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A NEW LIFE

FOR LANDSCAPE, ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN



foreword by
Mario Losasso

edited by
Francesca Scalisi

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6

A NEW LIFE FOR LANDSCAPE, ARCHITECTURE AND DESIGN

Edited by
Francesca Scalisi

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FUTURE SCENARIOS
The new life of the fashion industry in the post-pandemic scenario

Cristina Marino, Chiara L. Remondino

section
DESIGN

typology
ESSAYS & VIEWPOINT

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ABSTRACT
Worrying about the future means worrying about changes, both present and future environmental changes. But how will dramatic changes and consumer behaviour in a post-coronavirus world affect the future of fashion? What assets can design provide to rewire a system that has faltered so much? This essay aims to give meaning to the Covid-19 crisis by placing it precisely in the clothing industry context. It investigates the complex fashion system and the dynamics that are currently shaping this sector, catalysing it towards a sustainable new life. The paper also analyses future scenarios existing in the fashion industry to define some guidelines for preferable post-pandemic future.

KEYWORDS
fashion, covid-19, sustainability, future studies, design

Cristina Marino, Designer, is a PhD Candidate in Management, Production and Design at the Polytechnic University of Turin (Italy). She carries out research activities mainly in the field of systemic design applied to the fashion industry. Mob. +39 328/05.68.111 | E-mail: cristina.marino@polito.it

Chiara Lorenza Remondino, PhD, is a Research Fellow at the Department of Architecture and Design of the Polytechnic University of Turin (Italy). She carries out research activities in the field of communication of complex systems. Mob. +39 346/37.24.097 | E-mail: chiara.remondino@polito.it

For decades, the fashion industry has been a powerful driver for economic growth, contributing not only to the creation of millions of jobs, boosting capitalism globally, but also and undoubtedly an absolute protagonist in shaping cultures, societies, and our daily lives and consumer behaviours. The unforeseen circumstances that hit the planet during the Covid-19 health emergency were disruptive, and overwhelming. As never before, the fashion industry had to reorganise, readapt and redefine sustainability and unsustainability, short term and long term. This is because the pandemic, unaffected by borders, has challenged global structures by causing a profound economic shock, pushing companies and societies towards financial instability and human beings towards an unprecedented humanitarian and existential crisis.

These phenomena have destabilised the fashion industry, and the long-term consequences risk to confine sustainability issues to a secondary level again, following the usual strategy of quick profits. This happened when the foundations and the nature of sustainability were starting to be understood and metabolised, by both consumers and entrepreneurs, as an organisational principle to build a future scenario. From clothes capable of guaranteeing social distancing to the urgent and unexpected reconversion of entire production chains, from experimentation with new fabrics (possibly antibacterial) to the boom in online purchases, this essay aims to identify economic resilience actions and practices pursued by the fashion sector. These are very contemporary strategies that have unexpectedly pushed and accelerated the transformation towards a sustainable future vision. Finally, the analysis is supported by using the three horizons model first theorised in The Alchemy of Growth and adapted by Andrew Curry and Anthony Hodgson (2008) to link future-thinking to change processes.

Pandemic as a disturbance factor | The global coronavirus pandemic has led to a real push towards sustainability. This immediate threat to health has demonstrated human beings' fragility, making them feel overly dependent on a 'healthful' environment to safeguard their physical and emotional status. If a sick planet can make humankind sick, then the fashion industry (only peculiar of this species) cannot afford to worsen its health. The reference framework and the reflections that will emerge in this contribution are based on the awareness that you can never master a living system; you can only disturb it (Maturana and Varela, 1992, p. 256). The pandemic for the fashion industry has certainly been a disruptive factor, but at the same time, it has been able to direct the change towards sustainability. The fashion industry, which was already experiencing significant changes in consumption habits, has seen an acceleration in the need to look to the future with sustainability at its core – certainly environmental, but also social and economic. The 71% of consumers say that they will prefer to invest in higher-quality clothing in the wake of the health emergency, and that they are more inclined to favour circular business models, such as rental and upcycling practices.

