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**'AN URBAN PHENOMENOLOGY OF FABRIC: ON WIM WENDERS'
'NOTEBOOK ON CITIES AND CLOTHES'.**

Ian W. King and Jonathan Vickery

Introduction:

You live wherever you live

You do whatever you do

You talk however you talk

You eat whatever you eat

You where whatever clothes you wear

You look at whatever images you see

YOU'RE LIVING HOWEVER YOU CAN

YOU ARE WHOEVER YOU ARE

“Identity”

Of a person

Of a thing

Of a place

“Identity”

The word itself gives me shivers

It rings of calm, comfort, contentedness.

Where is it, identity?

To know where you belong?

To know your self worth?

To know who you are?

How do you recognise identity?

We are creating an image of ourselves,

We are attempting to resemble this image...

Is that what we call identity?

The accord

Between the image we have created

Of ourselves

And.....ourselves?

Just who is that....."ourselves"?

We live in cities

The cities live in us...

Time passes.

We move from one city to another,

From one country to another.

We change languages,

We change habits,

We change opinions

We change clothes

We change everything

Everything changes, and fast....

(Wim Wenders 1989) (1)

This above quotation is the 'voiceover' introduction of Wim Wenders 1989 documentary film 'Notebook on Cities and Clothes' [the original title: "Aufzeichnungen zu Kleidern und Städten"]. (2) This paper will use this film by way of exploring the relation between the organisation, fashion and the urban environment. Originally commissioned by the Centre Georges Pompidou, the film focuses on Japanese fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto, and flips between Tokyo and Paris, exploring questions of identity, agency, the body and human expression, contemporary economy and the city, and new media (video plays a major role in this documentary, making it seem somewhat anachronistic).

The presuppositions of this paper are, first, that fashion is the deep structure of economic life under consumer capitalism; and second, that the aesthetics of organisational fashion are intrinsically related to the urban location of the organisation. The film begins with a statement on identity – 'We live in the cities. The cities live in us'. It is a presupposition of contemporary organisation theory that organisations are not just physical places of function and production, or spaces of instrumental tasks that we frequent and then leave behind as the day's work is done. We live in organisations; and organisations live in us. The organisation is media and embodiment of social life, identity and agency, and insofar as our lives demand meaning, communication, subjectivity and intersubjective interaction, the organisation is no less a space animated by that necessity. The necessity for agency, indeed, is a great resource for organisations, who continually draw on 'human' capabilities – our sense of taste, perception and discrimination, discernment and understanding of human behaviour.

A further presupposition is that our individual self is always 'en clothed' – and whatever uniformity the organisation demands (cf. 'uniform' – its etymology is telling), our response to organisational regimes of dress and codes of self-presentation are always 'individual'. It is not without significance that all social regimes of community and society have always demanded uniformity in dress, if not a rigorously prescriptive approach to clothing codes – and the more authoritarian a regime the more clothing is prescribed and managed. And yet *dressing* is also an intimate act, of enveloping and protecting the naked flesh, usually in my private domestic domain, always in anticipation of a spectrum of social situations, and always conscious of our being an object of organizational attention – whether just 'fitting in', or carrying off the sartorial articulation of confidence necessary for looking competent, capable, successful or a suitable representative of the organisation. Organisational 'dressing' is often overlooked, or regarded as incidental. Dress and dressing – as noun and verb – indicates how the 'self' (the workers, the organisation itself) is always in a perpetual state of presentation and self-presentation, mediation, expression and representation, and the stylistic (design or visual) means of this activity is for the most part determined by fashion. Fashion is not a synonym of style, or dress, or consumer trend, but the coincidence of culture, meaning and economy – where a certain form of artistry and charismatic identity is strong enough to simulate collectively held values and behaviours, animated all these at once in a new fashion line or 'series'. It is extraordinary how sculptured and yet how fleeting and iconoclastic the catwalk series launch of the 'catwalk' actually is – brutal in its elementality. The most sophisticated and extraordinary designs can become mangled and ridiculous as they are walked down this aesthete's 'gauntlet's run'. Fashion is both subject and object, art and commerce, supply and demand, retailer and consumer. It is a mystery (Esposito, 2011; Czarniawska, 2011). Fashion is a broad yet determinate pattern of activity, resulting in systemic shifts in the animating principles, values, strategies and operational practices forms of management, design and production (Barthes, 1983; McCracken, 1986; Laver, 1995). Fashion sometimes sudden or seemingly capricious change, and yet at once generating new vocabularies and values, and the means of managing that change (Abrahamson, 1991, 2009).

