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## **A New 'T' for Textiles: Up skilling design researchers to inspire Buying Office staff towards sustainability at Hennes and Mauritz (H&M)**

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The textile and fashion industry is one of the most impactful in the world in terms of pollution (Greenpeace, 2011). Designers and the decisions they make can account for up to 80-90% of these impacts (Graedel et al, 1995). Carbon emission reduction targets for 2020 (EU, 2007) require rapid change on a huge scale. Design researchers working in this field need to address volume production, and work at the corporate level.

The paper is co-written by two practice-based textile design researchers and a leadership coach with a background in management consultancy. It is based on an up skilling programme given to researchers in the TED project at the UAL. The programme took place over three years (September 2010 – October 2013), whilst working for H&M and the Sustainable Fashion Academy (SFA) in Stockholm, Sweden. Much of the work was developed as part of the Mistra research consortium, which aims to bring scientists and designers together to find sustainable and profitable industry solutions. The fourth author - a consortium PhD researcher with a background in cultural studies - was an engaged scholar with TED during the project phase.

The paper addresses the research question: What new skills and capabilities do textile designers need to promote sustainable design innovation in large fashion corporations? Using a framework of traditional textile design practice (Gale & Kaur, 2002) and a vision of practice for sustainable fashion/textile designers (Fletcher & Grose, 2012), the paper argues that skills outside of the field are needed if researchers are to fully contribute to industry change. The authors reflect upon the experiences of the TED team, and the programme that aimed to prepare them to design and deliver the 'Sustainable Design Inspiration' (SDI) project at H&M. The up skilling series included consultancy, facilitation, and webinar skills, and 'Brilliant Thinking', by Idenk. This was supplemented with a less formal internal programme of mindfulness, meditation, and career coaching.

The SDI programme was designed using a 'T' shape – not in the Tim Brown designer sense (2009) – but more as a construct to reach a broad audience through: a one-hour presentation delivered seven times (to 350+ staff in total); as well as offering 30 staff from the 'New Development' (ND) team a practical experience of 3 workshops, each one 4 hours long, over a six month period. The paper uses qualitative data - reflective texts, interview and survey responses, and The Left Hand Column tool (Senge, 2006) - to argue that designers, particularly from female dominated areas like textiles and fashion, need new skills to complement the traditional textile design training. We also ask if designers training designers in sustainability might be more

effective than courses delivered by non-design trainers/consultants. Finally we consider how we can help enable female sustainable design researchers to 'lean in' (Sandberg, 2013), and contribute to a more empathetic sustainability leadership culture (Confino, 2014; Sealy & Vinnicombe, 2012). This paper seeks to find the right mix of skills – an extended 'T' - for sustainable textile design researchers to aim for.

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