

Call for Papers: RGS-IBG August 29 – September 1, 2017

Trending Now: The changing geographies of fashion in the digital age

Organizers:

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In the report *The State of Fashion 2017*, written by Business of Fashion and the McKinsey Institute, industry executives used three words to describe the current state of the fashion industry: uncertain, changing, and challenging. Indeed, the fashion industry is undergoing dramatic transformations, from digitalization and the rise of ‘see now, buy now’ fashions to brands redefining the function and timing of fashion weeks. In recent years, economic, social, and cultural geographers have recognized and harnessed fashion’s potential to serve as a valuable lens through which to explore radical and ongoing changes to the production, curation and consumption of goods, services and experiences (Crewe, 2013; Hracz *et al.*, 2013; Brydges *et al.*, 2014; D’Ovidio, 2015; Lavanga, forthcoming).

This session aims to build on and extend this work by bringing together researchers interested in the structures, labour dynamics, spaces, value propositions and practices of the contemporary fashion industry. Key questions to consider may include: are we still in an era defined by the ‘big four’ of New York, London, Milan and Paris, or will the geography of fashion shift to emerging fashion capitals, like Stockholm and Berlin? By extension, as the fashion industry continues to consolidate into a handful of global firms, what are the opportunities for independent and/or slow fashion brands to ‘stand out in the crowd’ and create alternative and/or sustainable business models? More broadly, what is the impact of digitalization on the way fashion is designed, produced, promoted, curated and consumed?

This session seeks to explore these questions and related themes in greater detail and welcomes papers from diverse conceptual, empirical and geographical perspectives.

Papers may wish to address one or more of the following questions:

- Has digitalization led to increased – or decreased – democratization in the fashion industry? What are the implications for employment opportunities and career trajectories of fashion designers, bloggers, and others working in the industry?
- How do specific physical and virtual spaces intersect in the world of fashion and what outcomes do they produce? For example, in what ways are permanent and temporary spaces (e.g. pop-up stores, fashion festivals, weeks and trade fairs), as well as online platforms such as Instagram, changing the geographies of retailing and consumption?

- Is the geography of global fashion capitals expanding or consolidating?
- Does technology create opportunities for local markets to emerge, or reinforce the dominance of global firms and established centers?
- What are the dynamics and geographies underpinning the rise of new movements in fashion, like slow fashion? Does increased transparency lead to increased sustainability?
- To what extent can cities cultivate and support the fashion industry more broadly, and independent fashion designers more specifically? What is the role and impact of policy at the national, regional and local scale?

If you are interested in presenting a paper in this session, please send your abstract (of 250 words) to Taylor Brydges (taylor.brydges@kultgeog.uu.se) by Friday, February 10, 2017.

References

Brydges, T, M Lavanga and L von Gunten (2014) Entrepreneurship in the fashion industry: a case study of slow fashion businesses. IN: A. Schramme, G. Hagoort and R. Kooyman (eds.) *Beyond Frames. Dynamics between the creative industries, knowledge institutions and the urban context*. Delft: Eburon Academic Press/University of Chicago Press. (pp. 93-79).

Crewe, L (2013) Tailoring and Tweed: Mapping the spaces of slow fashion. In *Fashion Cultures: Theories, Explorations and Analysis*. London: Routledge.

D'Ovidio, M (2015) "The field of fashion production in Milan: A theoretical discussion and an empirical investigation". *City, Culture and Society*, 6 (2): 1-8.

Hracs BJ, Jakob D and Hauge A (2013) Standing out in the Crowd: The rise of exclusivity-based strategies to compete in the contemporary marketplace for music and fashion. *Environment and Planning A* 45(5): 1144–1161.

Lavanga, M (forthcoming) "The role of Pitti Uomo trade fair in the menswear fashion industry" In: Reggie Blaszczyk and Ben Wubs (eds.) *The Fashion Forecasters: A Hidden History of Color and Trend Prediction*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.