So what brings together fashion and the city? The film 'Notebook on Cities and Clothes' opens with a film director (Wenders, as himself) pondering on the question of identity, wherein the identity of Tokyo and the identity of the human subject become the twin themes of the film. For the director, the first task is to find an adequate means to represent the city, as a means of establishing our place in it and our relationship to it and thus a coherent location for narrative (in this case, his journey to meet Yohji Yamamoto). The city is also metaphor – a 'real' metaphor, if that is not an oxymoron – for the 'contemporaneity' of human life. Since Baudelaire, it is commonplace to look to the city to tell us something of the current social and

existential truth of human life – what people are doing, how they look and are expressing themselves, what they are wearing, what is giving them pleasure or absorbing their interest or exciting them, and so on. The city has always been the birthplace of the most intense, extreme or progressive forms of social, cultural and economic life. The fashion designer Yamamoto is part of this world; he is a ‘Tokyoite’. But his task is more localised, at least his focus is on the human body and the artistic and social endeavor of its enclothment. How does the human body maintain a proximity, at once intimate and social, to its history and place of purpose and meaning – and does so through its clothing. How does the human body dress in a way that makes manifest – not masks or conceals or mis-represents – the social ontology or sense of ‘being’ of the person...their origin, sensitivity, significance, presence in the world and unique role within it.

If we use the term ‘dressing’ to understand the continually changing flux of appearances both within the organisation and without, we might ask ‘how does the organisation ‘dress’ for the city?’ This seems like a badly-phrased question, given that organisations ‘appear’ on various different levels and in a diversity of spheres simultaneously, and each of which seems quite independent of each other – the offices (inside, and the architecture outside), the brand or corporate identity, the advertising or marketing, the website or internet, and the employees themselves, as physical representatives of the organisation. Each of these spheres is subject to a different design regime and distinct set of competences. And yet, there is a significant (and largely unresearched) sense in which the organisation becomes ‘manifest’ most tangibly in the particular space and place of its location – not just as a single entity (like a great HQ building) but as part of the socio-urban expanse of the city life (what makes a city the city is its distinctive and unrepeatable urban culture). And like Yamamoto’s human subject, each organisation is faced with the task of finding an authentic identity, role and place in the city – not just squatting and ‘wearing a costume’ (which, arguably, most do – in the same way that most people, consumers, disregard the artistic and social task that dressing sets the human subject).

Since the Second World War, the urban entity of the ‘inner city’ (all over the world, from Tokyo to Los Angeles) steadily morphed from a place that articulates the historical alliance of state, military, public, civic and ruling class power, to a more hybrid place of organisations (less historical and more provisional business enterprise, retail, leisure or cultural spaces). Even through the post-industrial era of ‘liquid capital’, globalization and internet commerce, the urban location of the organisation has become critical to organizational brand, stability, and development. Look at Shanghai Pudong, Singapore City, or the City of London: location is critical.

Organisations have always tended to ‘cluster’ and locate in certain places of meaning, interconnection, facility, prestige and market or constituency access. One dimension of our subject is thus connected to the recent and growing interest in ‘space’ in Organisation Studies: of organisational space as social dynamics and social reproduction (Baldry, 1999; Gieryn, 2002); space as labour processes (Flecker and Hofbauer, 1998), and labouring subjectivities as they are created by their spaces of operation (Dale & Burrell, 2003, 2008; Witz, Warhurst and Nickson, 2003). And, of course, the organization itself is a labouring agent, whose flair, aspiration and facility for self-projection is often manifest in architecture and new office design (Hancock and Spicer, 2011).

