

Graduation thesis by Verena Michels
Fashion Department Gerrit Rietveld Academy
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PART I

The Main Historical/ Economic/ Political Events in Germany between 1940 and 1989 and their Influence on Fashion and Clothing Production from a German Point of View: WW2 and the Years of Restoration; East and West Germany under Division

1. Which solutions for material deficits were born out of necessity and hardship during the 40ies?
2. The economic miracle and flourishing fashion in West Germany
3. The unfulfilled desire for Fashion in a centrally planned economy in East Germany

PART II

German Tendencies for Sustainable and Innovative Design Solutions and Why the Country is leading in Green Tech: it goes back to traditional german thriftiness

1. Can post-war solutions be re-evaluated and be useful for overcoming the current crisis?
2. German young generation shows how to apply these ideas
3. The growth cannot last forever: over-saturation and material overload demand for new, sustainable directions: Minus-growth and the longing for frugality

Introduction

PART I

For the first 20 years of my life, being German meant to me:

collective guilt, depressing history classes and being part of a very unpopular nation.

History lessons and every other lesson in school were focussed on WW2.

Growing up close to the border of Holland, I experienced how prejudiced the older generations were on both sides, based on their own experiences.

I haven't felt any personal attachment to my national background, and happily moved to the international and diverse city of Amsterdam for my studies. Investigating German history and identity from a distance, I started to acknowledge the beautiful aspects of a country that actively worked on its coming to terms with the past, and I selectively studied its strong literature and culture. I learned about the possibility to grow from failure.

In my graduation thesis I want to explore how the main political, economical and social events influenced fashion and clothing production in Germany between 1940 and 1989.

I focus on World War 2 and the years of restoration, because I am interested in what happens to Fashion and attire when there are barely means or materials to produce clothing.

Furthermore, I will observe how Fashion and production changed during the economic miracle in West Germany in the Fifties. I want to look at the protest movement of the Sixties which was based on a generation conflict between the contemporary witnesses of WW2 and their children.

The Red Army Faction, the group that was founded in 1967 and operated in the Seventies was a group whose actions were meant to square up with who they considered the offenders

from WW2. The RAF is an example of a group dress code that was tightly knitted with political views and violence.

I want to look at Fashion in the socialist state GDR (German Democratic Republic) where Fashion was limited by the rigid system of the centrally planned economy.

PART II

Today, Europe is facing an economic crisis. What connects the situation of WW2 and the current crisis is that they are both affecting the whole world and not one nation alone. It is rather complex to understand a crisis that you are in the middle of. I want to compare my historical research on political and economical effects on Fashion in Germany to our current crisis on the level of material versus immaterial deficits. Instead of material shortcomings our problems lay in missing work ethics, in the lack of exclusivity and craftsmanship. I am fascinated by the absurd phenomenon of having too much, and being in what could be named a value crisis. I will look at German designers who re-evaluate the old solutions of DIY, recycling, mending and handwork and who combine them with innovative and smart business solutions.

Also, can the idea of Black markets inspire new business solutions?

I am also looking at lifestyle related trends that come along with sustainable movements in fashion: The trend of breaking up with possessions, living minimalistic and with a lot less. A frugal lifestyle that allows going through life much lighter, more open-minded and pro-active. The role of Germany as a leader in green technologies is interesting, because it is connected with the traditional identity of Germans who have learned to use their limited sources in efficient ways and have always been sensitive to their surroundings.

PART I

"In der Beschränkung zeigt sich erst der Meister." Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

I am going to look at the main political events and their effects on attire and gender roles. I will look at the period between 1940 and 1946 to see how women's lives were affected by the war and which roles they adopted.

After that I will look at what this development turned into after the war during the years of restoration, when women were responsible and became emancipated. Resources were short, and people found solutions in the most practical ways and the way to trade products was the Black market.

From the 50s on I compare West Germany, where old role models were revived at first, with East Germany, where the emancipation was taken to the next level with full-time jobs for women.

I am also looking at the discrepancy between Fashion during the economic miracle in the West, and the stagnation of the central economy in socialist East Germany.