The pandemic has added new concerns and accusations that have always been levelled at this industry. The inadequacy of business models and infrastructures to re-



Fig. 1 | Vogue Business, Chanel Fashion Show 2020 (credit: C. Lavenia).

spond to global challenges and even more so to sustainability challenges was now evident: «[…] Even if we pull all the levers, we will be very far from having a sustainable industry by 2030» (Global Fashion Agenda, 2020). This distance was in some ways exacerbated by the upstream and downstream repercussions of the effects of Covid-19. While on the upstream part of the chain, that of manufacturing, never stopped, either because of the derogation or because production was converted to overcome the lack of masks and gowns (to avoid stopping machines and people altogether); downstream, revenues and consumption of fashion and goods in general decreased. In Europe, compared to the same period in 2019, textile production fell by 16.8% in January-April 2020, and when global coronavirus cases peaked, retail sales of textiles saw the sharpest decline, with a 31% drop in sales per unit (Shahbandeh, 2020).

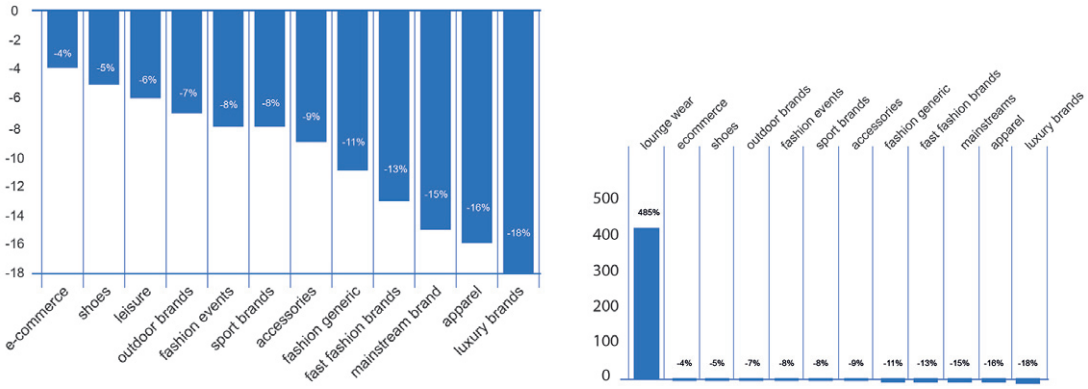
Spring-summer collections struggled not only to be launched at fashion shows, sometimes using masks and screens (Fig. 1) but also for on-shelf availability. Consumers postponed their purchases and preferred clothes to wear at home. To attract consumers' attention, many brands and social media invested on specific categories of home or casual outfits; some launched a series of hashtags related to loungewear, such as #StayInPyjamasContest (Figg. 2, 3). In a recent interview, Net-à-Porter, a well-known e-commerce company, stated that it had a 40 per cent increase in online sales, with consumers looking for comfortable outfits and buying mainly sweatpants (Fractals LAB, 2020). Smart suits, heels and jeans have given way to more comfortable clothing lines, and there has been no shortage of memes online of virtual meetings being held for 'components', where people put on clothes that were only visible on camera, wearing their pyjamas or being barefoot under it. The data also show how the

coronavirus pandemic's impact and the isolation measures imposed in many European countries have generated a widespread growth trends in online retail orders in many sectors. As shown in the chart (Fig. 4), after declining in January, online revenues in fashion and accessories categories in Italy increased steadily in the following weeks, with a 150% increase in the third week of April, compared to the same period last year (Shahbandeh, 2020).

The pandemic, with its lockdown and blocking of mobility and all activities, has pushed many fashion brands to 'take refuge' in e-commerce as a safe haven to cope with the closure of 'real' shops. A trend confirmed by a survey by The Business of Fashion and McKinsey & Company (2020) carried out in Italy, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States, which showed that 24% of people bought a product online for the first time during the quarantine, and 76% of them were satisfied, suggesting that the increase in online purchases will be a permanent trend in the future even when the crisis is over. This evidence, as well as the possible cyclical nature of this pandemic, could lead many businesses to adapt to stressful conditions, exacerbated by an intermittent opening and closing, with a digital conversion of many aspects of the business as has already happened in other sectors, for example, the education sector.