Another connected sphere of research moves beyond the sociological and anthropological study of human symbolic expression and exchange – Goffman 1971; Mauss 1973, for example – towards a conceptualisation of the human subject within the hybrid and overlapping spheres of the new global symbolic economy. The spatial interiors the organization, with its semi-enclosed worlds of labour, organizational cultures, values and mission, is coextensive with an exteriority that stretches from the physical walls of the organisation’s facility to the entertainments and social life of the city itself. What makes a city a city is not just architecture, planning and occupants – it is the dynamic networks, interactions, communications and intensity of energy, ideas, diversity that is its urban culture. The contemporary metropolis is now part of an organisation’s ‘capital’ and not just its physical place of habitation. Location is as much a brand value as it is a heavy real-estate investment, and employees inhabit both interior and exterior, for the processes of social culture and language that are cultivated within that city complex are also necessarily active within the particular zones of organizational space. There is a vast and growing literature on the interconnections between culture, economy and polity in the urbanization process of city development, and contemporary urbanism is increasingly relevant to the study of organisation in this context (Jacobs, 1960; Sassen, 1991; Konvitz, 1994; Zukin, 1995; Florida, 2002; Rantisi, 2004; Cooke and Lazzaretti, 2008).

For the organization, the city and global consumer markets are all overlapping spheres of life, interconnected by laboring subjects, who all participate in developing the ‘urban culture’ of distinction and vibrancy. Out of such places the ‘creative economy’ has developed, innovating new methods for the production and distribution of symbolic goods. However much symbolic goods are invested in IP, intangible value and internet or communication-based distribution systems, their urban location remains important – and around the world, from Shanghai to Sydney, city municipalities and governments are providing for creative ‘cluster’ zones or

cultural quarters for the small and vulnerable enterprises that drive this new economy – social incubators for the younger generation of the new ‘creative class’ (Florida, 2002), ‘cultural creatives’ (Ray and Anderson, 2000) or educated ‘bourgeois bohemians’ (Brooks, 2000). The ‘new model worker’ (Flecker and Hofbauer, 1998; Hancock and Spicer, 2011) is the sensible embodiment of the flexible, mobile, innovative and cosmopolitan character of the global order of neoliberalism.

We can therefore conceptualise the neoliberal city as a cultural metropolis that serves as a ‘catwalk’, where organisations can form a sense of agency, parade or display their style, image, flair, and aspiration, yet at the same time are faced with the question of their own obsolescence (or ‘mortality’). For the city is where change and transience are registered most acutely. The city is the most tangible manifestation of the global market, where the organisation becomes self-conscious of its physical presence, appearance and conduct, as it travels through a myriad of representations around the world. The experience of the subject – as understood through an improvised phenomenology – is conducted primarily through clothing. Clothing – where fabric is made over into a symbolic language of fashion through design – mediates the meaning of the organisation’s relationship to the city (as it concurrently embodies a sensory awareness of the city’s mediation of the market). Where Wenders’ film not only explores its subject matter – fashion and the city – it explores its medium (the relation between the language of fashion and the language of film). This paper [as performed in the conference] will endeavour to be similarly reflexive and is part scripted, part interactive, and part film clip. For further research, one could also question the actual reality of physical city locations, particularly global cities, and ask: how far is the city a ‘real’ place for the organisation, and how far a metaphor, or an horizon of cultural expectations, as the organisation dresses ‘right’ for different places, and where such ‘places’ are multiple and fluid, concerned with image for stakeholders (competitors, customers, suppliers, media, etc.) through the identity of employees, as employees move out into the city, or visit other locations, adapting their business attire for their specific location yet maintaining continuity (in the film, from Tokyo to Paris). Identity and agency are at the centre of this exploration – style working within the consumer dynamics of fashion – mediated through the experience of the city.

Lastly, this subject is also interconnected to the little developed area of organizational phenomenology. Entitled, ‘a urban phenomenology of fabric’, the paper attempts to establish (in a small way) the intrinsic relevance of the study (and practices) of fashion to organizational life and the aesthetics of organisation. The motive of this current paper was, in part, defined by two previous papers: ‘De-

familiarizing the organization: fashion and clothing in the global city’, delivered at EGOS 2012 (Helsinki) within sub-theme 09 Artifacts in Art, Design, and Organization; and the subsequent publication of ‘Do I look right? De-familiarizing the Organizational Fashioning of the Body’ in the *Scandinavian Journal of Management* (29(4): December 2013. (3)

