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Chapter 7: Holistic Sustainability in Fashion (?): The Case of Vogue Italia

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Abstract

Through an in-depth Content Analysis of the *Vogue Italia* archive, in this case, centred but not limited to the contents of the supplement *Vogue Talents*, the present contribution aims at shedding light on the evolution of the sustainability-related discourse in the context of one of the most influential fashion magazines. The discussion reads the findings in the light of the very needed holistic approach to fashion, highlighting the *Earth Logic* values and landscapes, investigating the concepts of de-growth, re-centring and scaling, in relation to the ways in which fashion, as a cultural, industrial and social dimension, is understood, practised and recounted. In this light, the study provides critical insight regarding the sustainability related engagement of the fashion media giants, opening for a reflection on whether fashion can save the world? What is certain is that fashion, in a systemic effort, can show the path towards a more responsible, inclusive and respectful society, opened for the multiverse of unexplored pluralities.

Keywords: *Vogue Talents*, Earth Logic, Fashion, Sustainability, Fashion Magazine

7.1 Introduction

In November 2019, Condé Nast joined UNFCCC's Fashion Industry Charter for Climate Action. It was an official declaration of the commitment '(to) play a more proactive and meaningful role in informing (their) readers about the climate emergency and inspiring them to take practical actions [...]' (Condé Nast). In January 2020, the issue of *Vogue Italia* was entirely dedicated to sustainability and creativity. Even before this act, perceived as an official declaration of commitment, the Italian fashion magazine was involved in renewed initiatives such as the scoutings organised in collaboration with Marangoni Institute 'Towards a Responsible Future'. Moreover, there is a consistent investment in the affluent, sustainability-dedicated section on the *Vogue* website. In February 2019, the supplement to *Vogue Italia* issue n. 822, *Vogue Talents* was titled *The New Frontiers of Awareness*. From its first publication in September 2009, the supplement was conceived as a platform for the showcase and support of young designers from around the world; it was dedicated to the creatives able to change the system for good. Still, the February issue was the first entirely dedicated to environmentally sensitive and socially responsible fashion practices. The supplement's attention to creative diversity and the apparent engagement in fashion decentralisation were crucial for the decision to broaden the already undertaken Content Analysis of the entire *Vogue Italia* archive that aimed to individualise the salient sustainability-related contents. The pages of *Vogue Talents* offer a much broader perspective on what sustainability is, or better, how it is presented in the fashion context.

Fashion's environmental impact and social consequences are certainly a topic of discussion for decades now. (Black, 2008; Fletcher 2014 [2008]; Black et al. eds. 2013; Hethorn & Ulasewicz eds. 2015 [2008]; Gwilt & Rissanen, 2011) Nevertheless, there is still no evidence of fundamental shifts. As a society, we still lack a holistic understanding of the problems linked to the fashion system. We have been seeing sporadic individual efforts for years now, but we lack concrete action for a systemic move forward. The analysis of the supplement's contents is important insofar it could shed light on the evolution of the sustainability-related discourse. Furthermore, it could provide critical insight regarding the sustainability engagement of the fashion media giants. Finally, the *Vogue Talents* Content Analysis observations are to be discussed in comparison with the more restricted in scale perspective of the Italian fashion realities. At the beginning of 2021, with Flavia Piancazzo, a fellow PhD student from the Department for Life Quality Studies at the University of Bologna, we have decided to investigate the directions that the contemporary born-sustainable Italian fashion brands are taking regarding sustainable and responsible practices. The research project aimed to understand what fashion sustainability means in the Italian context today. It sought to analyse how Italian fashion brands dedicated to sustainability embrace the *Earth Logic* concept, as discussed by Fletcher and Tham (2021 [2019]). The results of this preliminary research, which were presented during the Fashion Tales 2020+1 Conference and on which we wrote extensively in the conference proceedings (Maksimova & Piancazzo, 2022), served as a counterpoint perspective on what sustainability can mean in the restricted fashion context, as opposed to the broader dimension of the global fashion magazine.

By delving into the new ways of fashion production and consumption, presented through the brand stories on the pages of *Vogue Talents*, the study orientates towards understanding and describing the contemporary creative and production processes with a focus on the integration of the different sustainability aspects, the environmental safeguarding, social responsibility and protection of cultural diversities. In order to understand the levels of integration in sustainability representations, the contents of the supplement issue *Vogue Talents* are analysed in light of the values and the holistic landscapes proposed in the *Earth Logic Fashion Action Research Plan* (Fletcher & Tham, 2021 [2019]). The scope of this framework is to add a critical perspective and open for discussion on the possible improvements based on the concepts of de-growth, re-centring, scaling and diversification in the learning, communicating and governing fashion. Fashion as a manufacturing industry, still relying on modernist ways of production, should rethink and improve its practices. As a creative and communication industry, fashion should not forget its educative and awareness-raising role. As fashion agents, we all should engage in an active reimagining of how fashion is understood, practised and recounted today. This imagination act could open a path for the very needed paradigm shift towards a sustainable, inclusive and ethical society with respect for all life forms on this planet we call home. Ultimately, the grounded imagination, as opposed to misleading fantasy, could be fashion's role in saving the world.

