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How can we Design for a Degrowth Future when Profit is often a Priority Before the Workforce and the Planet?

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Durability in garments is a nuanced idea explored in the fashion industry through the technical testing of garments supported by third-party practitioners in laboratories in a siloed institution. These processes are evaluated in a retail head office, and the results are used to demonstrate aspects of the garment's durability. Notably, not all aspects of the fashion industry wholly adopt these processes. Outcomes of these durability tests often lead purchasing departments to choose synthetics as they have extensive durability over other fibres used in fashion and clothing, i.e. natural fibres that are protein or cellulose-based.

With fragmented networks of connection along supply chains from a testing laboratory to a garment manufacturer to a retail head office and ultimately the customer, this concept of durability will be interesting to explore. In auditing customers' wardrobes to explore those items that have both physical and emotional durability, the intention is to produce an archive of best practices. It has been said that the price paid for a garment is quickly forgotten. (Niinimäki, K. 2013) after it has been owned for several years. Price is a key factor in purchasing the garment; however, this may relate to longevity, or do the physical aspects of the garment or the emotional attachment create a new value?

In a degrowth society, there is a need to explore these attributes and how product developers can ensure their garments meet the requirements: they are loved longer and last longer in people's wardrobes and promote long-term sustainability. The area of consumer wardrobe audit and archival research will consider the attachment styles to artefacts, using action research based on an attitude scale linked to clothing items. This work will also explore the longevity of products in terms of durability, which links to the fabrication and weights of the fabric and its composition. The technical aspects of fabric weights, blends, durability and garment construction will be explored. Standard industry performance tests used by Fashion retail companies using Intertek (Intertek, 2025) can be linked to this process. The aim is to develop a new toolkit for fashion businesses to measure likely longevity by a new measure, handle, cost per wear, value, and emotional attachment, along with the intention of multiple user lifetimes. Kate Fletcher discusses these methods in Opening up the wardrobe (Fletcher, K., & Klepp, I. G.2017).

This paper will explore archival garments and fabric with an attachment and attitude scale and realistic thinking about the durability applied with technical knowledge of design for longevity.