Re-Making fashion experience: a model for 'participatory research through clothing design'

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Abstract

The paper presents a participatory research model based on two case studies, involving the making of the research and the making of the clothing. In recent years, there has been growing interest in participatory design research, especially in relation to textiles and clothing. Various practice-based initiatives focused around the role, value and use of clothing have demonstrated success in developing and applying research methodologies aimed at activating or recording creative outcomes while staying attuned to participants' experiential knowledge and feedback. Researchers working across social and design innovation contexts point to the urgent need for new cultures of sustainable practice that challenge the growth model through the sharing of expert and amateur knowledge and skills. Consequently, an important opportunity now exists to more formally explicate a transferable model of principles for participatory engagement through making together.

Based on critical analysis of two consecutive collaborative research inquiries, this article posits a working model of 'participatory research through clothing design'. The authors suggest that the model, consisting of five stages of participation: (I) communicating and listening, (II) involving, (III) activating and responding, (IV) consulting, and (V) sharing, offers a useful pathway when considering craft-based research aspirations and goals. The authors seek to highlight some of the practical opportunities and ethical responsibilities faced by researchers when making with others, while delineating some of the challenges and potential pitfalls raised by both case studies.

Keywords: participatory research, participatory research model, fashion and clothing, fashion and ageing, material engagement, embodied knowledge, textiles

Introduction

The ways in which products, especially clothing, are designed and made has developed from twentieth century modernity, and the premise that 'liberation from the weight of everyday activities' equates to 'well-being' (Manzini 2015: 95). The current growth-based fashion system (Fletcher and Tham 2019) where 'everything everybody needs' is manufactured, has led to 'a reduction in the informal economics of self-production and non-monetary exchange' (Manzini 2015: 94). The once necessary skills of making and maintaining one's wardrobe are familiar to individuals from the baby boomer generation, those born between 1946 and 1964 (UK Office for National Statistics, 2012) for whom purchasing fashionable clothing was something to aspire to. By undertaking research with members of this generation, we have been able to tap into their embodied knowledge of 'finding the right fit' through social, 'material' and 'wearer-worn engagements' (Goode in Townsend et al 2017; Malafouris; Valle-Noronha 2019). The outcomes of this design-orientated research have resulted in material artefacts (research tools) disseminated through exhibitions and conferences questioning the current fashion system, including *Everything and Everybody as Material* (Thornquist and Bigolin, 2017). Additionally, the work has led the authors to devise a participatory model to support 'co-creation' research practices, considered as an important strategy towards sustainability (Fletcher and Tham 2019; Manzini 2015).

The article reflects on the implementation and analysis of collaborative research methodologies employed in two projects focused on the making of fashion and textile artefacts informed by the clothing practices of older men (Sadkowska 2016) and older women (Townsend, Sadkowska and Sissons 2017). Both methodologies were characterized by participatory approaches incorporating 'research through design' practice (Koskinen et al 2011), culminating in artefacts constituting research tools, informed by phenomenological and co-design methods (Townsend, Kent and Sadkowska 2019). Each study differed in terms of the number of participants, the level of physical making together, the emerging data and how this was creatively interpreted. Variations also included individual aims and objectives, and particularly, the order in which the studies were undertaken.

In Case Study 1: *Re-Materialising Mature Men's Experiences of Fashion and Clothing* (CS1), (concluded 2016) the male participants' lived experiences of fashion were used as inspiration for upcycled interpretations of second-hand tailored jackets, re-made by the researcher (Sadkowska 2018). Case Study 2: *Emotional Fit: Developing a new fashion methodology with older women* (CS2) (concluded 2017) benefitted from reflections on the nature of participation in the creative practice in CS1, by proactively involving the female participants as co-designers throughout the entire research process (Townsend and Sadkowska 2018).

The article is organized into four sections, describing the theoretical influences on the 'participatory research through clothing design' model; analysis of CS1 to contextualize the rationale for the model; CS2 to illustrate its implementation, and finally, reflection on the model with consideration for its future application.

Developing a participatory model for co-creative practice

'Participatory' or 'collaborative' action research is a well-established research method in the social sciences where it may be applied to bring about broad social change (Kemmis 2006) and to improve the health of individuals or communities (Minkler 2000) (Goode in Townsend et al 2017: 96). The need for holistic approaches towards sustainable design and social innovation 'is supported by evidence that dress and the way we fashion ourselves can have real value in terms of enhancing health and well-being.'(Ibid.)