7.2 Fashion and Sustainability – the paradox

The presentation of sustainable fashion case studies has always been an integral part of academic publications on the topic. In one of the first works dedicated to the relationship between fashion and sustainability, *Eco-chic The fashion paradox*, Black (2008) writes about numerous practitioners, activists and brands that had contributed to the gradual introduction of eco-fashion. Even though the ‘eco’ prefix implies a focus on environmental issues, the publication showcases positive examples regarding many aspects of sustainable fashion, from the use of certified organic materials and unharmful processes to fair trade and respect for the people producing the garments. The importance of taking a stance and speaking out to the injustices and the commitment to safeguarding the local traditions and skills are also an integral part of the discourse. Black is one of the first authors to provide a defined path towards a more responsible, ethical and sustainable fashion system. She suggests rethinking design in the spirit of multifunctionality and longevity of the style, reclaiming and reusing waste materials through recycling, upcycling, repairing, remodelling and recreating (Black, 2008). Many of the academic works written on the relationship between fashion and sustainability dissect in detail the consecutive stages of the product lifecycle: textile production, sourcing, making, distribution, use, disposal, providing essential information to improve each one of them (Fletcher, 2014 [2008]; Gwilt & Rissanen (eds.), 2011; Fletcher & Grose, 2012). In the early 2010s, fashion sustainability is also the focus of some cumulative works. The publication edited by Hethorn and Ulasewicz *Sustainable Fashion: Why now?* (2008) and then republished as *What’s next?* (2015), opened a conversation centred on three venues of sustainability exploration: People, production and economic Processes and Planet. Furthermore, Section VII of *The Handbook of Fashion Studies* (Black et al., 2013) was also dedicated to sustainability in the fashion context with contributions related to corporate responsibility, sustainable design and alternative business models.

Most importantly, the paradoxicality of ‘sustainable fashion’ is acknowledged. Over-consumption and planned obsolescence are the drivers behind an industry constantly increasing in size, with a growth rate estimated at 2.1% between 2017 and 2022 (Euromonitor, 2017, cited in Rinaldi, 2019). The complexity of the matter implies a need to address the system rather than the individual parts (Fletcher, 2014 [2008]). While Black optimistically speaks of a “paradigmatic shift (towards) a new era of ethical consumption” (Black, 2008), Tham relying on the concept of *Languaging* understood as “a continuous and co-dependent process of understanding through saying and defining and by saying and defining, in turn, shaping our world,” explains why the attempts to change the intrinsic culture of the words ‘consumer’ or ‘consumption’ by transferring to their properties concepts like ‘ethical’ or ‘conscious’ are fundamentally wrong (Tham, 2010). She continues by stressing how ‘sustainability’ could not and should not be simply forcefully attached to fashion. Instead, we should change our approach and by investigating the immaterial manifestations of fashion, “we might find sustainability latent within the capabilities and qualities of fashion.” (Tham, 2010, 17) Sustainability as a concept is inherently opposed to the capitalist and consumerist paradigm. The logic of unlimited and perpetual economic growth is not in tune with the natural flows; thus, simplistic juxtapositioning of the concepts of fashion and sustainability is not possible.

What is possible instead is a paradigmatic shift towards the logic of the Earth, based on eight values: *Multiple centres* of attention and action, *Interdependency* between all of the diverse actors, openness to *Diverse ways of knowing*, *Co-creation* involving active collaboration, listening, dialogue and linking, *Action research* because our time to research without acting has passed, *Grounded imagination* as opposed to the fantasy of escaping the conditions of the world, concerned with how to join the world within its limits, *Care of the world* and *Care of self* for engaging with profound change means recognising loss (Fletcher & Tham, 2021 [2019]). To bring the concept of sustainability and the fashion system closer, the system itself has to be changed from within. Fletcher and Tham propose six holistic landscapes, “each containing an imperative to reformulate industry away from the physical accumulation of goods and towards care and maintenance” (Fletcher & Tham, 2021 [2019]). The primary solution and our only option, is to grow out of growth and simply produce *less*. The fashion industry produces 53 million tonnes of textiles every year (de Castro, 2021). There are 7.6 billion of us on this planet, 75 % of the produced textiles are discarded and a question remains: Is there a reasonable need for so many textile products? We live in different climate conditions; we have different social and cultural backgrounds; we experience different personal interests, needs and aspirations. Thus, fashion should be re-centred, ideated, produced and practised *locally*. Moreover, it should come from a variety of places, emphasising the *plurality* of our existence, celebrating the variety of perceptions, ideas and forms that humankind is conceiving and creating. To shift towards *Less*, *Plural* and *Local* fashion system, we will have to engage with new ways of *Learning*, *Governance* and *Languaging*. We will have to open for new knowledge and skills, rethink organising fashion, change our mindsets and open up updated communication practices.

Although we are witnessing the academic effort to stress the necessary holistic shift, the fashion system is still very much embedded in the capitalist paradigm. There is still a gap between what theory argues and the levels of environmental and social engagement when there are attempts to implement that theory. Focusing on the 15 industry’s most prominent players and investigating their performance across six categories, *The Business of Fashion* states that “fashion is falling short of ambitions to operate in a more environmentally and socially responsible manner”. They also find that “companies demonstrate progress in analysing and understanding their impact and in setting targets ... (while) waste and workers’ rights are the weakest categories” (Kent for BoF, 2021). Although studies have shown that there is a significant “gap between incumbent fashion companies willing to innovate their business model toward sustainability and born-sustainable startups striving to make their business model replicable and scalable” (Todeschini et al., 2017), the question remains on the so-called sustainable champions, small, born-sustainable companies. How do they approach sustainability? Is it holistic, considering the different aspects of sustainability, or is it still the well-known business-as-usual practice dressed in green?

Aimed at proposing an opinion on these questions, during the Fashion Tales 2020+1 Conference in June 2021, the initial results of the pilot project “Culture and Sustainability: An Interplay on the (contemporary) Made in Italy Landscape” (Maksimova & Piancazzo, 2021) were presented.

