

A GUIDE FOR FOSTERING SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY
IN MICRO AND SMALL FASHION BUSINESSES



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This guide is interactive.



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more than forty fashion MSEs, who demonstrate sustainable prosperity in and through fashion. It is also informed by interviews with 15 support organisations who deliver a range of programmes and resources to fashion MSEs. This collaborative research is led by Centre for Sustainable Fashion, a University of the Arts London research centre, based at London College of Fashion. Project partners are based at London College of

Fashion, The Open University and

Middlesex University's Centre for Enterprise and Economic Development Research (CEEDR; a partner in Surrey University's

The Fostering Sustainable

Practices project investigates

enterprises (MSEs) as an evidence base for change towards a more

This guide is underpinned by two-

creative practices in design-

sustainable fashion industry.

and-a-half years of work with

led fashion micro and small

Centre for Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity). Fostering Sustainable Practices

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This guide offers ways to recognise, evaluate, and measure sustainable prosperity in fashion micro and small businesses (MSEs). It provides a vital evidence base for counting their contribution to culture, society, environment and economy.

Through the guide we invite you to develop and deepen your knowledge and understanding of sustainable prosperity in fashion across these interconnected dimensions.

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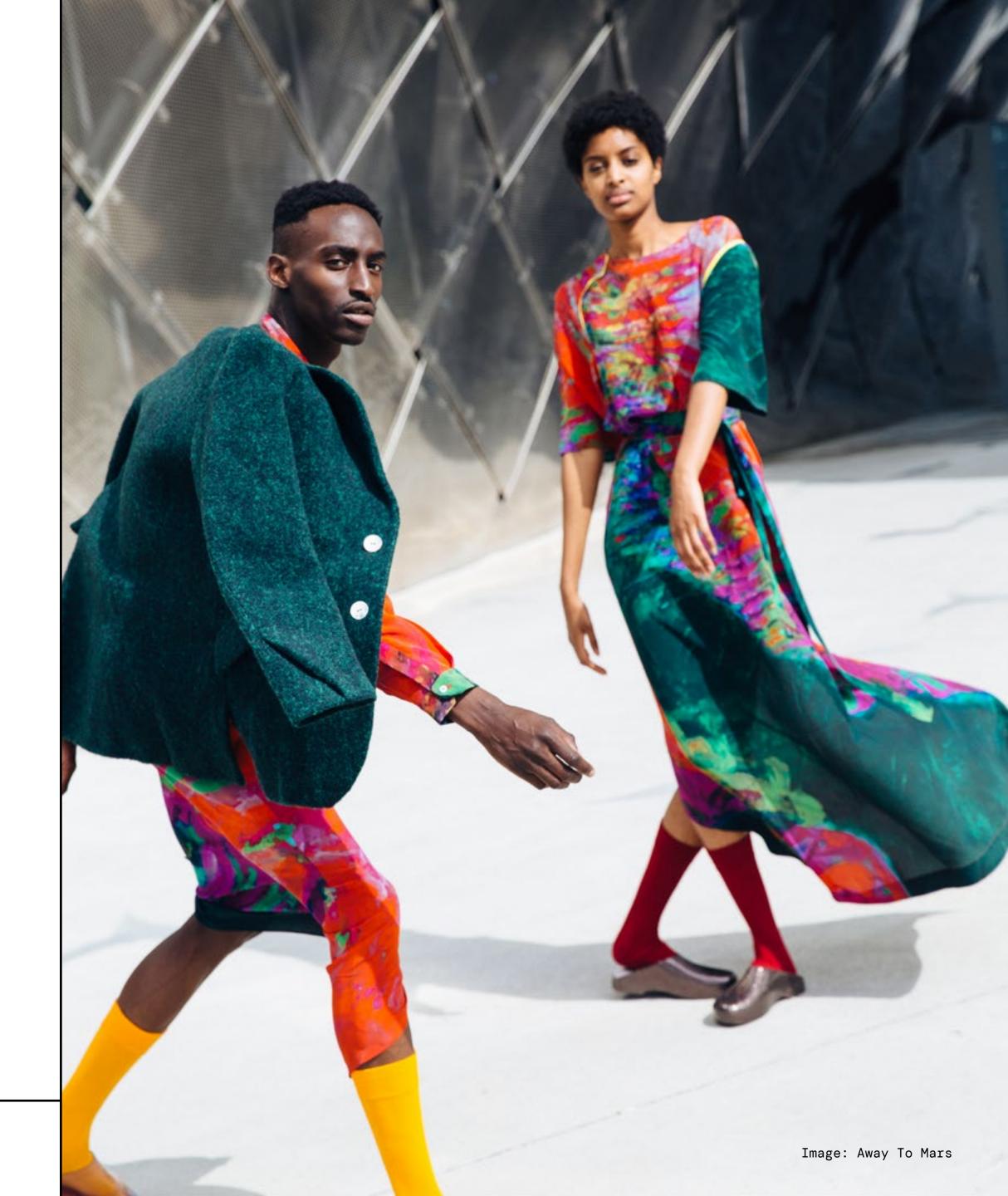
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WHAT IS THIS GUIDE?

This guide is a reference tool and a go-to-resource for those who are identifying, supporting, mentoring, showcasing, and investing in micro and small fashion businesses (fashion MSEs). It introduces ways to recognise designers whose practices do, or could, contribute to cultures, societies, and ecological and economic systems that are life- and livelihood-sustaining as well as creatively fulfilling.

The guide contains key tips, methods and practical examples for those who support fashion designers, to help them identify and promote businesses that can flourish and evidence long-term prosperity in and through fashion.

It draws on the findings of two-and-a-half years of research by researchers from different academic disciplines and professional backgrounds, who have investigated the distinction of micro and small fashion businesses and their sustainable practices.

Drawing on analysis of evidence from over 100 in-depth interviews with UK-based designers and people from a range of support organisations, it offers a verifiable account of sustainability in action and demonstrates new possibilities for the fashion sector in the UK. By this we mean fashion with earth and social equity front of mind.

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KEY TERMS

DESIGNERS

People who imagine and realise ways to change what is, to what is possible. Designers are led by intention, via commitments, relationships, products and their businesses, to contribute to societal, cultural, environmental and economic prosperity.

MSEs

Micro and small enterprises, defined by the European Commission¹ and the Office of National Statistics² as those with 0-9 employees (micro) and up to 49 employees (small).

SUPPORT ORGANISATIONS

Individuals and organisations that provide finance, business support, showcase opportunities or any other kinds of support to designers and MSEs.

^{2.} Business population estimates for the UK and regions 2020: statistical release (HTML) - GOV.UK (www.gov.uk)

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This guide draws attention to:

What support organisations can consider when identifying, supporting and showcasing MSEs.

What fashion MSEs can recognise, evaluate and measure in their work.

What buyers, press, customers and government can endorse by supporting these MSEs.



"As a species we need to decouple growth and prosperity.

For Elvis & Kresse this means we can only grow if in doing so we are solving more problems, rescuing more materials, donating more funds to our charity partners, and crucially while we are eliminating our use of fossil fuels."

ELVIS & KRESSE

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FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

Image: Elvis & Kresse

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This guide is for you if:

You are an individual or an organisation who identifies and supports talent locally, regionally, or worldwide.

You are a member of a community or an organisation that nurtures and guides designers and businesses in your local area.

You are a designer looking to embed sustainable prosperity into your work.

You want to learn more about how fashion MSEs contribute to cultural, social, environmental and economic prosperity.

FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION



"I've always wanted to work for a sustainable company.

My previous life was fast fashion, so I wanted to work for someone where it was going somewhere. I didn't want to work for somewhere that was happy just ticking over."

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We invite you to:

Extend your knowledge and understanding of fashion and sustainability.

Evaluate how to include the key tips, explanations and practical examples presented here in the decisions about who you select, invest in and support.

Apply this guide in supporting designers on personal and business levels.

Share the guide with others in your networks, to expand ideas on how fashion can be recognised for its positive contribution to culture, society, environment and economy.

Feedback what works well, what doesn't work so well, or what is missing — so that we can all be part of a shift towards sustainable prosperity in fashion.



"It's about how we approach key areas that dominate our thinking as a management team - thoughtfulness towards people and the planet. We navigate ourselves by always considering how and striving to keep those two in balance."

TOAST

FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

Image: Finisterre

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WHY FOCUS ON MSEs?

Micro and small businesses have long-held, but largely unacknowledged, identities as people who challenge the status quo and who move fashion and the UK forward in distinctive ways.

Using Office for National Statistics (ONS) data, it can be seen that 99.3% of businesses in the UK are micro and small businesses. While larger businesses also make a major contribution to employment and turnover, micro and small businesses account for nearly half of employment (48%) and over a third of turnover (36%) in the UK's private sector.

Alongside the social and economic importance of micro and small businesses,³ fashion MSEs demonstrate adaptability and – as with designers and artists in other fields – they are usually hands-on and multi-talented. They can move seamlessly across a plethora of roles and tasks.

Their work is not often fully recognised or realised. It seldom fits neatly into the expectations of government or business criteria, which are measured primarily in terms of economic growth. Besides, government policy and business support are primarily aimed at large entities.

Yet, pioneers, by definition, forge paths others go on to follow. Whether outspoken or quietly considering what it means to live and work well, the socially-centred purpose of these designers is often met first with disbelief, then distrust, before being accepted. Many of these designers demonstrate a resilience, vigour and humility to which others can aspire. 99.3% of businesses in the UK are micro and small businesses*

Micro and small businesses account for nearly half of employment (48%) and over a third of turnover (36%) in the UK private sector

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WHY NOW?

The facts are well known: fashion's current demands far exceed nature's capacity to supply the products and services that our industry, economic and societal practices rely on. We are destroying ecosystems and species, and creating emissions, all while undervaluing what we have in terms of nature and labour.

At the heart of the problem lies a deep-rooted, widespread failure to value fashion in environmental, social and cultural terms as the basis of its economic contribution. The industry is also implicated in long-standing social injustice; built on the colonial model of exploitation, the concerns of fashion are intersectional and intergenerational.

Through our research, we have found strong evidence of another story of fashion: one that thinks, acts and measures success in broader terms than solely financial profit.

This means that transformative change of the whole system is possible and its seeds are evidenced by the designers in our study. However, they need to be better recognised and receive greater investment. Then we can all enjoy fashion as a contribution to well-being for ourselves and our fellow citizens. We want all roles in fashion to be something everyone can be proud of.

Through our research, we have found strong evidence of another story of fashion: one that thinks, acts and measures success in broader terms than solely financial profit.

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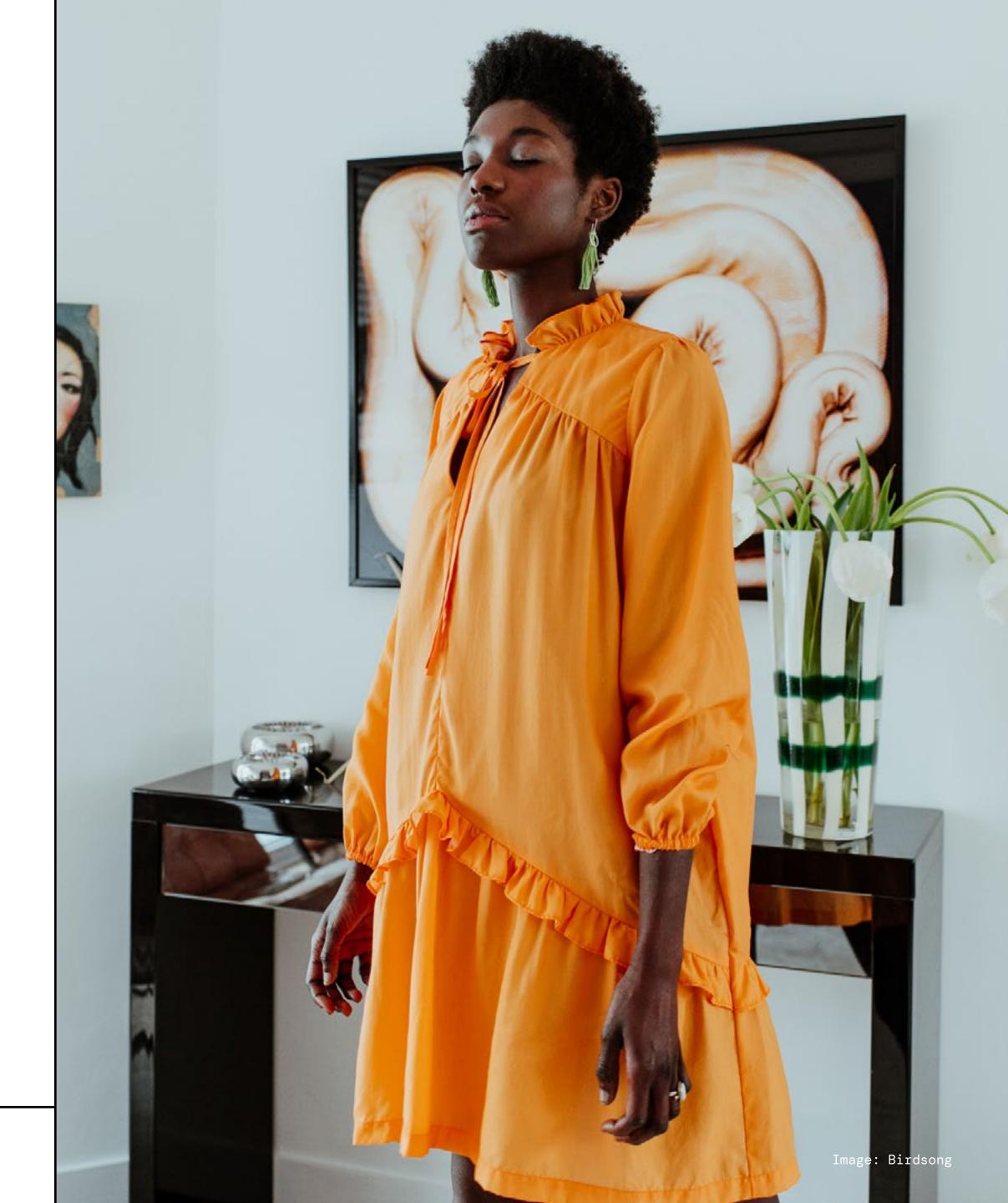
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Sustainable prosperity is a state of personal, cultural, societal and environmental thriving within planetary boundaries.

"Throughout the years when I was producing garments first of all to make money, I realised that while you're doing that, you always give up something from yourself because the profit takes over everything.

For example, the profit takes over, so you decide to move your production from London to Turkey. Then profit takes over and you decide to move to China. So, gradually, through that profit-making, you give up something from yourself, your own values. After a while, for every single millimetre of yourself, you leave behind two, three, five.

And a decade later you question yourself. What am I doing this for? I think we all go through that at some point in our lives."

BLACKHORSE LANE ATELIERS

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Sustainable prosperity

means long-term quality of life for people and nature everywhere.

cares for nature, because rich biodiversity, clean water, air, and fertile soil are critical for the well-being of all species on earth.

recognises that economic prosperity is critical for global equality, but, on its own, is an insufficient metric of human well-being.

enables decent work and long-term livelihoods everywhere.

allows enough time, energy and opportunities for personal development and participation in culture and community.

nurtures the search for meaning, satisfaction and fulfilment in life.

"Our jobs are being empathetic while still trying to make money."

BIRDSONG

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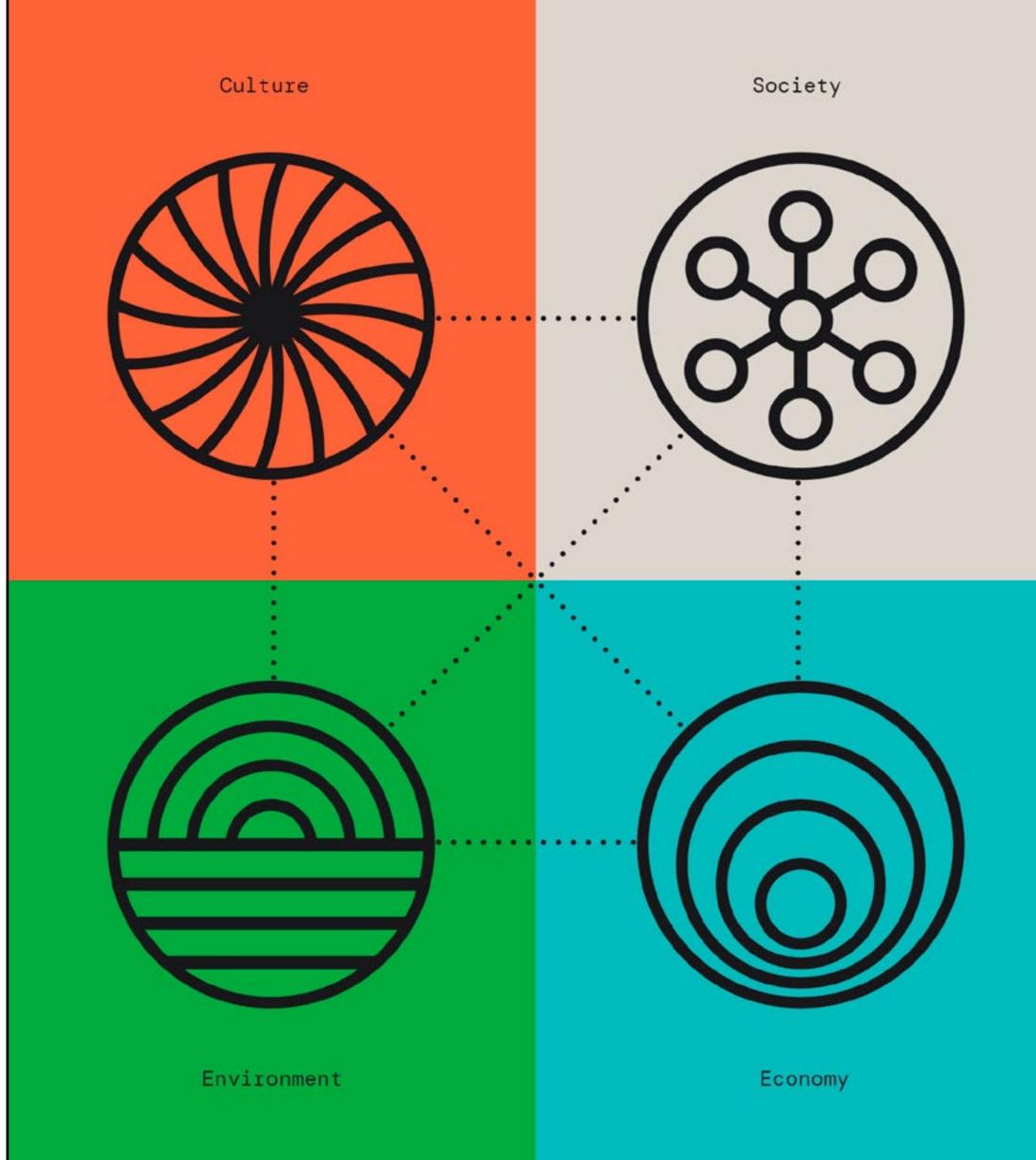
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SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY IN CULTURE, SOCIETY, ENVIRONMENT AND ECONOMY

Sustainable prosperity draws attention to the critical interdependencies between culture, society, environment and economy.

While this guide explains how each of these four elements can be uniquely reflected in fashion MSEs (Chapters 2 - 5), the distinction of the businesses featured here is that they work in a holistic way, across all four areas of sustainable prosperity. Any divisions between culture, society, environment and economy made here are only for the purpose of a detailed introduction of all four concepts.

The diagram here can be used as a constant reminder of their mutual interconnections:



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SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY IN FASHION MSEs

FASHION MSES CONTRIBUTE TO SUSTAINABLE PROSPERITY BY:

Putting emphasis on creativity	Being aware of interdependencies between culture, society, environment and economy.
Perceiving the urgency of the climate emergency	Recognising that incremental changes are not enough.
Being driven by purpose	To create a lasting positive impact that goes beyond monetary value.
Moving beyond products	By designing possibilities and solutions for cultural, social, environmental and economic good.
Exercising thoughtfulness	In relationship to both people and planet.
Putting emphasis on creativity	And intellectual development, together with profit.

Approaching growth as a tool	For increasing social, cultural and environmental regeneration.
Appreciating the benefits of staying small	For retaining creative control and authenticity.
Being reciprocal	Empowering communities and cultivating trust, collaborative spirit and mutual learning.
Questioning and challenging	The logic and values of the current fashion system.
Mastering complexity	Through self-reflection and iterative improvements of all aspects of business.
Bridging fashion	As it is now with fashion as it could be.

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COUNTING WHAT COUNTS

Thanks to their human scale, the ways in which MSEs reflect on their work and progress seldom include external frameworks or measures of success.

Instead, success tends to be considered in relation to their personal values and motivations, and the subjective fulfilment they draw from their work.



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COUNTING WHAT COUNTS

The following exemplify some of the indicators of success used by MSEs, as evidenced from our interviews.

Proof of concept	Striking a balance between traditional metrics (turnover, annual growth, wholesale, stockists, media endorsement) and own measures of success (social and environmental impact, personal and creative integrity, fulfilling work and delighting others), gives MSEs confirmation that their work creates the change they're aiming for.
Recognition for impact	In cultural, social and environmental terms. This includes solutions for fashion with respect to nature and contribution to community alongside financial viability.
Making things and making things happen	Having their own studio to realise design ideas and to collaborate with others. Both products and processes are a success when projects lead to results that are beautiful and fulfil the needs of others and their own creative ambitions. Achievements are recognised in multiple ways by multiple audiences.
Personal fulfilment	Achieved through authenticity and creative expression that make themselves and other people happy.
Establishing trust	Through investment in long-term relationships.
Reaching a level of maturity	That allows self-sufficiency of business, without compromising authenticity and autonomy, creative control, sustainability of products, choice of suppliers and manufacturers, and envisioned level of growth.
Realising own vision	Of sustainable fashion.

"I want to be happy and I want my mum to be happy. I love making my customers happy, I'm producing clothes that are going to be loved by people. I suppose that's it really. I want to make things that will last and will be kind to the planet and I want to make people happy."

ZOLA AMOUR

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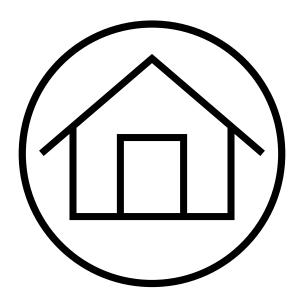
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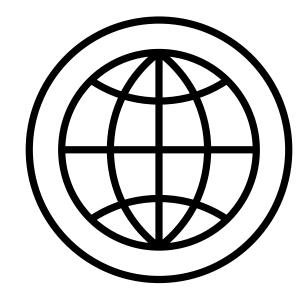
AT HOME AND OUTSIDE: CONTROL AND INFLUENCE



At home (within control)

The distinction of MSEs, in comparison with large-scale businesses, is in that they directly control and oversee multiple elements of their work. This gives them considerable flexibility and opportunities for change, where needed. The ability to make their own mark on how things are done also contributes to a sense of fulfilment and satisfaction in their work.

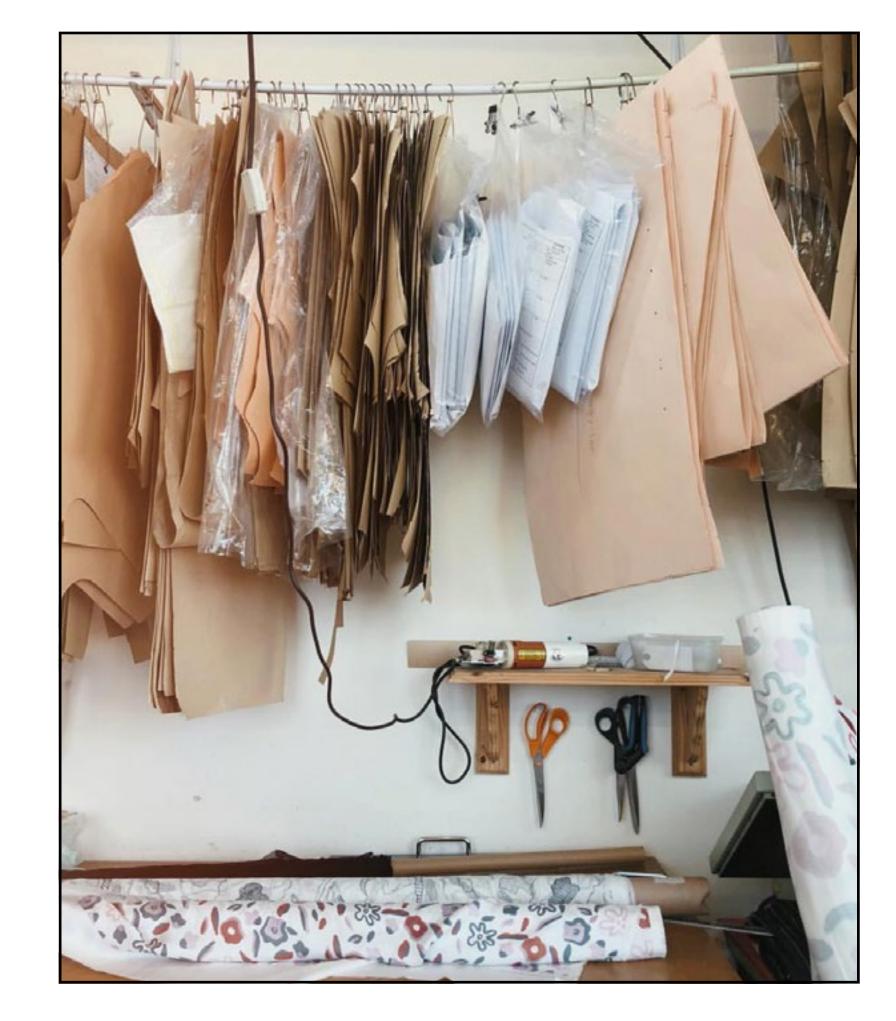
The practices they directly control are 'at home' and can be easily seen, shaped and iteratively improved.



Outside (within influence)

Yet, despite a good deal of independence and autonomy, MSEs operate within wider social and economic systems, and within the context of fashion as it currently is. This means that many things that impact directly on their work are not necessarily controlled by them. As a result, there is an ongoing tension between ambition and reality that MSEs need to navigate.

The practices beyond their direct control are 'outside'. MSEs cannot directly shape them but their work exerts influence and contributes to change.



"I'm not willing to sacrifice consciousness in order to grow too fast. Because the challenge is to find the balance, right? Can we prove that it's possible to have both because if we can't then what's the point in what we've done so far."

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COUNTING WHAT COUNTS

This diagram offers examples of the practices that are within MSE control, as well as those that are outside the business and so more difficult to navigate but can be influenced.



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"I wonder if there's something about looking at finding ways of measuring potential impact as a way of comparing to potential growth. Growth is generally measured in profit, but if a business looks like it would have a big impact, then it's almost worth putting the money there."