The participatory model developed by the authors and explored in this paper builds on Roger Hart's (1992), 'Ladder of Participation' developed for working with children, which was a further interpretation of Sherry Arnstein's (1969) 'Ladder of Citizen Participation'. Using the ladder as a metaphor, both exemplars addressed different power structures in society, between children and adults, and citizens and the state, devised to challenge and redress the balance within each context. In 2008, Hart called for further critical reflection on his model; for it to be considered as a 'jumping off point for other interpretations' (Hart 2008: 19). In our adaptation, we draw on principles from both ladders including steps 3-8: 'Informing; Placation; Consultation; Partnership, Delegated power and Citizen control' (Arnstein 1969: 217) and 4-8: 'Assigned but informed; Consulted but informed; Adult initiated shared decisions; Child initiated and directed, and Child initiated, shared decisions with adults" (Hart 1992: 8).

Table 1 illustrates our synthesis of Hart's and Arnstein's criteria for collaborating with children and citizens, to formalise our own participatory approach to working with older adults. Unlike Arnstein and Hart's ladders, our model has not been specifically devised for groups marginalised by society, but does seek to involve ageing, experienced users of clothing who have been traditionally overlooked by the fashion industry (Twigg 2013).
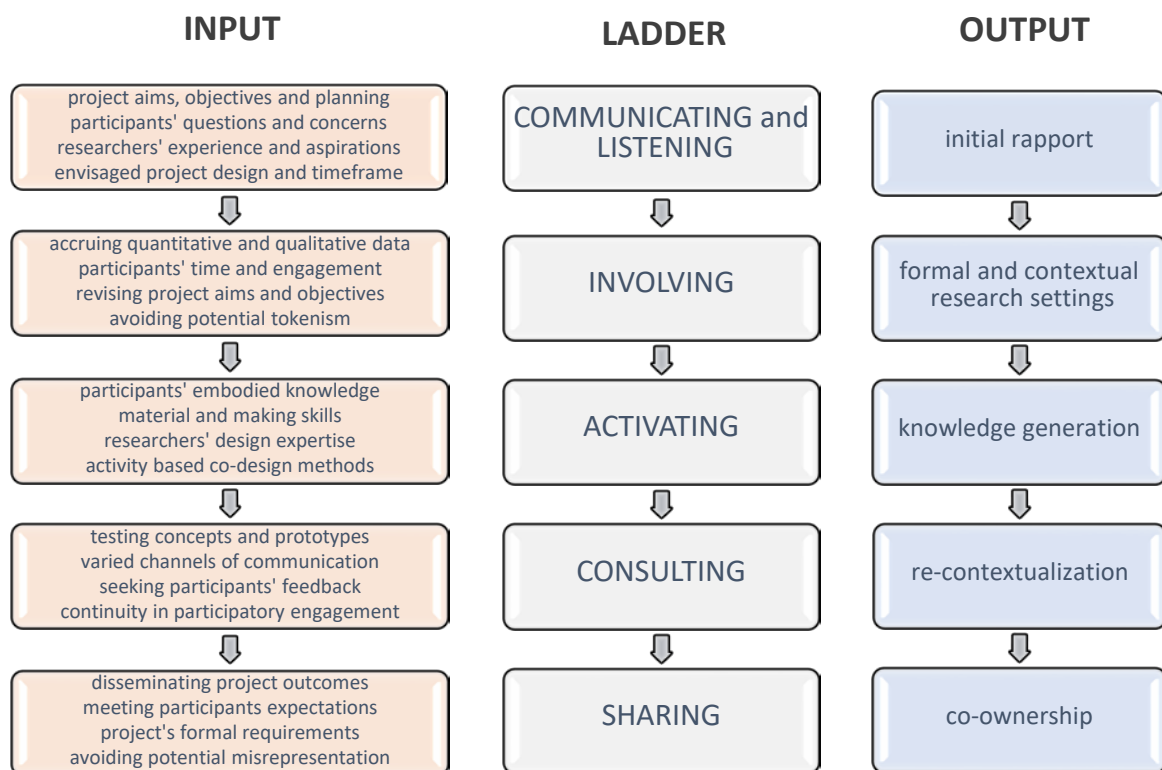
3