Methodologically the project was based on a grounded qualitative analysis of 60 Italian fashion realities, evaluated in the light of the values and landscapes presented in the *Earth Logic Fashion Action Research Plan* (Fletcher & Tham, 2021 [2019]). The results showed significant discrepancies regarding the holistic understanding of sustainability in fashion. In the Italian context, the lack of *Multiple centres* is sadly evident. It was shown that only three out of 54 brands are openly inclusive of marginalised communities, while only two are built with attention to non-western perspectives. The focus is on the environment, while community engagement and social responsibility are latent for most of the analysed Italian born-sustainable brands. Moving to the holistic landscapes, it was no surprise that *Pluralism* was almost absent as a perspective. One of the most prominent values is the *Diverse ways of knowing*, even though limited to the territorial know-how, without considering the broader understanding of the concept as integration of all of the available knowledge, wisdom, capabilities and creativities. (Maksimova & Piancazzo, 2022)

The preliminary project, however, was focused on the Italian fashion context alone. It is a good starting point, but it cannot be taken as a base for generalisations. This limitation is why it was decided for an additional perspective to be taken into consideration. Hopefully, the following pages, dedicated to this additional, global perspective presented on the pages of *Vogue Talents*, will provide insightful reflections resulting from critical thinking. In doing so and aimed at the improvement of the contemporary fashion system, the present contribution wants to deepen the discussion on how fashion can paradigmatically change the world.

7.3 Methodology

Following the above-discussed issues related to sustainability in the fashion context and the limited research in sustainability discourse analysis in the context of fashion media, an in-depth Content Analysis of the *Vogue Italia* archive was conducted. The lack of academic work on the holistic integration of the different sustainable aspects in born-sustainable fashion brands on the other hand, was the main motive for the undertaken analysis on the sustainable concerns in Italy. Aimed at broadening of that, restricted in scale perspective, the initial Content Analysis was broadened to include the *Vogue Talents* supplement contents. For the study, a cover-to-cover content analysis for a total of 15 *Vogue Talents* issues was conducted, covering the issues from September 2010 to September 2021. Since missing from the consulted collection, the issues from September 2009, September 2014, September 2016 and February 2017 were not explored. The complete list of the analysed issues with general information such as *issue number*, *date*, *page format*, *number of pages* (without covers), *title* and *subtitle*, can be consulted in *Appendix I*. During the content analysis, the focus was undoubtedly on identifying sustainability-related content. Still, other information that was found relevant was also noted. Pertinent for the delineation of the sustainability discourse, contents were selected to illustrate the developments in sustainability representation. For a facilitated referencing process, *Appendix II* contains all the *Vogue Talents* sustainability-related contents used in the *Findings*. This table contains the *issue number*, *date*, *page*, *section* and *title* or **brand name*. Functional to the contextualisation and the Critical Discourse Analysis that followed, contents from the *Vogue Italia* archive, individualised during previous analysis, were

also included. In *Appendix III*, a list of these contents with respective general information, content *type* and *title*, can be found.

The findings of the content analysis are presented on the following pages. In an observation-driven discussion, the insights on how the globally-orientated fashion magazine supplement represents sustainability are exposed. Thus, a view on the evolution of the sustainability discourse will be offered. Consequently, the discrepancies in the holistic approach to sustainability, on both global and local levels, will lead to final considerations, informed by the importance of fashion media representations for rising awareness and encouraging consumers' well-reasoned decision-making.

7.4 How fashion become responsible, an ongoing evolution

At the beginning of the 90s, a series of Moschino advertisements campaigns reflected the persistent socio-cultural issues: drug culture, racism, violence and wars (Appx. III, 1-4). From the point of sustainability discourse, much more reviling were the slogans such as 'Stop! Don't use the sea as a WC.' (Appx. III, 3), or 'Leave my plants alone!' (Appx. III, 4). Seeing a seal with the question 'what about me?' (Appx. III, 2) must have had a strong impact, especially in an industry that at that time still boldly relied on the use of natural furs. Not to talk about the images of children asking, 'What about us?' (Appx. III, 3). These were manifestos against the culture of consumerism, stating that the "advertisements could provoke damage to your brain and your pocket." (Appx. III, 2). It was the fashion system turning on itself: 'Stop the fashion system!' (Appx. III, 1). Even though Moschino stated that 'being in the latest fashion means being as aware as possible of the harm that can be done to nature, to our planet, to ourselves...' (Appx. III, 5), the 90s were also the years of uncontrollable acceleration of the fashion system. The production practices changed pace and location, the new markets opened for unexpected possibilities, the fashion was becoming democratised. The greater demand meant only one thing – an even greater offer and consequently terrible side effects. Still, fashion's relation to environmental problems and social injustices was not a point of discussion. Even though environmental issues and possible actions towards sustainable living were featured on the pages of *Vogue Italia* in the early 2000s (Appx. III, 6-12, 14-16), it will take decades for the actual discourse on sustainable fashion to evolve. One of the first articles on ethical fashion dates December 2009 and it recounts the cases of fashion brands engaging in projects empowering communities in developing countries (Appx. III, 13). In the following decade, numerous articles, brands showcases and discussions on sustainability in both fashion and not will make it to the pages of one of the most influential fashion magazines. 2009 was also when the first issue of the *Vogue Talents* supplement was published.

Vogue Talents - Research for the talented and the responsible

Right from the beginning, *Vogue Talents* was conceived as a platform for showcasing the new creatives of the fashion industry. For the first five years, the supplement was regularly published once a year in September (Appx. I, 1-4). The well-recognisable format contained four mandatory

sections: *Graduated from*, *Womenswear*, *Menswear* and *Accessories*, plus the expected shoutouts to academic fashion institutions, scouting contests, prices, articles on where to find and buy emerging brands or simply talent-related updates. In the first section, the presentation of the newly graduated designers was divided per academic institution and country; only name and contact information for each designer were provided. Here the display was supported by photos and other visual material. No specific explanations of the creative process or information on production were available. Thus, only the aesthetic choices, often inspired by cultures and perspectives different from the dominant Eurocentric codes, can be discussed here. It could be argued that the global style of the designers' solutions and the showcasing of a multitude of perspectives are talking about *Vogue Italia*'s awareness of the needed decentralisation of fashion, yet it would come as rather forced deduction. The *Womenswear*, *Menswear* and *Accessories* sections were dedicated to already operating brands, providing more detail on each brand's identity and collections. In these brief descriptions, we see the first although distant signs and mentions of sustainability and responsible fashion practices (Appx. II, 1).

