. PEC argues that there is opportunity for specific industry bodies and employers to pool resources,

“in local areas where creative industries are a sector priority and work with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) this may involve economic and skills planning to make the case for local engagement between schools and employers, to publicise projects for other less networked schools and employers.”<sup>97</sup>

Ultimately this acts to champion the creative industries in local areas and the excellent employment opportunities they offer for young people.<sup>98</sup> Below you can see an example of a case study who successfully utilised this approach.

## Case Study: The Duchess’s Community High School<sup>99</sup>

The Duchess’s Community High School is a secondary school (Years 7-13) in rural Northumberland. They have recently achieved a Platinum Artsmark award and have a strong Arts department which has recently been given an opportunity to develop their own Key Stage 3 curriculum. They took part in ‘This is Creative Enterprise’ (TICE) for the first time in 2020-21, which started in 2008 as a local-council funded initiative to boost the knowledge of creative design job opportunities. TICE is a careers and enterprise programme that can help schools meet their Gatsby Benchmarks – a framework for good career guidance and form part of the Careers Strategy launched in 2017.

### Key Impacts

Key impacts of the project were the increased awareness of creative industries and new creative skills. This was also cited to increase skills in the illustration and photography projects that were chosen. An employer also commented that some of the work was at degree-level quality.

The project meant that young people from disadvantaged families could participate at no cost to their families. Of the programme, the students used the following language:

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<sup>97</sup> Williams, J. *et al.* (2022) *Enhancing creative education*.

[https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/enhancing-creative-education.Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre](https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/enhancing-creative-education.Creative%20Industries%20Policy%20and%20Evidence%20Centre).

<https://creative-pec.files.svdcdn.com/production/assets/images/PEC-report-Enhancing-Creative-Education-FINAL.pdf>

<sup>98</sup> Ibid

<sup>99</sup> All data associated with this case study: Williams, J. *et al.* (2022) *Enhancing creative education*.

[https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/enhancing-creative-education.Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre](https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/enhancing-creative-education.Creative%20Industries%20Policy%20and%20Evidence%20Centre).

<https://creative-pec.files.svdcdn.com/production/assets/images/PEC-report-Enhancing-Creative-Education-FINAL.pdf> p. 48



Figure 5: The words used by pupils about the STEAM opportunity (see footnote 99).

As the project had direct employer engagement employers and industry professionals were able to contribute to increasing the skills of the future talent pipeline.

“Both project staff and an employer reported examples of young people going on to do work experience and internships with professionals that students met as part of TICE and also examples of people gaining employment within the organisations that had worked with on TICE.”

Working in this format with schools meant that employers could actively engage with a diverse cohort of young people and under-represented groups that would be able to bring their unique perspectives to the creative sector. This is a clear example of where joined up policies can support local economies within a holistic creative-sector vision and moves us on to discuss the need for growing green jobs.

## Growing green jobs

Despite the media attention that ‘levelling up’ has garnered, there continue to be stark differences in income between varying regions in the UK.<sup>100</sup> A chronic lack of investment across the nation, has created, “high-cost, low-reliability utilities and public services, including the transport network,” in turn affecting the country economically.<sup>101</sup> With this in mind, many believe that to grow the economy, there needs to be a concerted effort to focus on the jobs of tomorrow. There is currently no universally agreed terminology for defining green jobs, but research suggests that green jobs form part of the solution to climate change mitigations, and in turn build resilient communities. This is also argued in research commissioned by the AHRC-funded Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) and produced by Julie’s Bicycle with BOP Consulting. The research recognised the contribution that arts and culture could make to encouraging sustainability. The report progressed to suggest that an ongoing theme was, “the creative sector’s disproportionate

<sup>100</sup> National Policy Forum Consultation (2023) *A green and digital future*.

file:///Users/meg/Downloads/17274\_23\_npf\_consultation\_documents\_01\_green\_and\_digital\_future\_v5.pdf

<sup>101</sup> Ibid

impact on society over and above its economic size, and its potential for promoting positive change.”<sup>102</sup>

Tim Jackson argues that work should not only be considered as paid-employment, but also as something that becomes part of our participation in society. Examples of this are cited as,

“repair, recreation, craft, creativity, culture: these activities contribute to a flourishing and are embedded in the community. They have the potential for low carbon footprints and they provide meaningful work.”<sup>103</sup>

This is something which is echoed in the Sustainable Markets Initiative ‘Terra Carta - Charter’ which intends to make the growth story of our time, a sustainable one. This encourages a ‘future of industry’ approach, meaning that future-proofing jobs, vital skills and craftsmanship is high up on the agenda.<sup>104</sup> A further point made in the Summarium, declares the need to recognise the importance of localism.<sup>105</sup> This is stated as, “local traditions, languages and cultures along with local products, jobs and sustainability – and how these ‘locals’ connect and support each other in the wider tapestry of regional and global systems.”<sup>106</sup> Finally, the Summarium discusses the need for a skilled workforce who are prepared to, “participate in a fair, inclusive, equitable and just transition towards a sustainable future.”<sup>107</sup>

This turns the current focus of economic growth at-all-costs on its head and focuses instead at utilising fewer materials and extending the life of products. Under the CWE framework this means:

- Meaningful, well paid and respected long-term jobs;
- A focus on soil health, supporting energy, food and fibre sovereignty, and regenerative practices;
- Durability and repairability in manufacturing and design practices;
- Placemaking which looks to use existing spaces with a hyperlocal perspective.

This leads us to discuss the future proofing of jobs, and will progress to tackle these further points in more detail below.

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<sup>102</sup> Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (2022) *Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency The path to Net Zero*. ISBN: 978-1-913095-06-2. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre. <https://creative-pec.files.svdcn.com/production/assets/publications/PEC-Creative-Industries-and-the-Climate-Emergency-The-Path-to-Net-Zero-PEC-Research-Report.pdf>.

<sup>103</sup> Jackson, T., 2017. *Prosperity without growth: Foundations for the economy of tomorrow* 2nd ed. Abingdon, Oxon : Routledge. P. 220

<sup>104</sup> The Sustainable Markets Initiative (2021) *Terra Carta: For nature, People and Planet*. [https://www.sustainable-markets.org/TerraCarta\\_Charter\\_Jan11th2021.pdf](https://www.sustainable-markets.org/TerraCarta_Charter_Jan11th2021.pdf).

<sup>105</sup> The Sustainable Markets Initiative (2021) *Terra Carta: For Nature, People and Planet: Summarium*. [https://www.sustainable-markets.org/TerraCarta\\_summarium\\_Jan11th2021.pdf](https://www.sustainable-markets.org/TerraCarta_summarium_Jan11th2021.pdf)

<sup>106</sup> Ibid

<sup>107</sup> Ibid

## Future-proofing our jobs

In a recent interview, the Labour Party's Shadow Secretary of State for Culture and Media and Sport, Thangam Debbonaire MP has announced that if elected Labour will take action on future proofing potential job losses to Artificial Intelligence.<sup>108</sup>

As Artificial Intelligence (AI) develops it will be jobs that require critical creative thinking, dexterity and unique approaches, which will be more likely to last in the jobs market. The government might want all children to study maths until they are 18, but that will not prevent many maths based jobs being eradicated by AI in the next decade. Sewing by hand, filming a documentary, these are less likely to be done by AI.