INPUT	LADDER	OUTPUT
project aims, objectives and planning participants' questions and concerns researchers' experience and aspirations envisaged project design and timeframe	COMMUNICATING and LISTENING	initial rapport
accruing quantitative and qualitative data participants' time and engagement revising project aims and objectives avoiding potential tokenism	INVOLVING	formal and contextual research settings
participants' embodied knowledge material and making skills researchers' design expertise activity based co-design methods	ACTIVATING	knowledge generation
testing concepts and prototypes varied channels of communication seeking participants' feedback continuity in participatory engagement	CONSULTING	re-contextualization
disseminating project outcomes meeting participants expectations project's formal requirements avoiding potential misrepresentation	SHARING	co-ownership

Table 1: Participatory research through clothing design model. © Sadkowska & Townsend 2019.

In the following two studies we explore the creative research space between 'the two poles of *diffuse design* and *expert design*, where *diffuse design* is put into play by "nonexperts" with their natural designing capacity, while design experts are people trained to operate professionally as designers' (Manzini 2015: 37). What interests us is the potential for 'participatory design [to] reconnect the maker and user [of clothing]…by reframing the user as maker' (Fletcher 2008: 194).

Case Study 1: Re-Materialising Mature Men's Experiences of Fashion and Clothing

This case reports on a doctoral study conducted by Sadkowska (2016) at Nottingham Trent University (NTU) between 2012 and 2016. The aim of the project was to understand a small sample of older British men's experiences of fashion and ageing, using clothing to explore their psychological and sociological perspectives on this unexplored phenomenon. Clothing

is an inherent element of our mundane everyday lives (e.g. Bovone, 2012), but clothing can also function as a source of pleasure, confidence and self-assurance for individuals, offering a meaningful and potent prism to individuals' life experiences.

From the outset, the researcher's aspiration was to investigate and embrace participatory design practice by encouraging 'active user and stakeholder engagement throughout all phases of the research and design process' (Martin and Hanington 2012: 128), via methods of in-depth interviews, personal inventories, co-creative workshops with the male participants, and an exhibition to showcase the creative outcomes. While the practical application of some of these methods was successful in encouraging participants' active engagement, they also posed some challenges, as reflected on below.

Participants' recruitment

Great care was taken to obtain a closely defined group of participants for whom the research questions were meaningful i.e. mature men from the UK baby boomer generation with a lifelong interest in fashion and clothing. From the outset, discussion between the researcher and participants was undertaken to communicate the project's aims and objectives, encouraging questioning to aid transparency and rapport. Consequently, this stage ensured that those participating in the study had the required characteristics and were in tune with its inherent processes and proposed outcomes.

Interviews and personal inventories

A series of conversational interviews (n=5) was augmented by personal inventories i.e. as part of the interview the participants were asked to open-up their wardrobes (Fletcher and Klepp 2017) by showing and telling the researcher about meaningful garments (Fig. 1) in their 'personal fashion archives' (Sadkowska 2020). These objects worked as stimuli for conversation but also as direct, material inspiration for the researcher-practitioner to work with during the interpretative, artistic design part of the project. The interview stage was significant for the data collected by involving the participants, which also allowed the researcher to reconsider her research aspirations. The project's objectives were re-drafted to include the participants' feedback, and to ensure that the re-worked would preserve and convey the overall characteristics of 'wear-ability' embodied in the men's clothing habits.

[insert Figure 1 here]

Data analysis and creative reinterpretation

The process of data analysis was divided into two stages; first, the data collected from the participants was analysed using procedures standard to Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith, Flowers, and Larkin, 2009) with focus on in-depth analysis and interpretation of the participants' embodied experiences (Willig 2001; Finlay 2011). Second, the emergent themes were re-interpreted via various creative textile and fashion practices, applied by the researcher (Sadkowska 2018) (Fig. 2) culminating in the production of nine (deconstructed and reconstructed) jacket artefacts and nine corresponding films.

During this stage of the research the participants' involvement was limited to the researcher 'keeping in touch' by sending updates via email; often, these updates were fragmented due to delays in producing the interpretative narratives and practical work, and partly due to concern that the participants may disapprove of them. This led to a lack of collaborative engagement which shifted 'the power balance' (Arnstein 1969) to the researcher, and while several actions, were undertaken to ensure the validity of the process (Sadkowska, 2016), the creative interpretation of the data was ultimately influenced by the researcher's subjectivity, and the formal requirements of the project.