What does organizational ‘phenomenology’ attempt to capture? We used the term (above) ‘improvised phenomenology’, given the fiendish complexity of philosophical traditions of phenomenology, with their internal contentions over terminology as much as qualitative research methods. Generally, phenomenology moves both underneath and beyond epistemology – seeking to find the sensory (bodily, perceptual) conditions of human knowing and encounters with a world ‘outside’ but also how that world forms the means, and ends of the structures and meaning and human experience necessary for any subject-object-subjects relations to emerge. The significance of phenomenology is its natural tendency to include the aesthetic realms of experience, and so by extension narrative and visual representation, even though these have concerned so few phenomenologists. The perceptual means by which we construct meaningful environments may concern anthropology and certain strands of sociology as well as cultural studies, but a phenomenological attentiveness to the intimacy of the individual human body lends itself to speculation on the deeper realms of the human condition and constitution of the self – subjectivity and intersubjectivity, language, cognition and communication (which inspired the so-called ‘existential phenomenology of Heidegger, Sartre or Merleau-Ponty). However, this paper does not ‘do’ phenomenology – it is more of a supplement or suggestion, where organizational phenomenology is not a developed field, and as it is, it does not take fashion as a serious subject. In fact, it is perhaps even misleading to talk of organizational phenomenology as a field, given that a profound phenomenological dimension has opened up in critical approaches to OS generally – and was always present in classic work in organizational symbolism (Gagliardi 1992; Rafaeli and Pratt 2006), organizational aesthetics (Strati 1999). This is obvious to anyone in these fields. What we are doing is groping for a pre-theoretical and hybrid framework (i.e. where our observations or research material is not immediately ‘schematized’ with the classic texts or lexicon of academic phenomenology). We do this so as to explore, say, the intellectual subjectivity of fashion design – the process of design as a process of speculation on the human subject, the body, the world. As human experience – the constitution of human selfhood and identity, reflexivity and self-awareness, sociality and symbolic communication, consumption and cultural mobility – are all central to the effective constitution of organizational life. After all, the history of organisations betray a strong and persistent need to dictate and manage individual appearance and apparel. With the pre-theoretical, we are asserting (in the spirit of phenomenology), the significance of direct experience, perception, aesthetic

evocation, spontaneous narrative and the memory of experience. As research tools these are exploratory – and this paper is one dimension of a presentation that includes the screening of an edited version of the ‘Notebook’ film – (it is edited into the scenes quoted below).

Having said this, it is worth quoting the excellent essay ‘Fashion’, by César Moreno Márquez in the Springer *Handbook of Phenomenological Aesthetics* (2010), which states:

‘And it is in that movement of the transitoriness of fashions that fashion, with its profound playfulness, becomes a sort of vital celebration of the life-and-death process by virtue of the powerful dynamism that characterizes it, an uninhibited seduction by the accidental and an attraction for the periphery in the dismissal of “substance,” of “interiority,” or of the “thing-in-itself.” And this is true, perhaps, because fashions bring out the need for a light and playful, although persistent, contact with contingency that is all the more intense when the “wearers” have a heightened awareness that they are living contingently and theatrically. In its own way, fashion responds to the arationality of existence, almost opposing the being-ostentatiously-visible to the not-asking-to-be-seen of the rose without reason (ohne warum) of Angelus Silesius and Martin Heidegger (we remember that in *Der Satz vom Grund*, the rose of the mystical poem “does not ask if it is seen”—fragt nicht, ob man sie sieht)’.

While apposite to our interest in aesthetics, we hope that a brief consideration of the work of Japanese fashion designer Yohji Yamamoto (1943 --) will inspire us to assume the opposite of this quoted statement. The work of Yamamoto (whose labels are Yohji Yamamoto, Y's, and Y-3, and heavily invested in women's fashion), while enveloped in a compulsive need to respond to time and the transience of contemporary life, is not playful, or a-rational in any significant sense, and only ‘contingent’ insofar as most of life and art is contingent; and if Heidegger's appeal to the meaning of Silesius' poem is an appeal to a pure aesthetics of form (a ‘purposiveness without a purpose’, in Kant's saying; or a kind of Aristotelian ‘end’ – for a discussion among philosophers continues) then there is no contrast here, no ‘showing off’ or ostentation. There certainly is such ostentation in some contemporary fashion design (Walter Van Beirendonck, Henrik Vibskov, Rick Owens are three that Yamamoto has exhibited alongside), but Yamamoto himself shows us something else – something that fashion can be, and which serves to convince us that it is essential, at least as essential as painting or sculpture has been in our exploration

