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Marketing Fashion

Critical Perspectives on the Power of
Fashion in Contemporary Culture



**ROUTLEDGE STUDIES IN
THE FASHION INDUSTRY**

Afterword

Growing Demands of Ethics and Aesthetics

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In my activity of analysis and interpretation of sociocultural trends, that since 1989 I have conducted with the Institute of Research Future Concept Lab, I can affirm that the new decade of the 2020s has had a traumatic impact on our everyday lives. Like a century ago, the world is on the verge of war; the old paradigms have vanished, and the new ones have appeared, changing the whole globe. First it was big data, the sharing economy, artificial intelligence (AI), fake news and influencers, and then came the pandemic and the war. Obviously, all these novelties changed politics, business and everyday life. To summarize this, one can say that the first decade of the third millennium was a *turn into a digital mode*, which can be described as subjective, contagious, innovative, and instantaneous, but also unconscious, evanescent, pervasive, and driven in a powerful and non-transparent way by artificial intelligence, which is controlled by just a few. The political thought became impoverished and unscrupulous; tweets are slogans living in the present only, excluding any possibility of a strategic vision. All these changes created new opportunities and vital connections, but also increased the risk of a future characterized by poor distribution, to the advantage of individual actions and reactions, civil and societal – for better or for worse.

Then came the two years 2020–2022: a watershed for those involved in geopolitics, business and societal innovation. World events have revitalized activism, and the desire to count and to be counted, to place oneself at the centre of the stage in the act of an authentic presence rather than a virtual one. Movements such as Friday for Future, the Umbrella movement in Hong Kong, Me Too for gender equality, and other protests against racism and war, urged millions of people to demonstrate in city squares, revealing their need to count and to be counted.

The next few years will undoubtedly witness an increase in *ethical demands*, which will concern citizen rights in the physical sense (public health services, environmental care, local communities, specific sites), in other words, of taking care of people as creatures of flesh and bone, but also of their dignity. To reach such goals, it will also be necessary to exploit the power of big data, yet avoiding an uncritical and irresponsible surrender to the force of algorithms, which proved useless in cases of pandemic and war. The results

of such surrender have become obvious to all, but only in the context of an incredible risk to our health and to national security. In this way, the physical body, a focus always at the center of attention of fashion marketing, became the center of general attention.

In order to accomplish a necessary transformation, the fresh energy of new generations must be mobilized: the millennials, and even more Generation Z, will be able to make a crucial difference, and it is their sensitivities that need to be addressed first. The suggestions in this text concern in particular the Fashion System and its future, which have to adapt to the values and behaviours of young people (from 15 to 30 years of age), to be developed further in the encounter with other generations – those to whom the young look with hope and interest. A new game will be played, and before starting it, it is necessary to understand its rules and to notice the pieces on the chess-board: what are the choices, which judgments are being made, what are the specific motives, but also how do its most central elements – reasoning and reflection – look? These are the generative dynamics that can be summarized as a common need for *awareness*, which implies a responsibility to oneself of *being present*.

Obviously, the adults must listen, observe and support the demands formulated by younger people, as these young people feel strongly penalized today – not only in the sense of climate change, but also in terms of employment opportunities and a social recognition due. The 2020s can become a time of cultural rebirth and societal innovations, just as the roaring twenties of the last century were in the United States (in Europe, alas, history took another turn) – but only if we are able to face such a challenge with courage. The response will involve all dimensions of social existence, and must be based on 6 Rs: Respect, Responsibility, Relevance, Resonance, Reciprocity and Recognition.

In the world of fashion marketing, it will be a question of bringing brands closer to social commitment, even if business as such does not require it; this has become obvious in the face of the dramatic health emergency that made all other issues irrelevant, and which was confirmed at the time of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The Corporate Goals Statement presented in August 2019 by the Business Roundtable, an association of corporate America that brings together over 180 companies employing ten million people – from IBM to JPMorgan, from Apple to Accenture, from P&G to Johnson & Johnson – is in that sense a watershed in the history of Western capitalism. It has placed respect for the environment, the well-being of workers and the prosperity of the communities in which the companies operate, among the priorities of their operations. It is also a strong sign of discontinuity, 40 years after the Nobel Prize for Economics was awarded to Milton Friedman, who represented a handbook for companies all over the world, and who famously proclaimed that “There is one and only one social responsibility of business – to use its resources and engage in activities designed to increase its profits” (1962/1970).