LITTLE BLACK PANTS

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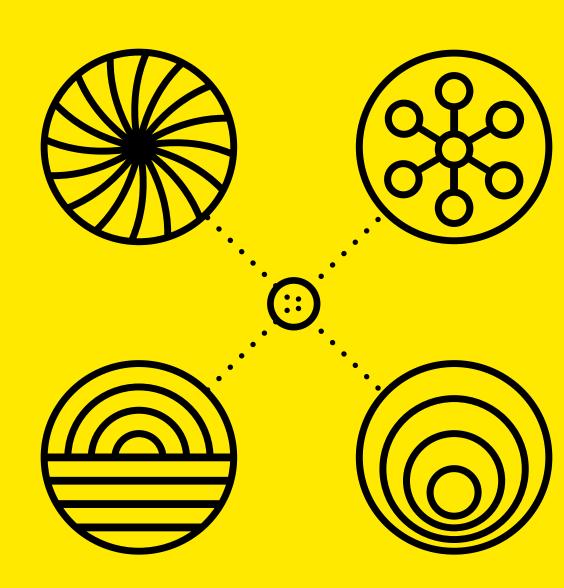
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The following chapters introduce each of the four elements of sustainable prosperity in detail.

We will explain what prosperity means in cultural, social, environmental and economic terms; why it is needed; how fashion MSEs contribute to it; and how those who support them can enable it through their work. The four areas of sustainable prosperity are further illustrated with real-life examples, including MSE quotes and case studies.

The MSEs featured here evidence that such a culture change is possible; it is already happening through their work, and this guide aims to amplify their voices.

The guide begins with a focus on cultural prosperity, to highlight that a radical culture change is needed to enable a new kind of fashion that is driven by sustainable prosperity across its cultural, social, environmental and economic dimensions.



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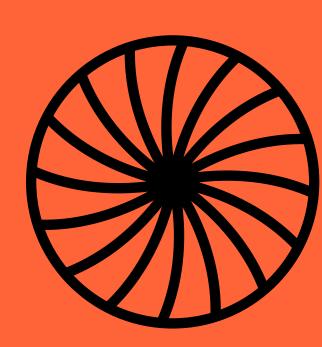
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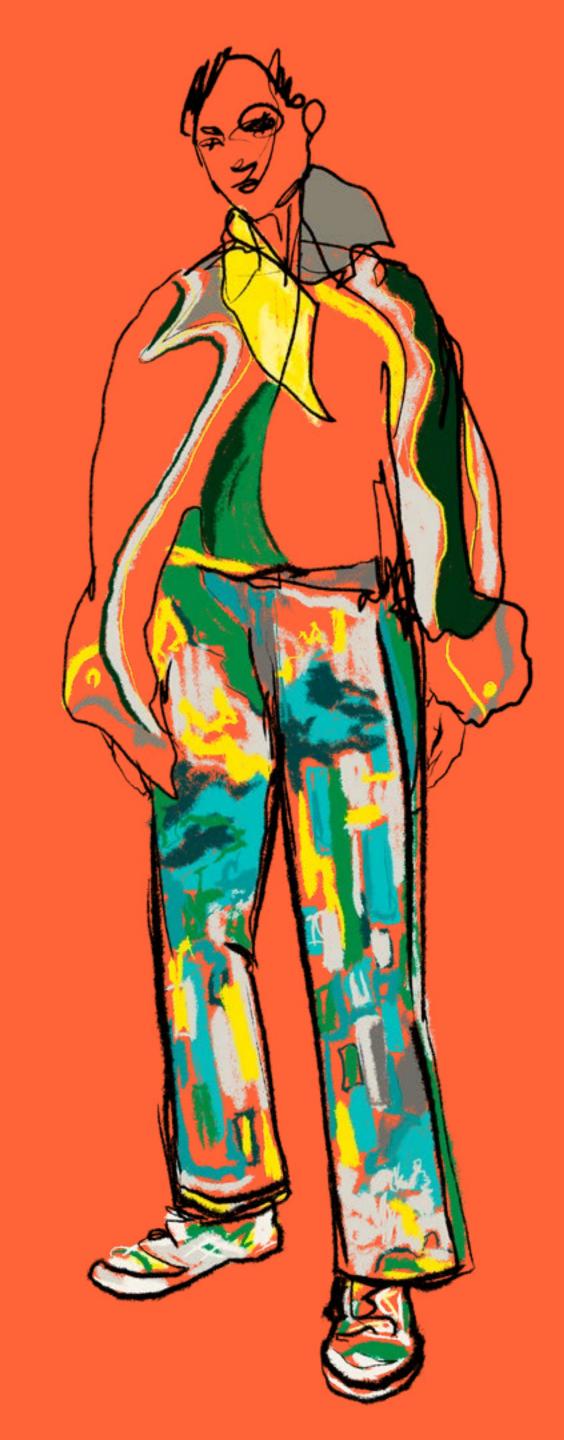
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CULTURAL PROSPERITY





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Key points in cultural prosperity:

Celebrating diversity in cultural heritage, art and craft traditions, customs, beliefs, histories and practices

New motivations, values and ambitions for fashion business

New definitions of success

Culture change in fashion



"When we make a product that doesn't work, as all brands will, it's usually because it's not authentic to us. Sometimes you'll have a go at something and it's just not quite true to you.

When we're authentic to ourselves and we're being comfortable in our own skin, then the customer gets it. But as soon as you try to be something you're not, or you spend a bit too much time looking at the market and not at your customer, or not at your natural surroundings, then the authenticity sort of slides."

FINISTERRE



FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

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WHAT IS CULTURAL PROSPERITY?

CULTURAL PROSPERITY

Cultural prosperity creates an environment where diversity of cultural heritage, art and craft traditions, customs, beliefs, histories and practices are recognised and valued. It draws knowledge and meaning from multiple places and from diverse ways of living, making and being.

Cultural prosperity thrives on distinctions linked to experiences of gender, race, sexuality, nationality, physical abilities, skills, neurodiversity, socioeconomic status or professional background. It embraces means of working and production that can benefit from both skilled craftsmanship and technological advances.

In the context of the fashion business, cultural prosperity broadens the definitions of success beyond traditional metrics, such as public recognition and profit. Staying true to personal values and hopes and having a sense of fulfilment and purpose in life are equally important for cultural prosperity. This means a radical culture change towards sustainability in action that brings together all four elements of sustainable prosperity.

CULTURE

Culture is much more than artistic expression, beauty or aesthetics. Culture shapes our beliefs, personal histories, our relationship to nature and to each other. Culture drives our daily routines and defines what is considered acceptable and desirable within a society. This includes practices and habits that relate to fashion and other forms of material expression.

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CULTURAL PROSPERITY IN ACTION

Culture change	The micro and small businesses whose work forms the basis for this guide, contribute to a radical culture change in fashion.
Motivations and ambitions	Their motivations and ambitions often stem from a sense of urgency and a dissatisfaction with what fashion currently stands for. They wish to create a new kind of fashion that values and celebrates both people and planet.
Sense of purpose	These are a new breed of designers who wish to link their personal and professional integrity by staying true to what they believe in, by doing something that matters.
	Many have taken lessons from their own professional involvement in the mainstream fashion industry, which often resulted in disillusionment at the lack of meaning and wastefulness of the current fashion system.

Embracing diversity

Their work thrives on drawing from diverse sources and multiple places. They reference personal histories, memories linked to nature and ideas of resourcefulness, benefitting from distinct experiences linked to a range of social, cultural and professional backgrounds.

Playing the game but changing the rules

They are aware of fashion's power to disrupt the status quo and enable a radical shift in how fashion is designed, made and enjoyed.

They play the game but change the rules along the way, navigating the space between shortterm goals and long-term ambitions. Working within fashion as it is, to create blueprints and possibilities for fashion as it could be.



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HOW CAN MSEs CONTRIBUTE TO CULTURAL PROSPERITY?

MSEs can contribute to cultural prosperity in multiple ways, including the following examples:

Spotting design opportunities in multiple places

Applying design skills in diverse ways, in and beyond designing products.

e.g. working on projects, collaborating with charities, cultural institutions or other brands, alongside designing own products

See example:

<u>Bethany Williams</u>

<u>Patternity</u>

RÆBURN

Creating a new kind of fashion

Proposing better possibilities of what fashion can be and destroying the old, harmful ones.

e.g. introducing new ways of enjoying fashion through sharing or swapping in local communities

See example:
Nuw
Away to Mars
Birdsong

Raising awareness

About social and environmental issues and using fashion to reconnect people with each other and with nature.

e.g. using design skills to encourage mindfulness and reflection, and to communicate the interconnections between humans and nature

See example:

Patternity
Finisterre
Phoebe English

Please note that while we selected case studies to illustrate specific aspects of sustainable prosperity in chapters on <u>culture</u>, <u>society</u>, <u>environment</u> and <u>economy</u>, the distinction of the businesses in this guide is that they work in a holistic way, across all four areas. This is why the examples shown are drawn from across the 12 case study businesses that feature in this guide.



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HOW CAN MSEs CONTRIBUTE TO CULTURAL PROSPERITY?

Continued >

Engaging customers

About the impacts of our everyday fashion choices.

e.g. sharing information about the details of the design and manufacture process, in addition to more generic information such as size and material

See example:
Petit Pli
Sabinna
Phoebe English

Making fashion more inclusive

Engaging people with diverse perspectives, experiences and a range of backgrounds.

e.g. considering everyday experiences of people who often are not part of mainstream fashion conversations, for example those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, people with different abilities and a range of health conditions

See example:

Bethany Williams

Birdsong

Nuw

Managing different timelines

Balancing fast and slow work, as well as short-term and long-term thinking.

e.g. working with varied product and collection ranges, weighing up the current fashion calendar expectations with projects that are led by different schedules

See example:

<u>RÆBURN</u>

<u>Away to Mars</u>

Phoebe English

Redefining luxury

To change perceptions of acceptable and unacceptable materials, behaviours and products.

e.g. introducing materials that utilise waste streams from other industries in new and creative ways

See example:

<u>Elvis & Kresse</u>

<u>RÆBURN</u>

<u>Nuw</u>

Taking on multiple roles

Acting as catalysts, activists, campaigners, speakers, educators, connectors, relationship builders, curators, consultants, strategists, future hackers, and many others.

e.g. supplementing design and product by taking active part in social and environmental causes that matter to them

See example:

<u>Bethany Williams</u>

<u>Elvis & Kresse</u>

Birdsong

Redesigning the fashion system

Developing viable models of how fashion can be designed, produced, sold and used, within planetary boundaries.

e.g. designing new solutions for production that directly responds to demand, avoiding overproduction, overconsumption and waste of skills and resources

See example:

<u>Unmade</u>

<u>RÆBURN</u>

<u>Away to Mars</u>

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"People want to talk about change, and fashion is such a great way to do that."

SARA ARNOLD

Image: SABINNA

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HOW TO SUPPORT CULTURAL PROSPERITY

This section introduces the <u>Challenges</u> MSEs face, then outlines different ways to address them through <u>Mindsets</u> (ways to shift existing attitudes and behaviours) and <u>Practical Solutions</u> (methods of providing support).

These challenges, mindsets and solutions look at the ways we can better support a creative, diverse industry, and a culture of sustainability which shapes the ways we make and wear fashion. Although these key points are most closely aligned to cultural prosperity, it is important to remember their interconnections with other aspects of sustainable prosperity. All points below are also linked to social, environmental and economic considerations.

We invite you to use these suggestions to expand your sustainability knowledge; to evaluate your existing strategies, programmes and activities from the perspective of cultural prosperity; and to apply new ways of providing support to MSEs aligned with their sustainability needs. Please note that not all of the points will be relevant to your organisation, and you may already be doing or offering some of the solutions suggested below. The format enables you to quickly identify and select the ones that are best suited to you.

The challenges, mindsets, and practical solutions suggested here are marked with a set of icons to help to navigate the context for each suggestion. For more information on the concepts of control and influence used throughout the guide, please see here.



AT HOME
[MSEs]
Under MSE control



AT HOME
[Support organisations]
Under your control



OUTSIDE

[Wider fashion system]
Outside direct control of MSEs
or support organisations, but
within their influence



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Challenges









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PROSPERITY?

This section outlines the challenges MSEs face in relation to cultural prosperity. We'll go on to explore some of the ways you can address these in the following sections, both from a cultural perspective and across social, environmental and economic aspects.

Key cultural prosperity challenges:

Access to support

Excluding values and mindsets linked to sustainability

Intersectional challenges



"What we need more of is people, people in positions of power, who have to actually say 'this is not the most important thing, we can do it differently'. It's finding those people that's the next challenge."

REJINA PYO



FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION Image: Rejina Pyo

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Access to support

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

An inability to access or benefit from the help offered by support organisations.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

Support organisations may not include sustainability criteria in their selection, or fail to recognise diverse business motivations, success measures or goals and ways of working. This means that MSEs who do not conform to mainstream businesses are more likely to slip through the gaps in support offered.

These distinctions may include cultural or socio-economic background, use of alternative craft or production and working processes, or business purposes that don't prioritise financial success or growth. Further to this, those who are supported may not be able to fully benefit from the support offered, as it may not be relevant to their business – for example activities focussed on developing global supply chains when their goal is to cultivate local networks.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Narrow selection criteria
- Narrow definitions of success

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS?
See the 'Creating new definitions of success' in the
Values and Mindsets section, and 'New selection criteria'
in the Practical Solutions section.

"It's just really hard being in between a lot of worlds. We're in between business and charity, so we can fall in between funding gaps sometimes."

BIRDSONG

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Excluding values and mindsets linked to sustainability

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The fashion industry usually focusses on short-term, materialbased solutions and actions in relation to sustainability, while excluding wider contexts, such as values and mindsets, that address issues at the core of unsustainable practices.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

The way the fashion industry uses the term 'sustainability' is often limited to impacts on people and planet, focussing efforts on lessening environmental impacts and advocating for workers' rights. This can lead to an emphasis on solutions to specific problems, treating symptoms, and increasing the risk that we don't effectively address the underlying systems, mindsets and behaviours that result in unsustainable behaviour. This band-aid approach can contribute to a short-term focus for fashion's sustainability efforts, limiting our ability to create systemic change on a long-term scale.

MSEs with sustainability values who focus on slower change and root causes may miss out on support compared to innovations that provide a short-term fix for a specific environmental or social problem.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Lack of sustainability education, resources or support
- Short-term sustainability thinking
- An inability to reflect on long-term sustainability practices

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS?

See <u>'Recognising and supporting sustainability mindsets'</u> and <u>'Supporting MSEs' motivations'</u> in the <u>Values and Mindsets</u> section, and <u>'Developing reflective practices'</u> in the <u>Practical Solutions</u> section.

"Let's just keep a little bit of humanity in what we do. If you take humanity out of it, then there's no point in anything."

BILL AMBERG

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Intersectional challenges

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Designers can face higher barriers or challenges based on the interconnections of their cultural and social background and identities.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

Intersectionality, as defined by the <u>Oxford Dictionary</u>, recognises "the interconnected nature of social categorisations such as race, class, and gender, regarded as creating overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination or disadvantage".

Designers face intersectional challenges – their identities (including gender, race, sexuality, nationality, disability, neurodiversity, socio-economic status, professional background) impact the way they experience barriers or discrimination. These challenges involve both cultural and social barriers: the fashion industry reflects wider social biases and discrimination towards particular groups, contributing to a culture of exclusivity, social hierarchy and/or prejudice in many places.

These challenges are particularly apparent in fashion and race. Evidence from our interviews has shown mainstream fashion industry lacks representative engagement with BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and People of Colour) communities and often views BIPOC designers as less 'bankable'. This leads to a lack of funding, sponsorship, retail or showcasing opportunities, collaborations and networks, or other supports in comparison to white designers. When support is offered, it can be tokenistic.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Unconscious and deliberate bias
- Social discrimination
- Systemic racism

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS?

See 'Creating new definitions of success' and 'Recognising cultural value' in the Values and Mindsets section; and 'New selection criteria' and 'Providing tailored support' in the Practical Solutions section.

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Mindsets









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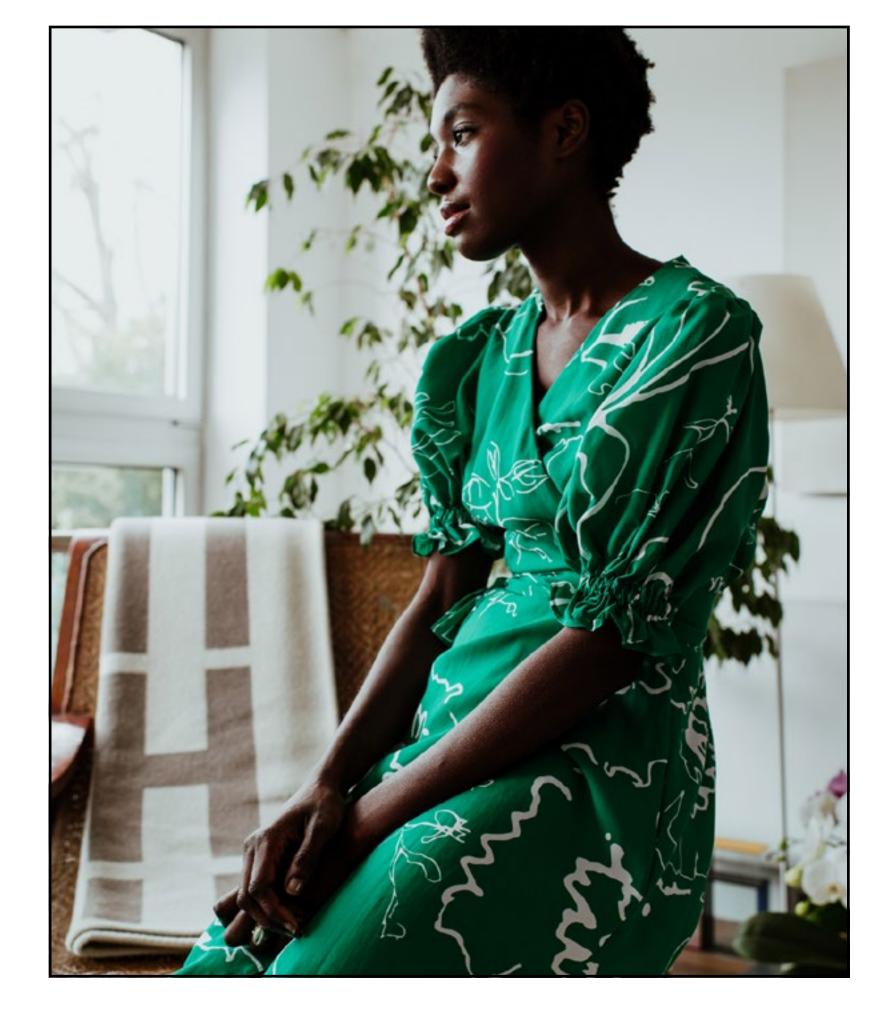
MINDSETS TO SUPPORT CULTURAL PROSPERITY

KEY MINDSETS: RESILIENCE & AUTHENTICITY (SEE PAGE 48)





Transforming the fashion sector is not just about environmental and social sustainability, but about a culture change. Cultural prosperity supports this in three ways – it recognises and cultivates diversity; it creates culturally relevant products; and it engenders a mindset with wider definitions of success. These are essential in fostering sustainable prosperity more broadly, across all four elements.



"It's all about rethinking through different perspectives, different solutions to a currently existing system. Before you abruptly try to change the system, how can you start to shift that change?"

PETIT PLI



FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION



Image: Birdsong

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How can you support this culture change?

Creating new definitions of success for businesses helps to embed cultural prosperity into measures and performance indicators.

Recognising and supporting sustainability mindsets pushes forward sustainable transformation for the industry.

Recognising cultural diversity as a core element of prosperity is an essential consideration in how and who you support.

Supporting MSEs' motivations and ambitions behind the foundation of their business can provide insight into what drives them, what they value, and how they can define success.



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Create new definitions of success

WHAT ARE NEW DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS?

Definitions of success that expand on what is traditionally considered 'successful'. They may take the form of pass/fail, yes/no, or qualitative performance indicators that ask MSEs to evidence how the measures have been met (see examples on

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

the following pages).

These new definitions provide a framework for MSEs to measure their sustainability progress, expanding on traditional indicators like growth, turnover or number of stockists. This ensures that sustainable prosperity (across cultural, social, environmental and economic perspectives) is included when defining what 'success' looks like to you and your MSEs.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

New definitions of success can be applied to your organisation and activities in different ways, such as:



Applied to MSEs

- By including them in the selection criteria used for admitting MSEs to your support programmes and activities.
- By using them to set aims, objectives and/or performance indicators for MSEs you currently support.



Applied to your own organisation

- By including them when developing guiding principles or a code of conduct for your own organisation.
- By using them to set sustainability aims, objectives and/or performance indicators for your own organisation.



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HOW CAN YOU DEFINE SUCCESS FOR CULTURAL PROSPERITY?

Some success measures for cultural prosperity could include (but are not limited to):

Contributing to cultural inclusivity and diversity

Making a positive impact on customers

Achieving personal fulfilment for designers and MSEs

Contributing creatively to the field of fashion design

Combine these new definitions of success with <u>social</u>, <u>environmental</u> and <u>economic</u> definitions for a full picture of sustainable prosperity.

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Contributing to cultural inclusivity and diversity

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The inclusion of diverse backgrounds, crafts, techniques or customer groups across the business and through its activities.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Use of culturally valuable, traditional or endangered craft and making techniques.
- Creativity and design that draws on the designers' or makers' cultural heritage.
- Intersectional, mutually beneficial collaborations with craft, making, cultural or local communities.
- Product or service development that considers diverse customer groups and their different needs and circumstances.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Products, services or other outputs that showcase diverse craft and making techniques.
- Products, services or other outputs that engage customers and audiences with diverse cultural perspectives, voices and histories.
- Products, services or other outputs from intersectional, mutually beneficial collaborations with diverse groups, makers or communities.
- Products, services or other outputs that are developed for the needs of diverse customer groups, such as people with different abilities and a range of health conditions.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Design and Service
Development Process:

Does the MSE include diverse voices, crafts or techniques in the design, product or service development process?

Who is involved and recognised?

Are workers' skills recognised?

Customers:

Does the MSE include diverse customer bases or needs in its product or service development?

Who do they design for?

Do they design for a range of people and their needs and circumstances?



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Making a positive impact on customers

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

A positive change in customers' lives caused directly by the MSEs' outputs or business.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Customer fulfilment: the ability to create delight for customers through their products or services.
- Buying better: offering products or services that use more sustainable production models or techniques. Examples could include non-seasonal pieces, project-based works or collaborations, working on commission, working outside the fashion calendar, or developing artist/patron relationships.
- Changing consumption habits: Raising awareness of fashion overconsumption and encouraging customers to consume less, or consume differently.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Products and services that customers value (for aesthetic, emotional, cultural, sustainability or other reasons) and keep for a long time.
- Strong, long-term customer relationships.
- Engagement with different customer groups.
- Customers who understand and/or demand more sustainable products, techniques or business models.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Is the MSE making a positive impact on its customers?

How is the MSE positively impacting on its customers?



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Achieving personal fulfilment for designers and MSEs

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The ability to fulfil the designers' goals or ambitions through their business.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Customer fulfilment: the ability to satisfy and delight others through their products.
- Creative freedom: the ability to set their own rules and commitments, and to freely explore design, craft and making through their vision.
- Realising the MSEs' ambitions for founding their business in the first place see 'Supporting MSEs' motivations and ambitions'.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Positive customer or stakeholder feedback on the product, outputs or business.
- Other business achievements beyond sales, for example developing new products or techniques, building collaborations, running workshops, teaching or consulting, speaking, communicating and marketing.
- Successfully managing multiple roles within the business for example designer, maker, retailer, mentor, strategist, speaker or business manager.
- Achieving personal goals set by the MSEs.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Is the designer able to fulfil personal goals or ambitions through their business?

What personal goals or ambitions have they achieved? How have they achieved them?

What personal goals or ambitions are they working towards?



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Contributing creatively to the field of fashion design

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The contribution of innovative, unique or exceptional work (e.g. designs, aesthetics, techniques, or other creative outputs) to the fashion industry.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

Unique ideas, creativity, aesthetics, design and making techniques embedded in products, services, business processes/models or other creative outputs.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

A unique product, service, output, business process or model that fulfils needs or delights customers, fulfils the business owners' ambitions, or provides innovation and/or culture change to the wider fashion industry.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Does the MSE contribute unique designs, aesthetics, techniques or other innovations to the fashion industry? How do they do so?

Does the MSE contribute unique business models or processes to the fashion industry? How do they do so?



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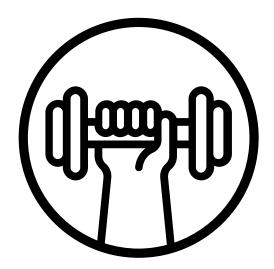
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Recognising and supporting sustainability mindsets

WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE FASHION MINDSETS?

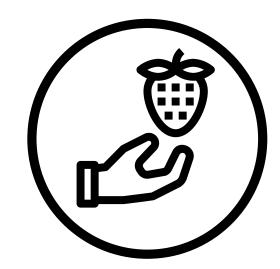
Continued >

CSF research has identified eight key mindsets that are critical for shifting behaviours and attitudes towards sustainability in fashion:



Resilience

The ability to be flexible in a rapidly changing world, and to recover from disruption in a way that catalyses renewal.



Resourcefulness

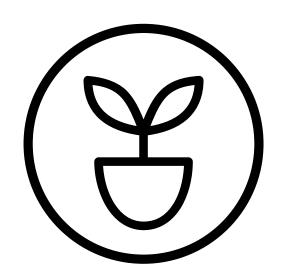
Practising ingenuity and thriving on what is there; solutions driven by frugality and creativity in challenging circumstances.

Doing more with less.



Equity

Recognising the equal, inalienable rights of all humans; and that access to opportunities and support must vary according to individual circumstances and needs.



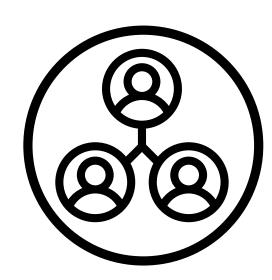
Sufficiency

Recognising the limits to nature. Connecting values, making, materials and aesthetics in ways that enable fashion to sustain itself.



Authenticity

Acting with integrity, honesty and accountability.



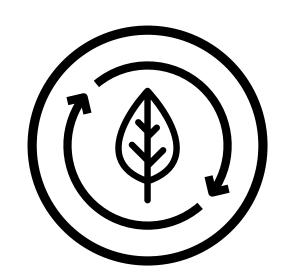
Collaboration

Working across disciplines and other traditional boundaries to share knowledge, resources and experience.



Activism

Standing up for what we believe in, and maintaining empathy for others.



Ecological thinking

Placing nature at the centre of all considerations.



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Recognising and supporting sustainability mindsets

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

These mindsets can equip MSEs with starting points for making positive change, and help them to think critically about their business from a sustainability perspective.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By recognising and building these mindsets for your MSEs, helping them to shift from a problems-based to a valuesbased approach to sustainability. This support could take the form of:

- Share information about sustainability mindsets by directing MSEs to the 'Recognising and supporting sustainability mindsets' section of this guide.
- As part of strategy development, asking MSEs to define which of these approaches they utilise already, or which they would like to utilise in the future, and how they would like to do so.
- Showcasing the work of MSEs that utilise these mindsets.