[insert Figure 2 here]

Research exhibition

The final stage of this project consisted of the researcher curating a fashion research exhibition at Nottingham Trent University, 16-18 December 2015 (Fig. 3). The study participants and external visitors to the exhibition offered a unique opportunity to accrue feedback and to validate the project and its outcomes. Reactions were personal and subjective, their value based on how they related to the artefacts. The participants recognised elements from their wardrobes, interviews and experiences, such as iconic references to Punk fashion via the use of safety pins and deconstruction techniques (Gill 1998) in the *Pioneering Jacket* (Sadkowska 2020: 79). The reinterpretation of these 'material signs' (Malafouris 2013: 97) offered a unique way of 'sharing' the ownership of outcomes and findings with the participants, enabling them, and members of the public, to provide additional commentary to the research findings. Consequently, this participatory element at the final evaluative stage of the project, acted as an interpretative and reflective tool that metaphorically stitched together all the previous analysis of empirical data.

[insert Figure 3 here]

Following reflection, it was considered that further consultation on the researcher's creative practice, could have been accessed using digital materials (e.g. textile/ garment visualizations and feedback sheets) and significantly, face-to-face meetings, to enhance participation. The experience gained throughout the different stages of the project was also analysed to inform the working participatory model of which was further tested and developed in the following case study (CS2).

Case Study 2 – Emotional Fit: Designing a new fashion methodology with older women

The writing-up of this case study has been structured to mirror the authors' adaptation of Arnstein (1969) and Hart's (1992) 'ladders of participation' into their own 'participatory research through clothing design model' (Table 1). While the case exemplifies how the model was applied to co-create printed textiles/ garments, the five-stage methodology has the potential to be applied in any creative making context.

Most of the participants in the *Emotional Fit* project were drawn from a self-formed group of semi/retired British women who retained a strong interest in fashion, following initial contact between the group and the university to enquire how higher education was designing for the growing older female demographic. A practice-based inquiry was established in early 2015, funded by the School of Art and Design, to explore the clothing issues and needs of this convenience sample (Townsend et al 2019).

Initial conversations with participants and a literature review identified 'an important gap in academic and practice-based approaches to fashion design' (Goode in Townsend et al 2017b: 196). A series of research questions and aims were formulated 'to gain understanding of how fashion and clothing are experienced and remembered by a sample of mature British women over the age of 55' (Townsend et al 2017a: 236). The title 'Emotional Fit' was devised by the researchers and participants, as a form of 'languaging' that conveyed the co-creative relationship of 'communicating, thinking and doing fashion' with a group of older women in response to the shortcomings of the contemporary paradigm (Fletcher and Tham 2019: 60).

Project call and workshop preparation

A 'call for participation' in creative workshops was circulated via the group including the question: 'How can womenswear be designed more effectively to meet the physical and emotional requirements of an ageing female demographic?' Invitees to Workshop 1 were sent an agenda and asked to bring a favourite/ least favourite garment, informing an objective to 'create a series of womenswear prototypes that reflected [the participants] emotionally durable design needs and aesthetic preferences' (Townsend et al 2017: 240).

Communicating and listening (initial rapport)

Workshops 1 and 2 involved 'gathering experiential knowledge and design data' carried out over two sessions in May and June 2015 with 10-12 participants, the three researchers acting as facilitators, supported by PhD students. At the start of each workshop (based in fashion and textile studios at NTU) the facilitators introduced the aims and proposed rules of engagement to establish a 'safe space' (Tham in Fletcher and Klepp, 2017: 75). The facilitators welcomed the participants, introduced themselves and their relevant research into textiles, fashion and pattern cutting (e.g. Sadkowska 2016; Townsend and Mills 2013; Sissons 2010). The participants were also invited to introduce themselves, their interests and reasons for participating, followed by three rotated activities of 40 minutes (below) a break and summary.