The drop in sales, which was strongly analysed in the first part of this essay, is, however, a figure linked exclusively to the opening and closing of shops but is also closely linked to a change in consumers' interest which, given the 'size' of some wardrobes, no longer perceive clothing as a basic necessity. In particular, what society and the fashion system faced with Covid-19 is not just a health or economic crisis but a real cultural and consumer crisis. The large amount of money usually spent in luxury and clothing whims are now being re-allocated on daily necessities and preventive savings for a second or third wave of the virus. While the end of over-consumption has been threatening developing countries for many years, at the same time, faced with the unexpected halt in production, the most vulnerable and lowest-paid people in the fashion supply chain are suffering the worst effects. IndustriALL (2020), the global union working to give voice to workers worldwide, says millions of garment makers have already lost their jobs to the virus and have no access to social or financial safety nets to help them weather this storm. Reports of retailers cancelling orders and late payments to suppliers have spotlighted how brands manage their relationships with supply chain partners.

To tackle and overcome the financial disruption and commercial difficulties caused by the pandemic, many brands and retailers have invoked force majeure to withdraw orders from suppliers. According to the labour rights monitoring organisation Worker Rights Consortium (2020), the number of cancelled orders in countries such as Bangladesh, Cambodia and Vietnam is estimated to be more than $20 billion. In the event of a similar scenario, transparency will become a key asset for consumers to verify whether companies have honoured their commitments during the crisis, both on environmental and social issues. For all the above-mentioned reasons, this article in-



Figg. 2, 3 | Data retrieved from Quentin, TD Reply's Search Data tool, across 5 markets (DE, ES, IT, FR and UK). Growth rate calculated as month-over-month comparing March-April 2020 against March-April 2019 (credits: Reply).

tends to pursue a more ethnographic and humanistic reflection than technical, using future-thinking as a tool to direct future project practices.

Futures in/of fashion: tools for design | «[…] The future, of course, is still being made: it is what people can shape and design through their own actions. To act intelligently, people need to know the consequences of these actions, of others' actions and reactions, and of forces beyond their control. These consequences can only occur in the future. Thus, people try to know not only what is happening now, but also what might happen, what could happen or what will happen in the future given certain conditions. Using such conjectural knowledge, people orientate themselves in the present and navigate through time, physical space and social space» (Bell, 1996, p. 28).

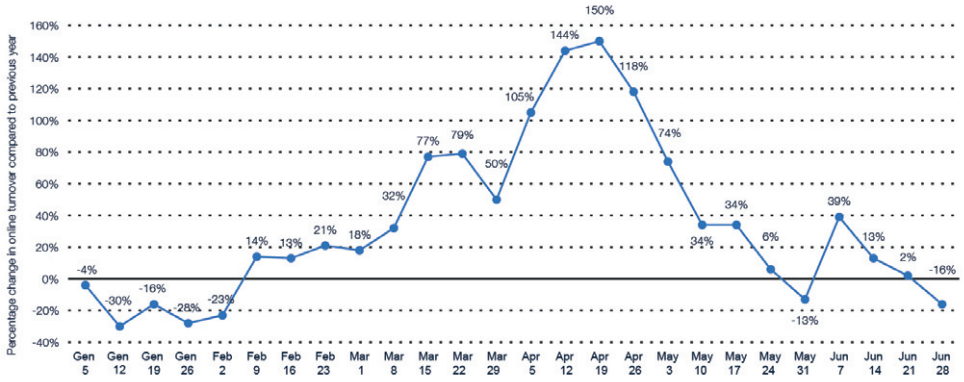
The studies on possible futures have always existed as peripheral and interdisciplinary areas of investigation in many fields of study but emerged as a discipline only after the Second World War with the aim to generate a more positive future (Slaughter, 1996). Nevertheless, several international organisations for the future had already developed by the end of the 1970s, including the Club of Rome and its publication The Limits to Growth (Meadows et alii, 1972) for directing change towards sustainable futures. Future Studies, deliberately in plural form to underline the possibility to imagine more than one future, intend to investigate models and signs of change in the present and their various forms. They have been applied to different areas of study, including marketing and fashion in general. In fact, when discussing Futures Studies applied to the fashion industry, one comes across concepts such as fashion forecasting or trend-forecasting (Tham, 2008). However, although the latter are widely used based on purchasing data, inventory and social media monitoring, they lose their meaning in a context such as pandemics, where nobody knows what will happen tomorrow.