"If you have the abilities, there is an obligation towards humanity, nature and its future. If you can create positive change it is your responsibility to do so. This is bigger than us."

MARTINE JARLGAARD



FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

Image: Bethany Williams London

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Recognising cultural diversity

WHAT IS CULTURAL DIVERSITY?

Diversity in the heritages, crafts, communities, belief systems, practices and histories that make up the fashion sector.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Cultivating this diversity will help us to develop a healthier and more resilient fashion system that draws from traditional, sustainable practices and artisanal or maker-led communities.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By questioning how you currently recognise cultural diversity to identify strengths and weaknesses. To begin this process of self-reflection, consider the following questions:

- What backgrounds, identities, communities or heritages are represented in the MSEs you support? Are there any gaps in your line-up you feel should be addressed?
- How will the supports you provide impact different groups (for example groups across gender, race, sexuality, nationality, disability, neurodiversity, socioeconomic status, or professional background)? Are there any disparities that need addressing?
- How will you ensure that groups who are underrepresented are invited, included and welcomed?
 How will you ensure they have equitable support?
- How can you create opportunities for cultural exchange, networking and collaboration between the different communities you engage with?

Consider how you can change or update your activities based on the above. For example, if you offer showcasing opportunities, you may want to hold a showcase that focusses on a particular craft technique or heritage. If you offer a mentoring programme you may want to invite mentors with diverse backgrounds or from communities similar to those of the designers you support, to provide a range of perspectives and worldviews in response to the challenges the designers are facing.



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Supporting MSEs' motivations and ambitions

WHAT ARE MSE MOTIVATIONS AND AMBITIONS?

The reasons designers have for starting a business, and their goals and ambitions for their business.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

MSEs don't often have the same ambitions for their business as larger corporates – they are motivated by a host of different reasons, such as those outlined below. These motivations affect how they run their business, resulting in unique approaches to fashion and contributing to a more diverse, resilient system with culturally diverse perspectives and ambitions.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT? By recognising and understanding the motivations of the designers and founders you support. The MSEs we interviewed discussed a range of motivations during our research, including:

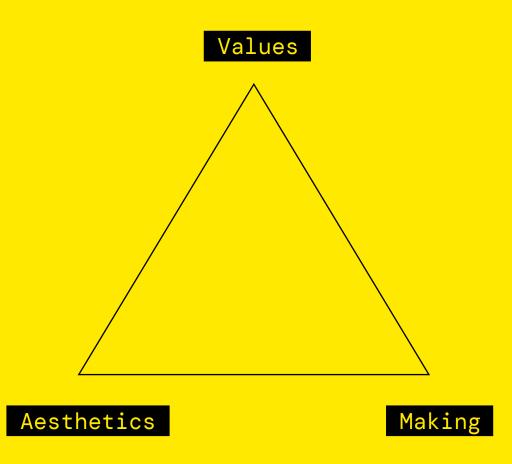
- Responding to the climate emergency and making a positive ecological impact.
- The desire to be creative and autonomous, and to do something that matters.
- Exploring fashion's potential beyond commerce.

- Fulfilment from seeing others delight in your work and from being true to oneself (i.e. having personal and creative integrity).
- Fulfilling a 'triangle of creativity'

 balancing values, making, and
 aesthetics when developing products,
 services or other outputs.
- Exploring an empathetic way of working
 drawing on soft skills or aligning
 family commitments with work.
- 'Giving back' through a social enterprise model, or reaching external standards such as <u>B-Corp</u>.

Business support activities (such as mentoring) should take these motivations and ambitions into consideration. For example, you could provide a framework for the personal development of designers based on their motivations, using these as a foundation for building the business vision, strategy and goals to align closely with the founders' values.

Triangle of Creativity





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Practical Solutions









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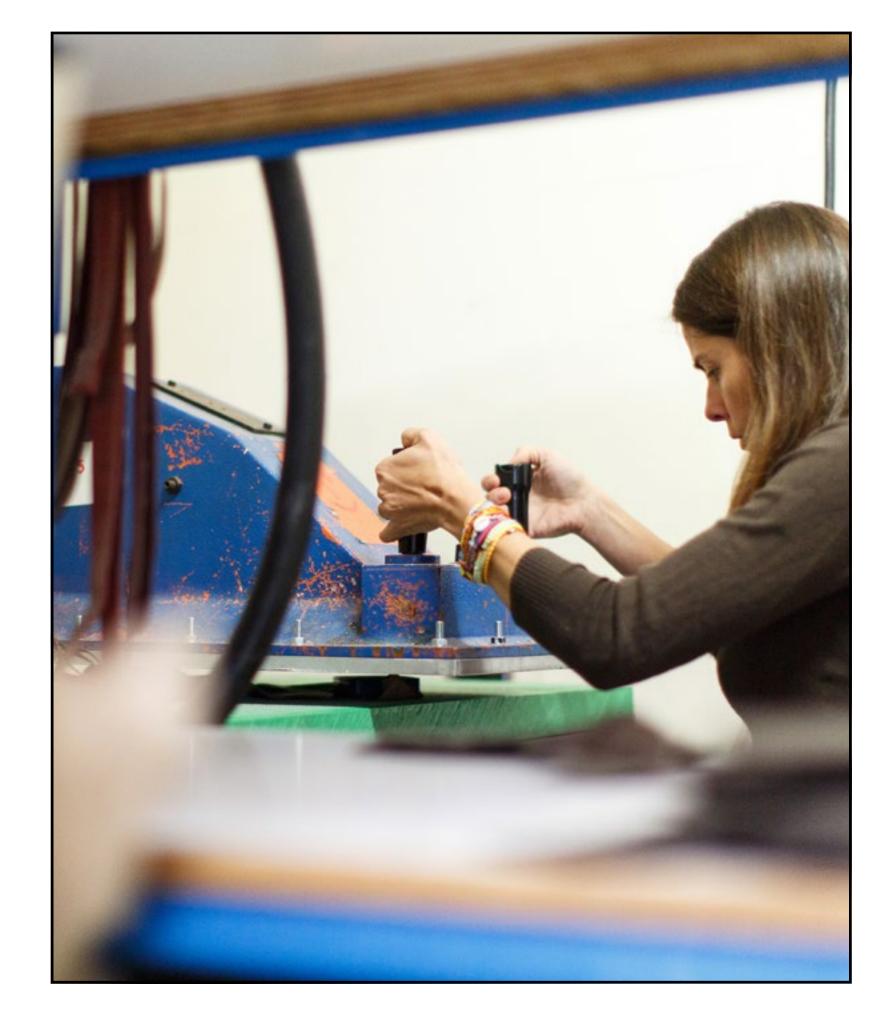
Now that we've introduced ways to support mindsets, this section outlines the more practical ways you can promote cultural prosperity. Note that depending on the kinds of support you offer, not all the solutions below may be relevant to you – or you may already be offering them.

Key solutions for cultural prosperity:

Including sustainability in selection criteria

Providing tailored support

Helping MSEs to develop reflective practices



"I think the best way for us to challenge the status quo is just to persistently exist in that space, doing it differently and successfully."

ELVIS & KRESSE



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Including sustainability in

selection criteria

WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE SELECTION CRITERIA?
Selection criteria that include cultural, social, environmental and economic success measures.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Not everyone has access to support organisations and their work. This access is a lifeline for MSEs – your decisions and activities can be the make-or-break for who or what survives within a difficult industry. As such, the criteria for selecting who is supported play a vital role in improving the sustainable prosperity of the industry.

By reflecting sustainability priorities in selection criteria, you can ensure that innovative and transformational businesses have the opportunity to amplify their products, services and business models across the industry. Additionally, when MSEs are selected for your support, this signals to others that their business is credible and worth supporting – strengthening their reputation or 'cultural capital'.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By widening criteria from conventional markers of success or credibility (such as stockists, turnover, fashion education or social-media following) to include cultural, social, environmental and economic success measures.

You can base your sustainability-focussed criteria on the 'New definitions of success' section for each chapter. These provide a selection of success measures that can be adapted or added to your existing selection criteria:

Cultural prosperity
Social prosperity
Environmental prosperity
Economic prosperity



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Providing tailored support

WHAT IS TAILORED SUPPORT?
Support tailored to MSEs' individual needs.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Time-poor designers don't always have the ability to engage with generic resources when they are looking for answers to specific questions. One-size-fits-most formats (e.g. webinars), while useful for delivering education, can require too much extra time to process and apply to the specifics of their own business.

This is particularly important when considering intersectional challenges, where obstacles (such as access to funding) have a more significant impact on different groups. Support can be adapted to recognise these impacts and help to redress inequalities.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By adapting resources and support activities based on the needs of the MSE, for example through:

Developing sustainability-focussed diagnostic tools

- Create (or adapt existing) diagnostic or evaluation tools that prompt MSEs to question and outline their work in relation to sustainability. You may wish to base these on the 'New definitions of success' section as listed on the previous page.
- Evaluate MSEs' sustainability behaviours, ambitions and level of understanding against these indicators.
 See the <u>Appendix</u> for suggested questions.

Match-make resources with MSE needs

- Based on their level of understanding and sustainability progress, point MSEs towards resources (either internal or external) that can help to fill knowledge gaps or develop their sustainability practice. The <u>CFDA Sustainability Resources</u> hub can provide a starting point for many different needs.
- Share the <u>Useful Resources</u> section of this guidebook

Utilise one-to-one support formats

- Provide one-to-one supports like mentoring or coaching to build a personal relationship with MSEs and more fully understand their needs (both for sustainability and the business).
- Embed emotional business support, where feasible, into one-to-one supports, providing pastoral care as part of the assistance package and helping to prevent burnout.
- Bring in external sustainability experts when needed (for example to fill knowledge gaps in your own sustainability offering).



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Helping MSEs to develop reflective practices

WHAT IS REFLECTIVE PRACTICE?

Reflective practice is the ability to reflect on your actions, in order to engage in a process of continuous learning. It involves making space and time for considering what you have been doing, what you are currently involved in and what you plan to do – all in relation to your wider ambitions and what is going on in the world.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

A reflective practice helps MSEs to build stronger sustainability actions, products and governance by prompting them to define how their business is currently making a positive impact, and how it will make a positive impact in the future. It prioritises making time and space for the 'big picture' of sustainability, so they're not just focussed on the short term.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By asking MSEs to take a step back and consider two focus areas: the MSE as a business; and the MSE's products, services and other outputs. This is applicable to MSEs who embedded sustainability from the beginning as well as those who have yet to start.

Develop sustainability-focussed reflection tools and questions for the business

- Help MSEs to self-evaluate based on a list of prompt or critical questions focussing on their goals and ambitions across cultural, social, environmental and economic prosperity.
- You may want to use or adapt the prompt questions in the Appendix.

Develop sustainability-focussed reflection tools and questions for their products

- Highlight continuous learning and improvement as a key aim for products, services and outputs (rather than striving for perfection).
- Prompt MSEs to reflect on the improvement of their products and services. These can be continuously improved through close connection to customers and creating feedback loops that allow MSEs to cocreate better products. This also helps to create a kinder, more process-focussed culture.
- Prompt MSEs to develop flexible, responsive goals or success indicators for this learning and improvement (e.g. customer satisfaction levels, products and outputs that are improved across seasons, or the successful integration of new sustainability practices).

Networking opportunities

Create networking opportunities and encourage MSEs to connect with peers, seniors or other mentors who can play a 'sounding board' role for critique and reflection.

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CASE STUDIES IN CULTURAL PROSPERITY



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CASE STUDY

PHOEBE ENGLISH

Founder/Owner

Phoebe English

Type Sector Designer fashion label Womenswear/Menswear

Established Location Size

2011 London

Website

Micro

phoebeenglish.com

"It is about bringing the craft of making back into design."

"There's always been this overarching push to expand and get bigger and get better and have more money. Everyone has always been like: you should be making it in Portugal or Turkey, and you can make profit. It's been very hard just to be actually a Made in England brand."

"What we're trying to do is use design as a vehicle to amend or alleviate some of the problems the systems within the industry are putting into place."

PHOEBE ENGLISH





FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION Image: Phoebe English

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Preserving what is already here and designing into what already exists (e.g. her 'Nothing New' collection).

Gathering and sharing information about fashion's damaging practices.

Ensuring control over design and production process to 'know' the impacts of her work.

Staying local and resisting the push towards getting bigger, stretching supply chains which, in turn, results in a loss of control and transparency.

Focussing inwards; refining elements, stopping doing certain things and using certain materials.

Proactively educating herself and her team.

Connecting and building relationships of trust and understanding that can scale up sustainable practices and positive impact.





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CASE STUDY: PHOEBE ENGLISH

OVERVIEW



Phoebe English is a designer of skills-led, often hand-crafted, carefully considered clothes. She works from a design studio in London, where she draws, sources, makes, co-ordinates and distributes collections directly or via wholesale. Her team consists of full-time, part-time and freelance members, who play an important role in a business that is as much about making relationships as it is about making clothes.

Trained as a designer and showing both off and on schedule at London Fashion Week, Phoebe's practice is much more than designing collections. A significant part of her work focusses on being a sustainable fashion advocate, through sharing knowledge and making connections between the roots of fashion: materials that come from the earth and shapes formed by skilled hands. Developing an understanding of fashion's relationship to nature and acute awareness of the Climate Emergency have led Phoebe to design with an 'emergency mindset'.

Phoebe English's ethics of care is realised both in products and across the business. Her pieces are designed as seasonless, genderless, timeless and to a certain extent technologyless. She sees her work as a reaction to what is going on elsewhere in fashion, and offers an inspiration and encouragement to a range of aspiring and established designers.

Phoebe English takes a culturally engaged approach to design and business, developing a model that

extends who and what fashion represents in terms of people, craft, and artistic and aesthetic practice. She describes sustainability as 'design with good intention'. This also led Phoebe to join forces with designers Bethany Williams and Holly Fulton to set up the Emergency Designer Network, making and delivering NHS scrubs, alongside dealing with all the challenges relating to the wholesale side of her own collection.

Phoebe English is a prime example of a transformative fashion designer who seeks to change the fashion industry from the inside out, through her subtle, committed and effective activism that is visible across all her work.

--

"I think success is what I have now. It's not something that I'm still looking for. I have a lovely team, I have a lovely studio, I am making things that I really like, and I'm doing it with the processes that I believe in. So that feels pretty successful to me. I don't feel like it's something that is far away."

PHOEBE ENGLISH

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CASE STUDY

NUW

Type

Sector

Established

Location

Website

Size

Founder/Owner Aisling Byrne, CEO

(originally with Ali Kelly)
Peer-to-peer clothes sharing
and swapping platform + app

Womenswear/Collaborative

consumption

2019

London (founded in Dublin)

Micro

thenuwardrobe.com

"Nuw is a social network for sharing clothes, so that the products can circulate locally, but we want the idea and concept to scan globally."

_ _ _

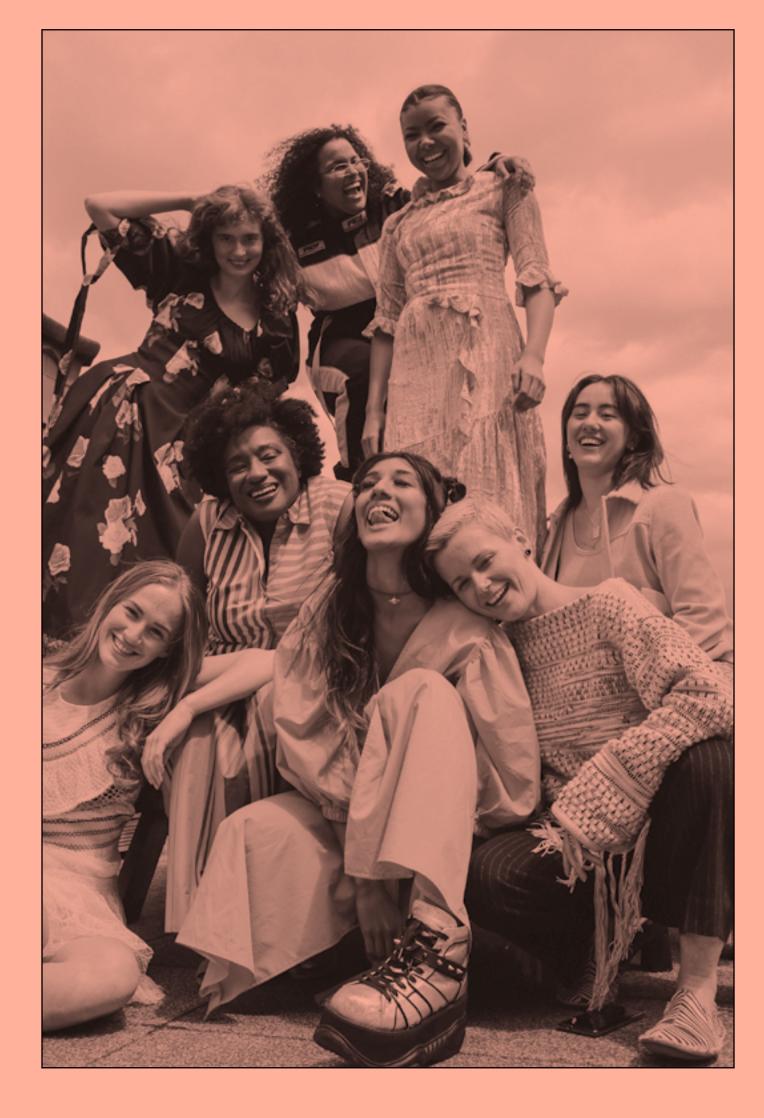
"It's a really positive movement towards not feeling the need to own things any more, but getting to enjoy them."

_ _ _

"What we're looking for is behaviour change.

And we'd argue that rental is behaviour change, because nobody pays their friend to borrow their dress, but people will casually walk into their friend's wardrobe and borrow something for a wedding."

NUW





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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Extending the use-life of clothes through enabling clothes-sharing communities, initially at a local (or hyperlocal) level.

Disrupting fashion and changing fashion habits by modelling the natural behaviour of sharing amongst friends - borrowing, lending and swapping pieces from individual wardrobes.

Aiming to make sharing and swapping a widely accepted practice.

Working closely with user communities to understand their sustainability attitudes, clothing practices, preferences and needs.

During COVID-19, swapping of clothes has become the major function of Nuw., representing 80% of its activity.





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CASE STUDY: NUW

OVERVIEW



Nuw is a peer-to-peer clothes sharing and swapping platform and app, co-founded in Dublin by Aisling Byrne and Ali Kelly in 2015. It aims to increase the wear rate of garments by encouraging people to share their wardrobe with others, initially on a local basis. The first subscription-based platform of its kind, the concept was initially built and tested with a community of university students who could not afford to spend much on clothes, particularly for special occasions.

Aisling and Ali were inspired to act for change following a visit to India organised by an NGO. Here, they saw first-hand the horrific exploitation and human and environmental impacts caused by the fashion industry. Aisling and Ali used to swap clothes while at university and they recognised that the most sustainable fashion activity was using the clothes you already have. So they set up swap shops and events and then built a basic sharing platform through their university and friends' networks.

All the time they were building the platform, they worked collaboratively with their community to understand their attitudes and needs, and to listen to their ideas. They aim to educate their members via the platform with their carbon-, waste- and water-impact calculator, built in collaboration with the London Waste and Recycling Board. Users can upload their pieces with information on the materials content

and see the average savings in carbon and water gained by sharing and not buying new.

The business is constantly gathering information from its users on their attitudes towards sustainability, representation and diversity, and their behaviour and experiences. This provides valuable insights into the continued development of the platform.

Aisling believes Nuw advocates that the sharing model is better than a rental business, which requires inventory and warehousing. The lower price point, compared to rental platforms, enables them to make sustainable fashion more inclusive and accessible.

- - -

"We want to collect the story of where these pieces go, if they go on adventures. We want to instil in people that we have this responsibility to give our pieces a fulfilled life. If we can't do it individually, we can do it collectively. We want people to be really proud if they're wearing things that have been worn before."

NI IW

--

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CASE STUDY

Sector

Website

Established

ELVIS & KRESSE

Founder/Owner Kresse Wesling and

James Henrit

Type Luxury accessories from

rescued materials;
Social enterprise with
B Corp certification
Accessories/Homeware

2005

Location Tonge, Kent, UK

Size Small

<u>elvisandkresse.com</u>

"The primary purpose of the business is to rescue decommissioned fire-hose. We started the business exclusively to save London's hoses from landfill. Over time our goals have grown, we can focus on challenging failures in fashion and luxury. In our view, if an industry's profits are reliant on environmental degradation or human exploitation then those industries have structurally failed."

--

"We have taught people how to love damaged, decommissioned fire-hose. We have taught people how to love leather scrap. I think we can teach people how to love littered aluminium cans too."

_ _ _

ELVIS & KRESSE





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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Transforming waste materials into luxury products, through craftsmanship and a passion to eliminate waste streams and honour materials.

Preventing all of London's used firehose from going to landfill since 2005.

Business founded as a form of protest, although Kresse prefers the term "actionist" rather than "activist".

Sustainable practices and social equity permeate every aspect of Elvis & Kresse, from energy use to employment strategies and customer service.

Transparent business with open book accounting.

First fashion-related businesses in the UK to obtain the B Corp certification.





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OVERVIEW



Elvis & Kresse is a luxury goods business creating an alternative to the traditional luxury fashion model. Their core objective is to reduce waste through their core principles: Rescue, Transform and Donate. Elvis & Kresse rescue fire hose, and more recently leather offcuts, transforming these into high-quality bags that rival the leading names in luxury fashion. Their aim is to grow a business and diversify their activities in order to have a greater impact on reducing waste.

Elvis & Kresse are able to succeed on their own terms, avoiding unsustainable fashion practices (such as a preoccupation with fashion seasons) and sharing a message of sustainability with their customer base. They see their products as "the story customers will want to retell".

Their business is a social enterprise that is involved in trade but has a core social and environmental purpose. They run a profitable business and donate half of their profits. To enshrine this ambition in their business they are certified as a B Corp, an accreditation system for sustainable businesses that requires signatories to structure their company articles so that the planet and people are at least as important as shareholders.

Elvis & Kresse are now starting a new project to rescue littered aluminium waste by creating a solar forge that can be used around the world. This is partly to ensure the metal parts of their bags are made from rescued material, but their ambitions are wider than that: "We helped people cherish fire hose and so we can teach people to love aluminium, while also creating technology for all." This project is based on a commitment to open source all of the research, development, and design that underpins the solar forge. A range of partners are looking to join them and each has to sign up to the conditions of sharing.

As Elvis & Kresse slowly scale up their impact, they are able to ensure more material is being re-used, more profit can be donated, and more people who are fascinated by their approach have the pleasure of their products.

"We don't make trendy or seasonal products. We don't make one bag one year and an entirely different bag the next year. We make classic shapes that we tweak and improve all the time. If you buy a tote bag from us today it's the same tote bag we've been making and improving for 15 years."

ELVIS & KRESSE



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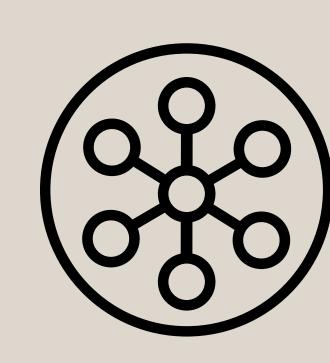
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SOCIAL PROSPERITY





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Key points in social prosperity:

supply chains and customers

Moving away from designer as sole creative, recognising other contributors

Creating and contributing to communities

Flat, non-hierarchical company structures

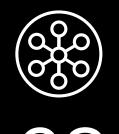
Building long-term relationships based on trust and mutual respect

Making positive impact on employees,



"There is a certain trend in saying 'Yeah, I'm a Founder'. It is very problematic because this sells a wrong story of how you, as one person, can change the world. As a network, as a community, we can change the world, not necessarily as one person."

SABINNA



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WHAT IS SOCIAL PROSPERITY?

SOCIAL PROSPERITY

Social prosperity is people's ability to interact and collaborate at local, regional, national and global levels, in ways that create social cohesion and mutual respect. It considers places, communities and organisations, both formal and informal, and their prosperity and well-being at present and in the future.

Social prosperity applied to fashion business creates a fashion ecosystem that is built on trust, mutual support, collaboration and pre-competitive peer-to-peer learning. Care for others and a desire to contribute to community fit alongside considerations of financial viability.

SOCIETY

Societies enable interaction and bonding between individuals and groups of individuals, based on physical (or virtual) proximity and a set of shared values. They can be safe spaces for cultivating collaboration, drawing on benefits that result from a diversity of perspectives, skillsets, and experiences contributed by each member.

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Focus on people

The micro and small businesses whose work forms the basis for this guide, focus on people. Materials and products become a means to do this in creative ways.

Building relationships They create spaces where strong relationships with employees, suppliers, manufacturers, peers, customers, local and on-line communities are valued and nurtured.

> Their work builds on an awareness of both local and global contexts and a connection to place. They are creating a new kind of fashion that recognises the interdependencies of all people around the world. They foreground collaborative, reciprocal and mutually supportive fashion practices.

Diverse clients

They draw resilience from distributing risk, working with diverse clients with a range of needs. This means that their business does not rely on just one sector, a few customers, or a fixed idea of what they offer.

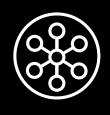
Values driven

They support social and environmental causes that reflect their own philosophy, they empower workers, and choose collaborators that share their values.

Community-centred

They play an active role in the communities where their practice takes place. They find satisfaction in giving back and taking the time to witness and reflect on the direct impact of their efforts.

They take a social approach to design and business, creating new models for living and working that foreground well-being for themselves, those in their business and their supply chains.



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HOW CAN MSEs CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL PROSPERITY?

MSEs can contribute to social prosperity in multiple ways, including the following examples:

Driving positive impact in communities

Cultivating generosity of spirit and trust in themselves and with others.

e.g. getting involved in local networks, finding opportunities to use own skills and resources to support their work

See example:

<u>Bethany Williams</u>

<u>Birdsong</u>

<u>Phoebe English</u>

Securing decent working conditions

Sustainable livelihoods for themselves, their employees and supply chains.

e.g. becoming an accredited living wage employer, using only suppliers with verifiable social welfare standards

See example:

<u>Birdsong</u>

<u>Sabinna</u>

<u>Finisterre</u>

Raising awareness of ethical practices

Demanding worker welfare standards from collaborators.

e.g. asking questions about working conditions and worker benefits prior to signing any contracts

See example:

<u>Away to Mars</u>

<u>Bethany Williams</u>

<u>Patternity</u>

Please note that while we selected case studies to illustrate specific aspects of sustainable prosperity in chapters on <u>culture</u>, <u>society</u>, <u>environment</u> and <u>economy</u>, the distinction of the businesses in this guide is that they work in a holistic way, across all four areas. This is why the examples shown are drawn from across the 12 case study businesses that feature in this guide.



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HOW CAN MSEs CONTRIBUTE TO SOCIAL PROSPERITY?