Chapter 1: 1940-1945

Kinder Küche, Kirche (Children, kitchen, church)

Under Hitler the role model for women was all about being a good mother and a decent housewife. Their only task was bringing up children while the husband works, and being of robust health, in order to bare more children, as many as possible. Women, with few exceptions, were excluded from any political responsibilities. Education taught girls from the earliest of years that this was the lifestyle they should adopt.

Hitler passed a Law for the Encouragement of Marriage in 1933. This law stated that freshly married couples will receive a loan of 1000 marks, which was as much as 9 months of average income at the time. The loan had to be paid back by couples without children, but on the contrary the birth of one child meant a reduction of 25%, and therefore the birth of four children would clear the entire loan.

Due to the Nazi's discriminating regime many women who were educated as teachers,

lawyers, musicians or doctors, had to drop their careers. They had to fully identify with their role as “breed machines” of strong and healthy German children.

“Take hold of kettle, broom and pan,

Then you’ll surely get a man!

Shop and office leave alone, your true life work lies at home.”

However, in 1937 there weren’t enough trained men anymore, and women had to serve a so called “Duty-Year”. Many women worked “patriotically” meaning in factories, or even in the military- the number of female auxiliaries in the German armed forces approached 500,000 by 1945.

For the protection and employment of adolescent girls, the Reich Minister of the Economy introduced work service program in the Eastern territories. For the Bund Deutscher Mädel (League of Young German Women) an agricultural work service program in Brandenburg was compulsory.

In the United States and the United Kingdom it was very common that women would take over the work of their husbands who were fighting in the war. They were occupied in typically male jobs in factories and took over much more responsible tasks, than had been typical at that time. This meant hard labour and long working hours, but at the same time female empowerment and emancipation from the old ways. Work wear determined the look of women and work icons as Rosie the Riveter were role models. In Germany this trend was much less apparent, due to the hierarchical structures imposed by the Nazi regime. The moment for female emancipation in Germany, followed right after the war though.

Chapter 2: 1945-1948

The “Trümmerfrau” (Woman of the shreds)

Four million out of sixteen million homes in Germany were destroyed during Allied bombings in World War II, and four million were damaged. Half of all school buildings, large parts of the infrastructure, and many factories were damaged or destroyed. According to estimates, there were about 400 million cubic meters of ruins.

Trümmerfrau is a term that can be translated as ruins woman or shred woman. It is the German name for women who, in the aftermath of WW2 helped to clear and reconstruct the bombed cities of Germany. Hundreds of cities had suffered significant bombing and firestorm damage, and with many men dead or being war prisoners, this enormous task fell to a large degree on the German women. Trümmerfrauen, both volunteers and regular workers, worked in all weather. They were organized in columns of ten to twenty people.

Their first concern was to work on the restoration of their country after the bombings, every day, in exchange for a hot bowl of soup. But while restoring ruins, the concern to rebuild their own lives re-emerged. One element of establishing one’s life again was clothing, for every day, and for social events with the prospect of meeting a partner. Due to material rationing and material deficits there was a severe shortage in textiles and clothing. One had to be pragmatic and creative: a vest could be made from oven mitts, dresses from marine beddings, jackets created from military blankets. Especially shoes were barely available: the solution was found by making them from wooden leftovers. Shoe soles and heels could also be produced by recycling rubber wheels.

The documentary “Kleider machen Deutsche” (Clothes make Germans) is about material rationing and deficits during World War 2 and the years after. The film also talks about how fashion has been important for self-esteem and self-motivation even in times of poverty and hardship and it visualises German solutions. One woman speaks about how she was desperate to find material and that her father brought old Nazi flags home for her instead of burning them, so his daughter was able to sew a dress for herself and go to a ball. Another woman recalls that her dad made her a shirt from pillow cases.

There was a desire to finally dress elegant again after years of depression, and women came up with outstanding solutions: Some would use an empty coffee jar and wrap a scarf around it, and the result looked like a Nophretete-style hat, which was very fashion forward at the time. According to the taste of the decade, to finish a look, stockings were a must- but since they

were not available, many girls found out that an eyebrow pencil could do the trick and they would draw a line on their legs which resembled the look of nylon stockings. Blouses made from parachute silk were luxurious looking too.