Creativity is often upheld as a niche human quality which is less vulnerable to disruption by technology, however, the rise in the use of artificial intelligence (AI) and its next phase, risks eliminating a number of fashion jobs. A paper prepared by PwC for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, predicted job creation in sectors such as health, education, science and technology.<sup>109</sup> At the same time, the technology threatens devastating job losses over the next 20 years in wholesale and retail; transport and logistics; and manufacturing. The report suggests that as many as 30% of UK jobs could disappear within this period.<sup>110</sup>

This evidence shows a significant impact on entry-level jobs for younger workers, which are more likely to be automated, with those with higher education and degrees more likely to see a positive effect than those with little qualifications. The report showcased data from ONS highlighting significant estimated net employment reductions are projected in wholesale and retail. The paper cites that due to the size of the sector, the automating effect of AI in the retail sector may be particularly disruptive to the economy (wholesale and retail constitute more than 12 percent of UK employment).<sup>111</sup>

There are also concerns that AI will have specific impacts in the design process. At the recent respective London and Paris Fashion Weeks, this was already being utilised to predict trends and analyse customer preferences. Forecasting agencies are focusing on quantitative results generated to detect patterns within large datasets of runway show images and across social media to spot emerging trends more quickly. While this could be seen to assist with market-driven designs, Forbes highlights that a further challenge to AI will be the homogenisation of design and the concern around the decline in the quality of fashion products.<sup>112</sup> The challenges will be on the capability for the algorithm to replace human labour in the way of stylists, designers and also marketers, to name but a few.

In a recent debate in the House of Commons, Mick Whitley MP, raised:

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<sup>108</sup> Seymour, T. (2023) 'Exclusive: UK shadow culture secretary to map out first national infrastructure plan for the arts,' *The Art Newspaper - International Art News and Events*, 9 October.  
<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/10/09/exclusive-uk-shadow-culture-secretary-to-map-out-first-national-infrastructure-plan-for-the-arts>.

<sup>109</sup> PwC (2021) <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/615d9a1ad3bf7f55fa92694a/impact-of-ai-on-jobs.pdf>, *A Report by PwC for the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy*. BEIS Research Report Number: 2021/042. Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy.

<sup>110</sup> Ibid

<sup>111</sup> Office for National Statistics (2023) *EMP13: Employment by industry* - Office for National Statistics.  
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/employmentbyindustryemp13>.

<sup>112</sup> Yec (2023) 'Artificial Intelligence In Fashion,' *Forbes*, 21 February.  
<https://www.forbes.com/sites/theyec/2023/02/21/artificial-intelligence-in-fashion/>.

“an urgent plea for a rights-based and people-focused approach to artificial intelligence, and for a process that puts the voices and interests of workers at its heart. In this new machine age, we must assert more than ever the fundamental right of all people to a basic level of economic security and dignity at work.”<sup>113</sup>

The report also showcased data from ONS highlighting significant estimated net employment reductions are projected in wholesale and retail. The paper cites that due to the size of the sector, the automating effect of AI in the retail sector may be particularly disruptive to the economy, specifying that wholesale and retail constitutes more than 12% of employment in the UK.<sup>114</sup> The retail sector has already been pummelled by Covid and Brexit red-tape, as well as the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, alongside record retail closures.<sup>115</sup> This raises the need for the voices and interests of workers to be placed at the heart of AI policy, while simultaneously ensuring that investment is aligned to deliver town centres that reclaim maximum impact to a specific place with a focus on hyper-locality.

Writer Rebecca Arnold who has written a number of fashion books including ‘30-Second Fashion’ and ‘Fashion: A Very Short Introduction,’ spoke with us today, as her writing has been used without permission to train generative-AI systems. As anyone in the creative sector will know, writing and publishing at this level, is a labour of love and would have taken countless hours of research. Arnold was first alerted to the fact that her book was being used after reading an article by Alex Reisner about 183,000 books being used to train AI systems, without permission.<sup>116</sup>

Arnold told us:

“After reading Alex Reisner’s article on the theft of authors’ texts by companies including Meta and Bloomberg, I discovered that two of my books were among the 183,000 being used without permission or recognition to train AI to write. This raises huge questions concerning intellectual copyright - and transparency and openness in AI’s development by these companies. All creatives need to be aware of this situation and its implications.”

From an Intellectual Property point of view, we contacted the UK’s leading design and intellectual property campaigning organisation, Anti Copying In Design (ACID) on this topic, Dids Macdonald OBE – CEO and Co-founder of ACID said:

“Many say there are huge opportunities for AI within the creative industries and undoubtedly, there are, but there are also diverse challenges not least about tech firms using artists’ work to train its systems without permission.

“Using the IP of creators, without the originator’s permission, raises serious ethical,

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<sup>113</sup> House of Commons. 2023. Oral evidence. House of Commons. Artificial Intelligence and the Labour Market Volume 731: debated on Wednesday 26 April 2023.

<https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-04-26/debates/0E66B478-1A0B-4F49-9517-F2A91D6365F3/ArtificialIntelligenceAndTheLabourMarket>

<sup>114</sup> Office for National Statistics (2023) *EMP13: Employment by industry* - Office for National Statistics.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/datasets/employmentbyindustryemp13>.

<sup>115</sup> Centre for Retail Research.(n.d.) *The crisis in retailing - latest closures & job losses*.

<https://www.retailresearch.org/retail-crisis.html>.

<sup>116</sup> Reisner, A. (2023) 'These 183,000 books are fueling the biggest fight in publishing and tech,' *The Atlantic*, 3 October.

<https://www.theatlantic.com/technology/archive/2023/09/books3-database-generative-ai-training-copyright-infringement/675363/>

legal, and reputational concerns. Firstly, it may infringe on IP rights, potentially leading to copyright violations. Artists hold legal rights over the work they create making unauthorised usage a breach of those rights and, if intentional, it is a crime.

“This practice can also erode artists’ control over their work through manipulation inconsistent with their original vision. It also denies the author/creator fair compensation, impacting livelihoods.

“There is a significant risk of tech firms damaging relationships with the creative community by continuing to use designs without permission. To mitigate these risks, there is a corporate responsibility for tech companies to secure permissions and compensations for artists.

“Many are calling for global IP regulation on those big tech firms capitalising on IP which does not belong to them but thus far there is little buy-in to this ethos, nor would there appear to be any appetite for licensing models. UK creators are looking to our Government to create clear guidance on this subject which, currently, is expanding exponentially with little or no regulation, ethics, or compliance.”

We do not yet know how this will impact the fashion industry or the broader economy as a whole, therefore we are asking for:

#### Key Policy Asks:

1. A roadmap which takes responsibility for the potential impacts of AI on the labour market; its impact on skills and the required steps to mitigate devastating job losses in the fashion sector.
2. A long-term focused and robust policy framework with a rights-based and people-focused approach to artificial intelligence, and for a process that puts the voices and interests of workers at its heart.
3. Transparency around the use of AI. That all AI designs and marketing be labelled as such, to ensure that those created by people are set apart. Similar to [the Competition and Markets Authority policy for content creators and influencers on transparency around ads](#).
4. Stringent IP regulation that protects creatives and their work from the use in training of AI programmes and systems.