Continued >

Nurturing opportunities for fulfilling work

Enabling creative personal and professional development.

e.g. sharing skills and knowledge within the team, acknowledging everyone's contributions to the success of final outcomes

See example: Petit Pli Phoebe English **RÆBURN**

Supporting local manufacture

Providing livelihoods in their local area.

e.g. using local suppliers where possible, developing long-term collaborations and finding multiple ways of supporting each other

See example: Phoebe English **RÆBURN** Finisterre

Valuing long-term relationships

A source of strength and a success factor.

e.g. taking the time to talk to suppliers and collaborators and understand their concerns and stories, long-term relationships are stronger and more satisfying than one-off business transactions

See example: Finisterre Bethany Williams **RÆBURN**

"It's funny because when you talk about social conscience, people often don't talk about that crucial element, the time it takes to build trust."

TOAST

Thriving on reciprocity

Collaboration, mutual learning and peer-to-peer support.

e.g. experiences and knowledge shared with fellow designers and businesses can be more helpful than generic resources, they can make everyone stronger

See example: Petit Pli Sabinna Phoebe English

Connecting disjointed sections of society

And offering a sense of belonging for employees, collaborators, partners and customers.

e.g. giving opportunities for involvement to those who are often excluded in the process of designing and making fashion – such as people from socially disadvantaged backgrounds or customers from multiple age groups

See example: Bethany Williams Away to Mars <u>Nuw</u>

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This section introduces the <u>Challenges</u> MSEs face, then outlines different ways to address them through <u>Mindsets</u> (ways to shift existing attitudes and behaviours) and <u>Practical Solutions</u> (methods of providing support).

These challenges, mindsets and solutions look at the ways we can better support a fashion industry that is equitable, collaborative and community-oriented for all people. Although these key points are most closely aligned to social prosperity, it is important to remember their interconnections with other aspects of sustainable prosperity. All points below are also linked to cultural, environmental and economic considerations.

We invite you to use these suggestions to expand your sustainability knowledge; to evaluate your existing strategies, programmes and activities from the perspective of social prosperity; and to apply new ways of providing support to MSEs aligned with their sustainability needs. Please note that not all of the points will be relevant to your organisation, and you may already be doing or offering some of the solutions suggested below. The format enables you to quickly identify and select the ones that are best suited to you.

The challenges, mindsets, and practical solutions suggested here are marked with a set of icons to help to navigate the context for each suggestion. For more information on the concepts of control and influence used throughout the guide, please see here.



AT HOME
[MSEs]
Under MSE control



AT HOME
[Support organisations]
Under your control



OUTSIDE [Wider fashion system]

Outside direct control of MSEs or support organisations, but within their influence



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Challenges









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This section outlines the challenges MSEs face in relation to social prosperity. We'll go on to explore some of the ways you can address these challenges in the following sections.

Key social prosperity challenges:

Access to ethical standards and suppliers

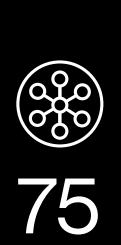
Access to affordable space

Access to business networks

Access to manufacturing networks

Lack of technical knowledge

It's important to note that this is not an exhaustive list of social prosperity challenges, but focusses on the key points identified through the research process. Other significant challenges for the industry include: lack of financial resources to fund social prosperity; difficulty paying the living wage globally; competition driving down prices; discrimination in supply chain businesses; mental health of employees, supply chain workers and customers; and modern slavery risks.





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Access to ethical standards and suppliers

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

An inability to validate ethical standards for employees, factories and workers in MSEs' supply chains.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

MSEs may not know where to start in order to ensure their supply chain is ethical and compliant with labour regulations. Compared to larger businesses who often have dedicated ethical trade job roles, employees have to undertake this work alongside their many other responsibilities.

Additionally, for MSEs who have a close proximity or strong relationship with their supply chains, it means that while they personally trust the sources and people involved, they are not able to prove this in recognised ways (such as certification).

Because MSEs are smaller businesses, they have higher barriers to accessing validated ethical standards.

- MSEs often can't afford audits or certifications.
- They don't always have the time or proximity for regular factory visits.
- They can lack the resources to gain full transparency of where their materials are from, where their products are made, and what working conditions are in place.
- They can lack information on where to find ethical suppliers, or which of their suppliers match their ethical values.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Cost
- Time constraints
- Geographic location
- Lack of information on supply chain practices

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS? See 'Supporting Ethical Supply Chains' in the Practical Solutions section.



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Access to affordable space

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Difficulty accessing affordable studio space or workspace.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

Though the inability to afford a studio is an economic barrier, lack of affordable space for start-ups and MSEs is a social issue as well. This is because:

- Higher rental costs or fewer subsidised/funded studios prevent businesses from sustaining themselves or even from being founded in the first place.
- Proximity to a well-established fashion sector with access to businesses, networks, peer support, skilled workers and producers – comes with a higher cost.
- Gentrification and increasing rental costs push designers out of previously affordable areas and the creative communities established there.

These factors contribute to competitive rather than collaborative social relationships and a more difficult environment for MSEs to succeed.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Cost of rent
- Access to funding
- Geographic location

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS? See 'Providing Affordable Space' in the Practical Solutions section.

"We like to design things that bring people together rather than separate them."

CUTE CIRCUIT

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Access to business networks

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?
Difficulty developing useful, strong business connections and relationships.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

- MSEs lack the time needed to develop their business networks to a useful level, especially when juggling many other roles and responsibilities.
- MSEs rely on existing personal networks and often lack the resources or connections to access the support that wider networks can provide, especially in the early stages of the business.
- Those with large networks may not have the time to keep contacts warm.

Networks are a vital element of an MSE's ability to sustain itself and develop across cultural, social, environmental and economic dimensions. They provide access to suppliers, customers, peers and other supporters, as well as a source of manufacture, sales, information and guidance (particularly in relation to sustainability).

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Lack of connections
- Time constraints

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS? See 'Offering Networking Opportunities' in the Practical Solutions section.



"We've had a new initiative for the black and ethnic minorities, that we want to showcase, because we feel there's a lack in how they're supported and represented."

SOBOYE



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Access to manufacturing networks

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Difficulty accessing suppliers, makers, materials and other production needs.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

MSEs struggle to develop an adequate network of manufacturers to produce their pieces.

- Some suppliers don't have an online presence, making them hard to find (though this is becoming easier through directories, trade shows and organisations who connect designers to manufacturers).
- Often suppliers have high minimums for orders, which MSEs aren't at the right scale for, or they can't afford.
- Manufacturers in the UK are usually specialised, unlike other regions (for example Portugal) where full-service, vertical production is more common and more aligned with MSE needs.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Inability to find the right supplier
- Cost
- Minimum orders
- Specialism of businesses
- Geographic location

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS? See 'Mediating Supplier Relationships' in the Practical Solutions section. "It's also about how we deal with people. Whether it's the people at TOAST, our partners, customers or those working in the factories, all are terribly important to us as a management team. We put people high on the agenda. We wouldn't just push somebody to produce one season and then walk away from them, that's not our ethos, we foster long-term partnerships."

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Lack of technical knowledge

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

A poor understanding of how products are made and what manufacturers are able to do.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

Designers often lack technical skills that are essential to the product development process.

- At present, UK fashion education focusses on design more heavily than on technical skills, placing the onus on manufacturers to fill these knowledge gaps

 which is outside the scope of their services.
- Many MSEs don't know how to develop accurate, clear and comprehensive tech packs or spec sheets, or how to manage sampling in collaboration with suppliers.
- There can be a manufacturer-designer culture clash: the expectations of designers can conflict with what manufacturers are able to produce, and often designers don't know how to ask for what they need.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Design education that doesn't teach practical skills
- Lack of technical skills
- Differences in expectations from both manufacturer and designer.

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS? See 'Mediating Supplier Relationships' in the Practical Solutions section.





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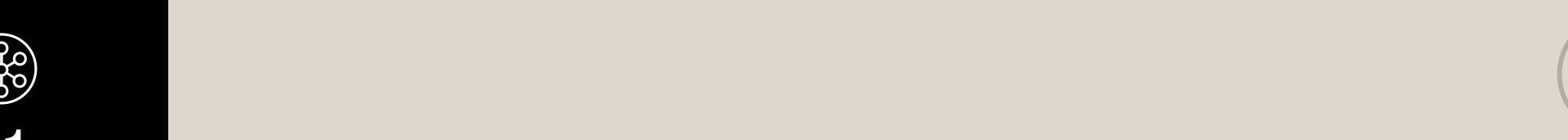
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Mindsets











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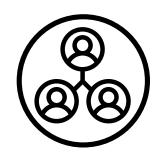
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KEY MINDSETS: COLLABORATION, ACTIVISM, EQUITY (SEE PAGE 48)







Social prosperity, with its focus on collaboration (social networks, relationships and infrastructures), relies on mindsets as well as practical supports. These mindsets create attitudes in which fashion is approached with ethical values; workers and fair labour are valued; and strong social relationships are recognised as a key success factor in sustainable business.

How can you support this culture change?

Creating new definitions of success for businesses helps to embed social prosperity into measures and performance indicators.



"I found the fashion industry hugely inspiring because of this psychological impact that it could have on people, giving an individual so much confidence or harnessing community power together."

PETIT PLI



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Creating new definitions of success

WHAT ARE NEW DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS?
Definitions that expand on what is traditionally considered 'successful'. They may take the form of pass/fail, yes/no, or qualitative performance indicators that ask MSEs to evidence how the measures have been met (see examples on the following pages).

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

These new definitions provide a framework for MSEs to measure their sustainability progress, expanding on traditional indicators like growth, turnover or number of stockists. This ensures that sustainable prosperity (across cultural, social, environmental and economic perspectives) is included when defining what 'success' looks like to you and your MSEs.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT? New definitions of success can be applied to your organisation and activities in different ways, such as:



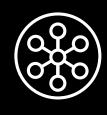
Applied to MSEs

- By including them in the selection criteria used for admitting MSEs to your support programmes and activities.
- By using them to set aims, objectives and/or performance indicators for MSEs you currently support.



Applied to your own organisation

- By including them when developing guiding principles or a code of conduct for your own organisation.
- By using them to set sustainability aims, objectives and/or performance indicators for your own organisation.



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HOW CAN YOU DEFINE SUCCESS FOR SOCIAL PROSPERITY?

Social prosperity success measures focus on the well-being of people. Some of these could include (but are not limited to):

Making a positive impact on workers

Making a positive contribution to communities

Developing beneficial, collaborative relationships

Combine these new definitions of success with <u>cultural</u>, <u>environmental</u> and <u>economic</u> definitions for a full picture of sustainable prosperity.

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Making a positive impact on workers

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The ability for MSEs to make a positive change in employees' and workers' lives.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Defining the MSEs' core values for how employees and supply chain workers should be treated and how their rights will be protected.
- Raising awareness of ethical practices and standards for the other businesses they work with, ensuring suppliers understand the baseline for treating their workforce well and paying them properly.
- Providing career development and creative opportunities for employees and workers.
- Paying living wages to employees and workers.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- A code of conduct or ethical trade policy that outlines the standards MSEs expects their suppliers and partners to follow.
- Positive employee or worker feedback on the business, its working conditions, and/or career development opportunities.
- Long-term relationships with suppliers, workers and employees.
- Accreditation as a Living Wage employer.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Has the MSE positively impacted on the lives of the workers in their supply chain?

How has the MSE made a positive impact on its workers? Who have they impacted?



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Making a positive impact on customers

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The MSEs make a positive contribution to their communities (e.g. customers, suppliers, workers, peers and other fashion businesses, local groups, activist groups, and other stakeholders) through the activities of the business.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Contributing skills, space, knowledge, mentoring, products, volunteering or other activities to local groups or communities.
- Creating a sense of purpose and community for employees, suppliers, workers, customers or partners who are involved with the business the business helps to foster pride in their work.
- Collaborating with community groups in ways that mutually reward participants (such as profit and credit sharing, or co-creation with artisans and suppliers).

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Strong, long-term relationships or positive feedback from local communities, suppliers, workers, peers, employees and the wider fashion sector.
- The development of the MSEs' own community built around their business.
- Products, services or other outputs from mutually beneficial collaborations with different community groups.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Has the MSE positively contributed to its local communities, customers, suppliers, workers, peers, or other stakeholders?

How have they done so?



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Developing beneficial, collaborative relationships

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The development of mutually beneficial, collaborative relationships with others.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Realising projects or ambitions through collaboration (either within teams or with external partners).
- Using a 'flat' hierarchy in the business, where everyone's contribution is recognised. This includes internal relationships within the team, and external ones (such as between MSEs and suppliers).

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Strong, long-term creative relationships with others (both internal and external).
- Successful products, services or outputs that result from mutually beneficial collaborations within the team, or with other creatives and community groups.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Does the designer collaborate creatively with others?

How do these collaborations benefit the creators?



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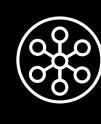
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Practical Solutions











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This section outlines the more practical ways intermediaries can foster social prosperity, and ensure MSEs are getting the sustainability support they need. Note that depending on the kinds of support you offer, not all of the solutions below may be relevant to you.

Key solutions for social prosperity:

Supporting ethical supply chains

Providing affordable space

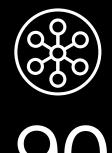
Offering network opportunities

Mediating supplier relationships



"Everyone talks about the product but as a small business you're growing jobs and you're growing people and that's a big responsibility. It's also amazing to be able to do that for a group of people. It's one of the most important things in creating a business."

REJINA PYO



FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION



Image: Finisterre

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Supporting ethical supply chains

Note: this point is applicable to intermediaries who provide manufacturing support.

WHAT ARE ETHICAL SUPPLY CHAINS?

Supply chains and suppliers that meet robust ethical standards.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Ethical supply chains address key standards (including safe working conditions, living wages, right to collective bargaining, and regular employment); and risks (like modern slavery, child labour, excessive working hours, discrimination, or workplace violence).

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By capitalising on economies of scale, providing a collective voice for MSEs and a central database in relation to ethical trade. This signals to manufacturers that ethical standards are a growing demand and worth the investment.

Your support can help MSEs to develop trusting relationships; develop evaluation frameworks; and build transparency.

Developing long-term, trusting relationships

- Highlight the importance of building trust-based, long-term relationships with MSEs' suppliers – this is essential not only for successful collaboration, but can help to bring problems or red flags into the open.
- Where possible, visit factories and encourage MSEs to do the same. This helps to build relationships, pick up on any possible risks, and develop a list of factories you are happy to endorse and share with MSEs.

Developing evaluation frameworks

- List factories that meet existing certifications or audits (e.g. OEKO-TEX, SMETA, B-Corp or GOTS) for your MSEs' reference.
- Share a framework for ethical standards with suppliers, and use it to evaluate manufacturers and factories. The Ethical Trade Initiative (ETI) Base Code for ethical trade policies is a widely-used foundation.
- Encourage MSEs to develop their own code of conduct or ethical trade policy to share with suppliers.
- Encourage MSEs to develop a checklist or list of questions to ask factories about their sustainability practices. This helps MSEs to define what matters to them in terms of ethics - for example, transparency, worker safety, living wage etc.

Building transparency

Encourage MSEs to map their supply chain by identifying the origin or geographic location of their materials, production processes and suppliers. They may want to begin with a best-selling product as a starting point. The Open Apparel Registry can help to locate apparel suppliers.



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Providing affordable space

WHAT IS AFFORDABLE SPACE?

Studio or showcasing space that's made affordable for MSEs (through part or all of the cost).

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

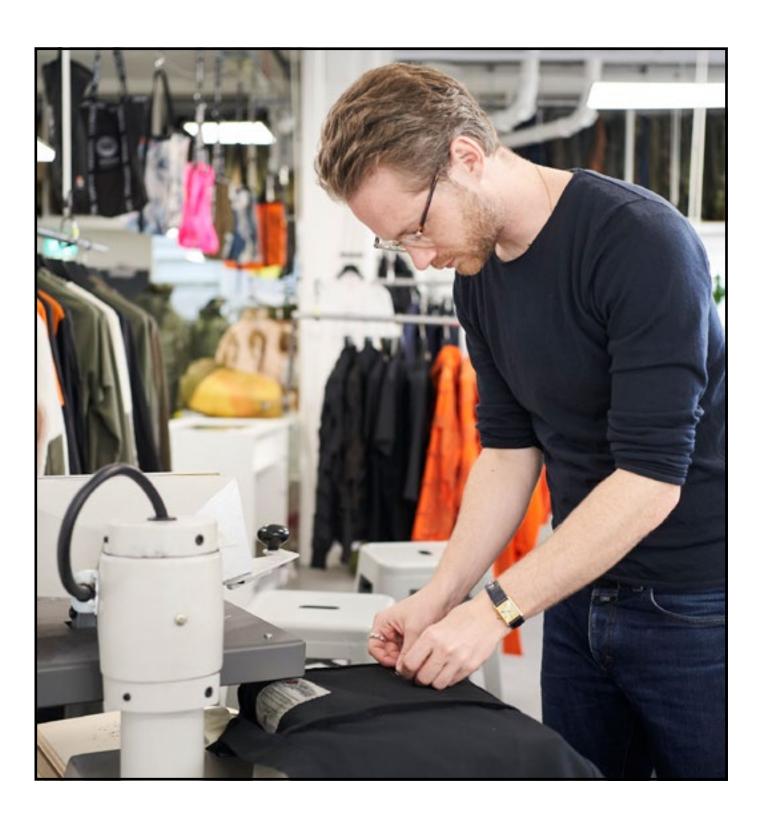
This is an essential service provided by support organisations – without this help many MSEs wouldn't be able to sustain themselves, especially in the early stages of the business.

It supports sustainable transformation by offering this space to MSEs who are sustainability-focussed or exemplify alternative business practices. This accelerates their development, signals your organisation's commitment to change, and can help to scale cultural, social, ecological or economic innovation across industry at a faster rate. It also enables you to evidence your impact on communities and places, as well as to individual businesses.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT? By giving access to space for MSEs who demonstrate strong

By giving access to space for MSEs who demonstrate strong sustainability performance. You could do this by:

- Expanding or updating selection criteria to focus on sustainability indicators. See <u>'Including sustainability</u> <u>in selection criteria'</u> in the <u>Culture</u> chapter.
- Providing showcasing opportunities (such as access to sales events, shows, or online sales platforms) for sustainability-focussed MSEs.



"We're a completely open plan space, there's no meeting room. Everyone sees and hears everything, and we actively encourage their involvement. They've contributed in the past to our internal improvements and changes and often come up with the best ideas."

RÆBURN



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Offering networking opportunities

WHAT ARE NETWORKING OPPORTUNITIES?

Opportunities for MSEs to connect with new customers, investors, manufacturers and suppliers, peers, and other fashion businesses.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

The connections MSEs make can lead to sales, investment, knowledge sharing, sourcing, mentors, advice, creative inspiration or collaborations, peer-to-peer learning, materials development or other innovations.

The sharp culture shift catalysed by COVID-19 has given the fashion industry an opportunity to develop more trusting, interdependent networks. A blurring of the boundaries between different sectors within the industry (for example between designers and manufacturers) has helped to create a sense of community for fashion as a whole.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By fostering connections across personal networks, informal networks, press or social media, and professional or organisational networks. These connections can take place in person or virtually – for example at studio spaces, showcasing spaces, meet-ups or dedicated events, over WhatsApp, Instagram, Zoom or other digital media.

This is already a strength for many support organisations who give MSEs access to their own networks and create space for people to meet and develop new relationships.

Networking opportunities can include:

- Meet-ups for members or wider networks.
- Match-making events or services, for example between suppliers and designers, between businesses at similar stages, or between early-stage and developed businesses.
- Bookable slots to meet specific experts.
- Showcasing and sales opportunities to connect MSEs with customers, for example, pop-ups, shows or sales events.
- Creating a trusted space for MSEs to share ideas, innovations or contacts without fear of losing any competitive advantages.



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Mediating supplier relationships

WHAT ARE SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS?

Relationships between the designer/MSE and their suppliers and manufacturers.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Support organisations can help MSEs to meet new suppliers, communicate with them effectively, and develop long-term, productive relationships with them.

Note that some MSEs are circumventing this by setting up their own small manufacturing units (especially for knitwear). This can provide an alternative route to designer-entrepreneurs who might want to take different approach.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

Making connections

- Host networking opportunities or trade shows (or share information about existing ones) where suppliers and designers can meet.
- Create databases or lists of suppliers with their services and/or area of expertise (e.g. photography, marketing, manufacturing etc) such as those provided by <u>Common Objective (CO)</u> and <u>Make it British</u>.
- Encourage MSEs to share their contacts, in particular those for ethically- or environmentally-focussed suppliers. They may even be able to work together to meet minimum orders.

Communicating with suppliers

- Offer practical tips or guidelines for working with manufacturers. This may include what information manufacturers need, what MSEs are responsible for, and examples of tech packs or sampling processes.
- Make it clear to designers what is feasible to expect from different manufacturers – what's within the scope of their services, and what designers will need to undertake themselves. This is especially useful for UK manufacturers who tend to be more specialised and do not offer full-service integration (sketch to production).
- Help manufacturers to understand the skillsets (and possibly the skill gaps) for the designers you support.

Developing long-term, trusting relationships (repeated from above)

- Highlight the importance of MSEs building trustbased, long-term relationships with their suppliers – this is essential not only for successful collaboration, but makes problems or miscommunications easier to work through than searching for a new supplier.
- Encourage MSEs to visit factories and suppliers in person, and organise group visits for the MSEs you support. This helps to build stronger relationships and clearer communication.

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BIRDSONG AWAY TO MARS

WAY TO MARS





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CASE STUDY

BETHANY WILLIAMS LONDON

Founder/Owner Bethany Williams

Type Design for social purpose /

Fashion as a tool for social change

Sector Womenswear / Menswear

Established 2017
Location London
Size Micro

Website <u>bethany-williams.com</u>

"There was nowhere I could work which merged fashion design with the social element, and also environmentally."

_ _ _

"The social manufacturing projects that we work on, that's where I spend most of my time - it's in that space, not really in the fashion space. That's where I enjoy my time."

- - -

"It's using fashion as a tool. It's using fashion as a tool to create social change. I've had to get more involved in the fashion side but I feel kind of removed from it."

- - -

"I think it [Bethany Williams London] creates a space where I can do everything I want to do. Which is to design textiles, taking on more textiles recycling, finding ways to reuse, but also working with social projects and trying to promote these really amazing organisations that are doing great things. And also working alongside them and our partners to try and support them."

- - -

BETHANY WILLIAMS



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FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

Image: Bethany Williams London

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Setting own rules for fashion, based on equity, social justice and care for the environment.

Collaborations with charities that support women, children, and people facing complex intersectional challenges.

Place-based and context-based learning, through participatory practice.

Artistic commissions and site-specific projects for public audiences.

Consultancy work, collaboration with global brands and speaker commissions with a range of audiences.

Social value needs to be recognised in fashion and this is something that needs to be addressed.





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OVERVIEW

An artist and designer by education, Bethany Williams connects the worlds of fashion and social justice. The contributors and beneficiaries of her business are individuals and social groups that are seldom recognised in fashion. Breaking from convention, she starts with the people, skills and resources with whom she interacts on an everyday basis. She wants fashion to offer fulfilling work and contribute to the well-being and dignity of those involved. Bethany's work is representative of a diversity of perspectives, places and circumstances.

While balancing multiple projects and roles, Bethany's design methodology involves research and development from a range of sources to ensure an informed approach that is appropriate to its context. She is guided by an ethos of fashion as a tool for social change. This informs her decision-making processes and her design ethic, resulting in outcomes that are both visually distinctive and infused with integrity.

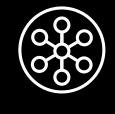
However, working in this way is challenging, as it goes against the

grain of the current system. More time, patience and understanding of complexity are needed compared to conventional practices. Bethany Williams' personal work ethic means that she has worked very long hours for a number of years, in order to establish and continue her business. This highlights the need for a shift in perception of fashion by investors, buyers and customers, who expect conformity, constant reproduction and delivery dates that do not factor in fair time, and alternative manufacturing methods.

Bethany Williams is still able to thrive, being driven by the intrinsic values that motivate and inspire her. The relevance of her work is increasingly recognised, however there is also a concern that a significant proportion of this recognition is tokenistic and does not truly value the underlying principles of her design work and business. Her ability to sustain and continue her work is also based on her skill in maintaining a portfolio of roles that are complementary, allowing mutual synergies and enabling resilience in action.

Bethany Williams' values are also reflected in her participatory practice that has enabled a network of collaborators with a range of skills and resources. This means that mutual exchange takes place across multiple levels: from a large jeans manufacturer who offer her all of their unsold pieces for re-use in her designs, to a charity with whom she works to de-construct the garments, and stores and customers who are delighted by the beauty and integrity of her designs.

Bethany Williams responds powerfully to concerns relating to climate and social justice. She sources materials that do not add to resource depletion, but rather extend the value of what already exists. She responds to intersectional challenges by working with organisations that have a deep understanding of social needs relating to the safety and dignity of women, the vulnerability of children, homelessness, and rehabilitation. Her work also considers justice between generations through raising awareness and providing an inspiration and tangible examples of action to others.



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CASE STUDY

BIRDSONG

Founder/Owner

Sophie Slater

Type

Social enterprise /

Making clothes for women

who dress in protest

Sector

Womenswear

Established Location

2014 London Micro

Website

Size

birdsong.london

"We're always willing to learn, we're not completely wedded to something unless we know it's got really good social impact that we can completely see."

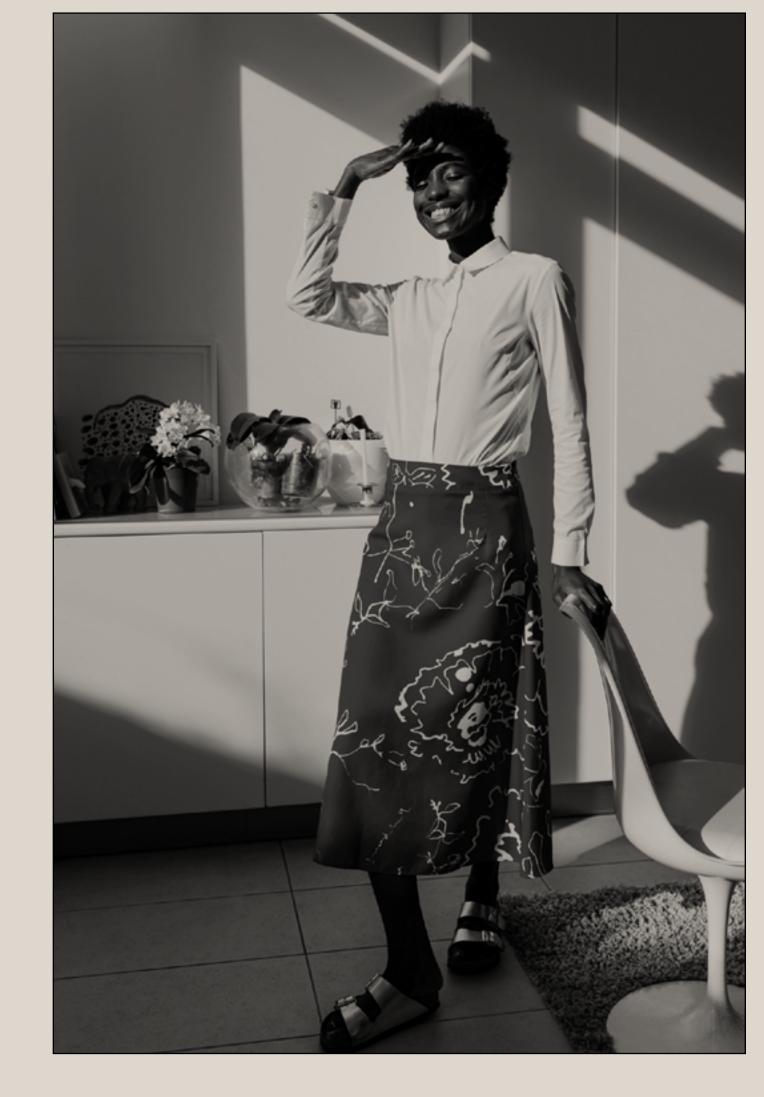
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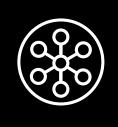
"Every person we work with is obviously named, or their face is shown in some way, whether that's through Instagram or on videos on the website. We have got loads of amazing video content of everyone. All our packing and post is done by adults with learning disabilities at another charity."