In September 2010 issue, Christopher Raeburn stated that he is mixing sustainability and fun; for him, "fashion (was) opportunity to create clothing and products in an intelligent, sustainable, greener way" (Appx. II, 3). Marco Corso was inspired by the environmental crisis (Appx. II, 4). Still, in neither of the two cases, additional information is given. The reader could only imagine what does this mean in practice. We see the first slightly more detailed info on some responsible practices a year later when Partsparts Imseonic gives a partial description of their processes and explains how those respond to the production waste problem (Appx. II, 11). In the short overview on womenswear of the same issue, the editor highlights the "eco-conscious dying techniques" (Appx. II, 6). While some designers were proudly emphasising that they were using "ecological fur only" without actually explaining what it is or what they meant by 'ecological' (Appx. II, 9-10), others like Vincent Billeci were completely immersed in the exploration of the traditional craftworks via collaborations with artisans, silversmiths and leather goods manufacturers (Appx. II, 8). The latest is maybe one of the first examples of *localism*, attention to the crafts of a specific place and openness to diverse ways of knowing and learning. In line with the traditions, but also with respect to the environment, were the vegetable-tanning skills employed in the production of the accessories by Nasha Mekraksavanich and PB0110 (Appx. II, 14, 15). Furthermore, the founder of PB0110 stated, "I believe in the significance of the beloved objects, in things that develop an individuality through daily use" (Appx. II, 15). This statement, so as the philosophy of "creating editions and not collections; clothes, objects and accessories that outlive the cycle of a season" (Appx. II, 7) and thus could be used for a very long time, reflect the message of the *Loved Clothes Last* (de Castro, 2021). While designers were promoting an eco-friendly attitude towards fashion, reflected in their "modular composition and (creation of) garments (that) can be assembled and disassembled to create different solutions" (Appx. II, 12), or were creating collections starting from an elaborated vintage leather jacket (Appx. II, 2), *Vogue Talents* was investigating the fashion capitals of tomorrow. Significant for the decentralisation of fashion, Dublin's Redress initiative was also a symbol of encouragement for "better ethics and sustainability" (Appx. II, 5). In these

initial years of the supplement publication, no specific reference on the growing-out-of-growth logic is noted. Most of the brands' activities appear to be best positioned within the mainstream business frameworks, whereas sustainability-related characteristics such as revisited design, use of apparently sustainable materials and attention to local crafts are to be understood as a plus, a feature useful for finer brands' positioning.

In December 2013, a special issue of *Vogue Talents* was published and it was dedicated, as the title states, to "The ones who have succeeded" (Appx. I, 5). Fashion is understood as "a bridge between cultures" while adhering to the ethical fashion programme of the ITC of the United Nations is presented as the right path to undertake (Appx. II, 16). Yet, the title suggests an alignment with the predominant system. Starting from 2015, the February edition of *Vogue Talents* was introduced and it was initially dedicated to talents from around the globe. The format was also changed, giving more space to the individual presentation. Consequently, we learn more about designers' personal paths, philosophy and inspirations. The analysis of the section "Scouting for Africa" showed that many brands acknowledging the need for more socially responsible fashion practices were actively engaged in community empowerment. Differently from what we saw in the first *Vogue Italia* article on ethical fashion where there were the western designers to engage with the communities in the developing countries, here, we see African designers engaging with local communities, empowering women, providing educational workshops and skill-learning opportunities (Appx. II, 17, 19). Not less importantly, they are promoting African fashion products and aesthetics. The focus was on preserving traditional techniques and promotion of the local crafts (Appx. II, 18, 19, 26, 30). Still, no discussion on cultural inspiration, as opposed to cultural appropriation, is present on these pages. Fashion was perceived and used as an empowering tool to lift people out of poverty (Appx. II, 19, 26, 27, 28). The *Plural* landscape proposed by Fletcher and Tham undoubtedly involves honouring of the numerous non-western perspectives. In this line, the "A focus on the countries to watch for new talented emerging designers" issue of *Vogue Talents* does a great job in featuring the new generation of creatives from Nigeria, Sudan, Ghana, Senegal, Mozambique, but also from Ukraine, China, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Qatar and Russia. What is to highlight are not only the different geographies, represented in the issue in question by individual designers, but also the crafts and traditions which are usually suppressed by the pervasive, capital driven system. In that sense, it could be argued that *Vogue Talents* is coming short in setting fashion free from its prominent association with consumerist ideals, mainly because the success stories are always contextualised within the predominant fashion system. Nevertheless, on the pages dedicated to the African creatives, the problem of the second-hand western clothing market also pops up (Appx. II, 29). Donating the clothes that we do not care for anymore to charity does not help the underdeveloped communities; on the contrary, it additionally damages the local industry and burdens the waste management of the countries of arrival. Donating to charity is the same as discarding; the only difference is that it is not the landfill near one's home but another, kilometres away. Still, it is on the same planet and featuring these problems, even though sporadically, on a platform as *Vogue Italia* was undoubtedly a very needed step. It is to admit though that the neo-colonial aspects of fashion are sadly underrepresented and

not enough talked about in the mainstream fashion media. For this reason, the new frontiers of fashion activism must discuss revisited ways of organisation and governance, proposing and learning, as well as unlearning outdated common senses.

Moving to the September issue of the same year, we see the comeback of the classical *Vogue Talents* format, this time enriched by a selection of twenty emerging designers chosen by the combined efforts of *Vogue Italia* editors and the readers of *Vogue.it*. The keywords with which these brands are described are customisable, handcrafted, collaborative, craftsmanship, tradition, handwork (Appx. II, 31). The stance away from the industrialised production processes characteristic of the fashion system is underlined. It is in this issue that the first, even though implicit, features of degrowth, understood as “purposefully slow[ing] things down in order to minimize harm to humans and earth systems” (Kallis et al., 2020), can be perceived. In the *Womenswear* section, the editor emphasises the need for agency regarding socio-cultural concerns and engagement for traceability in the supply chain (Appx. II, 32), whilst an updated view of luxury is also proposed, imagined as “quality and traceability rather than a logo” (Appx. II, 33). Moreover, the editorial choice to boldly present practices related to artisanal and handmade methods is reflected in articles such as *Italians handcrafting innovation* (Appx. II, 34), where examples of brand collaborations with experienced craftspeople are showcased. In these examples we can observe traces of values such as *Co-creation*, *Grounded imagination*, reliance on *Diverse ways of knowing*, characteristic for the *Earth Logic*. Clearly, that is only what can be perceived from the representations in the supplement, while the actual integration of these values by the brands would require an additional, in-depth analysis.