Clothing Preferences/ Challenges

- Show and tell: favourite garments (groups of 3-4)
- Show and tell: least favourite garments
- Photos taken of participants wearing favourite garments
- One-to-one conversations about garments with researcher

Sizing and Fit

- Discussion of shared issues (groups of 3-4)
- Detailed body measurements taken of each participant
- Based on: Standard Body Measurements and Sizes (Aldrich 2004)
- One-to-one conversations with researchers

Aesthetics

- Colour, tone, pattern, texture
- Textile qualities
- Garment style, silhouette

- Mood board creation using tear sheets

Throughout these data gathering exercises, emphasis was placed on 'listening' to the participants to capture as much information about their clothing experiences as possible, using audio recording, photography and notation methods. The studio, furnished with cutting tables, mannequins, sewing, measuring and cutting equipment provided practical tools and visual prompts (Fig. 4). The environment triggered memories of home-making copies of iconic boutique fashions (e.g. Patti Boyd's 'Dolly Rocker' dress) wearing older sisters coveted items and surreptitiously swapping clothes with friends (Goode 2016: 6). Many of the participants possessed life-long dressmaking skills, learnt from mothers and needlework classes at school, practiced at home as young women in the 1960s and 1970s (Ibid.). Most of the women had continued to use this tacit knowledge to 'make' and 'personalize' garments (Twigger Holroyd in Kuksa and Fisher 2017) having often found 'mass-produced clothing an uneasy fit' (Aldrich, 2004: 4).

[insert Figure 4 here]

Involving (formal and contextual research settings)

As in CS1, five in-depth interviews were undertaken and analysed using IPA methods (between June and October 2015) to gain further insights into the women's past and present clothing practices. All the interviews were carried out in the participants' homes, so the women could be close to their wardrobes, using photography and further (gentle) questioning find out more about specific, well-loved and worn garments and to identify their personal values (Haugsrud in Fletcher and Klepp 2017). The interviews revealed strong connections between emotional durability and garment longevity (Niinimaki and Koskinen 2011; Burcikova 2019). Analysis of the transcripts identified five superordinate (master) themes and subordinate variations, as detailed in Table 2.

Superordinate (master) theme	Subordinate themes (variations)	
Fashion awareness (1)	importance to stay informed about changing trends	filtering contemporary trends through individual needs and expectations

Sense of belonging (2)	clear individual textile/ style preferences (personal likes and dislikes)	constant negotiating between individual preferences, and shared generational and socio-cultural connections
Bodily changes (3)	changing physicality and its impact on embodied experiences of textiles and clothing	emotional memory; past body as a point of reference
Personal trajectories (4)	the significance of the individual life courses	fashion and textile experiences as touchstones
Textiles as a catalyst (5)	textiles providing a 'material gestalt' underpinning the participants' fashion identities	surface pattern as embodied narrative and emotional expression

Table 2: Superordinate and subordinate themes emerging from interpretative phenomenological analysis of participant interviews. © Emotional Fit 2016.

In this case study we particularly focus on themes 4 and 5; the participants embodied experiences of fashion and the capacity for textiles to act as form of material gestalt, to inform co-creative making (Townsend and Sadkowska 2018). The themes supported the quantitative (measurements) and qualitative (narratives) data accrued in Workshops 1 and 2. The findings were triangulated through the development of series of (textile and garment) design research tools, made between November 2015 and April 2016, in regular consultation with a core group of participants.

Activating (knowledge generation)

The detailed body measurements were used to cut individual pattern blocks and construct calico bodices for each participant, which were tried on by the individuals concerned in fitting sessions (in and between workshops) (Fig 4). The blocks informed circular, square and rectangular shaped toiles (in woven and knitted qualities) to accommodate groups of body shapes. These silhouettes were developed alongside 30 printed textile designs inspired by references to patterns, colours, textures digitally printed onto natural fibres, identified in the wardrobe conversations (Fletcher and Klepp 2017). The prints and toiles constituted the

emerging designed outcomes of the project, defined by Malafouris as 'material and physical signs':

A physical sign can be touched, carried, worn, possessed, exchanged, stored, transfigured or destroyed. Things act most powerfully at a non-discursive level, incorporating qualities (such as colour, texture and smell) that affect human cognition in ways that are rarely conceptualised (Malafouris 2013: 95)

The participants were invited to respond to these research tools in Workshops 3 and 4 (April and May 2016). The textiles were handled, visually analysed, then quickly placed against forearms (and skin), shoulders, torsos and waists, at strategic anchor points of the body. Toiles were tried on and developed through live draping with the researchers, bring together the 'diffuse' and 'expert' design skills of both parties (Manzini 2015: 37). The women personalized the silhouettes through 'intentional alterations' (Twigger-Holroyd in Kuksa and Fisher 2017) using pins, tacking and cloth strips to shorten, manipulate volume and attach prints to the modelled silhouettes (Fig. 5).