## Preserving cultural heritage

As far back as 2003, UNESCO developed a Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage which stated that safeguarding traditional craftsmanship should focus not only on preserving craft objects like the work that museums do, but also in a continuation in developing opportunities for and encouraging thereof artisans to continue with their traditional crafts so that they can transmit this knowledge to others.<sup>117</sup> A look through the urgent safeguarding list shows Indonesia is conscious of its Saman Dance; the United Arab Emirates its traditional weaving skills; and China ancient Hezhen Yimakan storytelling. In

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<sup>117</sup> UNESCO, 2011. 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Sixth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage 22-29 November 2011, Bali, Indonesia. Available at: <https://ich.unesco.org/doc/src/15164-EN.pdf>



fact, of the almost 200 countries who have signed the Convention as part of their cultural policy, the United Kingdom is not one of them.<sup>118</sup>

Daniel Carpenter, the Operations Director of the Heritage Crafts Association offered some insight into the barriers faced by traditional crafts with us. Daniel said:

"In the long term I think a lot of this is around public perception and people valuing craft skills as part of our culture. People don't think of skills as cultural and perhaps when you think of culture you think of opera or books and literature, you don't necessarily think of the social practices.

"And I think that's related to a kind of gatekeeping by a cultural elite over a number of centuries, that working-class occupations have been annexed outside of culture and that continues to this day.

"There's really so much potential that we're not tapping into, in terms of placing us globally in the world as a craft capital."



Figure 6: Colette Davies. Lip-work basketry.

Although the Association has plans to look at more indigenous crafts across the country in the future, Daniel shares that they have managed to get further in Scotland so far. Daniel talked of Scotland's advancement over the current Westminster Government on Intangible Cultural Heritage. Daniel said:

"The Scottish Government has always been further along than the Westminster Government in terms of Intangible Cultural Heritage and it is likely that if they gain independence they will be ratifying the UNESCO Convention.

"We need the government to ratify the 2003 UNESCO Convention on Intangible Cultural Heritage to help raise awareness and direct support."

Success therefore in preserving crafts requires a plurality of approaches in which the government has a role to not only safeguard crafts, but also in exposing these crafts to the younger generation. We have been asked only this week to join Fashion Revolution

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid

Scotland in lobbying for a Scottish Textiles Minister. This brings us to a qualitative interview which brings wellbeing into this discussion.

## Case Study: Guild group interview



Figure 7: Jenni Frost.

With wellbeing as a thread within the creative sector, Meg Pirie, did a series of qualitative interviews, one being with a local women's guild group. The Chair of the local guild, Jenni Frost, led groups to teach the entire process of turning British wool from fleece to finished yarn used for weaving or hand knitting. Of the group Jenni said:

“We’re in an era of desocialisation and due to the cost-of-living crisis, we have members who can’t afford the petrol to attend. The cost-of-living crisis is a concern.”

While the group met once a month, Jenni told us that:

“We exist to keep traditions alive. It’s a way to acquire and pass on knowledge and also update skills.

“Industrious crafts like spinning are very calming. The group brings people together with other like-minded individuals.”

This sense of wellbeing was echoed within the group and another member told us that:

“We come here to meet each other, for relaxation and to learn new skills. It helps us forget about our troubles.”

## Localism

Post growth is defined by Jackson as the dismantling of consumerism, requiring viable alternatives, such as those which strengthen communities and enrich human life without encroaching on environmental limits.<sup>119</sup> In light of this, there is a growing body of evidence to suggest that valuing localised ways of working within the craft and textiles sector, can allow for power to be transferred back to local communities—who are most familiar with the infrastructure of their communities and its specific geographical knowledge. Burgess offers that, “it is place-based textile sovereignty, which aims to include rather than exclude all the people, plants, animals, and cultural practices that compose and define”, a specific place.<sup>120</sup> Fletcher and Grose suggest that this requires, “developing knowledge of local traditions, mythologies and symbolism, and [...] draws on regionally available materials of local people who contribute an innate cultural knowledge to the product itself.”<sup>121</sup> Felcey et al., echo this complexity:

“Many materials have a discernible place of origin which can motivate makers to pool knowledge, skills and resources in ways that challenge, extend or retain this provenance.”<sup>122</sup>

The idea that localising a supply chain drives grassroots initiatives is cited by a number of authors. Mazzarella and Black offer that, “heritage craftsmanship has underpinned the local [...] textile industry since the 14th century and drives grassroots making initiatives.”<sup>123</sup> Burgess suggests that Fibreshed’s approach may offer an alternative model of working which transfers power back to communities.<sup>124</sup> This could be seen through the means in which Fibreshed were founded as a place-based textile system, sourcing raw materials transparently and therefore connecting to communities of farmers and makers at a local level—all whilst providing fair prices throughout the value chain.<sup>125</sup>

This is also argued in research commissioned by the AHRC-funded Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (PEC) and produced by Julie’s Bicycle with BOP Consulting. The research recognised the contribution that arts and culture could make to encouraging sustainability, particularly when localism is utilised,

“the shortening of supply chains and reduction in transportation could have significant impacts, especially in terms of nearshoring, and the relocation of manufacturing associated with the UK’s Creative Industries.”<sup>126</sup>

Nonetheless, while the examples discussed offer a positive position on valuing culture in a localised supply chain, there are many practical issues and challenges to working at this level, one of which is cited as a local industry needing to be in place. This is particularly challenging in an ever industrialised system, where economics have driven production away

<sup>119</sup> Jackson, T., 2017. *Prosperity without growth: Foundations for the economy of tomorrow* 2nd ed. Abingdon, Oxon : Routledge. pp 204

<sup>120</sup> Burgess, R., & White, C. 2019. *Fibreshed: Growing a movement of farmers, fashion activists, and makers for a new textile economy*. Chelsea Green Publishing. pp. 7

<sup>121</sup> Fletcher, K., & Grose, L., 2021. *Fashion & Sustainability: Design for Change*. 1st ed. London: CPI Group (UK) Ltd. pp. 108

<sup>122</sup> Felcey, H., Ravetz, A. & Kettle, A., 2017. (ed.) *Collaboration through craft*, London: Bloomsbury Academic. pp. 5

<sup>123</sup> Mazzarella, F. & Black, S., 2022. Fashioning change: Fashion activism and its outcomes on local communities. *Taylor and Francis* , pp.1–26. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17569370.2022.2095729> [Accessed August 15, 2022]. pp. 3

<sup>124</sup> Burgess, R., & White, C. 2019. *Fibreshed: Growing a movement of farmers, fashion activists, and makers for a new textile economy*. Chelsea Green Publishing. pp. 2

<sup>125</sup> Ibid, pp.8

<sup>126</sup> Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre (2022) *Creative Industries and the Climate Emergency The path to Net Zero*. ISBN: 978-1-913095-06-2. Creative Industries Policy and Evidence Centre.

to low-cost countries.<sup>127</sup> Grose suggests a solution could be for social agency to be resituated into the structure of the business itself and offers the example of mutually agreeable fibre prices and co-ownerships of spinning mills as small and manageable solutions.<sup>128</sup>

This strategically links capacity with local need and offers the potential for deviation from globalised routes to something of value to culture and knowledge, at a slower pace. Thereby making a case for textiles and fashion within localised markets, if social agency were embedded into the practice.