In addition to the DIY solutions and creative ways of re-cycling, a solution for getting materials or even garments was the black market. Next to food and other goods, one could trade for example cigarettes for clothes.

Black Market

Germany 1945-1948

The transition from war to peace was a time that can be described as a vacuum (“Niemandszeit”): Salaries were not being paid, grocery cards (“Lebensmittelkarten”) handed out before were not valid anymore, banks and shops and businesses stayed closed.

The black market was the only way to come by food and clothing and especially in cities they were the only way to survive.

The deficit grew with the end of the war. People were forced to grow their own food, and the cities who acknowledged the hardship provided land to farm, for example in an old zoo in Hamburg. Any- thing was being used to feed one's community: frogs, snails, berries, acorns, nettles, mushrooms of all kinds and dandelion were included in the so called emergency and standby recipes of the time. Also remarkable: sausages were made from fish, and pie from coffee grounds, soup from fodder beet. Despite these pro-active solutions there was a permanent shortage in food supply that resulted in extreme malnutrition.

Due to the immense destruction during the war, it was possible only very slowly to stabilise the economy again. Chronic supply shortages ensured that black market became a more and more indispensable complement to the controlled economy.

There was a chronic shortage in housing, energy supplies, shoes and clothes.

For lack of baby clothes newborns in hospitals were sometimes wrapped in a newspaper to warm the baby on the way home.

Demonstrations against the severe shortages that existed in the countries of the Bizone (the combination of the American and British occupation zones) took place in 1947.

The situation was a greenhouse climate for black markets and only several years later the situation was re-established and it slowly went down.

Chapter 3:

Late 1940s and the 1950s

A Country divided in two: West Germany and East Germany

In 1948, with the introduction of the new currency (Deutsche Mark) and with the end of the occupation period and the foundation of the German Republic nine months later, the era of the shred woman ended.

In both parts of Germany the efforts of the Trümmerfrauen were recognized with numerous ceremonies, memorials, awards and exhibitions.

Their role was considered important in changing post-war gender roles. East Germany took up the idea of women as independent workers much more eagerly as west Germany did, though.

In West Germany, once peace and economic prosperity were restored, a tendency re-emerged to return women to their traditional family role only.

West Germany (FRG)

There was a new fashion for women to represent the status of their husbands. It was characterized by generous use of fabrics and the return of corsages; accompanied by a feeling of elegance. Women dressed up as the decor of men and therefore the gender roles were clearly divided by attire.

This was the time of the German economic miracle and German households had a decent income to spend. Still, buying clothing in shops was considered too expensive, and it was more common to buy fabrics and assign a self-employed dressmaker or “Patch woman” (Flickfrau) to sew their clothes and next to that repair garments, especially for the kids. Wealthy

women could even afford to hire a dress maker and would assign her to make several dresses a year, according to the changing trends of fashion.

On the one hand, West German women looked at Paris for inspiration; on the other hand they looked back at nostalgic clothing styles and attire inspired by "Heimatfilme". That meant leather shorts and socks up to the knees for the boys and dirndls for the girls.

It was important for families to keep up a good appearance to the outside. The laundry was washed once a week and neighbors would peek over the garden fence to check whether the laundry was cleaned properly.

In 1951 the automatic washing machine was produced, which in the beginning only rich households could afford, but then was selling out quickly. It was an enormous advantage for the (German) housewives.

Strictness and high moral values were characteristic for the Adenauer era.

But Rock-'n-roll pops up in the 50s in West Germany, and the young ones start wearing jeans imported from America and take on other "indecent" clothing styles. "Foreign" gestures and accessories were chic, and girls returned sun-tanned from holidays abroad with hot pants and cropped T-shirts. These casualties were completely new in conservative Germany.

In the Sixties, Mary Quant's mini skirt enters Germany and is part of the female student and emancipation movement. Girls protest for equal rights and education, and against abortion laws.

Later in the decade, the mini skirt will be adapted by wealthy conservative women, and the young and rebellious ones discover the Maxi dress. This floor length clothing style upsets the German police, who immediately releases a security warning in form of a video message saying: "Girls, dress decently, and don't ever cycle with this unpractical garment".