In this crisis scenario, some data clusters are missing. There is a lack of customer research, selection and purchasing, reduced ability to interpret order movements and the resulting difficulty in clearing them out, and a loss of certainty about what will happen in the future. The fashion industry, certainly not impervious to the threats posed by an uncertain future of the world, including climate change, resource scarcity, vulnerable economic conditions, changing consumer behaviour within the pandemic context, has seen the need to face and understand these threats. Warnings are essential to take appropriate action to safeguard the future, protect the environment, and improve consumers and citizens' lives. With this in mind, future studies should be more widely applied to the fashion industry. On the other hand, studies of the past also show how specific global interest events have profoundly changed this sector. The influenza epidemic in 1918, by transforming personal hygiene and cleaning habits, had increased the frequency of washing clothes and the use of washing machines. The Second World War changed women's domestic employment, that started to participate in the workforce after the war. Moreover, the more recent SARS outbreak in 2003 brought about lasting changes that facilitated e-commerce platform development (Tham, 2016). Consequently, investigating the effects and implications of Covid-19 means considering all those signs of change and transferring them into design skills to design tools, processes, and products to cope with epidemics.

Nobel Prize winner Herbert Simon (1982) defined design in the broadest sense of human action as the ability to devise courses of action to transform existing situations into preferred situations involving a wide range of processes that humans use to plan for the future. Nevertheless, a decade earlier, Charles Eames (1972), in his video Design Q&A, asserted that design depends mainly on the designers' ability to recognise as many constraints as possible and their willingness and enthusiasm to work within those constraints. Constraints of price, size, strength, balance, surface area, time and more (Candy and Potter, 2019). However, the current scenario is full of more considerable, systemic, dynamic, and pervasive constraints.

Within this essay, the authors wanted to highlight the importance of these otherwise invisible or hidden constraints that could play a significant role in the potential of design in the clothing industry. If design orients our strategic choices, objectives, and planning of our actions made to achieve them, Future Thinking and Speculative Design represent the future-oriented approach to identifying problems within an increasingly complex scenario. Similarly, Systemic Design as a tool and method to develop a critical sense of the complex contemporary fashion system highlights a preferred and preferable future that follows some well-defined guidelines that pursue sustainability goals. These guidelines, ranging from a collective vision to the efficient use of project inputs and outputs, intended to guide the designer in the configuration and management of the design activity in its entirety with the aim of zero-emissions (Bistagnino, 2009).

The case study analysis that follows will be interpreted following precisely the Systemic Design guidelines concerning the signs of the current health crisis (Fig. 5).



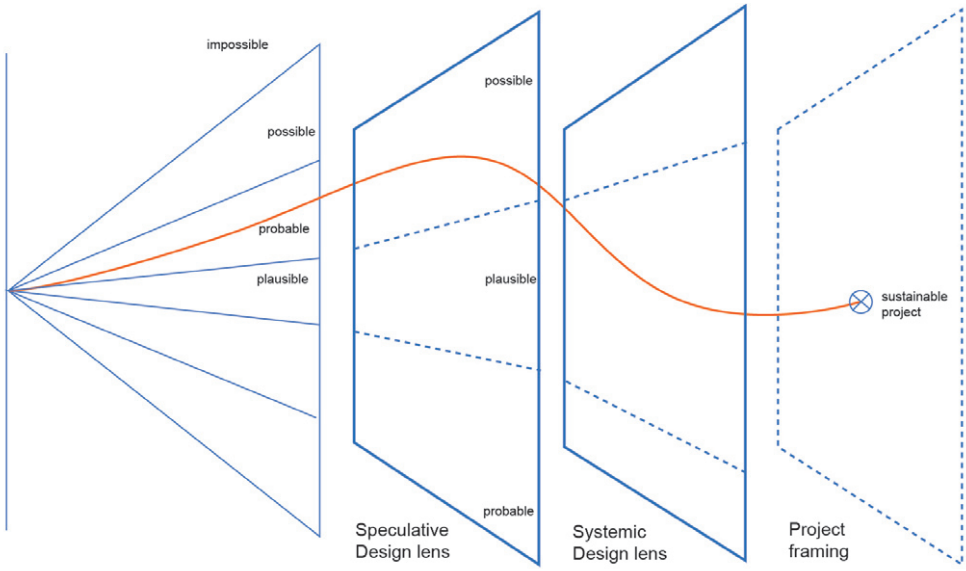


Fig. 4 | Weekly trend of online revenues in the fashion and accessories retail sector in Italy 2020 (credit: Euratex, 2020).