## Food and fibre sovereignty

There are many notable parallels between food and fibre as both have an ultimate dependency on the land. Burgess offers this parallel as, “a multifaceted industry that involves many of the same supply-chain dynamics as the food industry, starting with its roots in agriculture.”<sup>129</sup> Within this agricultural lens, Fletcher and Vittersø cite fibre as part of a wider commodity, “typically manufactured from little valued and indiscriminately sourced raw materials involving a process of intensive commercialization.”<sup>130</sup> Klein states that defenders of large agricultural processes uphold that local forms of agriculture cannot feed the world’s growing population, maintaining therefore that industrial means of operating are fundamental to sustaining human life.<sup>131</sup>

FAST	VS	SLOW
Globalisation		Localism
Homogenous products and designs using AI		Using expert craft and skills to create long-lasting products
Low cost		True price
High cost to people and planet		Community connection with impacts clearly defined
New, New, New		Repairing and extended responsibility

Figure 8: Author’s depiction of fast and slow fashion systems

<sup>127</sup> Thakara, J., 2015. ‘Politics and the Fashion System’, in Fletcher, K. and Tham, M., (ed.) in *Routledge handbook of sustainability and fashion*. 1st ed. Oxfordshire: Routledge. pp. 49.

<sup>128</sup> Grose, L., 2015. ‘Fashion as Material’, in Fletcher, K. and Tham, M., (ed.) in *Routledge handbook of sustainability and fashion*. 1st ed. Oxfordshire: Routledge. pp 229

<sup>129</sup> Burgess, R., & White, C. 2019. *Fibershed: Growing a movement of farmers, fashion activists, and makers for a new textile economy*. Chelsea Green Publishing. pp. 4

<sup>130</sup> Fletcher, K. and Vittersø, G., 2018. Local Food Initiatives and Fashion Change: Comparing Food and Clothes to Better Understand Fashion Localism. *Fashion Practice*, [online] 10(2), pp.160. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17569370.2018.1458496>>

<sup>131</sup> Klein, N., 2014. *This Changes Everything*. United Kingdom: Penguin Books. pp. 135

Meanwhile, in contrast, activist Vandana Shiva points out that shifting to ecological methods of agriculture such as organic farming would increase food security.<sup>132</sup> From a localised perspective, local food as part of the 'slow-food movement' is cited to benefit the textiles sector due to its, "mix of top down political and market-driven initiatives as well as more small-scale, bottom up programmes of change."<sup>133</sup> The slow-food movement is defined as linking food and taste to culture, skills and practices, as well as to preserving fast-disappearing local products, thus bringing them back to common use and therefore consumer consciousness.<sup>134</sup> This raises the question of speed, which means changing unrealistic expectations and potentially the way things have always been done.

Materials are key to this role in the local agenda as they tangibly link a, "product with a region, plant species or animal breed and begin in a small way to counteract the abstract 'flow of goods' that dominates globalised production systems."<sup>135</sup> In relation to localised textiles supply chains, this could be suited to regenerating small and diverse producers and hand-production practices and skills, which would require, "a new wave of local ecosystem-sustaining activity."<sup>136</sup>

Regenerative farming should also be acknowledged within the discourse of food and fibre sovereignty. By nature, regenerative systems suggest this goes beyond soil health and instead looks at the entirety of the system, including the role of extraction within a capitalist society and those who are suffering and oppressed within this system. In its simplest form regenerative agriculture improves the land instead of causing harm. This ultimately leads to healthy soil with capabilities of producing high-quality food, leading to healthy communities.<sup>137</sup> This is supported by indigenous knowledge, experience and wisdom and while this is often acknowledged,<sup>138</sup> our discussions with Fibreshed have shown that little investment is currently made in this direction.

Finally, practices which challenge fast-fashion's unfair purchasing practices, might look to governmental driven procurement. An example of local procurement in action can be seen in Wales, where the 'Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015' is at the heart of all procurement decisions.

"A nation which maintains and enhances a biodiverse natural environment with healthy functioning ecosystems that support social, economic and ecological resilience and the capacity to adapt to change (for example climate change)."<sup>139</sup>

Procurement by the Welsh government used long-term vision, maximising opportunities for social, environmental and cultural wellbeing overall.<sup>140</sup> This is highlighted by their work with the musical instruments dynamic purchasing system, where carbon neutral musical instruments were given to all 7-year old pupils in Wales in 2022.<sup>141</sup> The approach supported

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<sup>132</sup> Ibid pp. 284

<sup>133</sup> Fletcher, K. and Vittersø, G., 2018. Local Food Initiatives and Fashion Change: Comparing Food and Clothes to Better Understand Fashion Localism. *Fashion Practice*, [online] 10(2), pp.162. Available at: <<https://doi.org/10.1080/17569370.2018.1458496>>

<sup>134</sup> Ibid pp. 169

<sup>135</sup> Fletcher, K., & Grose, L., 2021. *Fashion & Sustainability: Design for Change*. 1st ed. London: CPI Group (UK) Ltd. pp. 107

<sup>136</sup> Ibid pp. 169

<sup>137</sup> Miller, et al., 2022. 'Slow and Indigenous Approaches to Textiles Arts', in Klepp, I.G. & Tobiasson, T.S. (ed.) in *Local, slow and sustainable fashion: Wool as a fabric for change*, Cham : Springer International Publishing AG. pp. 105.

<sup>138</sup> Kimmerer, R.W., 2020. *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge and the Teaching of Plants*. Great Britain : Penguin Books.

<sup>139</sup> The Welsh Government (2015) *Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015*, The Welsh Government.

<sup>140</sup> The Welsh Government (2022) *Wales procurement policy statement* <https://www.gov.wales/procurement-policy-statement.html#103794>.

<sup>141</sup> The Welsh Government (2022) *Innovative procurement initiative makes a noise*. <https://www.gov.wales/innovative-procurement-initiative-makes-noise>.

the Welsh economy, while creating work opportunities. At the time, Rebecca Evans, Minister for Finance and Local Government in Wales, said:

“This contract demonstrates how we can use funding to add social value and promote sustainability. At the same time, we have ensured these instruments will be produced on a national scale and in a way that represents value for money.”<sup>142</sup>

Future research might therefore develop this line of enquiry, and consider whether localised means of working could act as a way of preserving knowledge and culture, as well as boosting the local economy by procuring goods and services at a local level, as part of the Creative Wellbeing Economy. It might also be pertinent to look at the connections between food production and fibre, requiring an interconnecting and interdisciplinary approach, including those peoples which know the most about the land in their communities. This is as much about integrating fibre-growing areas within surrounding ecosystems, as creating localised supply chains. An example of localism in action can be found below.

Localism in action: Against the grain: those pushing the boundaries in the woollen industry



Figure 9: Fibreshed. Farmer, Gala Bailey Barker with Plaw Hatch Flock.

Fibreshed is a grassroots organisation specifically focused on place-based sovereignty and as soon as I wanted to write a piece on those pushing the boundaries within the sector. Deborah Barker runs South East England Fibreshed, she says:

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<sup>142</sup> Ibid

“It’s about getting away from the idea of supply chains and creating local supply networks. With a network you get equal stakeholders, so you’re bringing the designer, farmer, the spinner, the weaver, everybody working together.

“One of the things I hear from farmers is that it really gives them a sense of pride when they know where their work will end up.”