East Germany (GDR)

When the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was founded in 1949, another type of woman was enforced: the working woman, the heroine of labour whose potential has been proven by the "shred women" before. This role was reflected by trousers and overalls and practical attire even for leisure. It was common that women were married and being mothers from their early twenties on, and also take on a full-time job. Clothing needed to be functional and affordable. But soon women would look at and envy the fancy products and the rapidity of change in fashion in West Germany. The GDR's centrally planned economy was much less flexible and could not shift demands and needs of consumers. Therefore, it could not accommodate changes in style and did not like unanticipated changes in consumer tastes. The socialist system was characterised by "logic" and by its focus on quantity over quality. There was no attention for what people "want", but only for what they "need". Women complained about the lacking availability of quality clothing- they could not find clothes that fit well and flatter different body types and sizes, and above all, followed fashions! So a competition with the FRG seemed to be impossible. The East German leadership heavily criticised the "hectic" changes of fashion in Paris-oriented West Germany, and asked their clothing producers to ignore the irrational trends. The Modeinstitut (Fashion institute) operating in East Germany published a Journal for women that promoted objective, scientific, standardized means of judging and measuring fashion. They invented the characters "Mister Taste" and "Miss Fashion" to create a division between the irrational and dangerously feminine trends of "fashion," and sober, rational and masculine "taste".

The state managed to hold back a majority of people, but a number of individuals resisted. Therefore, next to the state's mainstream fashion, a DIY trend came up that expressed and encouraged fashion fantasies.

One of the most forward thinking leaders of the DIY movement has been Sybille Bergeman. She photographed exceptional styles on people on the streets, and has been one of the first street fashion photographers ever heard of. Next to spontaneous shots on the street, she organized Fashion shoots using either self-made or customized clothes, and sometimes smuggled clothes from the West. Some women complained when she depicted Western fashion, because the idea that they wouldn't be able to buy the dress was torturing them.

Sybille Bergeman was a friend of famous fashion photographer Helmut Newton who visited her in the GDR in the 70s and according to Sybille was driving around in her trabi all day. He also has been fascinated by the fact that in the shops they wouldn't know what fashion magazines were.

Sybille Bergeman always had the feeling that the Stasi was monitoring her and bugging the phone. She considered fleeing the GDR, but her husband wanted to stay and so she did.

Even though far ahead planning and the rigidity of the system in the GDR didn't officially allow innovation in style, the practical approach and the ambition in technology did lead to innovation in textile.

A variety of textiles was developed in East Germany, with a focus on low production costs, practicality and qualities like being crease-free and easy to clean.

MALIMO was a utility fabric invented in the GDR and mostly used for working clothes, household textiles and rugs. It is still used in the U.S. nowadays, because of the convenience of its production. Dederon was the GDR equivalent of the West German Perlon, which in turn was derived from the American Nylon. East Germany was the classic hosiery manufacturing area of Germany. Interestingly, men's tights that had been very popular in West Germany for years, had not been produced in that area for a long time. The "GDR-Men's-tights" were not being produced until 1978.

PART II

"Let's not pretend that things will change if we keep doing the same things. A crisis can be a real blessing to any person, to any nation. For all crises bring progress. Creativity is born from anguish. Just like the day is born from the dark night. It's inventive in crisis that is born, as well as discoveries, and big strategies. He who overcomes crisis overcomes himself, without getting overcome. He who blames his failure to crises neglects his own talent, and is more respectful than to solutions to problems. The incompetence is the true crisis. The greatest inconvenience of people and nations is the laziness with which they attempt to find the solutions to their problems. There's no challenge without a crisis. Without challenges, life becomes a routine, in slow agony. There's no crisis without merits. It's in the crisis where we can show the very best in us. Without a crisis, any wind becomes a tender touch. To speak about a crisis is to promote it. Not to speak about it is to exalt conformism. Let us work hard instead. Let us stop, once and for all, the menacing crisis that represents the tragedy of not being willing to overcome it."