Fig. 5 | Research methodology (credit: Authors).

In other words, all the explorations of probable, plausible, possible, and preferable futures made possible by speculative design will be brought under the microscope of a systemic design. In this case, Systemic Design will move the reflections away from a vision of a linear future to a circular one while maintaining the viewpoint on the whole system. The selected case studies are part of an initiative by Forum for the Future, a leading global sustainability organisation that theorised eight future scenarios ten years apart. The first was Fashion Futures 2025, set in 2025 and explored in 2009 (Fo-

rum for the Future and Levi Strauss, 2010), and the most recent Fashion Futures 2030, theorised in 2019 and set in 2030. Both projects aimed to understand and highlight possible threats and signs of the future in the clothing industry.

Case Studies | Using future thinking techniques and Levi Strauss & Co support, four scenarios were created that explore how climate change, resource scarcity, population growth, and other factors will shape the world of 2025 and its fashion industry's future. From the production of raw materials to manufacturing and sales, to use and end of life, every aspect of the industry is explored. Each scenario is designed as a tool to challenge companies' strategies, inspire them with new opportunities, help them plan future projects, and support students to understand the challenges of the future and come up with ideas for sustainable products and services (Tab. 1).

Since 2009, it was clear that a resource crisis and a change in consumption had already been predicted. The health crisis, however, has a significant impact on these scenarios. According to the systemic approach guidelines, the only viable futures are the first and the third. In particular, the first refers to a slowdown trend that the coronavirus brought back to light during the crisis. Giorgio Armani, in his open letter to Women's Wear Daily, and Alessandro Michele (Zargani, 2020), Creative Director of Gucci, emphatically stated that fashion must slow down. In the aftermath of the lockdown, these two statements hijacked the whole post-pandemic vision of fashion as being close to consumers and the environment. The third scenario, acting locally and allocating technological resources instead of human resources in manufacturing, would avoid all possible disruptions in the production chain that have jeopardised the industry's ethical sustainability. However, this does not mean that, in a future scenario, machines will entirely replace humans, but that part of the processes that generate social inequalities in a utopian future could be solved.

During the Fashion Futures 2030 project, four toolkits have been developed for fashion professionals and educators that make accessible four possible future scenarios. The toolkits were co-created by experts from the C&A Foundation, Centre for Sustainable Fashion and Forum for the Future (2020). Through the critical consideration of fashion and nature, they aim to encourage the development of visions and goals to guide design, business and communication from a strategic perspective. At the heart of the kits the scenarios explore, once again, climate change, resource scarcity, population growth, and other factors that will shape the world of 2030 and the fashion industry's future. The descriptions, this time more detailed, explore every aspect of the industry, from the production of raw materials, through manufacturing and retailing, to use and end-of-life (Tab. 2). In this second case study, it is possible to see how the pandemic has anticipated some future signs. If, since the dawn of the 20th century, fashion brands have shared their creative innovations and reinforced their brand image through highly ritualised interactions such as fashion shows, in the contemporary scenario, fashion brands have abandoned seasonal clothes along with the

Futures Scenario	Description
Slow is beautiful	A world of political collaboration and global trade where slowness and sustainability are in fashion
Community Couture	High-tech systems are the ideal solution for the speed-obsessed global buyer
Techno-chic	The resource crisis limits consumption in a world centred on local communities
Planet patchwork	A world of fast consumption in global cultural blocs

Tab. 1 | Fashion Futures 2025.

