



## **Fashion Ecosystems: Networks and Circuits**

Special Issue coordinated by Nick Rees-Roberts and Fabrice Rochelandet

Fashion was the subject of much work in the social sciences very early on, with a focus on industrial supply and organization, as well as demand and social practice (Simmel, 1904, Nystrom, 1928, inter alia). From the 1980s onwards, the study of the fashion system (including the production of clothing, beauty and “lifestyle” in the luxury goods and mass retail sectors) has mainly focused on image, brand identity and patterns of consumption to the detriment of a more in-depth analysis of the methods and circuits of production. Rather than thinking of the broader fashion sector (the creative and commercial production—both material and symbolic—of clothing, accessories, cosmetics, jewellery, and lifestyle brands) primarily as an industrial “system” (Barthes 1967; Institut Français de la Mode 2008), this special issue aims to understand the contemporary transformations of *fashion ecosystems* by articulating a set of networks and circuits within specific creative and economic models.

This special issue aims to open up the theorization of fashion ecosystems to multidisciplinary research methods, particularly in the fields of cultural studies, communication, economics, geography, and sociology. The advent of social media, in particular Instagram, has in recent years transformed the organization and coexistence of fashion by creating new interactions between the different actors of the industry. Underlying these changes is a key contradictory fault-line: on the one hand, a stronger visibility of alternative creative and critical voices through the challenging of traditional tastemakers; and, on the other, the bolstering of the dominant power of the brands through control of social media and the emergence of new prescribers—or influencers—of fashion.

The objective of this special issue is to question these transformations and the local and global dynamics that they generate in the context of the dissemination of social media platforms such as Instagram and the broader platformization of the fashion industry. This involves addressing both the economic models of the industry (upper or under-ground; global or niche); its social networks (local networks, existence of a local middleground) or economic structures (commercial or parallel circuits).

How, then, to analyse the importance of these recent industrial and cultural transformations? What role do creative and commercial venues and fashion communities in large cities play in the workings of the fashion ecosystem?

How do social media organize and make these communities visible? What differences are there in terms of ecosystems between the capitals of the fashion and the second-tier of cities or emerging networks? In particular, in terms of design creativity, economic organization, and the hierarchical relationships between fashion creatives.

Among the perspectives that we aim to open up through this issue:

- The role of social media (mobile platforms such as Instagram and TikTok) and their uses by the fashion industry: how do they serve the interests of major luxury brands while undermining the traditional channels of promotion such as the press?
- How do digital networks operate as places of visibility and interaction for creatives and companies located on the fringes of the creative industries?

- What role do these platforms play in the organization of the different networks and circuits of the fashion industry: brands, designer collectives, commercial structures, and the complex relationships between these different levels?
- The transformation of the creative processes of innovation with the widespread dissemination of social media in both professional and amateur practices. At what scale are professional networks and economic circuits structured?
- The relationship between the socio-professional status of those employed in the design sector and their inclusion in the networks and circuits (both real and virtual) of contemporary fashion.
- The impact of social media on the forms of (in)dependence of a local “scene” in relation to fashion manufacturers. How do they position themselves and how do they organize as independent creative ecosystems at a local level?
- How do the innovations of digital communication impact on the division of labour and the competitiveness of fashion organizations in different geographic and cultural contexts?

This special issue of the journal *Réseaux* will be open to work covering broadly different creative and commercial dimensions of the fashion industry. Contributions might relate to theoretical or empirical work, based on the analysis of corpus of texts or field research. A variety of disciplinary methods and perspectives in the humanities and social sciences — from socio-economics to culture-communication — fall within the scope of the issue.

#### **Calendar:**

**Please inform the journal's administrator of your intention to contribute and send by June 15 2021 a 1 or 2-page paper proposal specifying the main research questions, content, and methodology.**

**If your intention is accepted, the first version of your paper will be due by October 1 2021 for publication in June 2022.**

Intentions to contribute should be sent to the journal administrator: aurelie.bur@enpc.fr

More information on the *Réseaux* journal site: <http://www.revue-reseaux.fr/>