"I never want us to be like a factory where people have really tight deadlines. Whatever happens, we want the women we're working with to have time for a cup of tea when they want one."

_ _ _

BIRDSONG





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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Strong supply chain focus to design and produce in the most transparent, ethical and sustainable way possible.

Fair wages for their skilled but often marginalised production team (e.g. women facing intersectional challenges, knitters in a care home).

Fashion can exemplify social justice in practice - Birdsong value equality, choosing own goals and foregrounding fulfilling livelihoods.

Direct-to-customer model enables endorsement, understanding of fair production methods and regular feedback on products.





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CASE STUDY: BIRDSONG

OVERVIEW



Birdsong is a feminist fashion brand founded on the ambition to make fashion for women who expect more than a surface interest from their wardrobe. For Birdsong this means that all their designs and products are made in line with their code of ethics and sustainability. These practices are accountable in the most transparent way possible, paying fair wages throughout the production process to their talented production team that includes women who often face complex employment barriers, in collaboration with social enterprise Fabric Works, through to skilled knitters living in care homes.

With backgrounds in fashion design, social justice, modelling, care working, charity work, and a shared interest in fashion, Sophie and her founding partner Susanna Wen, began Birdsong as a means to connect their concerns and interests. First noticed for their 'No Photoshop' statement T-shirts, they have a deep commitment to addressing social injustice, particularly in the UK, and a growing understanding of environmental devastation linked to fashion. Their work demonstrates the power of fashion to provide fulfilling livelihoods, great clothes and means for direct change.

Birdsong's social approach to design and business means they are creating new models for living and working. This approach draws on collaboration, traditional fashion skills and inclusion of communities not usually associated with fashion production, sometimes involving skills development as part of the production process. They have

created a local production network in London, bucking the trend that has seen London drained of most of its fashion manufacturing capability.

Political in their nature, Birdsong are upfront, clear and organised in how they work with their distinctive groups of makers. Their direct-to-customer model creates a feedback loop that endorses their products, gives them valuable insights, and ensures that customers know what they are buying and what they are buying into. This clarity extends from fairness and recognising the contribution of makers and customers, to the selection criteria they use for the product design, material and manufacturing. They set out to create a blueprint for the fashion sector, not as a directly replicable model, but one that others can learn from, by showing that fashion does not have to be exploitative and wasteful.

"Many women's organisations want to have a social enterprise arm, but they're completely divorced from the fashion industry. So, there's a massive gulf between the two worlds. And then there's a lot of women in this country, because we used to produce everything here 20, 30 years ago, women a bit older, who have got amazing skills but their factories have shut down."

BIRDSONG

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CASE STUDY

AWAY TO MARS

Founder/Owner

Type

Co-creation platform and fashion brand

Sector

Womenswear / Menswear

Established Location Size

London Micro

2014

Website

<u>awaytomars.</u>com

Alfredo Orobio

"My main concern, and it would be my nightmare, is if a designer who worked with us feels betrayed or feels used. Success, for me, is to get all this circle going around and people getting what they need and getting paid, getting recognised."

_ _ -

"We are good connectors and I think our main job is to connect ideas and connect people, and connect the industry. Of course we are doing it for our profit, but it's not our main objective. Our main objective is to connect and to show there's a different way of creating products in a more global way, in a more connected way and that you can achieve a better product and a better solution if you have more people connected to it."

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AWAY TO MARS



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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Online co-creation platform that enables sharing, developing and realising design ideas from contributors worldwide.

Built around key values of collaboration, transparency and creativity, unrestricted by the boundaries of professional credit or social, cultural and geographical background.

Creatives worldwide respond to innovative briefs from the Away to Mars team and their collaborators.

Open voting process identifies the most successful concepts that are developed into samples and prototypes for manufacturing.



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CASE STUDY: AWAY TO MARS

OVERVIEW



Launched in 2014, Away to Mars currently has two main areas of activity. First, a technology platform that enables online co-creation and development of design projects, through the current database of 15,000 contributors worldwide. Second, a fashion brand with wholesale accounts, sharing a proportion of profits with designers who contribute to creation of each design.

Alfredo Orobio started Away to Mars after a Master's culture innovation project that explored the potential of social media for expressing creativity online. Driven by the desire to connect people and a curiosity about the disruptive power of business, Away to Mars explores new ways of using technology to open up the creative process to wider communities and audiences.

The social aspect of Away to Mars is also two-fold. Fashion is viewed as a social practice that can bring people together through a process of making, sharing, and mutually benefitting in both practical and emotional ways. In addition, innovative applications of technology, shapes, colours and styles are developed and refined through co-creation based on both analysis of data and responses from the creative community.

To complement the collaborative design ethos, Away to Mars set up a manufacturing base in Portugal. The conditions for manufacturing include fair wages, cultures of trust and care, and high health and safety standards. This is due to a

combination of government legislation, regulation and place-based cultures of 'no hidden doors' and a healthy work-life balance. The high quality and low minimums are also important factors.

Alfredo's ambition through Away to Mars is to change the industry, to change the creative model, by actively involving more people, sharing the rewards and opening up to collaborative practice. Future plans include expanding designer communities to extend impact, education opportunities and outlets for creative talent worldwide.

--

"My main objective is to keep the idea of collaboration in fashion alive in the business and try to keep people inspired every day. Also on that track, how we can change the industry, how can we change the creative model, involving more people in it, and then open up this very closed-minded, secret, creative environment, into a more broad, open-source, and collaborative one."

AWAY TO MARS

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FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION Image: Alfredo Orobio, Away To Mars

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Key points in environmental prosperity:

Recognising humans as part of natural world, moving beyond human-centric thinking

Climate emergency mindsets

Novel approaches to design practice and material use

Commitment to iterative improvements, through lifelong learning, on environmental impact of fashion

Examples of lived sustainability, care for nature at the core of all actions



"I began to think, we're in an emergency, so what am I going to do? Because I think of the emergency that we're living in, very much as a war. It's a war against ourselves, where we are the enemy, but we are also the saviour of the situation. So we are fighting ourselves, but we are also in a position where we can save ourselves."

PHOEBE ENGLISH



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WHAT IS ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY?

ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY

Environmental prosperity strives for a balanced, non-destructive, and mutually enhancing co-existence between humans and the natural environment. It is an attitude of care and responsibility for the outcomes of our actions and everyday choices.

This means constant reassessment of the resources we consume, pollute, or irreversibly deplete in meeting our needs, as well as the waste streams that we generate in the process.

Environmental prosperity recognises human connectedness to nature and cultivates lifestyles that fit well within the limits of planetary boundaries.

ENVIRONMENT

The natural environment enables the survival and flourishing of life on earth. It creates a habitat for all living species and their non-living surroundings. However, human impacts on nature have caused unprecedented changes of climate, rising global temperatures and sea levels, deteriorating water, soil and air quality, biodiversity loss, as well as climate-related global inequality and displacement.

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY IN ACTION

Environment at the forefront	The micro and small businesses whose work forms the basis for this guide are urgently aware of fashion's significant role in environmental degradation.
Minimising impacts	They are actively seeking ways of minimising fashion's contribution to the environmental crisis, using their creativity and resourcefulness to explore novel approaches to design practice and material use.
Fighting overproduction and overconsumption	Alongside challenging assumptions on accepted fashion materials and the ways they are sourced, their work is driven by a mindfulness that resists overproduction, encourages sufficiency, explores regenerative practices, and supports long-term use of their designs.
Long-term thinking	Long-term strategies for managing stock and

waste streams, from design and production to the

end of life of products, are the core philosophy

for many. Their teams are committed to iterative

improvements, constantly educating themselves

their work, so that they can do better every time.

on environmental implications of every element of

Eradicating waste from fashion's vocabulary

They counteract the wastefulness of fashion. This includes undervalued design and making skills, as well as the resources destroyed, and money lost on garments that are not worn or quickly discarded. They often build on their own experiences and learnings from the mainstream industry operations.

Lived sustainability – beyond temporary

They distance themselves from temporary fixes, compliance, and risk mitigation. Instead, they fixes and compliance offer strong examples of lived sustainability.

> For them, environmental sustainability is not a fixed, neatly defined goal, but a lifelong process that cultivates gentleness and care towards nature, towards others and to ourselves.



and iterative

improvements

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HOW CAN MSEs CONTRIBUTE TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY?

MSEs can contribute to environmental prosperity in multiple ways, including the following examples:

Putting nature first

Recognising human connection to nature and our dependence on it.

e.g. taking time to observe and learn about nature and the impacts we have on the environment through our everyday habits

See example:
Finisterre
Patternity
Phoebe English

Recognising climate emergency

As an approach that leads all design and business decisions.

e.g. starting one small but concrete step each day, as a way to improve practice over the course of a month or a year

See example:

Phoebe English
Elvis & Kresse
Petit Pli

Reducing use of virgin materials

And reliance on non-renewable resources.

e.g. finding creative ways of using materials that are already there – such as remnants from previous collections, factory off-cuts, deadstock and end of line materials, leftovers from other industries

See example:

<u>Elvis & Kresse</u>

<u>Phoebe English</u>

Bethany Williams

Please note that while we selected case studies to illustrate specific aspects of sustainable prosperity in chapters on culture, society, environment and economy, the distinction of the businesses in this guide is that they work in a holistic way, across all four areas. This is why the examples shown are drawn from across the 12 case study businesses that feature in this guide.



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HOW CAN MSEs CONTRIBUTE TO ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY?

Continued >

Exercising resourcefulness and sufficiency

In materials, design processes and ways of working.

e.g. by capping production, producing less but better, working on projects alongside designing products

See example: Patternity Phoebe English Unmade

Encouraging continuity

Through design that enables long-term use of products.

e.g. offering seasonless lines, thinking of future repairs and alterations in the design process

See example: **RÆBURN** Birdsong Finisterre

Evidencing new possibilities

For enjoying fashion, while minimising its environmental impacts.

e.g. exploring ways of sharing clothes or new ways of wearing them

See example: Nuw Petit Pli

Birdsong

Cultivating mindful lifestyles

That fit well within the limits of planetary boundaries.

e.g. taking the time to slow down, realign priorities and consider how our work harms or improves the environment

See example: Finisterre <u>Patternity</u> Sabinna

Instigating new language for fashion

Where aesthetics is defined by the values that underpin the design.

e.g. creative ideas are led by the materials available

See example: Elvis & Kresse **RÆBURN** Phoebe English "There's a very common value set across the team. Everyone cares about the environment. Everyone cares about social issues. Everyone cares about the state of our world. Maybe not everyone had the knowledge or understanding of how to implement that into their role, into their decisions that they're making, but through our discussions, through the policies we're implementing as a company, and the information that we've shared, people are becoming more and more engaged."

REJINA PYO

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HOW TO SUPPORT ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY

This section introduces the <u>Challenges</u> MSEs face, then outlines different ways to address them through <u>Mindsets</u> (ways to shift existing attitudes and behaviours) and <u>Practical Solutions</u> (methods of providing support).

These challenges, mindsets and solutions look at the ways we can ensure fashion operates within planetary boundaries and has a regenerative relationship with nature. Although these key points are most closely aligned to environmental prosperity, it is important to remember their interconnections with other aspects of sustainable prosperity. All points below are also linked to cultural, social and economic considerations.

We invite you to use these suggestions to expand your sustainability knowledge; to evaluate your existing strategies, programmes and activities from the perspective of environmental prosperity; and to apply new ways of providing support to MSEs aligned with their sustainability needs. Please note that not all of the points will be relevant to your organisation, and you may already be doing or offering some of the solutions suggested below. The format enables you to quickly identify and select the ones that are best suited to you.

The challenges, mindsets, and practical solutions suggested here are marked with a set of icons to help to navigate the context for each suggestion. For more information on the concepts of control and influence used throughout the guide, please see here.



AT HOME
[MSEs]
Under MSE control



AT HOME
[Support organisations]
Under your control



OUTSIDE
[Wider fashion system]
Outside direct control of MSEs
or support organisations, but
within their influence



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Challenges









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CHALLENGES IN ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY

This section outlines the challenges MSEs face in relation to environmental prosperity. We'll go on to explore some of the ways you can address these challenges in the following sections.

Key environmental prosperity challenges:

Access to support

Limited understanding of environmental prosperity

Access to sustainable materials, manufacturing and certifications

Access to sustainability knowledge and resources

It's worth noting that this is not an exhaustive list of environmental prosperity challenges, but includes the key points identified through the research process. One of the most significant challenges for the industry is to change consumption habits – which some MSEs already focus on impacting through customer education, product development and service models.



"The starting point of this project wasn't how can I design Childrenswear. It was how can I reduce consumption within the fashion industry."

PETIT PLI

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Access to support

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The inability to access or benefit from the help offered by support organisations.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

Support organisations may not include sustainability criteria in their selection, or fail to recognise diverse business motivations, success measures or goals. Businesses who meet existing definitions of success (such as turnover or number of stockists) are more likely to be supported than MSEs who focus on environmental prosperity. This means that MSEs who are 'different' to mainstream businesses are more likely to slip through the gaps of support offered.

Additionally, MSEs who are supported may not be able to fully benefit from the support offered as it may not be relevant to them – for example activities focussed on growing their business when their goal is to stay at the same size.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Narrow selection criteria
- Narrow definitions of success
- Lack of sustainability resources or supports

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS?
See 'Creating new definitions of success' in the
Values and Mindsets section, and 'New selection criteria'
in the Practical Solutions section.

"We were not necessarily positioned well for a lot of accelerators in fashion because they are funded by brand partnerships who are looking for start-ups who benefit their own supply chain and we have removed ourselves from that, so that's difficult."

NUW



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Limited understanding of environmental

prosperity

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

A poor understanding about what environmental prosperity is, and what it means in practice for MSEs and support organisations.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

What many fashion brands count as 'sustainable' is often limited to choosing lower-impact materials or processes, rather than looking at the impact of the whole business across the four dimensions of sustainable prosperity. This narrow definition leaves businesses at risk of greenwashing, and can confine their sustainability work and ambition to a 'doing less harm' approach.

MSEs may miss out on sustainability opportunities because of this limited understanding. These might include sustainable manufacturing or processes in either their own operations or supply chains (social aspects of prosperity); looking at the full lifecycle of their products (expanded view of environmental prosperity); and recognising the need for reducing consumption and production (a fashion culture change as an element of cultural prosperity).

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Lack of sustainability knowledge beyond material choice
- Sustainability mindsets or goals that focus only on reducing risk or negative impacts
- Lack of sustainability-focussed education, resources or supports

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS?
See 'Recognising and supporting sustainability mindsets' in the Cultural Prosperity chapter, and 'Creating new definitions of success', and 'Providing sustainability resources and knowledge'.



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materials, manufacturing and certifications

Access to

sustainable

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Difficulty accessing lower-impact materials and manufacturing, and sustainability certifications and standards.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

- The costs and minimum orders for sustainable materials or manufacturing are often prohibitively high for MSEs, who don't produce at the scale required to access these choices.
- New sustainable materials, technologies or innovations may not be available at scale, or ready for fashion production.
- The costs and time commitments required for certifications are often prohibitively high for MSEs.
- Sustainability certifications can encourage a onesize-fits-all approach that focusses more on boxticking than new solutions or innovations.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- High cost
- High order minimums
- Gap between technology advances and production
- Time constraints
- Narrow definitions of success

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS?

See 'Providing access to sustainable materials and production' in the <u>Practical Solutions</u> section.

"We give ourselves enough time to design and test. Otherwise you have to be quite hasty in making decisions and perhaps compromise your values."

PAYNTER JACKET



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Access to sustainability knowledge and resources

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Difficulty accessing and identifying reputable resources, education and information about sustainability.

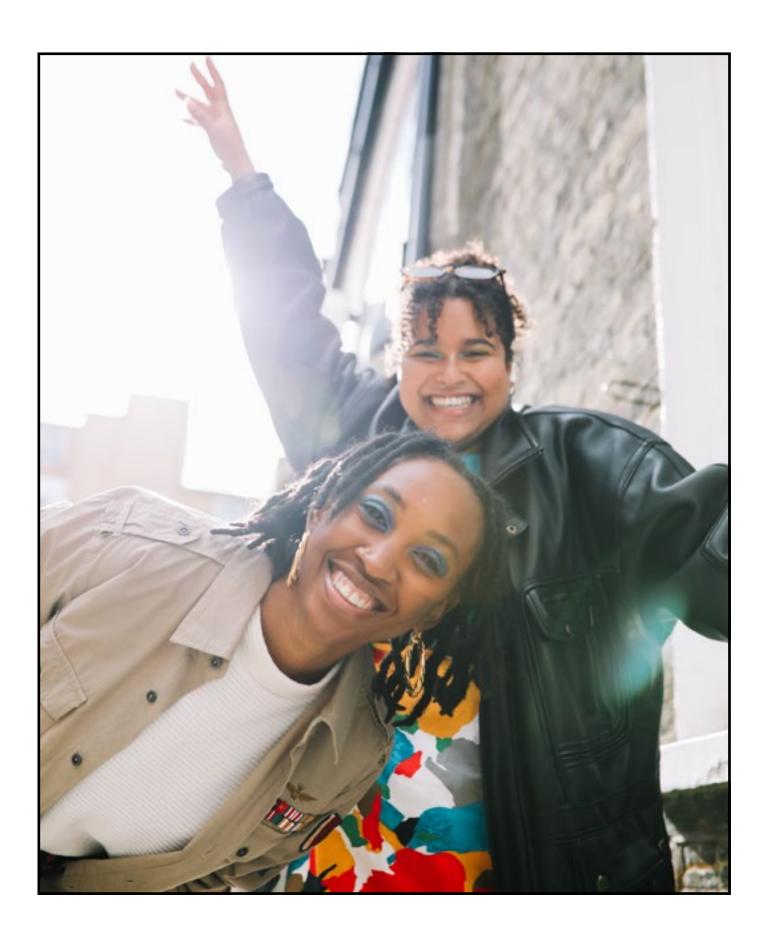
WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

- Sustainability knowledge can be difficult to navigate –
 MSEs don't know where to look for the information they need or how to identify which resources are trustworthy.
- Sustainability terminology can be difficult to understand for businesses who are not familiar with it.
- A 'one-stop-shop' for sustainability resources, highlighted as a need for many MSEs, doesn't exist due to the changing nature of sustainability innovation and the difficulty in developing a single resource for diverse needs.
- Sustainability resources can be paywalled or expensive to purchase, and too specialist or too generalist for the specific needs of the MSE.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- High costs
- Poor suitability to the MSE
- Inability to find resources
- Lack of technical sustainability knowledge

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS? See 'Providing sustainability resources and knowledge' in the Practical Solutions section.



"It's just being able to enjoy fashion but still be constantly educated on the impact."

NUW



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Mindsets









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KEY MINDSETS: RESOURCEFULNESS, ECOLOGICAL THINKING (SEE PAGE 48)





Environmental prosperity is often the most well-understood element of sustainability – many MSEs and support organisations are aware of fashion's destructive impacts on our planet, and take steps to address this. But equally important is a mindset shift in which fashion recognises its reliance on nature and aims to regenerate it rather than extract from it.

How can you support this culture change?

Creating new definitions of success

for businesses helps to embed environmental prosperity into measures and performance indicators.



"It's the personal sustainability and the social sustainability. If those two fit in, automatically that balance creates environmental sustainability."

BLACKHORSE LANE ATELIERS

(P)

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Creating new definitions of success

WHAT ARE NEW DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS? New definitions that expand on what is traditionally considered 'successful'. They may take the form of pass/fail, yes/no, or qualitative performance indicators that ask MSEs to evidence how the measures have been met (see examples on the following pages).

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

These new definitions provide a framework for MSEs to measure their sustainability progress, expanding on traditional indicators like growth, turnover or number of stockists. This ensures that sustainable prosperity (across cultural, social, environmental and economic perspectives) is included when defining what 'success' looks like to you and your MSEs.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

New definitions of success can be applied to your

New definitions of success can be applied to your organisation and activities in different ways, such as:



Applied to MSEs

- By including them in the selection criteria used for admitting MSEs to your support programmes and activities.
- By using them to set aims, objectives and/or performance indicators for MSEs you currently support.



Applied to your own organisation

- By including them when developing guiding principles or a code of conduct for your own organisation.
- By using them to set sustainability aims, objectives and/or performance indicators for your own organisation.



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HOW CAN YOU DEFINE SUCCESS FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY?

Environmental prosperity success measures look at the ways MSEs can look after the planet better. Some of these could include (but are not limited to):

Making a positive impact on the planet

Encouraging customers to change their consumption habits

Drawing from diverse sustainability practices

Gaining credibility through external certifications

Combine these new definitions of success with <u>cultural</u>, <u>social</u> and <u>economic</u> definitions for a full picture of sustainable prosperity.

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Making a positive impact on the planet

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The ability to make a positive change to the planet through the MSEs' outputs or business.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- By mapping the footprint across the lifecycle of the product (from raw material choice to textile production to garment manufacturing to distribution and logistics to retail to use to disposal) to determine where positive impacts could be made.
- By developing products and business practices that don't just 'do no harm', but 'do good', helping to restore nature rather than extracting from it. Examples could include sourcing materials from regenerative farms, upcycling waste streams into valuable products, or collaborative projects to reforest or rewild local environments.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- A clear plan for how MSEs intend to make a positive environmental impact through their work.
- Products, services or other outputs that demonstrate a clear positive environmental impact.
- A demonstrable positive change in the environments
 MSEs are part of or have an impact on (for example, fewer chemicals used at the farms they source materials from).

ASK YOUR MSEs

Has the MSE positively impacted on the environment through their work?

How has the MSE made a positive impact on the environment?



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Encouraging customers to change their consumption habits

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

Making, designing and doing business in ways that encourage customers to value their products more, consume less and/or keep their products for longer.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- By engaging customers in the impacts of their everyday fashion choices.
- By designing or making products to increase their longevity through their physical properties (physically durable) or their relevance and connection to the customer (emotionally durable). Examples include specifying the right materials for the right use, enabling alterations and repairability by design, making craft-based, seasonless or trendless, made-to-order, custom, or limited-edition products that draw attention to the time, skills, care and attention that go into the clothes we wear.
- By supporting their customers to use and maintain their products, for example, through offering repair services or replacement parts.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Products designed in ways that encourage the customer to keep them longer.
- Services that help customers to use and maintain their products.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Does the MSE encourage customers to buy less and/or keep their products for longer, and/or offer services to help them do so?

How does the MSE encourage customers to buy less and/or keep their products for longer?



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Drawing from diverse sustainability practices

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The use of sustainability techniques and processes that draw from a range of fashion cultures.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

By looking at resourceful ways to make and use clothes from previous generations, traditional practices or other cultures. European wartime examples include darning, mending and recutting new garments out of old ones; many African designers have a culture of recycling, re-using and upcycling from discarded apparel; Japanese and Indian techniques like *boro-boro* and *kantha* repair worn garments through embroidery.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

• Products, services or other outputs that showcase diverse sustainability craft and making techniques.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Does the MSE draw from resourceful sustainability techniques or cultures?

How does the MSE showcase different sustainability techniques or cultures in their products, services or outputs?



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Gaining credibility through external certifications

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

Accreditation for sustainability standards or certifications.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- By meeting standards and certifications at the business level (such as <u>B-Corp</u>).
- By using materials or processes that have been externally certified (such as <u>OEKO-TEX</u>, <u>GOTS</u>, or <u>Cradle to Cradle</u> products).
- By partnering with sustainability organisations or movements on projects. This may be most viable for smaller or local organisations who have a similar ethos to the MSEs.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- Business practices, products, services or outputs that have been awarded with a credible certification.
- A collaboration or small-scale project in partnership with a credible sustainability organisation.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Does the MSE hold any sustainability certifications?

How did the MSE achieve the certification?



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Practical Solutions









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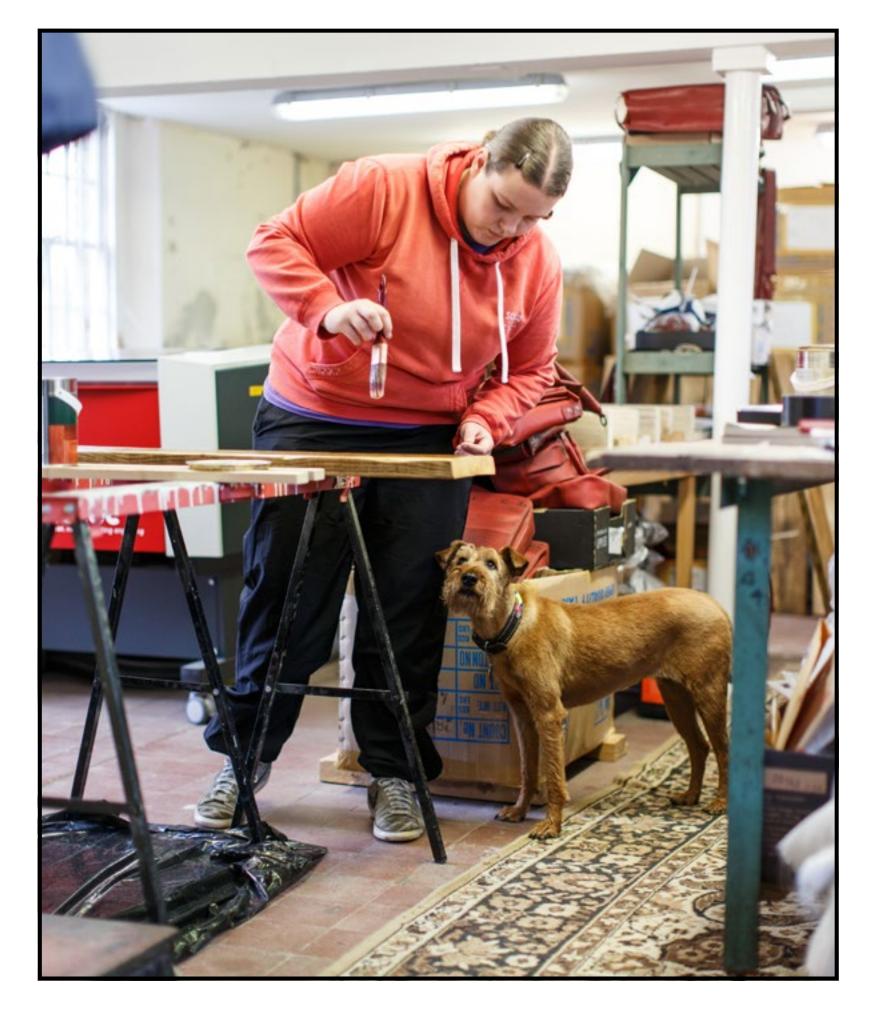
This section outlines the more practical ways you can foster environmental prosperity, and ensure MSEs are getting the support they need. Note that depending on the kinds of support you offer, not all of the solutions below may be relevant to you.