— ALBER EINSTEIN

The current crisis is a value crisis

WW2 and the current European financial crisis have in common that they both affect more than one country alone. The paradox is that during the war people suffered from material and food deficits, and needed to improvise, exchange, invent, collaborate and give up conventions in all situations of life. Nowadays, in the West there is an overload of fabrics and clothes, and there is too much food, but in every sense we lack values and ethics. Mass production affects the environment and triggers irresponsible consumerism. Luxury needs to be re-defined, it does not exist only in the material, but much more in the way a product is made, in its craftsmanship and in new ideas.

Economy, production and sustainability nowadays need to be considered as inseparable. Germany shows that green is greedy and that sustainability doesn't harm, but enhance success.

Chapter 4:

Turning around the growth model

The situation in the GDR demonstrates how Fashion as we know it is made possible by Capitalism. It is fuelled by the idea of rapid changes in order to enhance sales and growth, and by the idea of creating hierarchy in society. As German fashion designer Bernhard Willhelm puts it: Fashion is not social. Fashion is and will always be for the elite. Its function is to create a distance between yourself and others."

Compared to earlier ideas, luxury today is much more about ideas than about materialistic value. Something simple, but handmade can be more exclusive than something made of a fancy material, sustainability and transparency in production are more charming than status symbols made in factories with unethical work conditions, and many designers understand that the current elite prefers limited editions and one-of-a-kind garments to mass produced It-Bags. This trend is confirmed by recent developments in the industry. Before, the big Fashion houses have been dominating the luxury market. A big part of their success was based on the houses' heritage. Today, according to *The Industry London Magazine*, investors are more interested in young labels that found a niche for themselves and are innovative without heritage. The less-is-more trend is also reflected in contemporary lifestyle. There is a trend that is already happening and can be a life-changing choice: the frugal way of living. The choice to downsize your life and dispose of the majority of your belongings (by donating them or recycling) but by definitely getting rid of them. Economic growth, technological developments, mass production and the global availability of the latest products lead to the common belief that a life with more possessions was a happier life. On the contrary, German psychologist Galen V. Bodenhausen claims that consumption is linked with aberrant, antisocial behaviour. The Northwestern University psychologist states that money doesn't buy happiness and neither does materialism: His research shows that people who place high value on wealth, status and stuff are more anxious and depressed and less sociable than people who do not. His new study shows that materialism creates personal problems, but also an environmental ones. Galen V. Bodenhausen: " We found that irrespective of personality, in situations that activate consumer mindset, people show the same sorts of problematic patterns in well-being, including negative affect and social disengagement."The study was conducted with colleagues Monika A. Bauer, James E.B. Wilkie, and Jung K. Kim, and appears in *Psychological Science*. The negative effects of consumerism can be measured in their consequences on the environment, too. The increase of the globe's temperature, as well as acidifying oceans and melting glaciers are primarily driven by human activity. Many of the affordable products we buy depend on cheap, often exploitive overseas labour that does not respect environmental regulations. Therefore, the idea of reducing one's possessions and to live with much less serves your well-being, provides flexibility and reduces your carbon footprint. The trend of a greener lifestyle with minimal consumption goes hand in hand with greener technology and sustainable businesses. Germany has proven that green consciousness and traditional thriftiness can lead to economic success.

Chapter 5:

Why the Germans are leading in the clean technology movement

Renewable technologies provide 170,000 jobs to the German economy. The country is famous for its clean, cheap and sustainable electricity. It also is the largest home to power-generating windmills, and the leader in solar power. The country's leadership in eco-friendly technologies stems from the strict air and water pollution laws passed in the 1970s. These encouraged the development of advanced treatment systems and triggered out-of-the-box solutions.

Although Germany has for a long time been extremely industrial, 85% of the country is forested or farmed. The Germans have long cared about the environment. It is also true, that the event of the meltdown at Chernobyl in 1986 has raised environmental consciousness in Germany: it has been the moment when many realised that their actions do affect their surroundings and they started worrying about their health and safety.

The Green Party benefited from the new level of concern and started winning more state elections. They were able to push through major changes in the government's energy and recycling policies: They supported companies that work in environmentally-friendly industrial development and alternative energy. Today they can pick the ripe fruits, because these companies are coming of age now.

With the Fukushima meltdown two years ago, the German public demanded new measures, and the government responded with a serious plan to drastically reduce the use of nuclear

power and try to completely go green.