From this paradigm shift derives a scenario in which ethics suddenly regains its role, inviting reflection on the infinite diversity – of humans, of animals, of plants; a reflection opening a door for new applications in the world of brands (including the Fashion System), and for sustainable consumption. Our present digital life *online* creates a strong risk that must be avoided: the loss of the value of things, of people, of depth – as a result of the apparently unavoidable trend towards behaviours that are fast, recursive and automatic, and towards which a large part of society is unknowingly oriented. Therefore, a broad change is needed, both in priorities, and in the very concept of corporate vision, which – beyond profit and the traditional corporate social responsibility – must include a commitment for greater respect towards society, towards the community of employees, built on stable values structured into a recognizable ethics.

All this has a lot to do with what can be called a *moral conscience*, which needs to penetrate the world, which is apparently impermeable to it, such as the Fashion System. It needs to be added that in this context, it is necessary to begin by admitting the role that feminine thought and sensitivity can play – in all countries of the world. In fact, there exists an immense piece of the collective imaginary created by women who thought about it, who designed it, who built it and who supported it in everyday life. These women are still not sufficiently remembered or recognized – neither by name nor by merit or by method, as their work, which may have changed the world, has been carried out in anonymity. Doing them justice is an ambitious goal, but in tune with the times we live in, when the postulates concerning diversity are expressed with such strength. Politics and the media offer mostly hesitant solutions as to the ways of combating inequalities, so we need to react by imagining projects that will renew social sustainability in every sector, for each gender and every generation.

An obvious sector is that of the Fashion System, which is so close to our bodies. To revive its fate, it will be necessary to face future challenges with courage and imagination; to involve universities and research centres, but also companies and marketing firms. In this scenario, it is absolutely necessary to include the vital intelligence of women, along with all that women are capable of doing, despite the world that still does not respect its promise of equal rights. To quote some names is enough to see which way the wind of change is blowing: Greta Thunberg, Person of the Year; Ursula von der Leyen at the helm of the EU with the Green New Deal; Olga Misik with the Constitution in her hands, challenging Vladimir Putin in defense of Alexei Navalny; Liliana Segre, who became (in spite of her wishes and at the venerable age of 90) the symbol of the fight against anti-Semitism; and many other women of any age who mobilize themselves, take action, launch projects and espouse causes.

So, here is the point: we need to go back to a broad, cosmopolitan, happy vision, which is only possible via an awareness that comes from training for diversity, and from recognizing diversity as *the beauty of the world*.

Recognition of Aesthetics

Let's start from the last R – the need for Recognition. It seems that a great change is taking place, a change that expresses the common need for everyone to talk about themselves in order to be recognized by the world. This need can be fulfilled instantly and at no cost by circulating personal stories, by sharing tastes, opinions and passions. It signals the end of the era of the silent minority, and the beginning of an era of aesthetic recognition, based on individual feelings, and starting in the world of fashion.

In such a context of *diffused narrativity* (which sometimes can be inflated), the ability of people and companies to tell their stories in an authentic and imaginative way becomes indispensable. This is the way of engaging the relevant community, creating valuable relationships, based on emotions and aesthetics – in other words, of appealing by sharing a deeply human experience. As Ian McEwan put it in his magnificent novel *Machines Like Me*: “Transcribing human experience into words, and the words into aesthetic structures isn't possible for a machine.”¹ This is why storytelling in such situations need to be transformed into a *storydoing*: telling the know-how, describing extraordinary talents that can often be found in the world of fashion. In this way, an authentic storytelling can become a sounding board, a new tool of awareness. In this passage from storytelling – which fascinates by using plots detached from reality – to *storydoing*, in which people tell in an aesthetic way what they know and what they do, and in which the decisive element is the present experience. It is through such narratives that people may hope to be recognized and appreciated by their community of reference, but also by a wider audience. Another McEwan statement, that the present “is the frailest of improbable constructs,”² is correct in relation both to persons and to companies, and this is the way to go.

The key theme for the next few years should then be narration – of high or low resolution – in which the perception of value and quality of an experience told can vary. A low resolution enhances the narration, as it makes it fast, accessible, shareable – according to the logic of the immediate desire that becomes a whim. A chat rather than a narrative, such a low-resolution story fits well into the world of apps and social media. The high-resolution stories, on the other hand, require knowledge, patience, refinement, in-depth analysis, care and know-how, all these rare commodities in the times of a frenetic acceleration of experience. It is this kind of high-quality personal and corporate stories that have a chance to take hold of the most advanced markets, thus supporting the circulation not only of finished products but also of high-resolution stories.