Key solutions for environmental prosperity:

Including sustainability in selection criteria and diagnostics

Providing access to sustainable materials and production

Providing sustainability resources & knowledge



"We have proven that you don't have to exploit the environment, you don't have to exploit its people. You can be genuinely creative. You can innovate. You can create dignified, well-paid employment. You can do wonderful things."

ELVIS & KRESSE





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Including sustainability in selection criteria and diagnostics

WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE SELECTION CRITERIA AND DIAGNOSTICS?

Selection criteria and business diagnostic tools that include cultural, social, environmental and economic success measures.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- These ensure that MSEs with a focus on sustainability are more likely to be supported, and that the businesses you support must address this in their work. This makes sustainable prosperity a necessary part of doing business, rather than a 'nice to have' or optional element.
- They give innovative and transformational businesses the opportunity to amplify their sustainable products, services and business models across the industry.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By embedding sustainable prosperity (across cultural, social, environmental and economic dimensions) in selection criteria and diagnostic and/or evaluation tools.

Selection criteria

 Expand or update selection criteria to include sustainability indicators. You can base your sustainability-focussed criteria on the 'New definitions of success' section for each chapter. These provide a selection of success measures that can be adapted or added to your existing selection criteria:

Cultural prosperity
Social prosperity
Environmental prosperity
Economic prosperity

Diagnostic tools

- Develop diagnostic or evaluation tools that ask MSEs to reflect on how they address sustainability through their work.
- The success measures above can be used here by turning the suggested indicators into questions – for example, 'embedding environment into strategy' becomes 'How do you currently embed environment into your strategy?'.
- These tools may be quantitative yes/no indicators (e.g. How many boxes does your business tick? Does this meet a minimum threshold?) or qualitative and reflective indicators (e.g. How can you demonstrate a sustainability approach? What would you change about this? How do you measure and report your impact?).



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Providing access to sustainable materials and production

WHAT ARE SUSTAINABLE MATERIALS AND PRODUCTION?

More sustainable materials and production techniques use fewer resources (such as land, water, energy, raw materials and chemicals) and/or create less pollution or waste. These may include recycled, organic or regenerative agriculture fabrics and trims; lower-impact production processes that use fewer resources; and manufacturers that are local or that utilise green energy and processes.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Lower-impact materials and production help MSEs to reduce the environmental footprint of their products and business. In some cases (for example by sourcing regeneratively-farmed cotton or fabrics made from waste) they enable MSEs to make a positive impact rather than reducing a negative one.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By offering MSEs support with sourcing more sustainable fabrics, trims, production, processes & models, packaging and services:

More sustainable fabric

- If relevant to the supports you offer, compile a fabric library of lower-impact materials such as recycled, certified, organic, or regenerative options. Alternatively, point MSEs to reputable external resources such as <u>The Sustainable Angle</u>.
- Encourage MSEs to design with more sustainable fabrics, rather than trying to source fabrics to match previously defined design specifications. This helps sustainability to drive the aesthetic, rather than retro-fitting fabric choices.

- Encourage MSEs to speak with suppliers about where the materials have come from, how they're produced, and whether they have any certifications.
- Encourage MSEs to order stock or inventory fabrics that have lower order minimums; source off-cuts; or source materials from the UK as much as possible.
- Encourage MSEs to collaborate with their peers to reach order minimums for more sustainable materials they can collectively use.
- Inform MSEs about the origins and properties of fabrics, and how this affects their footprint. For example, viscose may be sourced from wood harvested from ancient or endangered forests.

More sustainable trims

- Encourage MSEs to choose lower-impact trims such as corozo nut, recycled, or milk-based materials.
- Encourage MSEs to collaborate with their peers to reach order minimums for standard trims they can collectively use.



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Providing access to sustainable materials and production

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More sustainable production, processes & models

- Encourage MSEs to source fabrics that use processes (dyes, washes, finishes, printing etc.) with a lower environmental impact – for example vegetable dyes, lowor no-water washes, natural finishes or digital printing.
- Encourage MSEs to look at lower-impact production processes, such as limiting sampling, tweaking the same blocks over multiple collections, or using zero-waste pattern cutting.
- Encourage MSEs to look at models that limit overproduction and avoid the need to mark down prices for seasonal sales, such as small runs, producing to order, or producing carry-over collections.
- Encourage MSEs to speak with suppliers and factories about their environmental practices: renewable energy use, chemical use, wastewater systems, and how they deal with production waste (such as off-cuts or chemicals).

More sustainable packaging

 Encourage MSEs to source lower-impact packaging, such as recyclable or compostable materials (for example paper, potato starch, bio-based plastic, and the options offered by innovative companies such as Paptic or Wastebased.)

More sustainable services

• Encourage MSEs to look at opportunities for offering more sustainable services, such as repair, reusing or upcycling, swapping, reselling and customising.

"We're now growing swap shops as well as repair workshops, so you can repair your own clothes because we want this to be, I deliberately use that word 'activism' because I believe in repair activism. You should just look after your stuff. And then it's a joy to fix something and then teach somebody else."

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Providing sustainability resources and knowledge

WHAT ARE SUSTAINABILITY RESOURCES AND KNOWLEDGE?

Resources such as guidebooks, toolkits, websites, materials libraries, articles, books etc. that provide knowledge and information about sustainability.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

These help to fill in MSEs' educational or information gaps, and develop their sustainability knowledge – enabling MSEs to design, make and do business in more sustainable ways.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?
By compiling reputable existing resources,
developing custom resources, and
enabling peer-to-peer knowledgesharing. Our research has found that
MSEs need resources and knowledge
that is flexible and accessible when they
need it, well-structured, and bite-sized or
delivered in smaller, digestible chunks

Compiling existing resources

 This guidebook provides a collection of sustainability-focussed resources (see <u>'Useful Resources'</u>). Add to this starting point with your own database of resources.

Developing custom sustainability resources

- resources that meet the needs of the MSEs you support. These may take the form of sustainability-specific deepdives, webinars or even full programmes (such as the Sustainable Fashion Accelerator offered by The Trampery).
- Invite sustainability experts to contribute to your supports (for example speaking at events or webinars).

Enabling peer-to-peer knowledge sharing

 Support organisations can encourage knowledge-sharing by offering meetups and peer-to-peer networking opportunities. This gives MSEs the opportunity to share sustainability knowledge with each other – for example, by collaborating on tips, ideas and suppliers; sharing information about environmental impacts or innovations; sharing best practice for sustainability production, materials, marketing and so on.



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CASE STUDY

SABINNA

Founder/Owner

Type

Sabinna Rachimova Female-led conscious

lifestyle brand

Sector

Established 2015 London

Location Size

Website

the scenes."

sabinna.com

Micro

Womenswear

"A few years ago we added another layer to our business concept: Sustainability beyond the product. We offer sustainable products and conscious experiences, putting emphasis on the education aspects. I feel that we're now on the right path. Change is inevitable and important - maybe next year when you ask me again I'd be like: 'You know what? Something new came up'."

"We're exploring sustainability beyond

the product, focusing on the makers behind

SABINNA



FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION Image: Sabinna

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Environmental concerns are evident in Sabinna's approach to materials, preventing waste and packaging, as well as in her studio's energy efficiency.

Sabinna's social conscience is evidenced in her close attention to the full supply chain, including makers of her hand knitwear, and ensuring ethically sound conditions in her factory-based manufacturers.

Sabinna is on a sustainability journey, learning and making changes all the time.

Her customer engagement activities are designed to increase appreciation of the skills that go into the making of clothing.

She is building a community of customers, actively listening and learning from feedback through multiple channels, all contributing to a loyal customer base.



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CASE STUDY: SABINNA

OVERVIEW



Sabinna Rachimova chose fashion to explore female empowerment, transparency, love for the product and respect for the maker. She has strong skills in clothes making, having learnt to crochet, knit and sew from a young age. The brand offers conscious womenswear fashion with production both locally, in the UK, and in Europe (Portugal and Austria, Sabinna's family base).

Sabinna continuously works on ways to improve and be as transparently sustainable as possible. This includes a workspace that offers data on energy use and other impacts of business, her individual environmental footprint in waste, actively cutting carbon emissions in transport, and using green compostable packaging. The brand is now mainly a direct-to-consumer e-commerce business, with a limited and carefully considered involvement with wholesale.

Sabinna Rachimova has excellent knowledge of and engagement with her customer base, using multi-channel approaches to communicate with her customers. Examples include a shoppable Instagram site, pop-up shops, and making workshops that utilise the brand's fabric and yarn offcuts. Sabinna is also excited about trying innovative technological ways of improving the customer experience and to showcase fashion. She has collaborated on a number of virtual and augmented reality fashion projects with the Fashion Innovation Agency at London College of Fashion.

As a micro fashion business, Sabinna aims to be fully sustainable through all aspects of their operations, from materials and packaging choices, minimising and upcycling waste, resource efficiency in the studio, to ethics and transparency throughout the supply chain. As an important part of its mission, the brand is committed to educating customers through storytelling and living 'sustainability beyond the product'. The same is reflected in their community outreach work with local groups and foodbanks.

With the benefit of her experience of moving to London from abroad to study and building her network from scratch, Sabinna advises being open and authentic, not being afraid to ask for advice, help and expertise, and offering her own expertise in return.

"It's about selling the story behind the product - talking about the things that are hidden because we only see the final outcome. How can we show the customer what's behind that product or what the product is about? We showcase the process and explore the story through technology and innovative tools."

SABINNA

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CASE STUDY

Sector

Location

Website

Size

UNMADE

Ben Alun-Jones, Hal Watts, Founder/Owner

Kirsty Emery

Software as a service business Type

> Large scale fashion, sportwear and lifestyle

brands and manufacturing

Established 2013 London Small

unmade.com

"I think that the consumer demand is changing, so that's a big motivation for brands. To change their behaviour and create new ways of engaging with their audience or new differentiation that is exciting and that drives consumers to buy from one outlet as opposed to another."

"The challenge for us is that everyone agrees that what we're saying is the right thing, but that's not a business. So, who's actually willing to come with us on that journey and invest time in setting that up.... the problem is the scale of the change we're trying to make. It's not just how brands work, it's also how factories work."

"There's a huge amount of focus and emphasis on sustainable materials, which is great, don't get me wrong. We should be focussing on that but it shouldn't be the sole focus. Because it's easy to continue to make too much stuff and make it from more sustainable materials, not changing your business model... Whereas the real thing should be making less, but that means less money for brands and so no-one is really willing to engage with that."



Rapha.

Image: Unmade

UNMADE

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Disrupting the current fashion manufacturing system from 'design-make-sell' to 'design-sell-make'.

Long-term vision to reduce overproduction and waste in the fashion industry, by selling fewer, customised products that will be kept for longer.

Creating a radical shift to on-demand manufacturing on a mass scale - i.e. mass customisation on demand.

Working across every part of the value chain - from design to manufacture, logistics and retail, connecting all digitally.





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CASE STUDY: UNMADE

OVERVIEW



Unmade is a fashion 'software-as-a-service' company, driving innovation through customisation and small-batch production. It delivers an end-to-end digital solution for on-demand production at scale. The company works with major fashion, lifestyle and sportswear brands to enable a radical shift in a business model that fosters a new level of customer engagement through customisation. Unmade innovation demonstrates that customer-driven manufacturing, capitalising on digitisation, can be as cost-effective as mass production.

Their UnmadeOS operating system builds on existing digital technologies such as industrial knitting or digital printing to provide a customised offer for consumers, brands and retailers. Their customisation and on-demand system of individual and small-batch production enables a radical shift from 'design-make-sell' to 'design-sell-make', creating high-level engagement and value for the customer and eliminating excess production.

The concept has been successfully tested with customised knitwear, knitted trainers (with New Balance) and small-run digitally-printed sports teamwear (with Rapha). UnmadeOS links digital production technologies (industrial knitting and digital printing) with design templates for production, achieving large-volume efficiencies in small batches or individually customised items.

Unmade started by selling individually customised designer knitwear direct to the consumer via

their own in-house production using industrial digital knitting machinery. This business model demonstrated the ability of Unmade's digital technology to seamlessly link customised design and on-demand production. Unmade now operates a subscription service, licensing their software to large clothing brands in a business-to-business-to-consumer model. They aim to facilitate a future distributed design and manufacturing fashion system where all clothing is made on demand in smaller batches, in response to local or regional customer requirements; where no stocks are held and everything that is made is sold.

Unmade have received several rounds of investment, enabling the company to expand their expertise and personnel. While the onset of COVID-19 meant that operations had to be scaled back to maintenance levels and some projects put on hold, Unmade continues to exemplify the value of multi-disciplinary innovation teams and creating better ways of doing things by building new connections between existing technologies.

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CASE STUDY

PETIT PLI

Founder/Owner

Type

Engineered fabrication/

Sector

Location

Established

Size

Website

Ryan Mario Yasin

pleating technology

Childrenswear

2017 London Micro

shop.petitpli.com

"We're applying human-centric design methodologies to the fashion industry, to design for individual humans and for humanity as a whole as well. What I mean by humanity as a whole is considering resource efficiency and looking at how future generations will be impacted by today's designs."

"We are trying to look at the entire system and say how innovation can work hand in hand with responsible design to offer people sustainability without trade-offs. How can we create that desirability, to make them actually want the more sustainable option because it's just better, rather than trying to convince them to buy the more sustainable product just because it's classed as 'sustainable'."

"The company exists to clothe the future of humanity, and we're just starting with the next generation. This is a commercially viable product that we can put out there today to address the needs of today whilst considering the resource use of tomorrow."

PETIT PLI





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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Innovative pleating technology that enables multidimensional 'growth' of childrenswear for up to 36 months (or 7 sizes).

Multidisciplinary team connects engineering with fashion and textiles to reduce waste and overconsumption.

Petit-Pli's user-centred approach engages customers and their families in the evolution of products, marketing and use, making them part of the process and extending the value of the resources involved.

Their attention to detail spans product and packaging design, material sourcing, product desirability and use-ability.





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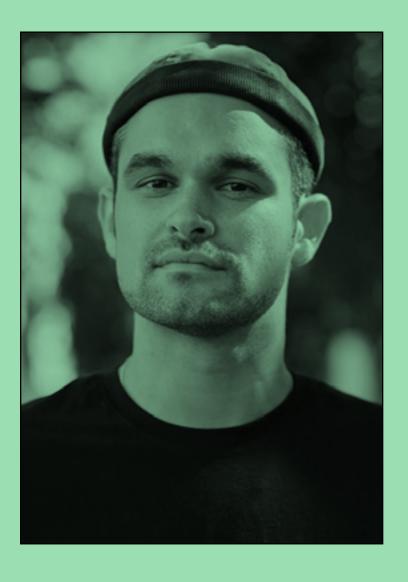
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OVERVIEW



Petit Pli is a multi-disciplinary team with expertise in design engineering, product design, fashion and print, sociology and neuroscience, business and e-commerce.

They explore and apply human-centred design principles within an ecological context, using highly technical processes that they have devised and implemented into a range of ergonomically- and aesthetically-led garments.

Petit Pli founder Ryan Mario Yasin trained first as an aeronautical engineer, then as a design engineer, before devising an approach to designing childrenswear that enables clothes 'to grow' with children. The ethical considerations in Petit Pli include intergenerational justice and the impact of decisions made now on those yet to be born. Their ambition is to provide garments that reduce the need for regular new purchases, extend product and material value, create cultures of sufficiency, minimise waste and enable parents to practise and educate for sustainability.

Ryan's leadership capabilities include weaving together a set of practices that draw on the skills of the team, ensuring an open route for creativity, innovation and professional fulfilment in their roles. He recognises the importance of the care and time it takes to support individuals as well as to manage the team practice. Success for Petit Pli depends on having an optimal level of team diversity while still having a shared focus on the core sustainability goal.

While demonstrating precision in product terms, Ryan also uses improvisational skills to spot opportunities and interact with a range of people, and he has built up a network that combines personal interests and professional activities. More recently, the intricate pleating system has been applied to the creation of garments and face masks for adults.

Petit Pli has received several grants, awards and mentoring support from a range of public and private organisations. However, they are also aware of the overuse and undervaluing of the word 'sustainability' and an increasing need to communicate the authenticity and relevance of their work. Ryan identifies the challenge of short-termism, where those who support business expect very fast results and payback in economic growth terms. Support that recognises a 10 - 15 year model would offer a far greater opportunity to businesses like Petit Pli, as their models offer significant potential for long-term returns beyond financial profit.

"There's no waste essentially and it's being as resourceful as possible with the materials you have available."

PETIT PLI

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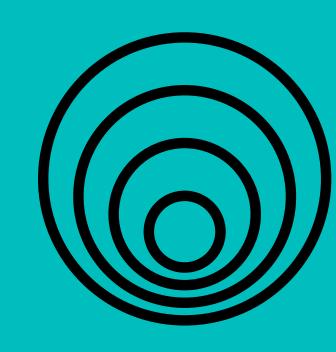
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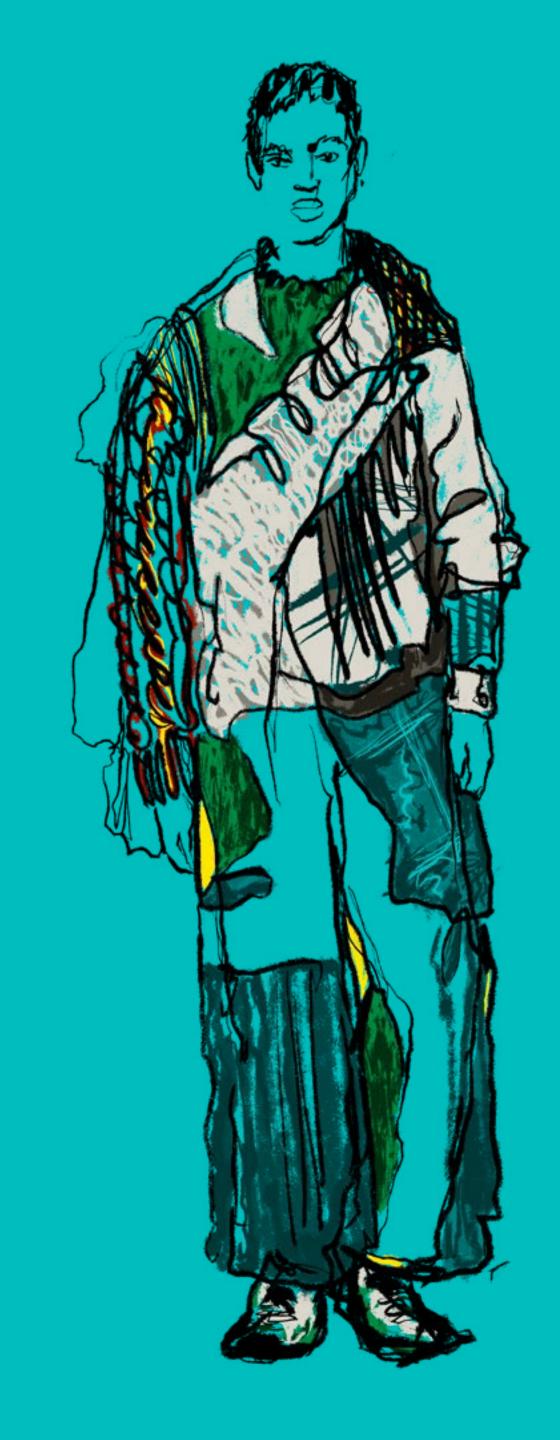
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ECONOMIC PROSPERITY





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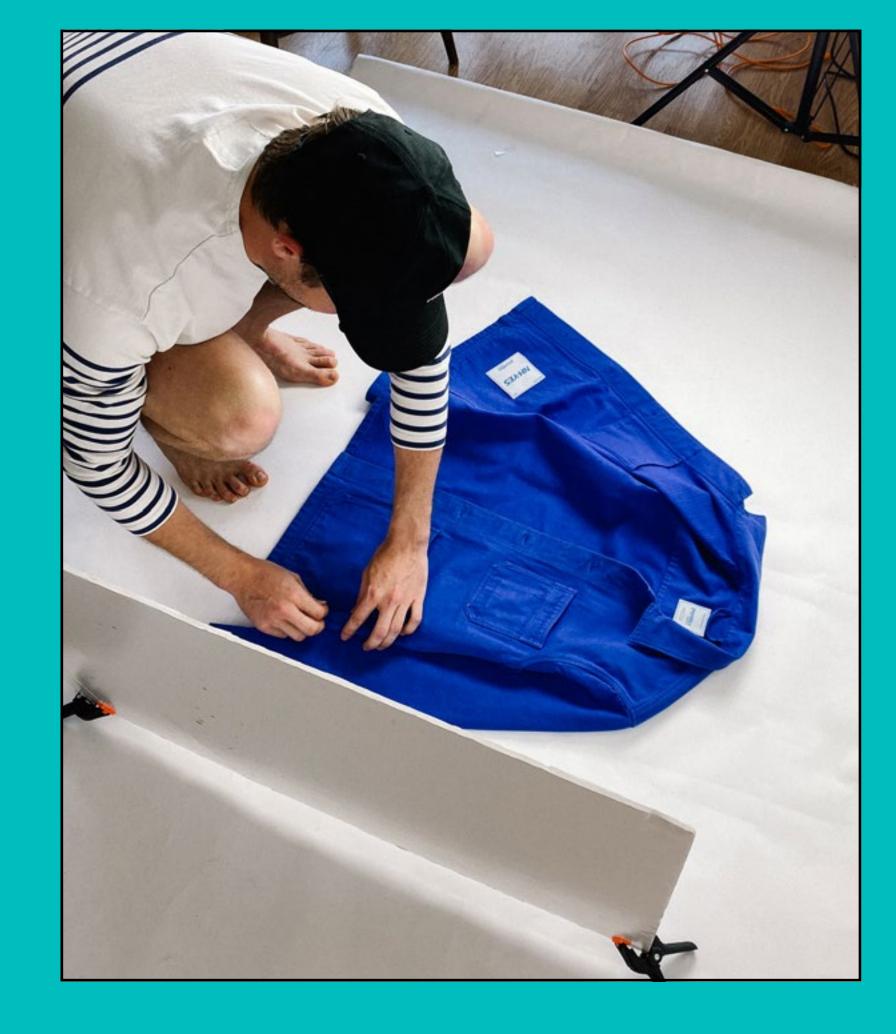
Key points in economic prosperity:

Sufficiency approach to resources and income generation

Human-scale operations to enable agility and creative control

Diversified income streams contribute to financial resilience

Balancing viable business with core social, environmental and cultural values Growth for impact, not just for profit



"We are a profitable business. We meet all the metrics that would traditionally be defined as success, but we do it in a completely different way and for completely different motivations. To me that's the most powerful campaign."

ELVIS & KRESSE



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WHAT IS ECONOMIC PROSPERITY?

ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

Economic prosperity enables a long-term balance between the resources used and the resources created. It is driven by respect for global and intergenerational equity.

This requires economic practices that guarantee decent quality of life and sufficient resources for all, without compromising any of the other three elements of sustainable prosperity – cultural values, societal belonging and the natural environment. Ensuring conditions for livelihoods within agreed boundaries, creating a healthy relationship between employment, productivity, and economic status, are all critical conditions of economic prosperity. This creates more resilience in human, environmental and economic terms.

Economic prosperity is underpinned by the awareness that uninhibited economic expansion and sustained global growth are irreconcilable with the finite resources of our planet.

ECONOMY

Economy is the system we use to manage the resources available to individuals and communities. The currently prevalent understanding of economy focusses on trade factors such as production and consumption of goods and services, and financial transactions. In a broader and longer-understood definition, economy considers humans and nature as a whole, ensuring long-term prosperity and sustained access to available resources for everyone.

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ECONOMIC PROSPERITY IN ACTION

New economic logic

The micro and small businesses, whose work forms the basis for this guide, invert the mainstream economic system. They also question the logic that feeds the current fashion system, bridging fashion as it is with fashion as it could be.

Business driven by purpose

They approach their economic activities as a means to achieving their creative ambitions and realising their personal values.

They create models for fashion business driven by purpose rather than profit. They recognise that if monetary gain is the priority, personal, social, cultural and environmental values that drive their work can easily be undermined.

Human-scale operations

Many adopt a mindset of sufficiency. This means that as long as they can pay all costs and continue their work, their ambitions for the growth of their business are fulfilled.

They recognise the benefits of agility enabled by human-scale operations. They flexibly adapt their ways of working and incorporate additional income streams as and when needed.

Balancing creative and commercial aspects

They carefully navigate the balance between fashion as art, craft or social activity, alongside running a viable business.

Partnerships based on shared values

As the tension between economic survival and retaining integrity and independence is a key concern, they carefully consider each potential collaboration and investment in terms of how these might align with their core values and business trajectories.



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"We are happy with our lifestyle. We prefer to run a manageable business with values and integrity, and show there's another way of doing things. We're lucky to have had offers of investment, but turned them down. We want to remain independent and grow slowly, reinvesting our profits."

PAYNTER JACKET

Image: Paynter Jacket

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HOW CAN MSEs CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY?

MSEs can contribute to economic prosperity in multiple ways, including the following examples:

Embracing resourcefulness and sufficiency

In materials, resources and income generation.

e.g. by finding alternatives to buying new materials, such as using leftovers from other local businesses; setting target income that covers costs and enables a satisfying livelihood for the business

See example:
Patternity
Phoebe English
Bethany Williams

Choosing human-scale operations

And business models that flexibly adapt to changing circumstances and enable retaining control and authenticity.

e.g. choosing to expand the team and premises slowly enables MSEs choice of projects and collaborators without the stress of covering high overheads

See example:

<u>Sabinna</u>

<u>Patternity</u>

Phoebe English

Diversifying income streams

Not relying on a single client or a single source of revenue.

e.g. working on projects and collaborations alongside own product lines can bring in additional sources of income that can support creative development in other areas of business

See example:

<u>Bethany Williams</u>

<u>RÆBURN</u>

Away to Mars

Please note that while we selected case studies to illustrate specific aspects of sustainable prosperity in chapters on <u>culture</u>, <u>society</u>, <u>environment</u> and <u>economy</u>, the distinction of the businesses in this guide is that they work in a holistic way, across all four areas. This is why the examples shown are drawn from across the 12 case study businesses that feature in this guide.



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HOW CAN MSEs CONTRIBUTE TO ECONOMIC PROSPERITY?