Futures Scenario	Description
Living with less	Thanks to new investment strategies, governments and companies have made a global turnaround in the fight against climate change. Fashion continues to play an essential role in societies; clothing is treasured and preserved for a long time and handed down within groups of friends and family. Sharing networks, enabled by the social credit system, are proliferating. Brands have also tapped into this 'heritage is queen' mentality and now offer 'product + service' models as their primary offering.
Hyper hype	The application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) to various industries has grown exponentially during the 2020s and has eliminated the need for most manual labour, leaving many unemployed. Fashion is fast, frivolous, cheap and fun. Seasonal clothing and the catwalk have been abandoned as new styles are launched every day through digital fashion shows and advertisements by large multi-brand conglomerates. There is a shift towards genderless clothing attributed to the rise of casual and streetwear, which continued to dominate fashion trends after 2020, and became increasingly popular once 'going out' became less common. One segment of the fashion industry creates exclusively for digital interaction. However, spurred by curiosity and an obsession with 'pre-digital' life, there is a growing subculture among some of the young, who collect vintage clothes and fabrics and patterns and use them to create their clothes.
Safety race	Tensions are high in an unstable global equilibrium. The world operates in silos of varying size and power, and inequality levels between countries are high. Many countries feel left behind. Terrorism, piracy and the collapse of democracy are becoming increasingly common. Fashion is driven by politics identity and strongly influenced by ethnic and national traditions. People deliberately seek patriotic clothing and clothes are a visual language for distinction. Fashion is often peppered with historical references, marking social and tribal divisions. Counterculture communities rebel against this, deliberately mixing and matching different cultural references to create political fashion statements that promote collectivism and globalism in a vibrant and arresting way.
Chaos embrace	Global agreements such as the SDGs and the Paris Agreement are long gone and forgotten. The world has retreated from globalisation as things fall apart and power is redistributed to local governments and communities that focus on building self-sufficiency and resilience, primarily due to a prolonged economic recession. Everyday fashion focuses on utilitarian, well-made clothing that is stored and worn for long periods. With a shortage of essential raw materials, most fashion is bought locally or used and remade. Personal style has become firmly linked to local identity and is often personalised with themes, images or symbols representing community, cultural or political affiliation. Fashion activism has played a critical role in the last decade's protests, including people wearing clothes expressing their disagreement with dominant regimes, and sculptural clothes worn by performance artists to bring attention to social and environmental issues.

Tab. 2 | Fashion Futures 2030.

catwalk. New styles are launched every day through digital fashion shows and advertisements of large multi-brand conglomerates'. In this sense, Covid-19 has brought an abrupt end to these environmentally costly forms of interaction, once again turning the future gaze towards sustainability.

In the 'living with less' scenario, the perspective is closer to the strategies that the fashion brands were already undertaking in the short term: the clothes are treasured and stored for a long time, as well as handed down within groups of friends and family. Sharing networks, enabled by the social credit system, are proliferating. Brands have also adopted this 'heritage is queen' mentality and now offer 'product + service' models as their primary offer. Covid-19 has already highlighted the need for a change in profitability mindset. If some products and collections have not necessarily generated better financial results, companies are being pushed to find ways to increase services to reduce stocks and use business models based, not only on the demand but also on the circularity of material resources. At the same time, increasing responsiveness in the season for both new products and restocks. In this case, currently, there is no shortage of business models interpreting sustainability with reusing and recycling models. Platforms such as Depop, Vinted, or Yoox act as resellers of used or unsold clothes. We still have to wait for other issues such as gender equality through clothing, the localism of specific productions, and the design strategy having a new life in mind and the prolonged use of clothing. Following this analysis, which focuses on the foreseeable aspects of the future in developing these case studies, all those signals in the present, which the health crisis has channelled towards preferable future scenarios because they are sustainable, will be expressed.

Future sustainable horizons in the post-Covid-19 paradigm | Using the three horizon models first theorised in The Alchemy of Growth and adapted by Andrew Curry and Anthony Hodgson (2008), signals from the present that triggered change processes are linked to future scenarios. The aim is to define an analysis model, based on the future, that can enable sustainability strategies in the whole system: both for the individual product and future business models.

Horizon 1 – Seeds of the future in the present. According to Curry and Hodson's (2008) model, on the first horizon should be placed all those signals that give value to a specific business strategy in the present scenario. In this case, we can only focus on the fact that the fashion industry moved to the forefront to reconvert production chains during the pandemic crisis and triggered major brands' reflections to re-evaluate their business models. Digitalisation is already underway, leading the entire system to reduce waste, such as that of fashion shows, and optimise rapid prototyping processes in design. These strategies to re-functionalise the system suggest that resource efficiency, improving the ability to re-use or reconvert (at any scale) are business models that are as viable as they are necessary to produce a precise shift of the economy towards a sustainable one. The covid crisis, which has accelerated some ideas, showed that such

transitions are feasible even in the short term to convert the impact of the supply chain.

