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Darning Clothes, Weaving Conversations: crafting sustainable fashion futures

As a craft-based textile designer and researcher, my practice explores relationships between sustainability, fashion, design thinking and the role of designers through individual practice and community based, collaborative projects. My former role as Research Fellow in Clothing Longevity at Nottingham Trent University (NTU, 2014-2016) was part of a wider Defra and WRAP funded initiative exploring how to embed sustainable design strategies into the fashion and textiles industry, including qualitative research into consumer perspectives on clothing purchase, use, care, repair and disposal. Alongside this, explorations into practice-based approaches to mending and repair consider the role fashion and textile designers can play in enabling solutions that support consumers to extend the life of clothing.

In this symposium I will present outcomes from personal craft-led design praxis –a series of darning samplers and visibly mended garments– developed for a series of participatory design workshops and public engagement events, informed by review of historical, existing and emerging repair practices, and personal craft-led design praxis. Discussion will focus on ways to address the barriers to mending, add value to the acts of repair by re-framing them as social design-led sharing activities, and the potential of participatory craft praxis as a tool to motivate greater public engagement in repair practice to support a more sustainable fashion future. Drawing on the research from the Clothing Longevity project – Strategies to Improve Design and Testing for Clothing Longevity – industry-led strategies to better support and facilitate consumer repair activities will also be considered.

Angharad McLaren is a craft-based textile designer and researcher whose practice explores relationships between sustainability, fashion, design thinking and the role of designers through individual practice and community based, collaborative projects. Her former role as Research Fellow in Clothing Longevity at Nottingham Trent University (NTU, 2014-2016) was part of a wider Defra and WRAP funded initiative exploring how to embed sustainable design strategies into the fashion and textiles industry, including qualitative research into consumer perspectives on clothing purchase, use, care, repair and disposal. Alongside this, explorations into practice-based approaches to mending and repair consider the role fashion and textile designers can play in enabling solutions that support consumers to extend the life of clothing. Angharad is currently Lecturer in Textile Design and Sustainable Clothing Research Coordinator at NTU. Prior to this she worked as a self-employed creative design professional on a variety of projects including WRAP's Love Your Clothes campaign with Zero Waste Scotland and Creative Carbon Scotland, and as a weave and textile designer at textile mills in the UK, Italy and India.