This concept of a network in place of a supply chain offers an alternative, one in which costs are agreed for upfront and consequently pride is instilled back into the process. Here transparency is key. Currently there is a disconnect between what farmers are receiving for their wool and the end product whether that be knitwear or yarn. This is something which Deborah feels cannot be taught in a classroom. Deborah said:

“Stand in healthy ancient pasture and you see the sheep are actually helping to maintain the biodiversity, they have a reciprocal relationship that has evolved over thousands of years with the landscape, and are part of the whole ecosystem.”



Figure 10: Deborah Barker. Plaw Hatch Flock plant-dyed wool.

The fact that sheep are part of a reciprocal relationship with the land is often disputed. I am reminded of a book I read recently called ‘Feral’, by George Monbiot, who suggests sheep are part of the reason that we are now facing a lack of diversity amongst species in Wales coining the term “sheepwrecked.”

However, Deborah suggests that there are certainly ways of working with the land including organic farming. She tells of the farmers she is working with who are at the cutting edge of regenerative farming, who are still working on long-term solutions in this direction.

Regenerative farming is the latest buzzword and much discourse surrounds this. This requires indigenous knowledge, experience and wisdom and while this is often acknowledged, Deborah says that little investment is made in this direction.

The term 'regenerative' also suggests it goes beyond soil health and instead looks at the entirety of the system, including the role of extraction within a capitalist society and those who are suffering and oppressed within this system. In its simplest form regenerative agriculture improves the land instead of causing harm. This ultimately leads to healthy soil with capabilities of producing high-quality food, leading to healthy communities. Deborah said:

"It's really important because a lot of our land, like Wales for example, is just not suited to arable, but we have to feed the population. So if those animals can graze that land in a way that supports nature, restoration and carbon sequestration, and convert the grass into food, that's a no brainer.

"I think it's very irresponsible for George Monbiot to suggest taking the animals out, because without the animal dung, you don't get the dung beetles and you suddenly disrupt a whole ecosystem of which they are an integral part and that's taken thousands of years to evolve."

Deborah said:

"Food and fibre sovereignty go hand in hand, and that seems really critical in times of climate crisis. I'm slightly wary about being too romantic about connecting with the land. I think there's a place for the landscape and rural culture being an expression of the land, but I think it also has to be rooted in urban life."

This thread of being rooted in the contemporary suggests that harnessing the provenance of Welsh wool requires a steer away from how things have always been done. Currently within the woollen industry, wool is blended at large-scale facilities into a homogenous fibre of sorts and loses its sense of place as a result alongside the parallel issue echoed in food supply where a lack of diversity in breeding and growing leads to a loss of variety and living history.

### **Celebrating diversity**

Later that week, Zoe Fletcher and Maria Benjamin, co-founders of The Wool Library, who set up their business to act as a bridge between the wool sourced from rare breeds and the makers and designers working in the sector spoke to us on diversity. Zoe said:

"We've got so many breeds with such amazing history that have been bred over generations for specific kinds of geographical locations. Why are we not celebrating those kinds of limited edition finite quantities? Why are we trying to peg ourselves into global uniformity when we don't need to? We should be celebrating all this diversity."

As if in answer to this rhetorical question Maria chimed in. Maria said:

"It's all about diversity. I mean that way of making everything almost bland and without a story, that globalised idea of things being placeless is so over. And the power of place is really where we're at at the moment in terms of business development.



“If you make something placeless you almost take away responsibility, you disconnect it from a place and the damage that you're doing. So connecting it to a place gives you a sense of responsibility, and then looking at it in terms of looking after a whole community is important.”



Figure 11: Amy Bateman, Zoe Fletcher and Maria Benjamin.

This comment suggests the waters are quickly muddied when wool is processed at scale without a degree of transparency, not only losing its sense of place but also a responsibility for how this is processed.

The current process of the wool market being geared up at scale with farming co-operative British Wool sending large amounts of wool to China for example needs unpicking. White wool is also favoured at this level, meaning that it is pushed towards a type of monoculture as scaled-up business often does.

Maria said:

“I think it was farmers looking to business as the model rather than nature. And nature likes complexity and diversity and business likes uniformity, and almost like a monoculture because it's easy to work with individually.

“This doesn't work in farming because it doesn't work in nature. You have to do so much work to keep nature out of a crop field. So it's about working with nature and how that naturally wants to work, which is having complexity and diversity. And that's built-in resilience really.”

[...]

What those in this story therefore are offering is the differing ways in which people in the industry are working with wool, from Fibreshed's approach in creating supplier networks and The Wool

Library acting as a bridge between diverse and rare breeds and designers, as a response to increase prices at raw-fibre stage.

A snippet taken from a full article by Meg Pirie:

<https://www.fashionroundtable.co.uk/news/2022/11/22/against-the-grain-those-pushing-the-boundaries-in-the-woollen-industry>

## Placemaking

The UK is a country of entrenched place-based inequalities which have persisted for generations and are more extreme in the UK than most OECD countries.<sup>143</sup> Without a solid long term strategy to build a decentralised, more localised approach, with a more integrated, less top-down approach, then levelling up cannot happen on a large scale. The work of Centre for Cities and Centre for Towns when it was operational, chaired by Lisa Nandy MP, highlights the disparities along, economic, educational, political and social impact between cities, towns and rural economies.

To this point, Professor Will Jennings from Centre for Towns gave evidence at an APPG event hosted by Fashion Roundtable and highlighted that economic, educational, social and political divisions can be seen between towns and cities across the UK, leading to ruptures and tensions between those who are economically and educationally more protected from the shocks of financial and political unrest in the cities, where there are statistically more university graduates, than those in towns. The Brexit vote, Will Jennings argued, can be seen along those educational and city versus towns division lines.<sup>144</sup>

The Covid-19 pandemic, Brexit, shifts to digital rather than 'bricks and mortar' shopping, and the ongoing cost-of-living crisis have changed consumer behaviour, alongside record retail closures. In 2021, PWC reported over 17,500 chain stores closed in 2020 alone.<sup>145</sup> More recently, the Centre for Retail Research (CRR) recorded that retail closures affected 34,907 employees in 2022.<sup>146</sup> Competition from online retailers, increased spending on leisure and experiences such as short breaks, gym memberships, and health and wellbeing treatments has exacerbated the issues the high street was already facing.<sup>147</sup> A consumer survey by PWC suggested that the onus to repair the high street should not fall solely on retail solutions,<sup>148</sup> while CRR suggested that remodelling large obsolete stores to add services such as clothing repair, cafes and concessions could provide a solution.<sup>149</sup> Finally, the survey showed that 44% of participants would prefer a focus on experiencing and exploring [a brand] rather than the only option being to purchase.<sup>150</sup>

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<sup>143</sup> Philip McCann, 'Perceptions of regional inequality and the geography of discontent: insights from the UK', *Regional Studies*, 2019.

<sup>144</sup> Chapman, M. (2019) 'Charity shops and the future of the high street,' *Charity Retail Association* [Preprint]. <https://www.charityretail.org.uk/charity-shops-and-the-future-of-the-high-street/>.

<sup>145</sup> All Party Parliamentary Group: Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion (2023) *Building Community Agency Through The Purposeful Use Of Unused Retail Spaces*. [https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/64677626079db43a18839f47/1684502055169/FR+Pros+umption+Policy+Briefing+2023\\_FINAL+.pdf](https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5a1431a1e5dd5b754be2e0e9/t/64677626079db43a18839f47/1684502055169/FR+Pros+umption+Policy+Briefing+2023_FINAL+.pdf).