The traditional skills and local craftsmanship continued to be topics of interest and action for the brands featured in *Vogue Talents* also two years later (Appx. II, 37-42, 50). Eco-sustainability was increasingly emphasised (Appx. II, 39, 41, 46-48), but alternative fashion practices were also consistently more present. Upcycling was becoming a thing, with designers “going to vintage shops, choosing items and then re-elaborating them” (Appx. II, 36, 44). Brands were becoming more attentive to minimising or eliminating production waste (Appx. II, 36, 41) also by introducing the make to order principle (Appx. II, 43). These practices that shift away from the conventional relying on virgin materials, the more resource-wise design approaches and the active listening of the community are all features of fashion entities that could be well located within the *Less* landscape. Ultimately, however, *Less* means living within a framework of decreased production and consumption. Thus, it “is the largest provocation associated with the transition to sustainability” (Fletcher & Tham, [2019]2021, 45), especially within the context of capitalist realism where “capital’s ‘need of constantly expanding market’ [and] its ‘growth fetish’ mean that capitalism is by its very nature opposed to any notion of sustainability” (Fisher, 2009, 18-19). In fact, all of the featured steps towards a more sustainable fashion system were reasonable and appreciable but not enough. Unfortunately, the results of the questionnaire administered to 950 young people from 53 countries showed that 90% of them are interested in sustainability “but thought that saving on fabric cuts and fewer seams is enough.” Only “Few believed it is necessary

to tackle the entire production chain with a holistic approach and be transparent with consumers” (Appx. II, 45). While emerging brands were gradually exploring different approaches to sustainability, *Vogue Talents* initiated to emphasise sustainable fashion brands. As the September issues changed, still featuring the newly graduated designers but introducing the *Scouting section*, which replaced the well-known *Womenswear*, *Menswear* and *Accessories* divisions, the ‘Sustainable’ label was also placed alongside brands that were considered sustainable (Appx. I, 9). Out of 46 brands featured in the *Scouting* section, seven were marked as ‘Sustainable’. The analysis showed that these brands were mainly focused on small production (Appx. II, 53, 57, 59) and the use of natural, ethically sourced materials (Appx. II, 51, 59), or however materials that would be otherwise burned or destined to landfill (Appx. II, 56, 57, 60). Furthermore, the brands showed attention to transparency and traceability (Appx. II, 51) and engagement in collaborations with artisans and craftspeople (Appx. II, 53). In contrast to this practice, the neo-colonialist approach of many luxury brands, which take inspiration from the traditional work of minority cultures without giving back to the interested communities, was also contested (Appx. II, 62). Sustainable practices could be seen in the description of six additional brands, which were not emphasised as ‘sustainable’ most likely because of their focus on social and ethical questions with the environmental engagement being not clearly expressed. This mode of representation is questionable since the focus on community, local artisans and craftsmanship (Appx. II, 55), the preservation of the traditional culture (Appx. II, 58), as well as the small production and workers’ rights (Appx. II, 52, 54) are all building blocks of a righteous fashion system. This eco-centred approach in the sustainability presentation as detached from the socio-ethical and cultural issues is rather problematic and it brings about perpetuation of fashion injustices. Starting from 2019, this will change, moving towards a more holistic understanding of the fashion system’s impact and consequential presentation of positive brand examples.

In the editorial message from February 2019, Sara Sozzani Maino writes, “From today, we must strive to change the way we produce, distribute and consume. ... our commitment is to highlight some of the designers and enterprises that are seeking to improve the present system.” “Now we must try to encourage creatives of the future to tread a more sustainable path” (Appx. II, 63). Indeed, the supplement pages became a platform for awareness-raising and education, featuring responsible brands, which here are not an exception but the norm. An increasing number of articles dedicated to sustainability enriched the traditional showcase of emerging designers whilst highlighting the complexity of the fashion-sustainability relationship (Appx. II, 64, 66-68). Community engagement and eco-friendly practices were presented as equally important (Appx. II, 72, 73, 77-81, 83-85). While in 2015, the information was still sporadic, without an evident *fil rouge*, featuring only some isolated responsible actions or sustainable practices, here we see the combination of “sustainability” with “social commitment”. The need for an integrated, transparent and traceable approach is also underlined. The concept of *Less*, as discussed by Fletcher and Tham (2021 [2019]), is reflected in upcycling processes where creativity is conditioned by the available second-hand objects or dead-stock materials (Appx. II, 74-76, 82). Other caring practices such as repairing (Appx. II, 77) and designing carry-over pieces (Appx. II, 79) are also featured. The

selection is enriched by texts with tips on ‘what can we do, follow, visit’ or ‘where to study sustainability’ (Appx. II, 69, 71, 65).