Continued >

Benefitting from reciprocity

Using mutual learning, collaboration, and exchange of skills.

e.g. establishing collaborations with peer businesses enables drawing on each other's strengths, and exchanging services without necessarily involving financial transactions

See example:

<u>Elvis & Kresse</u>

<u>Bethany Williams</u>

<u>Petit Pli</u>

Living lightly

To maintain autonomy, instead of relying on external investment.

e.g. choosing lifestyles that do not rely on constant growth of the business

See example:
Patternity
Phoebe English
Birdsong

Exploring a diversity of approaches

Of how to do business in fashion.

e.g. offering creative solutions that do not necessarily rely on producing more garments

See example:

<u>Birdsong</u>

<u>Bethany Williams</u>

<u>Patternity</u>

Highlighting purpose

That goes beyond financial gain.

e.g. using business as a force for good– finding ways to support social andenvironmental causes they care about

See example:
Elvis & Kresse
Bethany Williams
Petit Pli

Recognising that being everywhere is not always the goal

The goal can be to be where it matters.

e.g. staying focussed and prioritising showcase opportunities, retail outlets, projects and collaborations that best fit with the values, ambitions and philosophy of the business

See example:
Patternity
Phoebe English
Birdsong

Demonstrating care and empathy alongside viable business

Listening to, and respect for, others can lead the business without being contradictory to profitability.

e.g. better understanding of what collaborators and suppliers care about and the reasons why, can help build strong relationships that will benefit the business in the long term

See example:

<u>Birdsong</u>

<u>Bethany Williams</u>

<u>Patternity</u>

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HOW TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

This section introduces the <u>Challenges</u> MSEs face, then outlines different ways to address them through <u>Mindsets</u> (ways to shift existing attitudes and behaviours) and <u>Practical Solutions</u> (methods of providing support).

These challenges, mindsets and solutions look at the ways we can ensure the fashion industry runs on sustainable economic systems and fosters a healthy, diverse business ecology. Although these key points are most closely aligned to economic prosperity, it is important to remember their interconnections with other aspects of sustainable prosperity. All points below are also linked to cultural, social and environmental perspectives.

We invite you to use these suggestions to expand your sustainability knowledge; to evaluate your existing strategies, programmes and activities from the perspective of economic prosperity; and to apply new ways of providing support to MSEs aligned with their sustainability needs. Please note that not all of the points will be relevant to your organisation, and you may already be doing or offering some of the solutions suggested below. The format enables you to quickly identify and select the ones that are best suited to you.

The challenges, mindsets, and practical solutions suggested here are marked with a set of icons to help to navigate the context for each suggestion. For more information on the concepts of control and influence used throughout the guide, please see here.



AT HOME
[MSEs]
Under MSE control



AT HOME
[Support organisations]
Under your control



OUTSIDE

[Wider fashion system]
Outside direct control of MSEs
or support organisations, but
within their influence



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Challenges









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This section outlines the challenges MSEs face in relation to economic prosperity, impeding their ability to sustain a viable business. We'll go on to explore some of the ways you can address these challenges in the following sections.

Key economic prosperity barriers:

Access to finance

Lack of business skills and know-how

Access to markets

Competition from large players

Access to external innovation



"I want us to be profitable. I want us to be doing what we're doing and proving to everybody that you can make really good product and use business for good."

FINISTERRE



FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

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Access to finance

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

The inability to find and access investment, sponsorship, grants or other forms of funding.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

- MSEs often lack awareness or information about the funding and investment options available to them.
- MSEs find it difficult to access financial capital to invest in the business and keep afloat, especially in early stages.
- MSEs struggle to find funding suited to their needs, such as patient capital (long-term investment in which returns are not expected for a considerable time period) or funds with ethical values that match their own.
- Investment is often tied to requirements such as turnover, business growth, profit, return on investment or evidence of job creation. These requirements can conflict with the MSEs' business model or aims (for example a desire to stay at the same size or to re-invest profits in sustainability practices).
- Many MSEs are self-funded or funded by personal networks, creating higher barriers for those who do not have the same support or come from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. Higher barriers are often faced by BIPOC designers, who are seen as less 'bankable' than their white peers.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Lack of patient and/or ethical capital or funding
- Lack of understanding of sustainability from investors and funding bodies
- Investment or funding requirements that are incompatible with the business
- Higher barriers for BIPOC and lower socio-economic backgrounds.

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS?
See 'Creating new definitions of success' in the
Values and Mindsets section and 'Providing financial
support' in the Practical Solutions section.



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Lack of business skills and know-how

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

MSEs often lack business management skills, knowledge or experience.

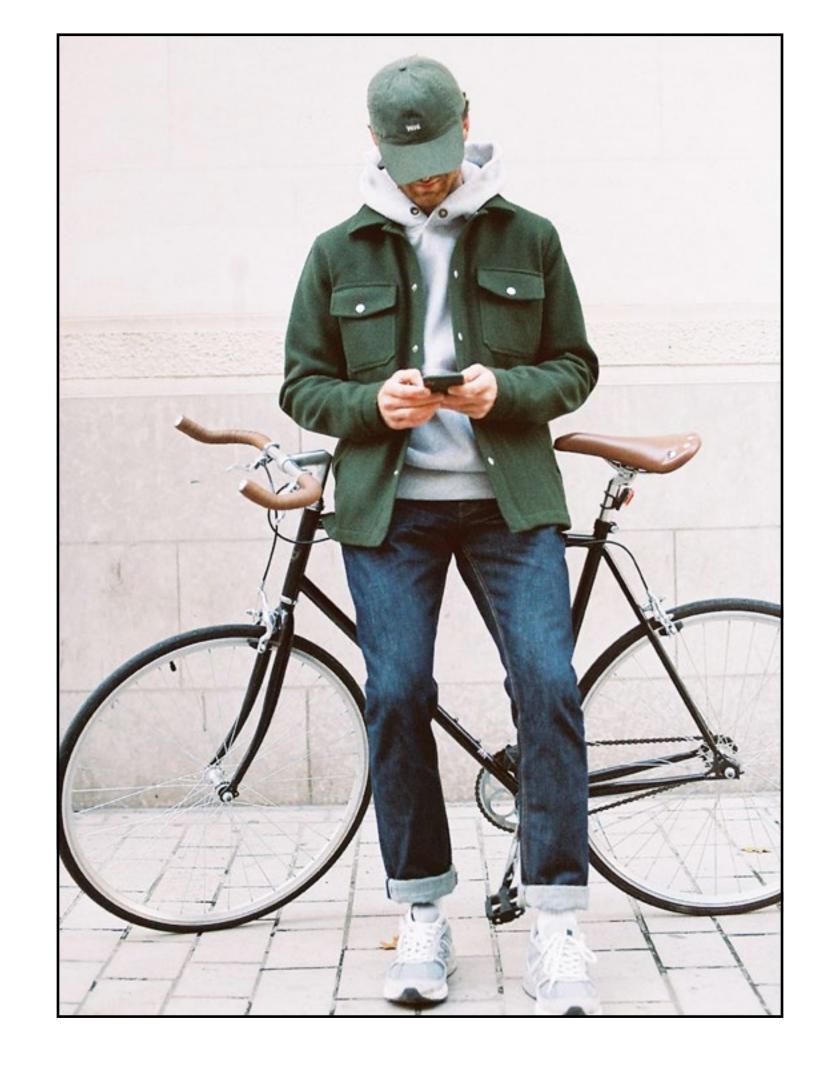
WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

- Designers excel in creative skills but have knowledge and skills gaps in how to run a successful business.
 These gaps might include business planning, strategy and development; people management; IT systems; legal systems (such as intellectual property, data protection or compliance); accountancy and finance; marketing, branding and communications; and retailing and sales.
- Depending on the previous employment of the team, MSEs may have experience of some aspects of business management beyond design and production. But the size of their team means it is difficult to encompass all of these skills in-house.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Lack of business education
- Lack of experience
- Enterprise size

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS? See 'Providing emotional business support' and 'Providing sustainable business support'.





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Access to

markets

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

A limited ability to reach customers via retail platforms, showcasing or other sales opportunities.

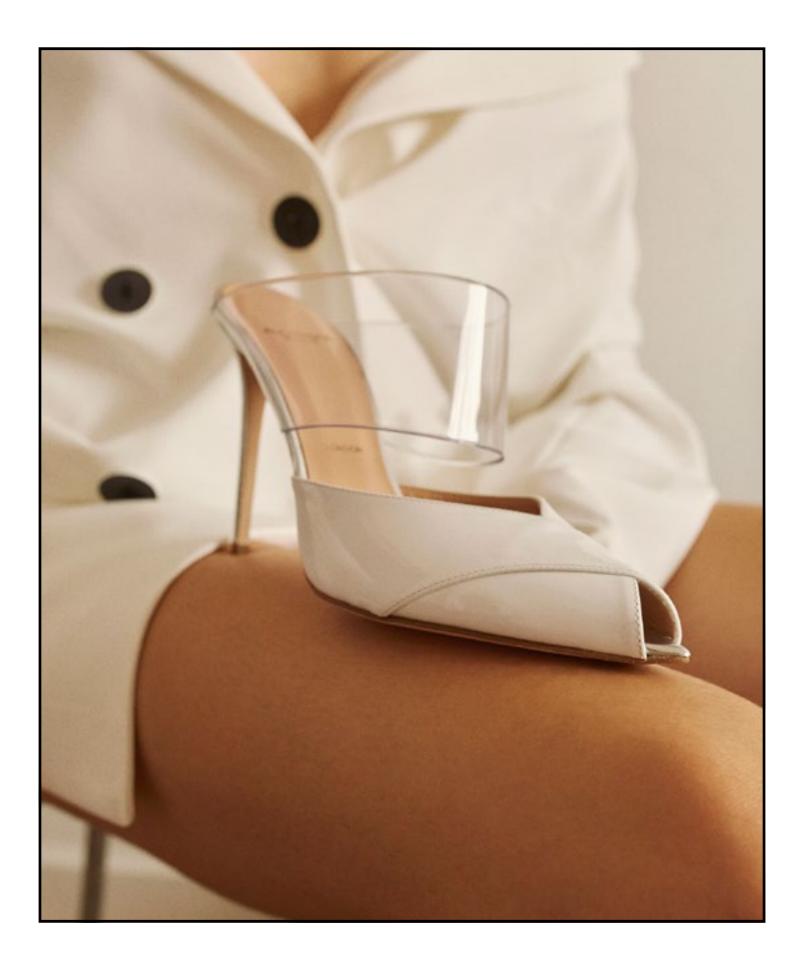
WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

- It can be difficult for MSEs to stand out and build their brand awareness in a market with larger, more established and international brands.
- MSEs have limited time or resources to connect with customers who are likely to purchase their products, especially when compared to bigger competitors.
- While some customers look specifically for emerging, small, local, craft-based and/or more sustainable brands (where MSEs have an advantage), others are driven by factors like price point, style, product range, availability or aesthetics – where MSEs must compete with everyone else in their market segment.
- Customers who are used to the price points of larger brands (who can capitalise on economies of scale) can be unwilling to pay the true price of products – one that includes environmental and social costs (e.g. fair pay).

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Limited resources for marketing or brand awareness building
- Competition from larger players (see further details below)

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS? See 'Offering showcase and retail opportunities' in the Practical Solutions section.



"Small money small problems, big money big problems."

SAMSON SOBOYE



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Competition from large players

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Larger companies with substantial capital and/or market share set benchmarks that MSEs struggle to meet.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

- While MSEs have the autonomy to run their business in more sustainable ways, they can struggle with unworkable customer expectations based on shopping experiences with much larger players. This is especially relevant to price points, as bigger brands don't include the true environmental or social costs of their products in the customer price. Furthermore, they have access to economies of scale that allow them to drive down production costs in comparison to MSEs.
- Large brands and retail platforms control much of how the fashion economy operates, including profit margins, lead times, seasonality, marketing, discounting, delivery and logistics.
- Large brands have greater resources to invest in brand awareness and gaining market share, with which MSEs are unable to compete due to financial and time limitations.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- Customer expectations
- Lack of resources
- Smaller market share
- Lack of brand awareness

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS?

See <u>'Recognising the role of MSEs'</u> in the <u>Values and Mindsets</u> section, and <u>'Offering showcase and retail opportunities'</u> in the <u>Practical Solutions</u> section.

"All the time you're reading about the growth of all those big businesses and you just think how is this ever going to change. These big businesses help little businesses, but it's never just like they're helping little businesses. They're consuming little businesses and they're buying them to make their own profitability and longevity matter - rather than it being more distributed."

REJINA PYO

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Access to external

innovation

WHAT IS THE CHALLENGE?

Difficulties accessing research and development (R&D), accessing existing sustainability innovations, or scaling up innovations they've developed internally.

WHY IS THIS A CHALLENGE?

MSEs are more likely to get left behind until innovations are affordable or available at scale, and are unable to take part in applying innovations to their business or products. This is a loss for the industry more broadly, as MSEs' size, flexibility and inventive attitude make them a perfect testing space.

- MSEs struggle to access sustainability, business or product innovations (for example new materials, processes, software or technologies) developed by other companies due to high costs, order minimums or investment requirements.
- MSEs may not have the capacity or resources to invest in their own R&D. Without these resources, they are less likely to be aware of new developments compared to larger businesses.
- MSEs may develop innovations internally, but are unable to scale these for use in their business or to meet wider industry needs.

WHAT ARE THE MAIN BARRIERS?

- High costs
- High order minimums
- Lack of connections or knowledge about industry innovations available to larger players
- Inability to scale innovations internally (within the business) or externally (across industry)

HOW CAN YOU HELP TO ADDRESS THIS? See 'Providing access to sustainable materials and production' in the Environment chapter, and 'Mediating collaboration on R&D' in the Practical Solutions section.



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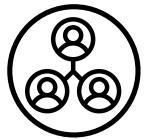
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MINDSETS TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC PROSPERITY

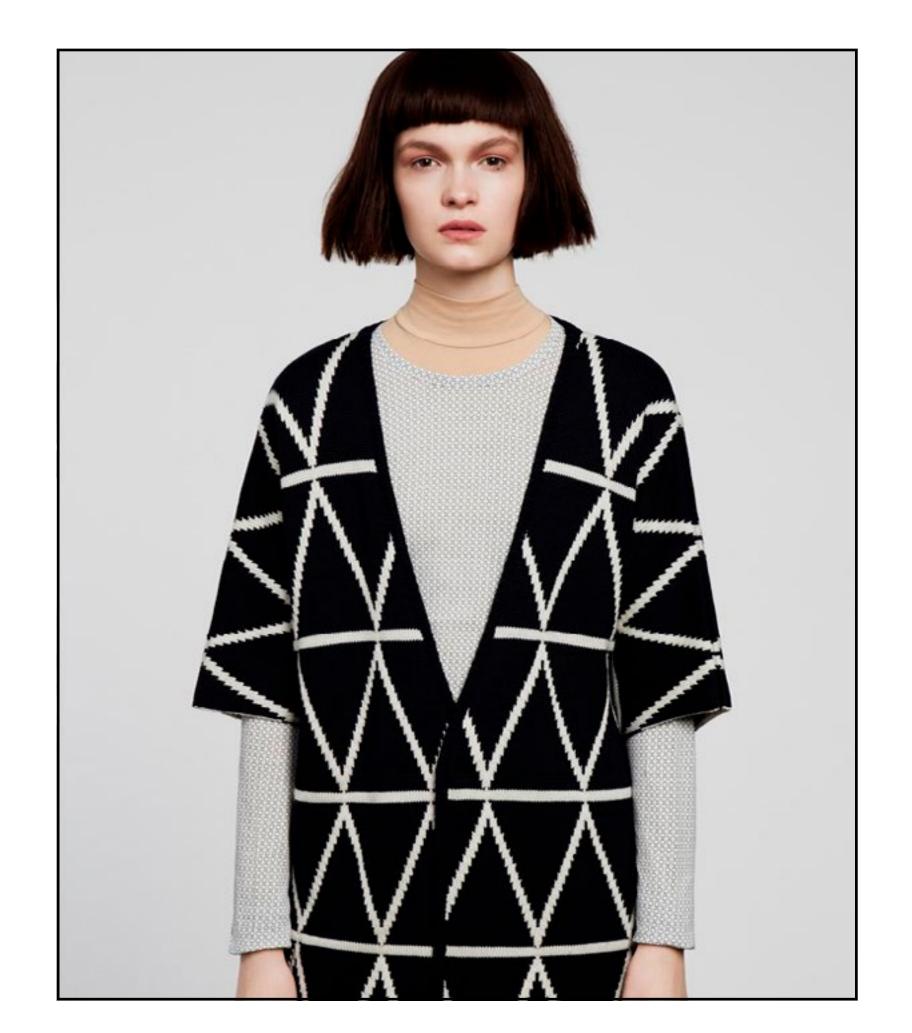
KEY MINDSETS: SUFFICIENCY, COLLABORATION (SEE PAGE 48)





Economic prosperity focusses on the systems by which we produce, distribute and satisfy the requirements of human life. These make up a sub-system within wider society and biosphere systems – in other words, an economy that both feeds and draws from people and planet.

Economic prosperity relates to viable businesses and sustainable business models; green finance and investment; retail and the fashion market; and sustainable goods and services (including manufacture, sale, ownership, use and disposal). A fashion economy runs not only on these elements, but also on economic mindsets. These simultaneously shape our economy and are shaped by it – particularly in relation to what the fashion system rewards and punishes.



"Patternity philosophy is more about a deepening rather than expanding, which feels like what we need right now - both personally and collectively."

PATTERNITY

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How can you support this culture change?

Creating new definitions of success for businesses helps to embed economic prosperity into measures and performance indicators.

Providing emotional business support acknowledges the pressures facing designerentrepreneurs and helps them to become more resilient.

Recognising the role of MSEs in the fashion economy ensures their contributions to sustainable prosperity across the industry can be utilised.



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Creating new definitions of success

WHAT ARE NEW DEFINITIONS OF SUCCESS? New definitions that expand on what is traditionally considered 'successful'. They may take the form of pass/fail, yes/no, or qualitative performance indicators that ask MSEs to evidence how the measures have

been met (see examples on the following pages).

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

These new definitions provide a framework for MSEs to measure their sustainability progress, expanding on traditional indicators like growth, turnover or number of stockists. This ensures that sustainable prosperity (across cultural, social, environmental and economic perspectives) is included when defining what 'success' looks like to you and your MSEs.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

New definitions of success can be applied to your

New definitions of success can be applied to your organisation and activities in different ways, such as:



Applied to MSEs

- By including them in the selection criteria used for admitting MSEs to your support programmes and activities.
- By using them to set aims, objectives and/or performance indicators for MSEs you currently support.



Applied to your own organisation

- By including them when developing guiding principles or a code of conduct for your own organisation.
- By using them to set sustainability aims, objectives and/or performance indicators for your own organisation.



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HOW CAN YOU DEFINE SUCCESS FOR ECONOMIC PROSPERITY?

Some success measures for economic prosperity could include (but are not limited to):

Embedding sustainability into strategy

Using alternative measures for business growth

Developing new business models

Contributing to local & regional economies

Combine these new definitions of success with <u>cultural</u>, <u>social</u> and <u>environmental</u> definitions for a full picture of sustainable prosperity.

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Embedding sustainability into strategy

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The inclusion of sustainability considerations into the MSEs' business strategy.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- By communicating personal, moral or ethical beliefs in the MSEs' approach to business, for example, through a brand manifesto or strategic vision.
- By including sustainability in their business success measures (such as those outlined in this section).
- By identifying where their biggest environmental and social impacts are, and outlining how they plan to address these.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- A public business strategy, vision or manifesto that includes sustainability concerns.
- Sustainability-focussed progress indicators or success measures.
- A map of the MSEs' environmental impacts and a clear plan for addressing these.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Does the MSE include sustainability (across cultural, social, environmental and/or economic dimensions) in its business strategy?

How does the MSE plan to make a positive impact on culture, society, environment and economy through its business?



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Using alternative measures for business growth

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The use of business models and measures that offer a different approach to economic growth, rather than increasing traditional metrics such as profit, sales and/or turnover.

Note that measuring success using these metrics needs to consider both a short- and a long-term perspective – looking at long-term outcomes and changes made over years as well as quarters.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- By aiming for commercial viability and/ or self-sufficiency as a goal, rather than aiming for growth for its own sake.
 This enables MSEs to reach a level of maturity and sustain themselves without compromising autonomy or sustainability.
- By using growth as a tool to increase sustainable prosperity – for example, growing demand for more sustainable materials, processes and business models; growing market share and awareness for sustainability-focussed brands; and expanding the positive impacts MSEs are able to make by increasing their size.
- By decoupling growth from physical resource use – for example focussing

on reputational growth, growth in terms of influence/brand awareness, creativity, product offering, sustainability practices, long-term relationships (with customers/suppliers), or better livelihoods for the people they work with.

- By staying small some businesses don't desire growth at all, and being smaller enables them to retain integrity, creative freedom and control, low costs and low investment, and agility and flexibility (confirmed during the COVID-19 crisis).
- By being 'growth agnostic' growth is seen as a by-product of a successful business, rather than a key indicator of success.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- A public business strategy or vision that is growth agnostic, or focusses on growth for impact rather than profit.
- Business goals or performance indicators that focus on growing sustainability impacts and making positive change.
- A self-sufficient business model that doesn't need to grow bigger to achieve its goals.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Does the MSE demonstrate a sustainable approach to business growth?

How does the MSE approach business growth? How does this impact the planet and people?

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Developing new business models

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

The development and implementation of innovative, sustainable business models.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- By implementing alternative business models that balance cultural, social, environmental and/or economic prosperity practices.
- By aligning with a better-paced production calendar, or stepping away from seasonality all together.
- By diversifying income generation, for example through offering services (like consulting, rental, repair or resale) as well as products.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- The use of sustainable business models that offer an alternative approach to design, making or using clothes, or alternative ways of doing business.
- An alternative production calendar.
- A diverse portfolio of income streams.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Does the MSE use a more sustainable business model?

How does the MSE's business model make a positive impact in terms of sustainability?



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Contributing to local and regional economies

WHAT IS THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

A positive contribution to the economies the MSEs are part of, made through the activities of the business.

HOW CAN MSEs MEET THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- By using the products and services of local businesses.
- By increasing job and work opportunities locally through their activities.
- By helping to attract businesses and investment to the area.
- By developing collaborations, networks and relationships between local businesses.

HOW CAN MSEs EVIDENCE MEETING THE SUCCESS MEASURE?

- A strong network of local businesses and business relationships.
- Increased job opportunities, businesses and/or investment in the local area that can be (partially or fully) attributed to their activities.
- Products, services or outputs from mutually beneficial collaborations with local businesses.

ASK YOUR MSEs

Has the MSE positively impacted the economies it is part of?

How has the MSE made a positive impact on these economies? What community groups have they impacted?



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Providing Bus

emotional business support

WHAT IS EMOTIONAL BUSINESS SUPPORT?

Business support that focusses on the emotional needs of the designer or founder. This includes supporting the person as well as the business, or providing business coaching or mentoring.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

MSEs are enmeshed in the designer or founder, and so their emotions and well-being play a significant role in business decisions and management. Emotional business support and pastoral care can have a significant impact on the long-term success of the MSEs, ensuring they are more resilient and able to deal with set-backs. This support can be formalised (e.g. part of an incubation programme or regular wellness checks) or informal (e.g. casual discussions or ad-hoc support).

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

- By setting up regular check-ins to see how the designer is doing in terms of mental health and well-being.
- By offering pastoral support and advice based on experiences with alumni or previously supported MSEs.
- By acknowledging and discussing the variety of pressures facing designers, such as managing the business through difficult times, balancing their work-life balance, avoiding burn-out and dealing with knowledge gaps.
- By acknowledging and discussing the higher barriers and challenges faced by different groups, particularly BIPOC designers and those from lower socio-economic backgrounds. (See 'Intersectional Challenges' in the Cultural chapter for more detail).
- By encouraging MSEs to develop peer relationships and support networks.



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Recognising the role of MSEs in the fashion economy

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MSES IN THE FASHION SYSTEM? A healthy economic system features a diversity of organisations, much like a natural ecosystem made up of biodiverse organisms. MSEs contribute to this diversity as smaller organisations that are likely to demonstrate alternative approaches to business.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Micro and small businesses play a critical role in the fashion economy by offering:

- More diverse approaches to fashion; including creative perspectives, cultural heritage, social background, and personal values or visions.
- A testing space for sustainable fashion practices, such as products, innovations or business models that can be scaled across the wider industry.
- The contribution to the creation of new fashion industry jobs.
- Alternative employment for both founders and employees, who are more likely to work flexibly across different roles than those employed at large organisations, and at a greater level of responsibility and/or independence. This supports the development of diverse skills within the industry.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

Support organisations can help to build wider recognition of MSEs' value. Their contributions can be highlighted through activities such as:

- Advocacy and lobbying.
- Advising on policy or governmental support.
- Funding bids (for both MSEs and support organisations).
- Speaking at panels, conferences or via media requests.
- Developing strategy and identifying organisational impacts.



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"What we need more of is people, people in positions of power, who have to actually say 'we can do it differently'. It's finding those people that's the next challenge."

REJINA PYO

Image: Rejina Pyo

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Practical Solutions









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This section introduces more direct, practical ways that you can help to support MSEs and ensure they are commercially viable. If these solutions are implemented, they can significantly contribute to wider sustainable prosperity across cultural, social, environmental and economic dimensions. Note that depending on the kinds of support you offer, not all of the solutions below may be relevant to you.

Key economic prosperity solutions:

Providing financial support

Providing sustainable business support

Offering showcasing and retail opportunities

Mediating collaboration on R&D



"It's just really hard being in between. We're in between a lot of worlds. We're in between business and charity, so we can fall in between funding gaps sometimes."

BIRDSONG



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Providing financial support

WHAT IS FINANCIAL SUPPORT? Support that assists MSEs to secure finance (such as grants, funding, investment or sponsorship) for their business.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Financial support helps MSEs to ensure their businesses are able to survive (especially in the early stages), and to overcome economic barriers that are often unequal, particularly if MSEs are not able to access funds from personal networks.
- This can further support sustainable transformation by offering funding support to MSEs who are sustainability-focussed; to MSEs who face higher barriers due to race, socio-economic background or other reasons; or those who exemplify alternative business practices including new approaches to growth and development (as explored in 'New definitions of success').

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

Providing funding or grants to MSEs

 For organisations who offer funding as part of their support, expand or update selection criteria with sustainability indicators. This ensures that funding is more accessible to sustainabilityfocussed MSEs, and provides a financial incentive for all MSEs to develop their sustainability approach.

Providing information on funding sources or income streams

- Compile a list of available funds and grants, along with application requirements or specific targets (e.g. regional funds or tech-focussed grants). This should include investors with more progressive evaluation metrics, for example <u>Bethnal Green</u> <u>Ventures</u> or <u>Fashion for Good</u>.
- Provide information on how MSEs can diversify their income streams alongside debt or equity funding (or identify how they do so already). Examples include consulting, teaching, speaking engagements, crowdfunding, licensing intellectual property, running workshops or offering services, taking commissions, and wholesale or retail sales.

Supporting with external grant, investment, sponsorship or funding applications

 Assist MSEs with applications for funding, for example through mentoring or one-toone coaching, workshops or training, or as part of support programmes.

Communicating MSE needs to investors and funding bodies

If feasible, educate investors on your MSEs' sustainability needs for financial support. Examples might include:

- The importance of patient capital (longterm investment) that recognises the greater benefits of a 10 – 15 year model;
- The growing prevalence of green investing as a market standard (as demonstrated by <u>BlackRock</u> or <u>Triodos</u>);
- The need for selection criteria across Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) ratings;
- Evaluation metrics that recognise a wide range of business models, attitudes to growth, motivations and ambitions for development.