<sup>146</sup> Ibid

<sup>147</sup> Ibid

<sup>148</sup> Ibid

<sup>149</sup> Ibid

<sup>150</sup> Ibid

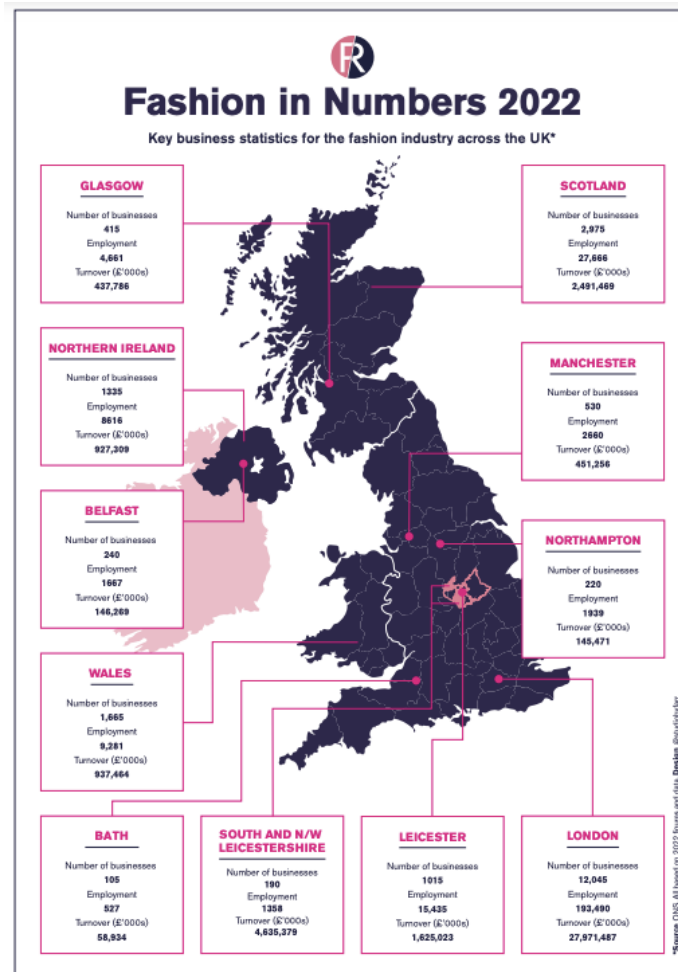


Figure 12: Fashion Roundtable's annual Fashion in Numbers tool

This opens a discussion on the importance of experience, connection and community to rehabilitate the high street and locality, whilst stimulating local business. Leading to a clear opportunity to align investment to deliver town centres that reclaim maximum impact to a specific place with a focus on hyper-locality. This can be seen clearly with the 'Preston Model', in which the local council procured its services from local companies, then invited public employers to do the same. This strategy led to Preston becoming the first living wage employer in the North of England.<sup>151</sup>

The 'Preston Model' looks to regenerate an economy often overlooked by policymakers to enable social and economic development at a local level. This can take the form of:

“human capital (i.e. skills and knowledge), social factors (i.e. personal networks, culture and community solidarity), environmental assets (i.e. the built environment and natural capital), (formal) institutions (i.e. local authorities and educational institutions) and physical capital (i.e. local firms and local savings).”<sup>152</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Moore, R. (2021) *Review Paint Your Town Red by Matthew Brown and Rhian E Jones review – how Preston took back control.*

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2021/may/17/paint-your-town-red-matthew-brown-rhian-e-jones-rev%20iew-how-preston-to-ok-back-control-and-your-town-can-too>.

<sup>152</sup> Whyman, P. et al. (2022) *Supporting the Creative Industries: The impact of the 'Preston Model' in Lancashire.* <https://pec.ac.uk/research-reports/the-impact-of-the-preston-model-in-lancashire>. pp. 24

This gave power back to marginalised communities and as a consequence is cited to have the potential to contribute towards a levelling up agenda, as this is focused in a hyperlocal way.

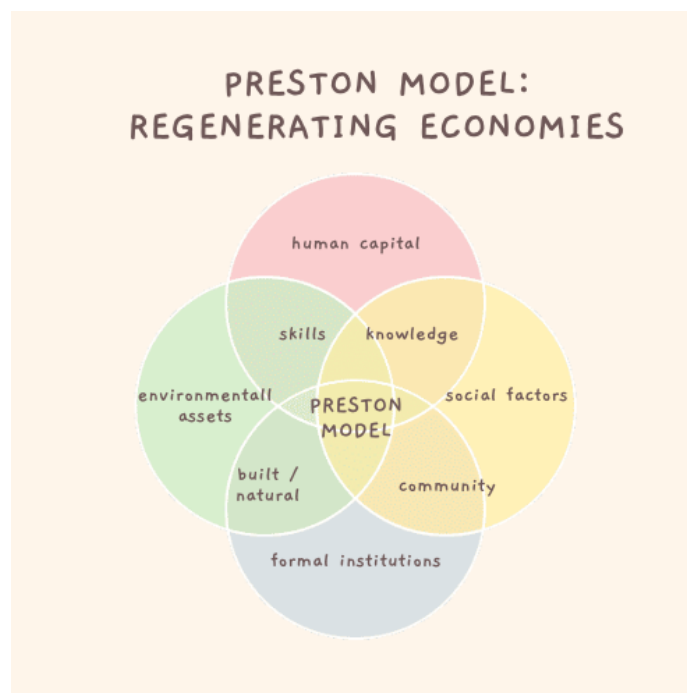


Figure 13: Author's depiction of the Preston Model

Further, this also goes some way in understanding the spillover from creative jobs and the effect this has on the economy. A report by the Design Council for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) defines creative spillovers as:

“...the process by which activity in... Creative Industries has a subsequent broader impact on places, society, or the economy through the overflow of concepts, ideas, skills, knowledge, and different types of capital.”<sup>153</sup>

This was further discussed in the report to guide policy co-design, one of which highlighted supply chain spending, citing that for every £1 of turnover directly generated by the arts and culture industry, a further £1.23 of turnover supported the economy.<sup>154</sup> A key policy lever therefore was in strengthening local supply chains to retain this spending. A further example of creative spillover is in the fact that creative business sectors also heavily engage with business-to-business activity and therefore have the potential to stimulate and support business innovation in the wider economy as a result.<sup>155</sup>

Finally, placemaking is more than bricks and mortar and relies also on developing green spaces for communities. This goes back to the heart of the argument in supporting a new framework which values credible alternatives of funding such as in shared goals, assets and infrastructures. Tim Jackson cites this as revitalising,

<sup>153</sup> Design Council (2022) *A Design Sprint for the Creative Industries Sector Vision Maximising the Spillover Value of the Creative Industries to the Wider Economy*, DCMS. [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1094190/Creative\\_Industries\\_Sector\\_Vision\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1094190/Creative_Industries_Sector_Vision_Report_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>154</sup> Ibid, pp.8.

<sup>155</sup> Bakhshi, H. and McVittie, E. (2009) 'Creative supply-chain linkages and innovation: Do the creative industries stimulate business innovation in the wider economy?,' *Innovation-management Policy & Practice*, 11(2), pp. 169–189. <https://doi.org/10.5172/impp.11.2.169>.