The commitment to encourage responsible fashion practices continued in the following issues of *Vogue Talents*. It was at the centre of many competitions, awards and projects presented in the supplement (Appx. II, 86-90). The new talents representing the hope for a just world (Appx. II, 91-93) were “refusing to be implicated in the waste, destructiveness and lack of care for workers which the clothing industry wreaks on the planet.” “Upcycling, responsible sourcing and localism (were) becoming the new normal” (Appx. II, 93). This statement is reflected in the *New Avantgarde* section of the same issue (Appx. II, 94-97) and the February issue the following year (Appx. II, 99-113). Following *Vogue Italia*’s ‘Sustainability and Creativity’ issue from January 2020, the February supplement boldly stated the commitment for a better future. The issue started with the ‘10 Reasons for Radical Change’ by Matteo Ward (Appx. II, 98) and continued with the already mentioned selection of designers integrating the different aspects of sustainability in their practice. The next issue underlines the importance of fashion media and the redesign of communication practices (Appx. II, 117), actively emphasizing the importance of the *Language* and *Learning* landscapes, as proposed by Flether and Tham ([2019]2021). The focus is on upcycling and reusing with brands counteracting the business-as-usual approach (Appx. II, 118-121) while centring on alternative practices based on values like *Care*, *Co-creation* and *Interdependency* (Appx. II, 123). More so, a reflection of the editorial choices to limit the industry’s impact are the editorials such ‘Morning light, the origin of everything’ – a celebration of responsible fashion brands (Appx. II, 116) and “Tender is the Night” completely illustrated by Yuliya Yg (Appx. II, 124). The latest was designed to save precious resources, usually needed during photo shootings – something that *Vogue Italia* also did for the January issue of the same year. It also recalls the past magazine practices when fashion was not so accelerated, harmful and unjust. Articles on ‘Europe’s best practices’ (Appx. II, 122) and ‘Amsterdam’s sustainability offer’ (Appx. II, 115) only broaden the understanding of how sustainability should be integrated into the larger context. In the latest issue, Sara Sozzani Maino wraps up the reasons behind the editorial decisions and provides an undoubtable definition of what fashion today should be:

‘Along with a commitment to more environmentally friendly fashion industry, (the) inclusive sense of responsibility also embraces society, artisans, people and local territories, conveying thought-provoking messages that raise awareness in present and future consumers.’ (Appx. II, 125)

7.5 Discussion and Conclusion

As presented in the *Findings*, the sustainability-related contents are not a recent feature of *Vogue Italia*; still, the more concrete delineation of the relationship between fashion and sustainability is observable after 2010. Specifically, in the context of the supplement *Vogue Talents*, this relation demonstrates a clear evolution and developments in regards to the meanings associated with the oxymoron ‘sustainable fashion’. From the ungrounded use of the word ‘sustainable’ in the early

2010s to the holistic understanding of what it means to be responsible in the fashion industry visible in the latest issues, we saw how the manifestations of social responsibility and ethics were gradually integrated with the environmentally-centred aspects, the latest, for a long time being perceived as the only association to sustainability in the fashion context. The ways in which the global perspective is presented by the emerging designers of all continents, highlights the power of the decentralisation of fashion, while opening for a discussion on the underrepresented nuances of *plurality*. Significantly, in the *Vogue Talents* context, the first appearances of social responsibility and community engagement are almost exclusively related to the non-western realities speaking volumes of the importance of the opening to *Multiple centres* a dimension that was observed as lacking in the Italian context, while here we observe an incrementing over time representation. The supplement's contents, reflective of the gradual, yet implicit, introduction of the degrowth logic add towards developments in a responsible direction, even though the road is still to be traced. Speaking to this is the lack of observable implications of updated forms of *Learning, Governing* and *Languaging*, which would undoubtedly demonstrate how the revisited understanding of where and who could envision, practice and recount fashion today builds towards a more just and holistically sustainable fashion system.

Moreover, it is to be underlined that the context of *Vogue Talents* is an isolated one in terms that it is ideated from the beginning to feature only a selection of fashion brands. Furthermore, here the focus is on the presented contents, not the featured individual brands. Thus, the results regard what is represented, not the actual integration of sustainability-related aspects by the brands. What is to highlight is that throughout the decade, we observe the evolution of both the meaning of the term 'sustainability' and the quantity and the quality of sustainability-related representations. If in 2010 there was only one unclear mention of "sustainability", starting from 2019, the pages are dedicated to born-sustainable fashion practices. Here, it is useful to remember that, as we saw through the qualitative analysis conducted during the pilot project "Culture and Sustainability: An Interplay on the (contemporary) Made in Italy Landscape", born-sustainable does not always mean holistically integrated. The in-depth analysis revealed discrepancies in regards to the *Earth Logic* values and landscapes. Although in this study we observe a gradual development of a holistic approach to sustainability, represented by an integrated understanding and presentation of the various sustainability aspects on the fashion magazine level, there are no practical frameworks able to efficiently convey the various levels of sustainable action undertaken by single concerns. In order to understand one brand's levels of sustainability-oriented commitment, the information available in *Vogue Talents* is not sufficient and we must further investigate the brand. The global perspective comprises plenty of local points of view, place-specific needs and responses to those needs, yet, as anticipated earlier, the multiverse of local pluralities is still unexplored. Bearing this in mind, it is essential to investigate and to actively foster new modes of understanding, organising and communicating fashion in a more systemic manner, also because we saw those aspects significantly underrepresented.

The latest issue of *Vogue Talents* reveals yet another layer. It is called *Fearless Generations* and it somehow implies that future generations, those that have nothing to lose, have to bear the burden or at least the responsibility to change the system for good. In order to paradigmatically shift the predominant system, we need the contribution of everyone, certainly including the efforts of those that have many things to lose. And here, *everyone* is to be understood, not as implicit of multiple individual efforts, but as a call for *collective subjectivity*, required, as discussed by Fisher, in facing systemic issues. (Fisher, 2009)

In conclusion, we must acknowledge the fact that the concept of sustainability presented in the fashion media context is not yet a reflection of the actual situation. In practice, as it is discussed in Vol.12 n.2 of *ZoneModa Journal* (Maksimova and Piancazzo, 2022), there is still much focus on the environmental aspects, at least in the Italian context. The field analysis unravels inconsistencies and much room for improvements. In this line, it could be of importance to offer a critical and more reflective thought, also within the mainstream media. For that matter, proposing consistent frameworks, also in the context of fashion media, could add to the role of fashion as a creative and communication industry, which integrated with its revisited fashion-as-industry praxis could be able to show the path towards a more responsible, inclusive and respectful society. Maybe only afterwards fashion will be a step closer to saving the world. In the meantime, we as a society should continue to engage consistently in a bolder manner to underline the complexity of sustainable thinking and action, growing past the simplistic associations of sustainability with environmental or social responsibility.