of the world. Fashion possesses an ‘urban phenomenology’ – through the simplicity of human clothing we find a means of embodied, emotional and expressive interaction with the alienating landscape of the contemporary city, and so explore to reconstitution of human (social) identity. Given its intimacy with the human body, Yamamoto’s work suggests that it is more essential: fashion is, at heart, your clothes, and in that you live your life in your clothes, and what you say and do is accented and often made possible by your clothes, and as inscribed as your clothes are within the part of the social order you inhabit (or are resisting, or escaping, or pretending otherwise) then clothes are coextensive with the very formation of subjectivity – insofar as subjectivity is social. Clothes are an accompaniment to all forms of sociality, identity and recognition, and so ‘being in the world’. Our phenomenological innovation in this paper, we hope, is that a phenomenological expression of fashion must at once understand the aesthetics of design (how the body is enclothed), the experience of identity, and the perception bound up with the fact that the ‘body’ of phenomenology is always mediated by fashion as fashion is always mediated by organisations and organisations by urbanisation. A phenomenology of fashion is an exploration of organisational urbanisation. This, however, must be the subject of another paper.

.....

To return to our opening quotation. This reminded us of the much quoted statement by Jean-Francois Lyotard (from his 1979/1984 text *The Postmodern Condition*): ‘Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald’s food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and “retro” clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games’ (1984:76). It has been commonplace to understand the decades since the 1980s as a crisis of identity – along with the new landscape of the global market, generating the hybridity of cultural globalisation, transculturalism and the seemingly endlessness of retail product availability or choices on identity, on what to wear or how to appear: returning to the Wenders quote: ‘Time passes. We move from one city to another. From one country to another. We change languages. We change habits. We change opinions. We change clothes. We change everything. Everything changes, and fast....(Wenders 1989). Who is the subject of this identity crisis? It is, of course, the privileged subject identified in the panoply of books that celebrated the new creative class (see above). And of course, the emergence of this subject is at one with the wide availability of new forms of representation – starting with video camcorder in the early 1980s. Video is endemic to the concept of this film, a film whose source is a video ‘notebook’, a practical aid for taking film clips prior to

the 'real' film shoot, which then supplanted the planned film shoot. Wenders realised, during the film's pre-production, that the video was giving him something that celluloid could not. For the language of images, he realised, was no longer the dominion of what he called the 'sacred celluloid' or the cinema. He expressed genuine shock at how video articulated the visual identity of Tokyo as film could never do. And, he therefore asks with some earnestness, '...is it not the time to re-evaluate everything: all notions of identity, language, images, authorship....'. After all, movies are part of the 'mechanical age' – made by craftsmen behind cameras, editing suites, and so on. Interestingly, what Wenders finds (and it remains apparent in this film that he is not able to discuss fashion historically the way he discussed film) is that fashion itself has always been a reconstruction of identity, language, images, authorship. It has never been anything else. For Wenders continues: 'Identity is out...out of fashion...then what is in vogue, if not fashion itself? By definition, fashion is always in.'

Wenders' perceived crisis of identity, language, images, authorship, is of course a trope of modern art and the 'shock of the new', testifying to the disorientation of modernity itself, whose industrialisation and social rationalisation was manifest most strongly in the city (in art, the city of Paris – the rise of Paris as the seminal centre of fashion and 'Hausmann's re-design, urbanisation or 'clothing' of the city, is no coincidence). For the human subject, the world was no longer a stable and singular space of communal habitation, where identity was intrinsic to place and rank, governed by a monocultural symbolic language in turn generating one dominant means of representation. The ethnically homogenous nation state did a fairly thorough job of micro-managing the social fragmentation wrought by industrial modernity, generating new and effectively delimited monoculture norms. By the 1980s, however, another industrial modernity was in flow – call it the 'postmodern' revolution of post-industrial globalisation. The monoculture of the nation state now dissolved into a hybrid and more complex space of global markets and electronically transmitted consumption. It is not insignificant, that through the century long passage of high modernity to postmodernity many art forms rise and fell but fashion design remains. There is something about 'fashion' – the most transient of all arts – that remains adequate to a rapidly changing world. Perhaps this is because fashion is not so much a product of change, but *the art of change*, of dislocation and disorientation, and a means of mediating that very change that we think threatens the forms of cultural continuity that act as substrate to social identity.

Tokyo and Paris are the urban location of the film – but the relation between fashion and the city is left open, and never a subject of the film's narrative. When the film

was released, this seeming omission was criticised from a number of quarters as a failing – an unfulfilled promise: for surely a film with this title and so full of scenes and shots of Tokyo and Paris should have provided some kind of insight into the way urban cultures of cities generate most, if not all, contemporary fashion? And fashion as a very concept has historically emerged out of inner city culture – being ‘seen’ and ‘looking good’ presumes that the subject of fashion (the individual) becomes an object for a collective subject: the viewer of the city itself.