“our sense of public space, of public institutions, of common purpose. [...] Green space, [...] libraries, museums, public transportation, local markets, retreats [...] these are some of the building blocks for a new vision of social participation.”<sup>156</sup>

Under the CWE framework, this countering of the current system, constructs a framework of meaning and empathy and enhances well being in the process, where creativity is recognised and social participation is championed.

## Green Finance

A recent report by the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) cites that, “while other countries recognise the need for green investment and industrial policy, the UK government is sitting on the sidelines.”<sup>157</sup> Europe is seeking to respond to the opportunities of harnessing sustainable finance with the Green Deal Industrial Plan, which looks to create a more supportive environment for net-zero technologies to meet Europe’s climate targets. The report suggests that €250 billion under the green measures under the RFF Invest EU could mobilise €372 billion.<sup>158</sup> The investment in clean energy technologies is estimated to be worth around \$650 billion a year by 2023<sup>159</sup> and is set to more than double related energy jobs within this time scale.<sup>160</sup> The National Investment Fund (NIF) proposed by the IPPR, suggests that there is currently a vicious cycle between low-levels of investments and de-industrialisation in the UK, causing regional disparities and an economic gap between other regions of the UK and the south of England.<sup>161</sup> The research shows that the UK’s path to decarbonisation might therefore be halted by domestic unavailability of green technologies, however the implementation of a green industrial strategy, such as that by Europe, alongside innovative and robust policy stability could, “revamp private investments [...] based on green manufacturing technologies and jobs, through the virtuous nexus of evenly distributed economic prosperity and climate mitigation.”<sup>162</sup> Anchoring the UK as a leader in sustainable finance is vital in closing the estimated financing gap to meet nature-related outcomes of between £44-97bn by 2032.<sup>163</sup> To close this gap, the UK must unlock private and public capital at scale, requiring increased transparency and accountability and strengthening policy with coherent sustainable finance.<sup>164</sup> The CWE framework recognises that there is a role by the private sector to demonstrate leadership, alongside robust policy and legislation, by delving deeply into the UK’s world-leading talent pool to support a just transition for all.

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<sup>156</sup> Jackson, T., (2017). *Prosperity without growth: Foundations for the economy of tomorrow* 2nd ed. Abingdon, Oxon : Routledge. pp. 218

<sup>157</sup> Gasperin, S. and Dibb, G. (2023) *Growing Green: A proposal for a national investment fund*, Institute for Public Policy Institute. Institute for Public Policy Institute. <https://www.ippr.org/files/2023-08/national-investment-fund-aug-23.pdf> pp.4

<sup>158</sup> European Commission (2023) *The Green Deal Industrial Plan*. file:///Users/meg/Downloads/Factsheet.pdf.pdf pp. 2

<sup>159</sup> Ibid

<sup>160</sup> Ibid

<sup>161</sup> Gasperin, S. and Dibb, G. (2023) *Growing Green: A proposal for a national investment fund*, Institute for Public Policy Institute. Institute for Public Policy Institute. <https://www.ippr.org/files/2023-08/national-investment-fund-aug-23.pdf> pp.10

<sup>162</sup> Ibid pp. 34

<sup>163</sup> Green Finance Institute (2021). Time period estimated is from 2022-2032.

<https://www.greenfinanceinstitute.co.uk/news-and-insights/finance-gap-for-uk-nature-report/>.

<sup>164</sup> The Global City UK (2023) *Vision for Economic Growth – a roadmap to prosperity*. The Global City UK.

<https://www.theglobalcity.uk/PositiveWebsite/media/Research-reports/Vision-for-Economic-Growth-%E2%80%94-a-roadmap-to-prosperity.pdf> pp. 33

## Final statement

As this report shows, the crash and burn economy has for far too long affected people and the planet. We believe that the Creative Wellbeing Economy is much needed and places thriving over simply surviving. This represents an exciting opportunity for Bath Spa University in partnership with Fashion Roundtable to shape a new basis for policy agenda fit for purpose for 2023 with the underpinning of the Creative Wellbeing Economy framework. We very much look forward to being at the vanguard of this.

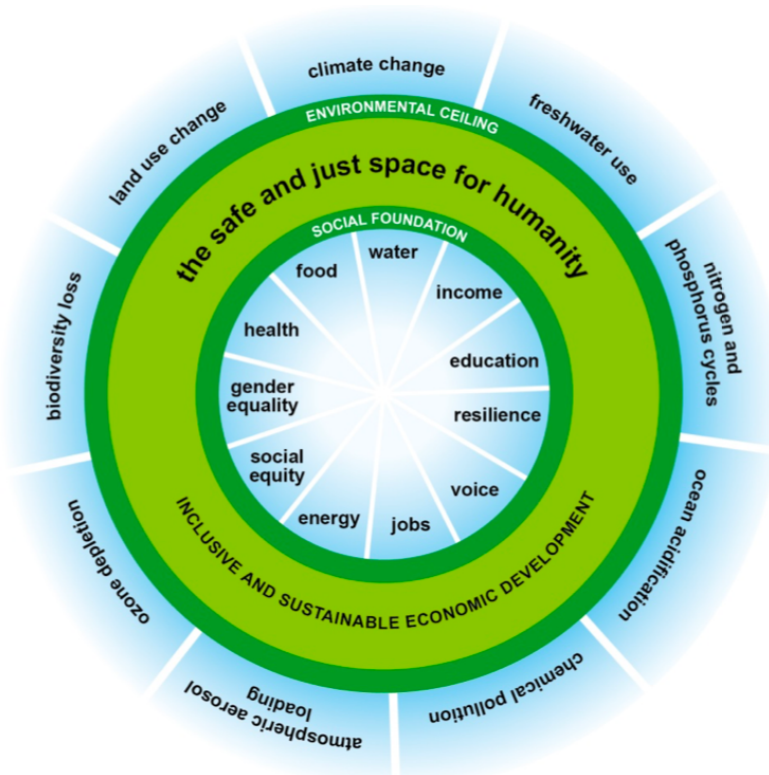
## Appendix and additional notes

In thinking about the Creative Wellbeing Economy holistically, we see the Creative Wellbeing Economy as central to other alternative frameworks, as shown below. Rather than a short-termist view of the required framework and policy focus, the Creative Wellbeing Economy framework and subsequent policies will be carefully mapped and reviewed, with the ability for agility on this. This is far more than just a focus on ‘firefighting’ pressing issues e.g. climate change, social injustice etc, and requires that longer-term challenges have a long-term vision which we can and must lead on.



Figure 11: Author's depiction of the CWE framework as an overarching framework

## 1. Doughnut Economics



Source: Oxfam. The 11 dimensions of the social foundation are illustrative and are based on governments' priorities for Rio+20. The nine dimensions of the environmental ceiling are based on the planetary boundaries set out by Rockström et al (2009b)

There is a challenge when transitioning to a safe and just space for humanity, given the social and planetary boundaries are interdependent of one another. Doughnut economics represents an environmentally safe and socially-just space for humanity – this is also the space in which sustainable economic development takes place. The social foundation forms the inner boundary and the environmental ceiling forms the outer – beyond this, many dimensions of human and environmental deprivation occur.

It is documented that the largest source of planetary boundary stress today is due to the consumption levels of an estimated [10% of the wealthiest people in the world](#) and the production patterns of the companies producing the goods and services that they consume. Adding to this, the aspirations of many consumers seeking to emulate these higher-income lifestyles are on the rise, with the global middle class anticipated to [increase by roughly 3 billion by 2030](#).