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Providing sustainable business

support

WHAT IS BUSINESS SUPPORT?

Support activities that help MSEs to run a successful fashion business across cultural, social, environmental and economic dimensions.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

Designers often have knowledge or skills gaps when it comes to running a business. Support organisations can fill these gaps, ensuring MSEs are able to sustain themselves – and thus also able to contribute to a diverse, sustainable fashion economy.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?

By helping MSEs to develop the business side of their brand, for example, through support with business planning and development, people management, IT systems, legal systems, accountancy and finance, logistics, pricing, marketing, branding, retail and exporting. Consider how sustainable prosperity could affect these activities.

Diagnostic tools

 Run a diagnostic with new MSEs to evaluate (or prompt them to self-evaluate) their business strengths and weaknesses, and identify what aspects of the business they need support with.

Sustainable business focus

- Ensure sustainability (balanced across cultural, social, environmental and economic perspectives) is included in any business support you provide.
- Prompt MSEs to define how sustainability will be addressed throughout all aspects of their business, from strategy to communications to retail.

Wider business education

- Provide education (e.g. webinars, workshops or resources) that focus on single topics, allowing MSEs to engage with different areas as needed through a flexible, bite-sized learning experience. MSEs noted that on-demand learning (content that can be accessed at any time) suits their busy schedules.
- Provide personalised mentoring and coaching that encompasses the full picture, looking at the 'business in 3D' for supported MSEs.
- Offer opportunities for MSEs to connect with each other through peer-to-peer learning, giving them a network of others to reach out to who have similar experiences and challenges.



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Offering showcase and retail opportunities

WHAT ARE SHOWCASING AND RETAIL OPPORTUNITIES? Opportunities for MSEs to connect with potential customers through showcasing or retail support.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

- Showcasing and retail support provide MSEs with vital opportunities to gain new customers and increase their brand awareness.
- They enable you as a support organisation to promote more sustainable practices and brands; share engaging narratives around fashion and sustainability; and to highlight this transformative work to the wider fashion industry.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT?
By hosting sales events and platforms, supporting with wholesaling, and capitalising on your existing networks and know-how to help MSEs reach new customers and markets.

Online retailing

- If feasible, offer a sales platform where customers can buy pieces from MSEs this is especially useful if targeted at customers who are interested in small, emerging, local, more sustainable, or independent brands.
- Create a pipeline with organisations who already offer this service (for example <u>Not Just a Label</u>, <u>Young British</u> <u>Designers</u>, and <u>Lone Design Club</u>).

Presentations and showcasing events

- Offer showcasing, marketing, brand awareness and buying opportunities (such as shows, presentations or press events).
- Create a pipeline with other organisations who offer these services (for example <u>Africa Fashion Week London</u>, British Fashion Council).

Sales events and pop-ups

- Host sales events such as showrooms, fairs, open studios or pop-ups that give MSEs the opportunity to connect (in person or digitally) with new customers.
- Create a pipeline with intermediaries who offer this service (for example <u>Lone Design Club</u>, <u>Cockpit Arts</u>).

Marketing

 Provide training and education on marketing and building brand awareness. This might include ways to connect with customers, understanding their needs, building a community, maintaining customer relationships, and developing creative, authentic sustainability narratives to attract and retain customers.



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Mediating collaboration on R&D

WHAT IS COLLABORATION ON R&D?

Partnerships and projects between MSEs and companies, universities and other organisations to collaborate on sustainability-focussed innovations.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT?

MSEs are an important source of innovation for fashion, but lack the resources to scale these ideas for wider industry use. Collaborations with a larger company, cultural institution, research centre or peer network can help provide necessary resources (such as skills, funding, expertise or R&D teams), aid development, and implement innovations across wider applications.

HOW CAN YOU PROVIDE THIS SUPPORT? By connecting MSEs with larger organisations that may be able to support them to develop an innovative concept, practice or product.

- Compile a list of innovation-focussed funds, organisations or supports (such as Innovate UK, Fashion for Good, BFTT, H&M Foundation or the Laudes Foundation) to share with MSEs.
- Foster or 'match-make' connections between MSEs and organisations that share or have a complementary focus, skill-set or area of expertise, and may be able to collaborate on a specific project or initiative together.



"We don't want to build an empire. We want to build impact, so growth for us looks completely different. It might mean embedding our solutions in different organisations. It might mean inspiring more businesses to become certified Social Enterprises and B-Corps. It definitely means that we are committed to acting, and not just talking about acting, in a regenerative way."

ELVIS & KRESSE



FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION Image: Elvis & Kresse

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FINISTERRE PATTERNITY

RAEBURN

FECYCLER Image: RÆBURN

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CASE STUDY

FINISTERRE

Founder/Owner

Type

Menswear / Womenswear

St. Agnes, Cornwall

functional outdoor clothing

Outdoor wear Sector

Established 2003

Location

Tom Kay

Website

Size

Medium

finisterre.com

"We are a business, we cause damage, and you could argue that the most sustainable thing you could do is not start a business in the first place. But we are trying to be a better business with better products and better supply chain, and transparency. There is an honesty factor there which I think people are drawn to."

"If we're developing product to work outdoors, we're doing it through a daily experience of being outdoors. We're not about high performance, we're about longevity, it's just got to work in the outdoors on that daily dog walk. It's real life as opposed to a lab test version of it. Even for colour palette, we're influenced by what's happening outside in our natural environment."

FINISTERRE





FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION Image: Finisterre

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Good design at Finisterre is functional design, fit for purpose, aiming to create long-lasting products.

Product development and innovation happens in partnership with suppliers (e.g. Econyl), customers and community groups (e.g. through local wetsuit testing).

Business processes are based on a deeply ingrained shared vision across the team and a culture of humility and compassion to ensure employee well-being.

The right investors who share their vision are key for Finisterre's goal of growth for impact.



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CASE STUDY: FINISTERRE

OVERVIEW



Finisterre was founded with the ambition to design and develop hardy British surf wear in the best and most sustainable way for those that share their passion for the sea. Founded by Tom Kay with a small group of friends, Finisterre managed continuous growth over the years, extending their existing retail business model to offering repair services to extend product life.

Customers are seen as the biggest advocates of the brand and the company organises a range of customer engagement activities. These include a wetsuit tester programme, online engagement through workshops and yoga classes, and repair workshops and interaction with customers who bring their products for repair. In order to facilitate continuous improvement, Finisterre also has a strong internal feedback culture enabling constant feedback loops.

Funding from private equity investors and through crowd-funding initiatives enabled Finisterre to significantly scale up over the years. However, it was important for the company to find the right investors to ensure that they grew in a way that was compatible with their values and the company vision. While Finisterre now operates in a more structured way than during the early days (which was enabled by external funding), investors fully understand Finisterre's vision and share their purpose-driven ambitions.

Thanks to more funding and a growing customer base in the UK and abroad, Finisterre now operate nine stores across the UK. This allowed them to engage with more people, extend their product range, and develop new collaborations. Examples include sustainable outdoor shoes with Vans, turning ocean plastic into swimwear solutions with Econyl, and developing new products to raise awareness of the urgent need to protect the environment with the Natural History Museum. Despite their growth, Finisterre has maintained previously existing, strong local partnerships with key stakeholders such as Tellenby, an Australian Merino wool producer in Exmoor.

However, with size come also new challenges. Right now, Finisterre is a fascinating example that it is possible to increase one's positive impact through growth while ensuring that the underlying purpose and vision are visible in everything they do.

"Yes, we are competing with others, but I would say we carry a story, we carry a purpose and we're not greenwashing. It's real and we live the way we say we live."

FINISTERRE

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CASE STUDY

PATTERNITY

Founder/Owner Anna Murray and

Grace Winteringham

Type Conscious creative

organisation / Pattern

awareness and understanding

Sector n/a
Established 2009
Location London
Size Micro

Website <u>patternity.org</u>

"We're increasingly less interested in product as a mechanism for change. When we started, ten years ago, product was a really good story-telling communication tool."

_ _ _

"It's acknowledging that we have moments when we do have lots of creativity flourishing, but also there is time of slowing down and breaking down and actually things becoming a bit messy. This is a model that goes against all models of growth because a model of growth goes up, it doesn't recede, it doesn't go down. I'm obsessed with spirals because everything in life is in this constantly spiralling formation, not a big upward line. Up to where? Collapse? Which is what we're seeing."

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"Patternity's philosophy is more about a deepening rather than expanding, which feels like what we need right now - both personally and collectively."

PATTERNITY





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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Combining material and non-material outputs - designing products as well as experiences, services and systems.

The immaterial in fashion is about creating conditions for well-being and connectivity.

Sustainability can mean working to one's own rhythm.

The freedom to roam, to explore, not to be confined by expected outputs, means the unexpected can unfold. Such 'composting time' needs to be factored into business practices.

The barometer for the impact of Patternity is through feedback from clients, audiences and customers, indicating their ability to connect people to the idea of nature and sustainability.





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CASE STUDY: PATTERNITY

OVERVIEW



Anna Murray and Grace Winteringham founded Patternity as a means to connect people with nature, using patterns to communicate different ways of seeing, knowing and reflecting on the world around us. With their backgrounds in design applied to graphics and advertising, and informed by their families and educational backgrounds, Patternity is defined by its ethos, as well as by what the team make and do.

Anna and Grace work with a small part-time team, complementing their expertise with an input from a network of specialists, as and when needed. They draw on principles and practices of ecology from spirituality, philosophy and science to recognise patterns repeated in nature and our lives. They apply this thinking to a range of activities that sustain their creativity and livelihoods. They work across multiple roles that are mutually reinforcing, building and contributing to their skillset. These developed over time and co-exist to inspire, generate revenue, uphold principles and test ethos - not always in equal measure. In this way, the products, services and systems that they create are always at the service of the well-being of those who come into contact with their work.

Patternity apply their thinking to a range of material and non-material products, with diverse clients who have a range of needs. They are not dependent on one sector, customer segment or a fixed idea of what they offer. They are commissioned to stimulate reflection and inform

working practices at larger companies, as well as to create products and services for and with clients, customers and public audiences. Examples include working with department store teams, festivals, exhibitions and global technology companies, designing team practices, and products.

Following a decision to only undertake work that contributes to and applies their philosophy, Patternity have actively downsized their operations. This has enabled them to maintain integrity and creative freedom. This decision also meant that they were 'perfectly primed' for the dramatic changes brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, having already identified a baseline that allows them to be very nimble and frugal.

This move away from a growth mindset is also challenging: downsizing the team means that they can no longer draw on specialist input. However, it has also been highly rewarding on professional and personal levels, giving distinction to their work and lowering stress levels.

Anna and Grace tread a balance between open-mindedness and a natural propensity for planning and strategic thinking. This is critical to their ability to maintain creative autonomy and to realise focussed and impactful work. The success measure for their economic model is their ability to continue Patternity and increase the well-being of those who are recipients of and participants in their work.

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CASE STUDY

RÆBURN

Founder/Owner

Type

Christopher Raeburn Responsible fashion brand

Womenswear / Menswear

reworking surplus fabric

Sector Established Location

London Small

2009

Website

Size

Small

raeburndesign.co.uk

"Sometimes we do things in a very analogue way in a digital world. We're obviously interested in tech and innovation, but at the same time the values associated with more traditional analogue processes are still important to us."

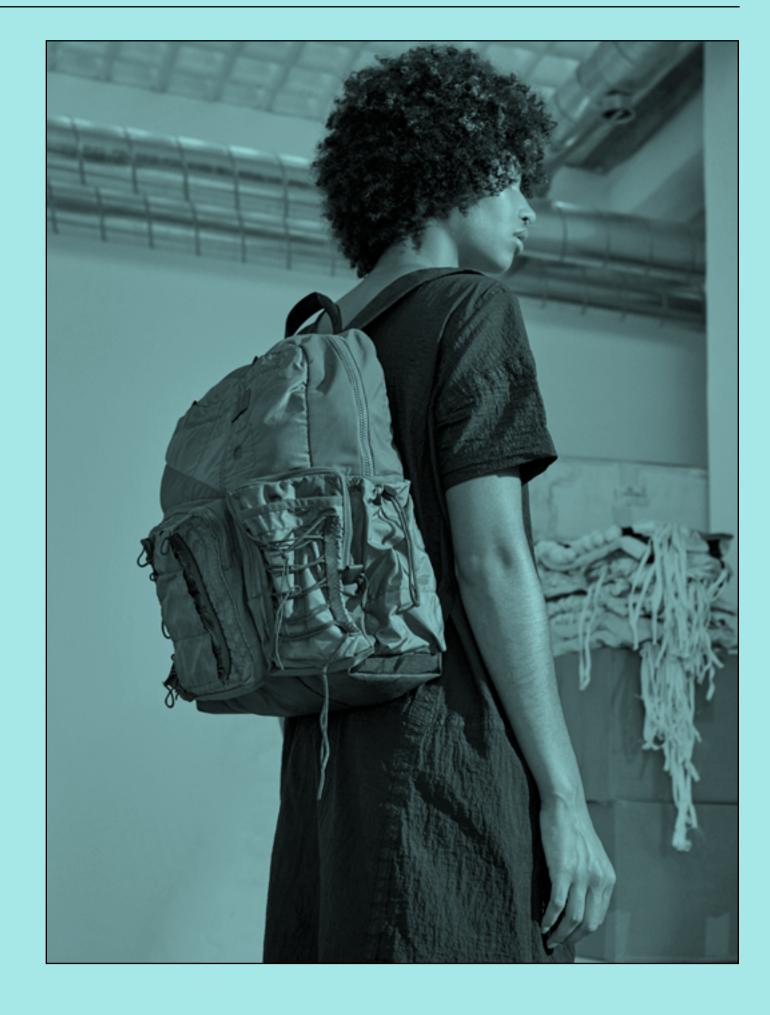
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"We're looking at the ability to be far more nimble, produce closer to market, closer on demand."

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"We issued a manifesto [in response to COVID-19] - around the idea of resetting the business and completely taking stock of everything we're doing. Dropping bad habits and inefficiencies and looking at new ways and new business models, new ways of creating, using it as an experimental space to test ideas. Trying out new ways of communicating. Lots of ideas we were having have been catalysed."

RÆBURN





FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

Image: RÆBURN

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

The RÆBURN ethos - Remade, Reduced and Recycled - underpins the design and business philosophy.

Repair and rejuvenation of garments, including workshops for the community, has become a key offer.

RÆBURN has reset the business to be more focussed on directto-consumer and retail than on traditional wholesale models.

Growing steadily, with more rapid expansion since 2018, the company is selective about collaborators to make sure their values match the RÆBURN values.

Currently applying for B-Corp certification, RÆBURN also subscribe to the 1% for the Planet scheme.



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CASE STUDY: RAEBURN

OVERVIEW



Christopher Raeburn established his eponymous label with signature pieces upcycling ex-military garments and fabrics (including parachute silk) as part of his first collection for A/W 2009, following graduation from the Royal College of Art. Over the ensuing years, the brand has become known and celebrated for its strong ethos of sustainability-embedded practices in relation to materials used: RÆMADE, RÆDUCED and RÆCYCLED. During 2020, a fourth strand was introduced - RÆFOUND - in which Christopher sources and sells original unworn (often exmilitary) clothing, without any interventions, in contrast to the RÆMADE line, where clothing is redesigned and rebuilt in-house from existing pieces or repurposed fabrics.

During the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, the business took time to reflect and revisit its aims and purpose, and the RÆBURN business model has deliberately evolved away from dependency on the traditional wholesale fashion model to engage better with its customers. More emphasis on direct-to-consumer selling through its website accelerated activity that was already evident.

Education on the value of clothing is a core aim, and since setting up the current studio as the RÆBURN Lab in 2018 - a hybrid design and manufacturing base where all RÆMADE items are created - the business has also opened as a retail outlet. Christopher and his staff conduct regular physical and online tours and run making and repair

workshops for audiences including the general public, fashion professionals and students.

The RÆBURN business now offers a diverse portfolio, with a new emphasis on e-commerce sales, madeto-order and customisation; rapid replenishment of stock made only in small batches (including for wholesale clients); educational and hands-on workshops and retail in the Lab and pop-up stores; in addition to wholesale trade through fashion week events. Collaboration and consultancy have become more prominent - for example, the business has created uniforms for several organisations including the V&A. Christopher has also consulted for other businesses (e.g. Victorinox), and in 2018 was appointed as creative director of Timberland.

RÆBURN has been nominated for several awards and was honoured in the December 2020 British Fashion Awards for its contribution to sustainability.

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"What we have here is the ability to test, reduce risk, trial things. There are so many exciting new ways of consuming clothing now."

RÆBURN

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FASHION AS SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION Image: Christopher Raeburn, RÆBURN

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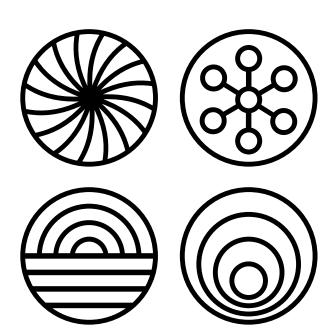
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While many fashion designers are already tuned into what the worvld and its citizens need in response to all these changes, they are less well recognised and supported than many of those who follow (outmoded) conventional practices.



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For over a decade now, we have been witnessing how this new breed of designers flex their creative muscles. We have been privileged to have spent valuable time with over forty of them in the collating of evidence for this guide. These fashion designers have shared a purpose, recognising possibilities for fashion to contribute to society. They are not, however, similar; each is distinctive and their contribution in the world is realised in very different ways.

Images left to right:

- 1. Michelle Lowe Holder
- 2. Birdsong
- 3. RÆBURN





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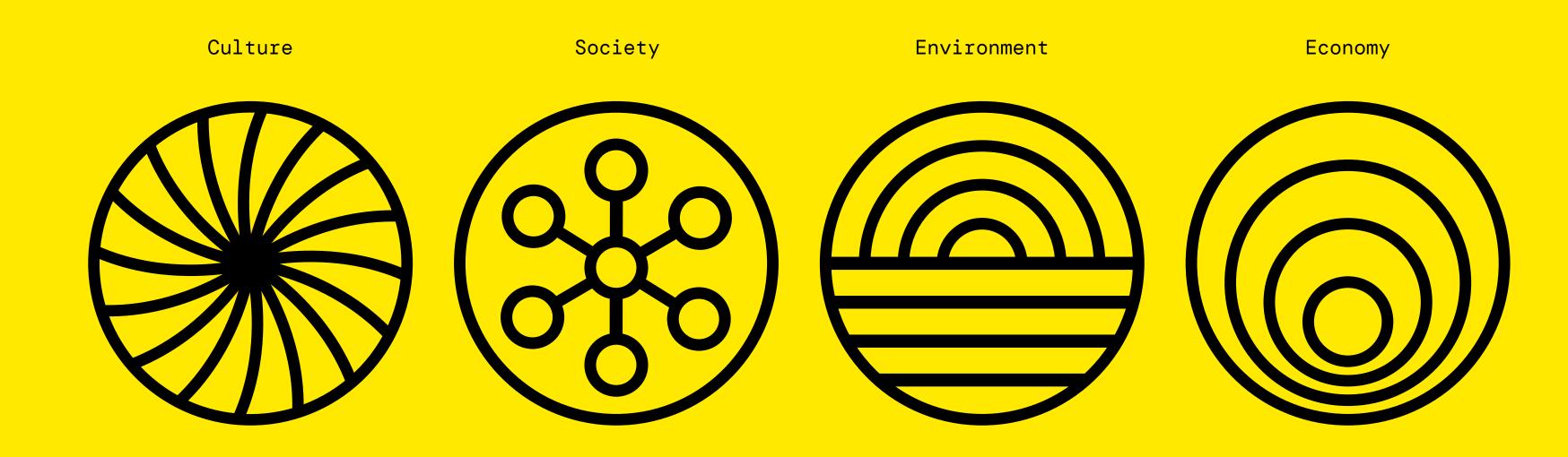
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This guide is based on real-life evidence on how all the elements of fashion – culture, society, environment and economy – are valued in their work. When we start to recognise these new markers of success, we shift the sector, we change perceptions and, critically, we change the possibilities of what fashion design can be.



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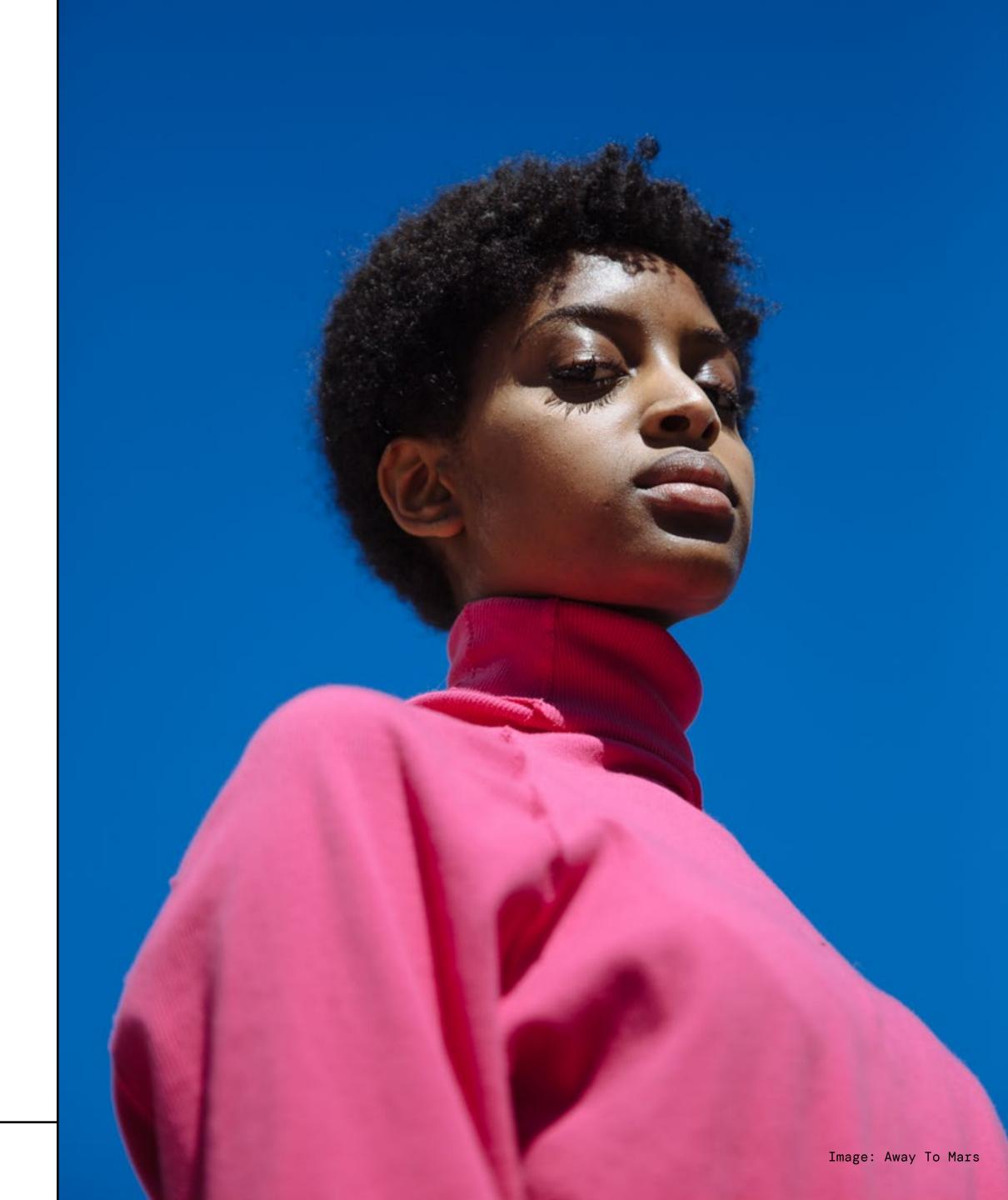
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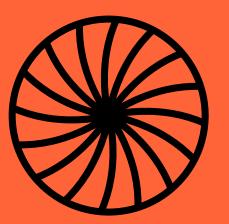
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CULTURAL PROSPERITY



KEYWORDS TO EXPLORE*

Artisan

Care

Cultural appropriation

Decolonisation

Diversity

Globalisation

Heritage crafts

Indigenous rights

<u>Interdependence</u>

Localism

Paradigm change

Systems change

Systems thinking

Traditional knowledge

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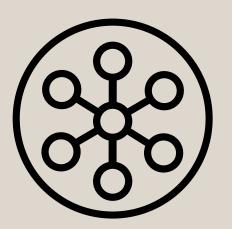
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SOCIAL PROSPERITY



KEYWORDS TO EXPLORE*

Care

Collaboration

Equality

Equity

Globalisation

Human rights

<u>Inclusion</u>

<u>Interdependence</u>

Living wage

Offshore manufacture

Reshoring

Supply chain

Transparency

Traceability

Resilience

Respect

<u>Trust</u>

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ENVIRONMENTAL PROSPERITY



KEYWORDS TO EXPLORE*

Biodiversity

Chemicals

Circular design

Climate Emergency

CO2 emissions

Distribution

Energy use

Extending clothing lifetimes

Externalised costs

Greenwashing

Health hazards

Microfibre pollution

Natural materials

Non-renewable

resources

<u>Overconsumption</u>

Packaging

Planetary boundaries

Recycling

Resourcefulness

Re-use

<u>Sufficiency</u>

Sustainable fashion

Sustainable materials

Synthetic materials

<u>Waste</u>

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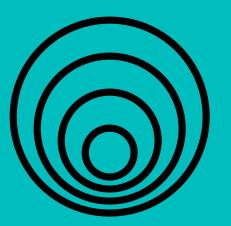
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ECONOMIC PROSPERITY



KEYWORDS TO EXPLORE*

Care

Planetary boundaries

Growth

Equality

Equity

Global inequality

Living wage

Globalisation

Post-growth

Post-growth economy

Stakeholders

Sufficiency

Resourcefulness

Systems thinking

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DIAGNOSTIC TOOLS: SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

From 'Providing Tailored Support' and 'Developing Reflective Practices'

Business values and ambitions	1. How would you describe your core business? (Range of products and services)
	2. What motivated you to start your own business? What did you want to achieve by having your own business?
	3. What values influence your practice and the way you run your business? (Including moral principles, personal values and cultural, social, environmental and economic perspectives)
	4. What would success for your business look like?
Understanding of sustainability	5. What does sustainability mean to you? How does this affect your business?
	6. What do you think you need to know more about in terms of sustainability? What are your knowledge gaps?
	7. What sustainability skills do you have within the business? Which areas do you excel in?
Transformational practices	8. Overall, where do you see your business in the wider fashion landscape? Are you looking to challenge conventional fashion with what you do in your business? If so, how?
	9. What sustainability practices or approaches do you currently use in your business? (Across cultural, social, environmental and economic dimensions)
	10. Would you say that what you are able to do has an impact on the fashion sector? If so, in what ways? Where else? (e.g. local community, media)
	11. What or who else would you like to impact or to change?
Conclusions	12. Are there any other issues in relation to sustainable practices in fashion we have not covered that you would like to comment on?

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