It is not the number of likes that will count in the future but also the ability to penetrate the fabric of deep knowledge (rather than a volatile opinion). But the purpose is the same: to report the experience of those who buy, in an innovative, surprising and memorable way. This can be done with authentic stories, which will then be reproduced in social media, and embedded in

a context of satisfaction and passionate gratification through fashion and clothes, thus redefining the rituals of getting dressed. In such a context, feeling “aesthetically happy” plays a fundamental role: the needle of the compass that guides people’s choices. Therefore, it is necessary to help persons and companies identify their talents, and then help them express these talents in a story that can be shared. While doing this, both the luxuries of the higher markets and a more democratic and inclusive excellence can both be affirmed. For small and medium-size companies, it will not be a problem of their size but of their openness to cultural (and not only technological) innovation, and of their storytelling skills.

The experience of creative taste will permit the experimentation with opportunities; the creation of connections between generations via narratives and stories; an expansion of a wide range of experiences through narrating them in the correct way. There will be a need for ingenuity – in order to demonstrate talents and to enhance the quality of life; all this may help the textile-clothing tradition to evolve. As for the quality of life, understood as both well-being and “being good,” the results will be, hopefully, a respect for the environment, an increased attention to details, and an education in beauty. The future will depend on the quality of people’s desires and their intact hope for beauty: the Fashion System should be able to make an important contribution to this challenge. This also means that the young generations will have a new theme to report: that of increasing ethical demands and the necessity of taking a stand, which in turn will nourish new professional activities. This task will belong to the “storydoers”: well prepared, competent, capable of producing and telling stories about the high quality of products, and even before that, the high-resolution stories about the secrets of an authentic existence.

To sum up: if the 2010s were an unconscious turn into the *digital mode* – creative but aleatory – the 2020s will proceed under the banner of increased ethical demands, from responsibility to the recognition of rights, accompanied by an emergence of powerful new paradigms. Paradigms such as Serve & Share, Trust & Truth, Smart & Sustainable, Deep & Deal will join that of Unique & Universal (which regulated globalization over the last two decades) in shaping the near future along the lines of augmented ethical demands. These new paradigms, in combination with innate human qualities, could produce ethical solutions for various dilemmas that would make societies (understood both as civil communities and as business organizations) happier, and better equipped to face the future. A list of some sources that can be useful in the construction of such paradigms follows.

Over the last 15 years, Future Concept Lab (FCL) has worked on these issues, suggesting five foundational paradigms, presented already in my 2011 book, *I paradigmi del futuro*.³ Now is time to review, refine and complete them, an attempt at which is presented in the pages that follow. I will maintain the paradigm Unique & Universal as it was, and continue with the other four that can be seen as having roots in earlier paradigms. These four are: Serve

& Share, Trust & Truth, Smart & Sustainable, Deep & Deal. They can be seen not only as descriptive and analytical, but also as generative, helping to imagine and to experiment with various solutions characterized by a high ethical impact – even in the world of the Fashion System.

The Paradigm Unique & Universal

Reverse the logic of classic globalization – Provide local venues of high intensity – Enhance local qualities in a global perspective – Adopt the logic: think locally, act globally

This first paradigm has remained unchanged for years now, and acquired even more strength in the present, as it has overcome the antinomy local/global that for two decades dominated reflections (often superficial) on globalization. Just remember the distorted idea of globalization that flattens and unifies products and experiences, or the slogan so popular a while ago among the US multinationals: “think globally, act locally.” Both are visions without a basis, just like the confusing concept of “glocalization,” from which everybody can take what they like best. In contrast, the paradigm that has been consolidated over the last decade, and towards which an augmented ethics will have to orient itself, emphasizes the role of a local venue, acquiring such intense character that it could be transformed into a global reference. A local place unique on the global level, which makes a plural globalization possible: Pluriverse, not Metaverse.

In this way, the Unique & Universal paradigm can become a way of enhancing local realities and supporting a better understanding of global successes. It helps to portray the archetypal consumption, it emphasizes the relevance of narratives, and it describes everything that has a character in the world of consumption.