There is an expectation that by [2030 global demand for water is expected to rise by 30%, as well as food and energy consumption by 50%](#). The inefficiency with which natural resources are currently utilised to meet human needs, e.g. via wasted food and poor recycling infrastructures, further exacerbates this issue. Therefore moving into a safe and just space for humanity means not only eradicating poverty, but also reducing the use of global resources.



This relies on far greater policies than those currently in place and will require the greatest reductions to come from the world's richest consumers. A fundamental challenge to political feasibility in respecting planetary boundaries is how their implications centre in national policy-making and also more complex negotiations internationally. If policies are poorly designed, they can push people further below the social foundation and exacerbate poverty. This is also true for environmental stress. However, [well-designed policies can support environmental sustainability and also poverty eradication](#), which requires careful consideration.

## 2. The Good Economy

The Good Economy, suggests that the UK is [entrenched with generational place-based inequalities](#), which Covid-19 and Brexit have exacerbated, centering them in public debate, alongside a quest for sustainable approaches to tackle them. A white paper by The Good Economy highlights how patient private capital can step in to match public investment by delivering social and environmental positive impacts with hyperlocality in mind. This suggests:

“a place-based approach to scaling up institutional capital, including pension fund investment, into opportunities that enhance local economic resilience and contribute to sustainable development, creating tangible benefits for people, communities and businesses across the UK.”

If successful, the authors note that this is an exercise in bridge building, i.e. London and the rest of the country. This requires an interdisciplinary approach, although it is important to recognise that both private and public investors might target specific places intentionally, therefore the necessary impacts would fall outside of the geographical areas that need it most. In theory, the smaller the area, the greater the probability for leakages – e.g. if someone lives outside of the area in which they work – and the possibility for greater impact.<sup>165</sup>

[https://thegoodeconomy.co.uk/resources/reports/Place-based-Impact-Investing-White-Paper-May-2021\\_2021-05-29-090621.pdf](https://thegoodeconomy.co.uk/resources/reports/Place-based-Impact-Investing-White-Paper-May-2021_2021-05-29-090621.pdf)

## 3. The Kindness Economy

Mary Portas

[https://www.ted.com/talks/mary\\_portas\\_welcome\\_to\\_the\\_kindness\\_economy](https://www.ted.com/talks/mary_portas_welcome_to_the_kindness_economy)

Mary Portas has defined a new economy built on kindness and a Triple Bottom Line of – people, planet and profit, called ‘The Kindness Economy.’ The theory behind this is that any business which centres themselves around this approach will win. Through her project ‘Work Like a Woman’ and agency Portas, Mary is at the forefront of making the nation’s shops better businesses.

Her [agency website](#) states:

“When a business is desirable, culturally magnetic and a powerful force for good – that’s beautiful business. Not only will they be the ones winning in the future, they’ll

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<sup>165</sup> UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills, ‘Research to improve the Assessment of Additionality’, Occasional Paper 1, October 2009.

be bettering it too. From our voice in culture, to our work with brands, to our ventures with likeminded partners - our mission is to prove the power of beautiful, make change happen, and enjoy ourselves along the way. From vision right through to action.”

Through the Kindness Economy lens, Mary created ‘[Mary’s Living and Giving](#)’ charity shops in partnership with Save the Children. This now equates to 26 shops across the UK, raising over £22 million for charity.

#### 4. Wellbeing Economy Alliance

<https://weall.org/about-weall>

Much like the other economic systems discussed, the Wellbeing Economy Alliance has designed the ‘Wellbeing Economy’ to serve people the planet. This economy places human and planetary wellbeing at the centre of everything and shifts the idea of societal success beyond GDP and growth. This approach focuses on people-centred approaches which are geared towards long-term and regenerative opportunities and solutions.

Economic approaches traditionally focus on growing the economy as quickly as possible despite their impacts on people and the environment. Instead, the Wellbeing Economy calls for governments globally to take an interdisciplinary approach to policy-making, with long-term outcomes and a fair and just distribution of wealth. Governments who have taken this approach include Prime Ministers Sanna Marin of Finland, Katrín Jakobsdóttir of Iceland and Jacinda Ardern, former Prime Minister of New Zealand. As this system grows in popularity, it does offer a vibrant counter solution to linear economics and the growing global trend of populist politics and policies, which arguably purport to listen to the left behind, but lead to greater divisions, binary thinking and exploitation of people and planet.

#### 5. Centre for Understanding Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP)

<https://cusp.ac.uk/>

Directed by Professor Tim Jackson, who has been quoted throughout this document, the Centre for Understanding Sustainable Prosperity (CUSP), is built on the following research question:

RQ: What can prosperity possibly mean in a world of environmental, social and economic limits?—We work with people, policy and business to address this question, developing pragmatic steps towards a shared and lasting prosperity.

The programme is organised thematically around the following:

1. (M)eanings and moral framings of the good life;
2. the role of the (A)rts and culture in delivering prosperity;
3. (P)olitical and organisational dimensions of sustainable prosperity;
4. (S)ocial and psychological understandings of the good life;
5. and (S)ystems analysis to explore narratives of sustainable prosperity. The findings of our MAPSS research themes are drawn together through a rich portfolio of engagement across business, government and civil society. Detailed information about our research programme can be accessed through our

Earlier this year in a talk for the ‘Beyond Growth Conference’ at the European Parliament in Brussels, Professor Tim Jackson rounded up the fact that care is often seen as the

“anathema to capitalism”, going on to say that “yet, without care we are nothing, our progress is nothing.” Professor Tim Jackson suggested that what’s required is a complete unravelling of the systemic distortions of the current system and to construct instead an economy of care, craft and creativity fit for purpose on a finite planet (Ibid).

## **6. Earth Logic**

Created by Mathilda Tham and Kate Fletcher, The [Earth Logic](#) plan has been created out of necessity to the climate crisis and focuses on research into action:

“[...] research that fosters change and action; not research that sits on shelves gathering dust. The urgency of the situation means that work cannot wait several years for publication in a peer-reviewed journal, and then more time still for other scholars to read and pick up on it.”

The plan looks to create an activist knowledge ecology, knowledge exchange, action, empowerment and change and looks to work on new models with interdisciplinary action in mind. This is built around the fashion sector and proposes a planet before industry as a radical concept in which the planet comes first and business interests come second. This upends existing priorities for the fashion sector and focuses on degrowth, localism, plurality, mindsets, language and governance.

<https://earthlogic.info/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Earth-Logic-E-version.pdf>

## **7. Terra Carta Mandate**

His Majesty King Charles III, when he was Prince of Wales, created the 'Terra Carta' framework under the Sustainable Markets Authority. The framework offers the basis of a recovery plan that puts Nature, People and Planet at the heart of global value creation – one that will harness the precious, irreplaceable power of Nature combined with the transformative innovation and resources of the private sector.

In the 2022 Commonwealth Heads of Government Leaders statement , the leaders of all 56 Commonwealth Countries commended His Majesty King Charles III, when he was Prince of Wales, on the creation of the Terra Carta for Nature, People, and Planet, and recognised its value as a blueprint for public-private collaboration in making markets sustainable for the future.

<https://www.sustainable-markets.org/terra-carta>