[insert Figure 5 here]

These responses were spontaneous, intuitive, the result of the 'myriad of different ways that in which bodies are understood, experienced, configured and made meaningful within fashion and material culture' (Entwistle and Townsend 2020: 289). The 'trying on' of raw, unfinished garments (Gill 1998) in a socio-material atmosphere activated playful and experiential interactions with garments over purely aesthetic judgements (Valle-Noronha 2019). Many of these 'gestures' of making clothing/ oneself could be analysed as involuntary 'memory tasks' (Malafouris 2013: 60), including reconnection with dressmaking skills applied in the participants youth, rediscovered as a joy in later life (Goode 2016).

Consulting (re-contextualization)

The research outcomes were developed and recontextualized through consultation with the participants during and between each iterative stage of the *Emotional Fit* workshops, fittings, photo shoots and salon, facilitated by: maintaining email/ telephone contact with the groups' coordinator(s); working one-to-one with participants in fittings; communicating via email and social media with the wider group ahead of major events.

Feedback from all sessions, comprising notes, photos, customized toiles and prints (ranked by participants in order), informed the modification and resolution of the printed/ garment prototypes (between May 2016 and April 2017). During this time multiple patterns were cut and graded (in three grouped sizes) textiles designed, scaled and printed to be integrated aesthetically with 2D geometric shapes while simultaneously envisioning them on the body as 3D forms (Townsend in Aldrich 2004: 189). Individual and group fittings were arranged along with two photo shoots (November 2016 and March 2017).

[insert Figure 6 here]

Engagement with the materials/ processes of fashion and textiles facilitated a literal and metaphorical 'making together'; enacted through the participants sensorial testing of physiological, psychological 'fit', as explored in the film, Emotional Fit (2017) (Fig. 6). Here, work-in-progress prototypes were iterated by the participants, exploring 'dress in its broadest sense as an intermediary between body and space' that is 'understood and experienced through […] an embodied experience of wearing, doing and being…' (Thornquist and Bigolin 2017: 5).

Sharing (co-ownership)

The 'sharing' of outcomes, included the *Emotional Fit: Fashion Salon*, devised in collaboration with *Fashion Revolution Week*, (on 26 April, 2017). From Workshop 1, the participants had expressed the desire to present the research outcomes in a celebratory showcase. Of the 45 women involved, 17 volunteered to present a selection of the garments at an external event in Nottingham. The salon was advertised via the women's network, online, via posters at NTU and was attended by 150 people, including participants, public, fashion industry, academics and students. The researchers introduced the research context, process and emerging outcomes, then the participants did a walk through, followed by a photo/ conversation opportunity (Fig. 7). The group's coordinator closed the event by reflecting on the project; the empowering impact of being involved in an aspect of the fashion industry through material conversations around body and dress in later life (Twigg 2013).

Reflections and feedback on the participatory process and model

Both case studies incorporated multiple forms of making together, from physical to 'metaphorical mappings' (Malafouris 2013: 61) of clothing use, design and construction across the five stages of the participatory model. The participants were involved throughout the exploratory, generative, and evaluative stages of research. However, the nature and level of participation in the making process, varied between CS1 and CS2, particularly in the 'Activating and Consulting' stages. The Communicating and Listening stage allowed the researchers to recruit the study samples, establish rapport and purposeful aims and objectives to build upon together. In CS1 these were chiefly devised by the researcher, but in CS2 were catalysed by the participants making initial contact, effectively shaping the research.

'Involving' participants in the research required collecting evidence of their lived experiences and subjective fashion preferences. The use of wardrobes as 'personal archives' revealed a mix of high fashion and 'mundane clothing' (Sadkowska 2020; Burcikova 2019). Items triggered emotive narratives about belonging to tribes, DIY and deconstruction/ making practices (Gill 1998) the significance of style over fashion towards more meaningful product relationships (Malafouris 2013, Fletcher 2008). Analysis of accrued data led to the revision of both project's aims and objectives, to avoid 'potential tokenism', identified as pitfalls of participatory engagement (Arnstein 1969; Hart 1992) As we discovered, the co-creative research practice required a 'high level of collaboration between all involved', reaching 'beyond knowledge exchange to generate new ideas and actions' (Fletcher and Tham (2019: 34).