It can also reveal the processes working in the opposite direction – with dramatic consequences, as when a virus that moves from the bat to the animals at a Chinese market, brings the whole world to a halt. It could have done this because it is unique, and because it had not yet been studied by the international scientific community, and because it has a power of contagion that found no barriers, and thus became global. Now we know this, although we paid a high price for learning it. But this event also showed that uniqueness must be governed – for better or for worse – by a systemic logic, through a complex thinking that takes into account many different variables.

Companies and operators who choose to ignore the Unique & Universal paradigm will have to understand that in the future, the increasingly global demand will be satisfied only by increasingly unique offers. Thus, the Unique & Universal paradigm will help definitively overcome the antinomy between local and global, so that the value of unique and local products will be recognized – also in the textile-clothing sector. Local products will be

transformed into global offers (Brunello Cucinelli's luxury brand is a good example of what has been called "a humanistic capitalism"), with the distinctiveness of their origin and their production processes recognized and amplified by digital transparency. From this perspective, the Web will be used to create new distribution and communication logics, giving local products greater opportunities to be recognized.

This paradigm also assumes an imperative for brands to expose themselves completely, with the aim of leaving a sign, an unmistakable signature, and revealing their original, sometimes unexpected solutions. Examples of this are French luxury groups such as LVMH and Kering, or prestigious brands such as Hermes and Prada. It is all about starting (or consolidating) the process of legitimizing their authenticity, of strengthening their Vision through Mission and Brand Equity. This gives them an advantage in terms of credibility and consistency, but the real challenge lies in the creation of an added value – starting from the improvement of the shopping experience and ending by creating social repercussions in the market, thus fueling the logic of *augmented ethics*.

The Paradigm Serve & Share

Encourage a ConsumAuthor – Strive for the common good– Share the non-economic value of services – Enhance sharing

The second paradigm moves the focus onto the subtle relationship between consumer service and the attention to the common good. It has been since 2020 that one can observe a more detailed and deeper reflection on the issues of serving and sharing – in an ethical way. Such a way requires consumption and distribution models capable of measuring not only the satisfaction of the individual customer, but also the collective discomfort a specific consumption and distribution may entail, whether it is related to the pandemic or to the war. While the daily needs of individuals still need to be seen as central, the pact between supply and demand can no longer unfold unconditionally, as has been demonstrated by the two emergencies, virus and war. The relationship supplier/customer, whether it concerns products or services, and their quality and reliability, is still the basic platform on which the value of the exchange will be measured and judged. Yet compared to the past, such measurement and judgment will take place in certain indispensable conditions: consideration of public health, of respect for the environment, of the dignity of workers and communities, of solidarity, and of national security. It will be necessary to serve (in the sense of encouraging) a ConsumAuthor, but at the same time to work with the same commitment for the common good. The final judgment will concern the ability to reconcile service to the consumer with the respect for the common good. The Amazon model, also adopted by the delivery protagonists and their riders (from Deliveroo to Uber Eats), which assumes that competition concerns

only the efficiency variables as judged by the consumers (e.g., best price, immediate delivery even at impossible speeds), and which is put into practice by imposing an unsustainable pace of work on riders and warehouse workers, thus stressing the community as such, will be judged less and less compatible with the rules of social life. Such models will undoubtedly be opposed and boycotted by the ConsumAuthors, who pay more and more attention to the humane aspects of working life. Sooner or later, but inevitably, all these events will have a legislative fallout, most likely first in Europe.

At the same time, alternative spaces will open for players capable to guarantee both the efficiency and the quality of the relationship, characterized by a simultaneous focus on the economic value of the services and on the humane values. The business models will be judged not only by their ability to aggregate costs and/or to multiply the contacts, but also by their ability to enhance sharing, and to enlarge the size of the reference community. This change is already taking place in Holland, where the CoopCycle manages its deliveries for e-commerce in many sectors in a cooperative way; or in France, where Molenbike describe themselves as Local & Fair Transport. Following their examples, more such ideal-oriented communities will emerge. The quality of their services will be measured not only in terms of time and money, but also in terms of quality and observance of humane values. An Italian example is that of a large-scale retailer created by Megamark Group, which launched the first-ever ethical tomato puree with a NoCap stamp, in collaboration with the association chaired by Yvan Sagnet, which ensures control over the quality of the work and of the product, combating illegal hiring. Another company working in such a way is Goodland, which designs productive regeneration strategies, with a high social and environmental impact. One of its founders was Lucio Cavazzoni, who, after his adventures with Alce Nero (a cooperative producing ecological food), has decided to focus exclusively on the ethical aspects of ecological businesses.