Appendix I

N°	Issue	Date	Page format	N° of pages	Title	Subtitle + Heading
1	721	Sept. 2010	A3	34*	Fidenza Village is proud to support Vogue Talents	160 emerging designers
2	733	Sept. 2011	A3	34*	Fidenza Village & Vogue Talents Explore a world of new talents	180 emerging designers
3	745	Sept. 2012	A3	34*	Fidenza Village & Vogue Talents Discovering fashion's future generation of talents	190 emerging designers
4	757	Sept. 2013	A3	34*	Samsung and Vogue Talents present a new generation of fashion designers and Samsung Accessories Talents Scouting	200 emerging designers
5	760	Dec. 2013	A3	8	The Dubai Mall and Vogue Talents present "The ones who have succeeded... The new generation of fashion designers"	--
6	774	Feb. 2015	A3	26**	The Dubai Mall and Vogue Talents present "A focus on the countries to watch for new talented emerging designers"	New Countries to watch out for
7	781	Sept. 2015	A3	34*	Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana and Vogue Talents present Spotlight on 2015's fashion designers	200 emerging designers
8	810	Feb. 2018	A3	30***	Camera Nazionale della Moda Italiana and Vogue Talents present Countries to watch for New Talented designers	Vogue Italia Talents
9	817	Sept. 2018	A3	36*** *	Vogue Talents Spotlight on 2018's fashion designers	--
10	822	Feb. 2019	A3	30***	Vogue Talents The New Frontiers of Awareness	--
11	829	Sept. 2019	21x28.5	88	Vogue Talents 10 (anniversary)	--
12	834	Feb. 2020	21x28.5	48	Vogue Talents The New frontiers of Awareness	--
13	840	Sept. 2020	21x28.5	56	Vogue Talents Strength of purpose	--
14	845	Feb. 2021	21x28.5	48	Vogue Talents The New frontiers of Awareness	--
15	852	Sept. 2021	21x28.5	64	Vogue Talents Fearless Generations	--

*36 with the internal covers; **28 with front and back cover; ***32 with front and back cover; **** with front and back cover

Appendix II

N°	Issue	Date	Page	Section	Title or brand name*
1	721	Sep 2010	19	womenswear	short description
2	721	Sep 2010	21	womenswear	*ERRO
3	721	Sep 2010	26	menswear	*Christopher Raeburn
4	733	Sep 2011	20	womenswear	*Marco Corso
5	757	Sep 2013	2	articles	The Fashion Capitals of Tomorrow
6	757	Sep 2013	22	womenswear	short description
7	757	Sep 2013	22	womenswear	*Cristaseya
8	757	Sep 2013	22	womenswear	*Vincent Billeci
9	757	Sep 2013	23	womenswear	*Kamenskakononova
10	757	Sep 2013	23	womenswear	*Alcoolique
11	757	Sep 2013	26	womenswear	*Partsparts Imseonoc
12	757	Sep 2013	27	womenswear	*FlaviaLaRocca
13	757	Sep 2013	28	menswear	*Tigran Avetisyan
14	757	Sep 2013	31	accessories	*Nasha Mekraksavanich
15	757	Sep 2013	32	accessories	*PB0110
16	760	Dec 2013	7	/	*Stella Jean
17	774	Feb 2015	3	/	*Ituen Basi
18	774	Feb 2015	6	/	*Maki Oh
19	774	Feb 2015	7	/	*Studio One Eighty Nine
26	774	Feb 2015	16	Scouting for Africa	*A A K S by Akosua Afriyie-Kumi
27	774	Feb 2015	17	Scouting for Africa	*Loza Maléombho
28	774	Feb 2015	19	Scouting for Africa	*Orange Culture
29	774	Feb 2015	18	Scouting for Africa	*Mafrika by Sadia Mustafa
30	774	Feb 2015	18	Scouting for Africa	*O 'Milua by Olajumoke Ademilua
31	781	Sep 2015	1	Supported by	-whole section
32	781	Sep 2015	18	womenswear	short description
33	781	Sep 2015	23	womenswear	*Etienne Derceux
34	781	Sep 2015	24	article	Italians handcrafting innovation
36	810	Feb 2018	06	/	*Kozaburo
37	810	Feb 2018	07	/	*Problem
38	810	Feb 2018	15	/	*Yohei Ohno
39	810	Feb 2018	17	/	*Moon Choi
40	810	Feb 2018	22	/	*Etiqueta Latina
41	810	Feb 2018	25	/	*Chain
42	810	Feb 2018	25	/	*Kenneth Ize

