

The dissertation 'Making Fashion Sustainable – The Role of Designers' describes the PhD research of Natascha M. van der Velden on the envisioned role designers could take responsibility for in the transition towards a more sustainable fashion industry.

The current worldwide textile and apparel system is unsustainable – from both an environmental as well as a social point of view. The clothing industry is associated with (un-)sustainability problems ranging from materials depletion and toxic emissions to social exploitation.

This thesis argues that knowledge about life cycle thinking and life cycle assessment (LCA, as a method to calculate 'eco- and socio-burden') could accelerate the transformation towards a more sustainable fashion production system. Therefore, designers are encouraged to include findings that result from the application of the LCA method, in the fashion design process, with the aim to gain insights into the sustainability hotspots over the clothing products lifecycle. This knowledge can help designers to apply ecodesign and create 'Life Cycle Clothing', and is intended to enhance the self-empowerment based learning and probing process of the designers, the makers and the wearers of fashion. It is envisaged, within the wider context of the national and international governance of the fashion branch sustainable development future, that (i) the analytical methods and ecodesign approaches from this study, together with (ii) the self-empowerment process, will be essential elements (even necessary conditions) for a successful transition.

The conclusions of the research suggest practical guidelines for designers who are willing to adopt a different role than many of their predecessors, and – possibly with help from the trans-LCA-tor – become a frontrunner of sustainable fashion by adding quantitative sustainability assessment to their 'portfolio of skills'.