These are only a few examples illustrating the ongoing entry into a true Sharing Society (like all those that joined forces to fight the virus), rather than that of an illusory Sharing Economy, which only too often is crushed by a business model in which platform capitalism is reduced to a monopoly, to data exploitation, and to user manipulation, in this way making all the failures of the classic model of advertising, and the media's hunger for control even more extreme. Combating such models is possible, as illustrated by the example of the US Lyft, which – with some success – has fought Uber, establishing respect and inclusion as the rules of engagement for its collaborators.

Thus, the point is to redefine service as an expression of trust, of reconciling innovation and efficiency with inclusiveness and respect for rights, of responding to the needs of individuals, while at the same time working for the common good, of aiming at a happy sharing of experience, and of strengthening competence and satisfaction. These are goals that previously belonged only to a few enlightened companies, but which today point towards

the only possible horizon. In the world of fashion and clothing, the turn of Victoria's Secret – moving from cover models to inclusion – is sensational.

The Paradigm Trust & Truth

Stem the wear and tear of communication – Produce truth in order to nourish trust – Relaunch the educational responsibility of teachers – Support the battle for transparency.

This paradigm takes on a phenomenon that today is spreading like wild-fire, undermining the very strength of social relations: mistrust. Social scientists signal an increasingly dramatic disconnection between social classes, between the privileged and the poor. A scenario emerges of a fragile social psychology, of psyches made even more vulnerable by pandemic and war, suffering from a pressure that becomes fear of losing that which one already has. The virus of mistrust is spreading, affecting individual actions, and lurking throughout the society. Many Europeans do not trust other people, convinced that one can never be prudent enough when dealing with others, both in their own country and abroad. "You are not telling the truth, you are unreliable," becomes a common motto, revealing the corrosion of trust in each area, from work to personal relations. While the politics and the law try to attribute a precise, distinctive, recognizable, and therefore circumscribable profile to professional haters, the widespread mistrust activates a genetic mutation in society, multiplying the extemporaneous, improvised, spontaneous, extra-digital haters. It is from this new ground that the tandem Trust and Truth wages its battles, as the times of pandemic and war give advantage to manipulative information, in a combination of tweets and an irresponsible arrogance.

Truth and propaganda have entered a race. The digital mode often allows – without people necessarily realizing it – the spread of yet another powerful virus that has eroded every social construction: discredit. Platform capitalism has propagated the dream of a reality accessible to all, but it is actually in the hands of a few, with a sick model of chasing clicks, and creating economic value through sensationalism, fake news, and haters (often fake keyboard warriors, managed by algorithms), the latter of which worked because they were particularly attractive. Yet when health and personal integrity are at stake, the reality of the facts becomes even more attractive, because it can affect the audiences directly, and save people. Truth becomes the saviour, like in the Bible and in other holy books, but unlike these, it does not need an exegesis or an interpretation. It offers itself via the naked reality of the facts, to millions of increasingly aware, and frightened, people. At this point, the weariness of communication is obvious to most of the world population, while previously it had been noted only by the most alert experts. Perhaps we have reached the breaking point of the information system, which risks losing all its credibility.

Those who first understand it, and will be able to produce alternatives, will have an immeasurable advantage over the medium to long term.

The Trust & Truth paradigm fits well into this context, bringing the chain of trust back to be measured by the authenticity of the process of information production, which will be increasingly guaranteed through innovative protocols. The spread of the blockchain far beyond cryptocurrencies is just one example pointing in this direction. Trust and truth will again converge, after decades in which first the mass media, and then the digital circus, have worked in opposite directions. The companies that will be able to stem the wear and tear of information transmission will then be rewarded, and will continue producing truth, inventing new ways of telling it, new logics of distributing it, relaunching the responsibility and competence of those who know, are aware, who reflect, and go in depth.

The new educational models will start with understanding how misleading the concept of “teacher as facilitator” was, and will restore the fundamental role of teachers as guides to learning, thus as vital pillars of society. Also, many battles of the future will focus on re-establishing the role of transparency, honesty and respect; the future activism will be oriented towards these values. The Fashion System, too, seems to have taken this path by searching for substance, competence and responsibility.