Another reason why clean tech succeeds in Germany is because it is supported by the country's strengths in engineering and physical technologies. Clean tech depends on Germany's traditional command of chemistry, physics and precision instruments.

And what else helped the success of clean tech? It is the German characteristic thriftiness, the traditional tendency to save energy- or to save anything basically. When Germans were told to switch off the motor when waiting in the car longer than 3 minutes to save fuel, they actually did it! It can be said that Germany is not a land full of natural resources and therefore people have always been using what they had in the most efficient ways. Like wind- it is just there for taking, and now provides sustainable energy and profit.

Sustainable energy is a get-rich-slow business and not comparable with capitalist mindsets as for example Google or Microsoft. Still, some business scholars believe that the green boom is only in its beginning and is still to bring the big technological shifts of our age. Will a third Industrial Revolution be what follows?

Chapter 6:

"Be the change you want to see in the world"

The green trend can also translate into new ideas for designers. In Fashion, it is necessary to stop producing blindly and to re-consider the difference of what people "need" or "want". We don't feel the necessity of mending out of a material deficit (compared with WW2), but out of the necessity for maintaining our environment and improving work conditions.

The young generation of German designers who grew up in the 70s or 80s experienced the feeling of collective guilt related with WW2, and was confronted with environmental threats as well as political disorders. Some of them decided to be pro-active and make a change.

I selected a range of young German designers whose work is shaped by ethical and sustainable design approaches. They find original design solutions by developing their own set of rules. They are not simply repeating the past but are re-shaping old values and push them in new directions. It can be mending, "grey market" strategies, re-cycling, up-cycling, collaborating, experimenting. One even looks into the fridge for materials.

SCHMIDTTAKAHASHI is a label founded by Eugenie Schmidt und Mariko Takahashi. Their first collection Wiederbelebungsmaßnahmen (Reanimation) reveals the label's concept of collecting and up-cycling second hand garments that friends and professors donated. This system of working is a statement against the useless overload of things in our society, and more precisely the unnecessary overload of clothing production. They realise that designers very often just add something to a world that is already over-saturated, and want to break the cycle by pausing it and giving a second and ideally better life to a garment. The idea has been there before, many times, but these two prove themselves through exclusive and intimate designs, with original new compositions and silhouettes. The idea of one-of-a-kind garments is attractive to the sophisticated customer, who is someone that has been bored by mainstream clothing lines and anonymous mass produced garments since a long time. A garment by Schmidttakahashi costs between 300 and 1500 Euro, a fair price considering the detailed handwork and the fact that they are unique pieces. Online, the label provides a platform for interaction between the donors and the customers. Each item can be traced back by using the identification number, and therefore everyone can view the original item and its transformed appearance.

ANUSHKA HOEVENER is a fashion designer living and working in Berlin. For material she uses mostly wool and silk. Her work is characterised by an intellectual rather than eccentric signature; and hand-work is apparent in each design. She shows her work twice a year in Berlin, not necessarily as a collection, but as loosely related yet independent works.

Fashion label BLAENK is a collaboration between the two German designers Silke Geib and Nadine Moellenkamp. Their paths crossed in Amsterdam, while working for Viktor and Rolf.

Their label combines the re-use of vintage pieces with handwork with contemporary techniques like laser cut. Many of the garments are one-off 's, others are produced in small quantities.

Designer ANKE DOMASKE can make a dress from only six litres of milk. She developed a material made from high concentrations of milk protein. It has the look and feel of silk, and even promises health benefits like a good effect on blood circulation and, I wonder if it's true, it is supposed to have anti-ageing powers.

The milk cloth is an invention that goes back to World War I. The Germans discovered the potential of milk proteins for fabric when they were short in materials. The drawback and why it has not been used much is that it wrinkles and should not be machine washed. The young designer has spent a year on a cow farm and worked with scientist to create an advanced version of this old idea.

FRANK LEDER is a German fashion designer who embraces quality and craftsmanship and combines it with his interest in German identity, tradition and culture which he uses to tell the story of his collections. Military garments often play a role in the designs, as well as German strictness combined with irony. He produces mostly in Germany and Austria.