'Activating' insights to generate new knowledge through the development of co-designed artefacts was carried out remotely in CS1, but in CS2 the researchers utilised expertise holistically, drawing on the participants latent dressmaking skills and embodied knowledge of 'wearer-worn engagements' (Valle-Noronha 2019).

'Consulting' the participants throughout the iterative stages of CS1 and CS2 involved different channels of communication to reframe the project based on changing opinions and ethical responsibilities. Reflection on CS1 led to stronger continuity of participant engagement in CS2, supporting stronger investment in the co-created outcomes.

The dissemination of both projects' artistic outcomes in the university and wider Nottingham community prioritized the participatory nature of the studies by creating conditions of shared ownership, underpinned by the university's ethical clearance procedures. In CS1 participants were invited to respond to exhibitions of artefacts, which were utilised to inform the research findings (Sadkowska 2016). In CS2 the participants expectation to co-present the research 'tools' publicly, was facilitated by the research team and Creative Quarter, Nottingham with

support from independent venues and companies. Participants were notified of the further dissemination of both projects to avoid misrepresentation while meeting the formal requirements of the research.

[insert Figure 7 here]

Feedback on Emotional Fit

The research team accrued feedback on the participatory process throughout and at the end of the project, through ongoing dialogue, short questionnaires (via email) and films. A paper, written in collaboration with one of the participants, who acknowledged all aspects of the research process in *Finding the right fit* (Goode in Townsend et al 2017b: 196).

A 10-minute documentary style film *Emotional Fit* (Townsend, Sadkowska and Boxall 2017) featured footage captured in the latter stages of the project, proritising participants speaking to camera about their experiences. Here, the comments were focused on 'the sense of agency' the project had afforded them, allowing them to feel part of the fashion conversation and to 'get out of a comfort zone' they had found themselves in through the opportunity to revisit their individual clothing selves through socio-material practices. The use of participatory research through design supports 'a shift from looking at fashion as a field of visuality and meaning to one of materiality and experience' (Valle-Noronha 2019: 17). Feedback on the model's entanglement of making and outcomes (Sennet 2013) is perhaps best expressed by the one of the participants:

> 'The clothes designed are material artefacts whose fabric, colours, textures, ways of draping the body we want to see, touch, play with, in person as part of the process of design/construction. The ability to access them as material objects in this way at every stage of the process is also validating - of us as active co-creative older women - and thus goes against the grain of dominant discourses on ageing.' (Goode in Emotional Fit, 2017)

Two of the participants, Helen Scott, the group's coordinator and Jackie Goode, an independent researcher, have been instrumental in disseminating the project by submitting and presenting the *Emotional Fit* film at the Women's Over Fifty Film Festival (WOFFF) in 2017 and 2018, which was shortlisted at Best of the Fest, HOME, Manchester in August 2019.

The 'participatory research through clothing design' model has already been tested through another project, *Emmanuel House X NTU* (Townsend et al 2019), reinforcing the aim of

Arnstein's (1969: 2017) original 'ladder' to empower marginalised members of society. The social/ sustainable design collaboration, whereby fashion students addressed the clothing needs of homeless people, has now been implemented as a core module within the undergraduate curriculum.

Acknowledgements

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Bios

Katherine Townsend (Ph.D.) is Associate Professor of Fashion and Textile Crafts at Nottingham Trent University where she leads the Craft and Embodied Knowledge group in the Centre for Fashion and Textile Research. Katherine's current research (and Ph.D. supervision) encompasses emotionally durable design, dress archives and wearables, social and sustainable textile innovation, including ethnographic work in Guatemala, supported by the Global Challenges Research Fund (AHRC). She led the participatory project *Emotional Fit* (2015-17) is lead editor of *Crafting Anatomies: Archives, Dialogues, Fabrications* (2020) co-editor of the journal of Craft Research (2009-) and has presented and published her work internationally.

Ania Sadkowska is a Fashion Designer, Senior Lecturer and Researcher at Coventry University, UK. In the past she worked as a Lecturer and Research Fellow at Nottingham Trent University, UK. Her research explores the intersection of sociology and psychology with art and design practices. Current projects span a variety of topics including fashion and ageing, masculinity, phenomenology, and art and design research methodologies. Ania has presented her work at various UK and international conferences and exhibitions including Italy, China, Sweden and USA. Since 2015 she has been involved in a co-creative research project titled *Emotional Fit: Developing a new fashion methodology with older women*.