It seems to be the request of the younger generations who – because they were raised in the inertia of judgment and the simple circulation and multiplication of messages, or in spite of it – today require to be listened to, as they feel capable of having an impact both on the social network (virtuous in some cases, vicious in others) and beyond. Thus, a mass revolt concerning the languages of communication and the prioritizing of values is to be expected. It is, once again, a demand to focus on the augmented ethics.

The Paradigm Smart & Sustainable

Support ResponsAbility as commitment to sustainability – Combine creative performance and personal happiness by finding new balances – Reconcile “smartworking” with work-life balance – Combine algorithms with dignity of work

The aspects discussed in the previous paradigms converge in Smart & Sustainable, which proposes a simple but decisive starting point: sustainability must be facilitated by smart technologies, which means once and for all abandoning Luddite complaints, and a mistrust of the digital. Happy “degrowth” will become a distant memory, as will the irresponsible anti-vax vision. The logic of sustainability will become standard; after all, many sectors are already aligning themselves to it. In the clothing industry, in the future, everything has already changed: 90% of clothes are recycled, cashmere is revitalized, fabrics are being recovered from unsold garments, and

buttons are recreated. These are only some of the projects – from companies large and small, from Zegna to Kering, from LVMH to Desigual. Design studios invest in centres researching sustainability; in the food industry, the apps aiming to reduce waste, such as Bring the Food or Too Good to Go, multiply.

In other words, after 50 years of reflection and discussion about it, the ecological dream becomes reality, as it no longer involves just a handful of intellectuals and a few followers as in a sect, but a large slice of the population. It is a major sensitivity that touches all generations and social classes in many countries of the world; the Fridays For Future movement marks here a turning point. What began as an action of a few anti-system activists, became a conviction of millions of normal persons, including the very young, who think about their future. This means that even smart systems (such as those used in *smart cities* or in *smartworking*) must be redesigned around the new concept of sustainability in this digital era.

Such a concept includes saving resources and energy, facilitating the circularity of processes, respecting the new data protection standards, which will be defined through a painstaking analysis and synthesis. In this way, a Smart & Sustainable value balance can be created, in a virtuous encounter between artificial intelligence and optimization, plus an enhancement of sustainable vision. The European attempt at General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) privacy regulation is only a first step in this direction, as this is a sensitive issue that requires a balanced approach and a profound reflection, as the desirable smartness at home, in the city, and at work must not become pervasive, and permitted to extract information from individual behaviours. It will be necessary to assess and regulate the ambivalent presence of domestic devices, and those new panopticons in public spaces and in the city, which may create the risk of mass social control. Digital experiences must not be offered without checking their impact on the environment (thus encouraging virtuous behaviour), on the strengthening of personal skills (discouraging repetitive and automatic activities), on relational responsibilities (*smartworking* must not damage the relationships between colleagues), and in defence of creative thinking.

Algorithms must not transform workers or employees into servants of an invisible master, a master more ambiguous and dangerous than the master of the ironworks: individual performance must not be measured by the time taken. The point is not to defend and protect a workplace, but to defend and protect the quality of workers' life and their dignity. This awareness is growing, as it quite naturally follows the evolution of actions and control in workplaces. Yet the ground is mined, and HR managers, when facing this new challenge, will have to approach it with great care and attention. Because, as McEwan put it, "To exist in the human moral dimension was to own a body, a voice, a pattern of behaviour, memory and desire, experience solid things and feel pain."⁴

The Paradigm Deep & Deal

Support an environmental pact between industry and institutions –
Propose a social pact between generations – Launch a political pact for
innovative inclusion – Define a socio-economic pact to reduce inequalities