BLESS is a label run by Desiree Heiss and Ines Kaag. They work with limited editions, with interactive products, and with a very personal approach towards their consumers. They sell their interdisciplinary products in changing stores or shop in shops, but the best one I think is the Bless apartment in Berlin, that is inhabited by a staff member and everyone can make an appointment to come by and drink coffee, chat, purchase something. Their best product is a kit that enables customers to make their own sneakers. It contains two New Balance soles, some fabric, and instructions for how to do-it-yourself.

NEMONA (Network for Fashion Design and Sewing) is a pilot project in Neukoelln, Berlin, and it is funded by the European Union. It aims at young fashion designers and seamstresses. The initiative wants to create partnership between the two fields and trigger cooperations and new business models. Designers will grow into the role of the employer, and both professions will be linked to the already existing fashion network. This leads to sustainable relationships between seamstresses, tailors and designers.

Conclusion

Next to all the examples of German efficiency and innovation, in my research on German history and politics I have come across examples of "guilty" fashion, too. Fashion house HUGO BOSS, which today is operating as one of the most successful German (fashion) companies, has once been serving the Nazi regime. Hugo Ferdinand Boss has decided to join the National Socialist Party in 1931 in order to benefit from business relations. He has provided the German soldiers with the famous brown uniforms, and also produced uniforms for the "Hitler Jugend" and other nationalist groups. By 1938, the business focussed exclusively on manufacture for the military, and when workers became scarce during the war, the factory employed 30 to 40 war prisoners and about 140 forced workers, most of them women. I found another interesting story where fashion affected politics: In the 70s and 80s, the Red Army Faction, also known as Bader-Meinhof gang, terrorized Germany with murders, kidnappings and bank robberies. Targets for kidnapping were individuals who represented capitalist ideals. In 2007 one of the former members of the group revealed that Karl Lagerfeld was viewed as a perfect target because of his personal wealth. Convicted terrorist Peter-Jürgen Boock said the designer was the most prominent of "an array of people with a large fortune on whom we collected information with a view to kidnapping them. Karl Lagerfeld was on our list, [along with] an underwear manufacturer and a few

Frankfurt bankers". The plan was eventually dropped in favour of kidnapping Schleyer former employers' representative Hanns-Martin Schleyer. He was kidnapped and murdered by the RAF in 1977.

Fashion has been formed by economy: it has been driven by Capitalism, repressed by Socialism and been innovated in the time of Black Market. Today we are looking at "minus growth" and recession reports, and are affected by severe budget cuts (in this case: Amsterdam).

Hard work and original business plans are the best strategy to create a business in tough times. Mindless production and consumption are not being tolerated anymore. I interviewed dutch menswear designer Sjaak Hullekes on this matter and he states that especially in times of crisis there is no reason for giving up or feeling depressed: when accepting a system's flaws, one can turn them into special powers!

(I would trust him, since he managed to grow a successful company in times of recession.)

From my German perspective, I can proudly say my native country has for a long time been efficiently breaking old habits and constantly been renewing the system. The young generation of german designers set the mood for more thoughtful and sustainable design and I can identify with their pragmatic approaches. My initial idea of German identity being boring, has been proven wrong when I kept on finding original and even radical examples of people who shaped Germany's cultural history. Fashion photographer Sybille Bergeman is my new icon: she resisted and took a severe risk in order to create and spread original and renewing Fashion imagery in the GDR. Claudia Skoda is a german legend of knitwear design and she has decided to stay loyal to Berlin and not taken the chance of international fame instead. Bernhard Willhelm is an example for a German designer who works internationally and manages to impress even Paris with his outrageous presentations. Frank Leder turns tradition into seduction and a bad conscience into humorous imagery. Suzy Menkes of The International Herald Tribune states: "Berlin has fashion in its blood!".

WW2 will always be part of our "guilty history", but it is necessary to realize that the crimes in WW2 were not committed by a whole nation, and that large parts of the German population have been suffering from the Nazi regime. When discussing history in school, teachers should remember to mention how many good ideas the regular German population came up with, and how fruitful ideas were born out of misery. The path that Germany is taking, is and has been a constructive and conscious one, and I am excited to observe future developments.