Horizon 2 – The new transition paradigm. The second horizon, can include new opportunities for the sector, not tested but undoubtedly feasible in an approximately near-future scenario. In such a scenario, all those practices that move fashion away from the paradigm of visibility emerge. With the emergence, fashion was perceived as a peripheral need, clothing as a validation of one's identity and status no longer required high funding. In this social distance scenario, remote working and more digital than face-to-face engagement, the characteristic of fashion as a visible indicator of social status, wealth and style is increasingly losing ground. So, if fashion shows are cancelled and shops closed, the growing accumulation of unsold stock could lead to a radical paradigm shift for some brands. In this case, designers would have to shift their attention to new agile waste disposal strategies to avoid (forever) dead stock, perhaps speeding up the transition to an approach no longer oriented towards trends and seasonality, with collections guided by the vision of the consumer.

Horizon 3 – A preferable, sustainable, but still very distant future. Finally, in the third horizon, it is possible to include all those signs of the future that could happen in a very distant timeframe, unpredictable and falling within all the possible preferable futures. Therefore, we can highlight which features we hope to see in the post-Covid fashion system. Technology will give an essential contribution to this horizon. Online fashion, supported by data to encourage transparency and on-demand production, will prevent the system from falling back into over-production with terrible environmental and social impacts. A production that follows project guidelines, centred on people and their real needs, that can exchange information transparently, that does not need to leverage production across borders but can feed local, territorial systems. Covid has accelerated the digitisation process, this will undoubtedly support fashion companies in making each link in the value chain sustainable.

In conclusion, the threats of the current economic growth paradigm, digitisation, and a total overturning of relational logic, make difficult to imagine what future lies ahead for the fashion industry after the pandemic. However, the signs lead us to think of a resilient and regenerative future – a sustainable future, a blank sheet to design.

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The subjects of climate change, excessive use of soil, renewable resources, ever-increasing production of waste, the current pandemic emergency and the global socio-economic crisis that it is causing, have in fact entered our daily life. Even if these are terrible issues, they can be, somehow, seized as an opportunity to rethink the way we live and our world. In this 'revolutionary' (Floridi, 2020) and 'polycrisis' (Losasso, 2020) context, specifically referring to the building industry, the Academy, the Research and Industry worlds are called to give answers – based on sustainability and the principles of the Green Deal – that can stimulate reconsiderations and re-orientations of processes, products and services, new projects on places, buildings, objects and materials, able to positively affect the governance of the global change that our planet and humanity need, able to give a 'new life' to the built environment, at any scale.

In the light of these considerations, the volume entitled A New Life for Landscape, Architecture and Design encloses 14 essays, research and original experiments, projects and interventions. While they address only some of the issues listed in the introduction, they are food for thought and contain good practices capable of give a contribution to the international debate on the subject. The contributions show that now more than ever a paradigm shift is needed. Though a multidisciplinary, systemic and interscalary vision, it should be able to deal with problems as if they were complex processes, activate projective simulations with the use of big data and implement structured strategies and actions that, on the one hand, can determine new balances adaptable to the unpredictable, continuous and constant change, and on the other, are respectful of our planet and of its non-renewable resources, but are also inclusive not to leave anyone behind.

Francesca Scalisi, Architect and PhD, is the co-founder and Research Manager at DEMETRA Ce.Ri.Med. (Euro-Mediterranean Documentation and Research Center), a member of SITdA (Società Italiana della Tecnologia dell'Architettura) and the editor-in-chief of Agathón | International Journal of Architecture Art and Design. She is a member in several International Steering Committee as well as a reviewer for various scientific Journals. She carried out research on Green Materials, Innovative Materials for Architecture, Nanomaterials, Energy Saving in Buildings. Her main Research Projects are 'Natural and artificial innovative materials for architecture', 'Nanotechnologies for unfired clay bricks (tradition, innovation and sustainability)', 'Recovery and conservation of Architectural Heritage using nanostructured materials and innovative technologies'.

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