The four paradigms described above, with the exception of Unique & Universal, are already well consolidated but still useful for equilibrating the local and the global, lead to the fifth, whose strategic role consists in closing the circle by implying a need for a New Deal on a global scale: thus, the name Deep & Deal – Deep because it requires a profound and well-articulated analysis of the developing scenarios; Deal as the ability to forge new agreements between interlocutors from different generations, institutions, organizations and societies, and Deal in its multiple meaning of a *pact*, an *agreement*, but also a *bargain*. This is a direction to take if one is interested in a win-win situation, which is perceived as a good bargain for all. Perhaps it is the first pandemic of our era, and a near world war that made a leap in this direction necessary; it has been rushed forward by concerns about ourselves, our families, and by the social integrity that made this new pact between peoples and nations essential. This is a pact between countries that compete, both in a commercial and in a military sense, usually suspicious of each other; between political leaders who hate each other cordially, like in many post-war classics, where there were always winners and losers. At present, everybody can become a loser, and – following the first weeks of inevitable confusion – it has become clear to everyone that this is a challenge never before faced by humans, and that the only viable path, the only possible choice, was that of solidarity and reciprocity. It is a global New Deal of Care, focusing on health on the whole planet in order to prevent local outbreaks threatening everyone's health.

In the field of sustainability – and in particular that of climate change – the process has appeared already advanced in theory but quite behind in practice. Without support from the United States and China, the new president of the EU, Ursula von der Leyen, launched a vision of the Green New Deal, supported by one trillion euro in investments. If accepted, it would truly make a difference, as a new pact between public and private, and between industry and its environments. Obviously, introducing it on a global scale will not be easy. Again, it will be necessary to define new rules and plan new strategies in order to bring different generations together in a collaborative way, recognizing each one's ability to make an original contribution to a responsible social recomposition. The world of new technologies and digital innovation must no longer proceed unconditionally, but will have to consider the urgency of inclusiveness, probably starting from the most sensitive sectors: health, education, work. Only in this way a socio-economic pact can be reached, to reduce inequalities and the ever-widening gap between the creative classes that enjoy a cognitive advantage, and the economically and

culturally disadvantaged classes, which for the first time possess tools of revolt and rebellion that they will not hesitate to use if the problem is not addressed.

In the world of art there are already the Artivists, feminine figures committed to societal problems, so described by Vincenzo Trione:

Skilfully combining experiences of social teaching and community engagement, of social teaching and of committed communities, these artists seek direct emotional and practical involvement [...] They propose unprecedented solutions to dramatic everyday problems, always in dialogue with indigenous communities. Their utopia: to change the social fabric.⁵

They have many names, come from various countries and all generations: from Guerrilla Girls to Emily Jacir, from Marjetica Potrc to Regina José Galindo, from Tania Bruguera to Zehra Dogan. They are women artists who solicit attention, after which, the majority will never be silent again, but will learn to react to the creative solicitations launched in the social sphere. The solution they propose is not the classic breaking of rules, typical of artists, but the imagining of new ones, and then dealing with the system that “resists.”

The paradigm Deep & Deal reveals the limits of artificial intelligence, which within it can never make a significant contribution: here, different types of intelligence are required – those capable of treating, evaluating, and deciding the deep dimensions of human action, which can never be imitated, or reproduced in *machine learning*. Once again, it is McEwan who explains the reasons for avoiding the classic mistake of comparing life to a game of chess:

The point is, chess is not a representation of life. It’s a closed system. Its rules are unchallenged and prevail consistently across the board. Each piece has well-defined limitations and accepts its role, the history of a game is clear and incontestable at every stage, and the end, when it comes, is never in doubt. It’s a perfect information game. But life, where we apply our intelligence, is an open system. Messy, full of tricks and feints and ambiguities and false friends. [...] There is one particular form of intelligence that all [robots] know is superior to theirs. This form is highly adaptable and inventive, able to negotiate novel situations and landscapes with perfect ease and theorise about them with an instinctive brilliance. I’m talking about the mind of a child before it’s tasked with facts and practicalities and goals.⁶

Machines will never be able to reproduce this. To correctly apply the principles of this fifth paradigm, the actual child born from the pandemic and the geopolitical crisis, it will be necessary to activate this form of intelligence, capable of experimenting and using the most intuitive circuits of

the brain, imagining a new social contract, as the Enlightenment movement of the eighteenth century did, inventing new forms of negotiation starting from new values and behaviours. What is needed are new forms of relations between authorities and citizens, between companies and workers, between colleagues and friends. The entire system of human relations must be profoundly redesigned, as actually happened during the lockdown or during wars in which national distances are redefined.

Of course, an essential role in this huge task will be played by the forms of communication that today permeate everyone's existence, and that follow the logic of the 6 Rs, with which the Fashion System will have inevitably to make a deal in the future: Respect, Responsibility, Relevance, Resonance, Reciprocity and Recognition.