43	810	Feb 2018	27	/	*Proudrace
44	810	Feb 2018	28	/	*Style wars
45	810	Feb 2018	10	article	ITS is back
46	810	Feb 2018	19	Scouting for India	*Bav Tailor
47	810	Feb 2018	19	Scouting for India	*N&S Gaia
48	810	Feb 2018	20	Scouting for India	*Shift
49	810	Feb 2018	21	Scouting for India	*Ara Lumiere
50	810	Feb 2018	20	Scouting for India	*Uvrashi Kaur
51	817	Sep 2018	13	Scouting	*Soster Studio
52	817	Sep 2018	15	Scouting	*Victor Von Schwarz
53	817	Sep 2018	17	Scouting	*Phipps
54	817	Sep 2018	18	Scouting	*Kay Kwok
55	817	Sep 2018	19	Scouting	*Armando Takeda
56	817	Sep 2018	24	Scouting	*Germanier
57	817	Sep 2018	28	Scouting	*Nathalie Ballout
58	817	Sep 2018	30	Scouting	*Emmy Kasbit
59	817	Sep 2018	33	Scouting	*Gabriella Coll Garments
60	817	Sep 2018	32	Scouting	*Tiziano Guardini
61	817	Sep 2018	33	Scouting	*Grassi 10000 by Anna Grassi
62	817	Sep 2018	35	Scouting	*Alama
63	822	Feb 2019	2	article	New Frontiers of Awareness
64	822	Feb 2019	2	article	Waterworld: Everything the see has to offer
65	822	Feb 2019	3	article	Where to study sustainability?
66	822	Feb 2019	19	article	What is the future of our planet? What can we do to safeguard it?
67	822	Feb 2019	23	article	The Challenge to Climate Change and the Cooperative approach to production
68	822	Feb 2019	24	article	Natural Mimesis
69	822	Feb 2019	27	article	How to be sustainable. 15 resources to go greener while buying or making fashion
70	822	Feb 2019	29	article	Success Stories
71	822	Feb 2019	31	article	What's going on. Summits, Awards and Exhibitions during 2019
72	822	Feb 2019	4	Scouting	*Bethany Williams
73	822	Feb 2019	4	Scouting	*Soster Studio
74	822	Feb 2019	5	Scouting	* Germanier
75	822	Feb 2019	5	Scouting	* Helen Kirkum
76	822	Feb 2019	8	Scouting	* Ahluwalia Studio
77	822	Feb 2019	8	Scouting	*Maggie Marilyn
78	822	Feb 2019	9	Scouting	* Hazza
79	822	Feb 2019	9	Scouting	*Bite Studios
80	822	Feb 2019	10	Scouting	*Cara Marie Piazza
81	822	Feb 2019	10	Scouting	* Escudo

82	822	Feb 2019	20	Scouting	*Matthew Needham
83	822	Feb 2019	21	Scouting	*Cora Bellotto
84	822	Feb 2019	21	Scouting	*John Alexander Skelto
85	822	Feb 2019	21	Scouting	*Cesta Collective
86	829	Sep 2019	3	Vogue Talents for	NABA
87	829	Sep 2019	5	Vogue Talents for	CNMI
88	829	Sep 2019	28-29	Vogue Talents for	Fashion 4 development
89	829	Sep 2019	40-43	Vogue Talents for	Woolmark company (award)
90	829	Sep 2019	74-75	Vogue Talents for	Fidenza Village
91	829	Sep 2019	6	Voices on talents	Federico Marchetti
92	829	Sep 2019	8	Voices on talents	Sara Mower
93	829	Sep 2019	6	Voices on talents	Clare Press
94	829	Sep 2019	62	The New Avantgarde	*Carlota Berrera
95	829	Sep 2019	68	The New Avantgarde	*Duran Lantink
96	829	Sep 2019	71	The New Avantgarde	*Salim Azzam
97	829	Sep 2019	71	The New Avantgarde	*Oloapitreps
98	834	Feb 2020	4	article	10 Reasons for Radical Change
99	834	Feb 2020	6	The New Avantgarde	*Vitelli
100	834	Feb 2020	8	The New Avantgarde	*Sevali
101	834	Feb 2020	12	The New Avantgarde	*Leandi Mulder
102	834	Feb 2020	14	The New Avantgarde	*Collina Strada
103	834	Feb 2020	16	The New Avantgarde	*Amesh
104	834	Feb 2020	20	The New Avantgarde	*Morphine.online
105	834	Feb 2020	21	The New Avantgarde	*re;code
106	834	Feb 2020	22	The New Avantgarde	*Weiyu Hung
107	834	Feb 2020	24	The New Avantgarde	*Style wars
108	834	Feb 2020	25	The New Avantgarde	*Kowtow
109	834	Feb 2020	28	The New Avantgarde	*Kudsuper

110	834	Feb 2020	29	The New Avantgarde	*Vanta Design Studio
111	834	Feb 2020	32	The New Avantgarde	*Fantabody
112	834	Feb 2020	33	The New Avantgarde	*Mama Tiera
113	834	Feb 2020	34	The New Avantgarde	*Manuel Manufactures
114	834	Feb 2020	30-31	Vogue Talents for	African Fashion Foundation
115	834	Feb 2020	36-37	article	Walking in Amsterdam: The home of sustainability
116	834	Feb 2020	39-46	editorial	Morning light, the origin of everything
117	840	Sep 2020	4	article	Communication as a force of change
118	840	Sep 2020	6	New Generation	*Av Vattev
119	840	Sep 2020	10	New Generation	*Arturo Obegero
120	840	Sep 2020	23	New Generation	*Florentina Leitner
121	840	Sep 2020	24	New Generation	*Vaquar
122	840	Sep 2020	26	article	From energy to culture: Best practices in Europe
123	840	Sep 2020	43-46	Artisans and Community	Entire section
124	840	Sep 2020	49-53	editorial	Tender is the night
125	852	Sep 2021	3	editorial	Fearless Generations

Appendix III

N°	Issue	Date	Page	Type	Original title
1	478	Apr 1990	33	Adv.	Moschino
2	499	Mar 1992	135	Adv.	Moschino
3	506	Oct 1992	133	Adv.	Moschino
4	510	Feb 1993	91	Adv.	Moschino
5	529	Sep 1994	105	Adv.	Moschino
6	637	Sep 2003	200	article	Eco awards
7	637	Sep 2003	206	article	Philosophy: consumo etico?
8	687	Nov 2007	112	article	Eco
9	688	Dec 2007	96	article	Eco-ansia
10	703	Mar 2009	182	article	Ecoterapia
11	704	Apr 2009	20	article	Sostenibilità
12	704	Apr 2009	92	article	Earth Day
13	712	Dec 2009	84	article	Goodwill fibres
14	716	Apr 2010	52	article	Sure this is not a wonderful world
15	716	Apr 2010	80	article	L'insostenibile leggerezza dello spreco
16	717	May 2010	52	article	Il tempo sostenibile

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