

EDITORIALS

PROSPERITY FASHION

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The fashion system has been questioning for years how to decrease its negative impact on the environment and people, trying to improve individual elements: from natural, organic or recycled materials to zero-waste design methodologies, from slower production processes to socially responsible actions, from development of local supply chains to inclusive communication campaigns, from blockchain traceability of products to more reliable trend forecasts through artificial intelligence, from social engagement to large scale regulation. Thanks to the contribution of researchers, practitioners, and activists, a new awareness in civil society about the finite nature of materials and resources has been achieved, and the definition of standards and certifications regulating fashion processes and products towards circular and closed ecosystems has been refined and broadly disseminated.

This awareness, however, often conflicts with the need for constant and exponential economic growth, on which fashion brands base their creative direction, communication, branding, and sales decisions. The last few decades, marked by climate, humanitarian and health crises, have prompted debate about the prevailing economic model centred on 'GDP Fetishism' (Stiglitz, 2009), which consists of holding Gross Domestic Product (GDP) as definitive and universal, and thus pursuing it at the cost of dramatically burdening environmental, human, and social resources. Many researchers have gone back to the criticisms made by the Club of Rome in 1972 to verify and actualise them, fuelling the need not only for a new direction for economics and production, but also for new definitions and terminologies for this urgent change of pace: a-growth and post-development politics (Latouche, 2006), post-growth fashion (Fletcher, 2016), regenerative marketing (Sarkar, Kotler & Foglia, 2023), restorative design (Antonelli, 2019), sufficiency-based economy (Bocken, Niessen & Short, 2022) and post-industrial design (Cross, 1981), expressions of a new approach to nature, seen as our ally and subject of an ethic of care (Gambardella, 2024).

Underlying all these reflections is the ambitious goal of redefining the concept of prosperity, hitherto understood almost exclusively in its economic sense, but instead indicating etymologically what is in keeping with hope, what is preferable for the future. The concept of prosperity therefore requires a new interpretation consist-

ing of a fundamental rework of the relationship between the economic and the social (Moore et al., 2023), in a non-mercantile but relational prosperity. The dimension of relationality is a fundamental component of a new conception of prosperity, conceived as a resource of both economic and human value, generated by a community within environmental and ethical constraints. This idea of prosperity has as its objective the 'common good' (Sandel, 2021) not only of the community, understood as a group of people, but also of the trans-species, post-phenomenological (van Dongen, 2019) and more-than-human (Wakkary, 2021) relationships that coexist in it.

With its complexity, can fashion move beyond its singular profit-driven vision in order to develop the ideas of multi-faceted shared well-being? Can research into materials, processes, and fashion products shape new social and cultural models oriented towards prosperity? Can fashion be an example of this change that is capable of redirecting other knowledge and disciplines? Can the legal framework for sustainable development and the relevant legislation for the textile and fashion industries help drive the transition? Can fashion redirect the relationship between human and non-human, individual and territory, nature and technology? Can we move from the current 'Fashion Prosperity', understood as fashion's pursuit of its economic growth, to 'Prosperity Fashion', a broad vision of the future and a transversal and contemporary focus on people, planet, economy, and technologies?

Based on these premises and questions, on 13 and 14 February 2025, Prosperity Fashion, the first international conference on fashion organised by Università degli Studi di Firenze, took place. The two days were enlivened by 94 contributions, selected through peer review, 147 speakers from 88 institutions around the world, 18 parallel sessions, and two keynote speakers—Kate Fletcher and Ron Wakkary—who spoke during the plenary session held in the Sala Bianca of Palazzo Pitti.

This special issue of Fashion Highlight Journal brings together a selection of the contributions presented during the conference, offering further reflection and insight into the oral presentations. This volume demonstrates the vitality and diversity of the themes addressed during *Prosperity Fashion*, serving as a concrete extension of the dialogue initiated during the conference.

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