The film thus begins with the theme and object of the city – shot from within a car, as the director Wenders drives around the ‘peripherique’ of Paris, but on the car dashboard is a video monitor of a parallel driving scene from a similar road around Tokyo. His conversation is not about the city, but about images, about representation and reproduction – how we see the city, through film and now the video image. After all, how many cities do we actually ‘know’; what does it mean to ‘know’ a city, if not principally retain in memory a series of images, sights, colours and sounds. Unlike the chemically complex and heavily laboured movie film, video is utterly candid, without history and thus legitimacy. It becomes a medium through which the crisis of identity unfolds, and becomes reflexive, and with another statement reminiscent of Lyotard, Wenders states that ‘There is no more negative and no more positive....the very notion of the original is obsolete. Everything is copy. All distinctions have become arbitrary’. So how do we recognise identity? ‘We are creating an image of ourselves. We are attempting to resemble this image...Is that what we call identity? The accord between the image we have created of ourselves and...ourselves? Just who is that...’ourselves”?

The crisis of individual identity is, of course, symptomatic of the crisis of the ‘we’, and of collective or social identity. And the subject of Yohji Yamamoto articulates this complex condition – of a quiet and self-effacing, yet assertive Japanese fashion designer, looking out from the terrace of the Centre Pompidou, he ruminates “I am more of a Tokyoite than Japanese...Tokyo has no nationality.” He later said “There is no nationality to my clothing.” There is no gender either – at least, the traditional signifiers of gender that are so embedded in the historical evolution of fashion design are re-appropriated and redirected, for Yamamoto famously uses ‘men’s’ clothes to enclothe (and empower) women. Fashion is ‘dressing’, as noun and verb, to dress is a fundamental act of self-articulation, more significant because it possesses an obvious dimension of necessity. Fashion is art as much as an improvised defense against environmental conditions, and is design as much as a response of the will to the dictates of social norms. Dress always articulate nakedness, and insofar as the nakedness of a woman is always implied by her dress, Yamamoto’s clothes address

the politics of such nakedness – where a woman’s traditional garb effect an emphasis of vulnerability by either masking or emphasizing the sexual features.

The film – at 80 minutes long – is punctuated by repeating scenes, where the ‘voice over’ narrative of Wenders reflects on interview scenes with Yamamoto, and the implications of this journey for Wenders own craft of film. One such scene is the road scene, simultaneous of Paris and Tokyo; another is a Paris pool hall, where Wenders questions the fashion designer in an informal, sometimes ironic, manner. There are repeated scenes of Yamamoto sitting on a chair in his empty studio, talking haltingly, as if tired or struggling to express himself in English. There are the scenes of the studio and both him and his myriad of assistants working and collaborating on a new outfit – usually revolving around a live model. There are scenes of the Paris catwalk – often tempered, like many scenes, with the appearance of different video monitors, so as to give three scenes in the one shot. Sometimes scenes split, or become fragmented, as Wenders plays around with (the then novel) possibilities of video, with its pixillated colour-saturated imagery, made more vivid by the dynamic movement of the hand-held camera. As a film, here are so many scenes and repetitions, it is only after five or six screenings that the viewer begins to remember the order of everything – in fact, it is probably true to say that visually there is no logic or order; no structure at all. The only ‘structure’, if we can call it that, is the narrative of the voice over of the filmmaker. On reflection, the process of making this documentary simulates Yamamoto’s process of taking fabric and forming it, drawing, cutting, pinning, overlapping and stitching. The narrative takes the form of ‘strands’ -- ‘weaving’ of five strands, each quite distinct subjects, like separate pieces of cloth stitched into one article of clothing; the first is the contemporary city as metaphor of the crisis of identity; then video and film; then Yohji; his studio and production processes; and then there is fashion industry and the catwalk.

The conclusion of the film is poignant – where Wenders seems to identify a certain existential role for Yamamoto’s fashion, where self-reflection, individuation and the emergence of a personal history restores a sense of identity and equally revives a sense of personal significance and self-worth. At the beginning of the film, the theme of identity moves from Tokyo road scene to the first shot of the Paris pool hall, where Wenders plays pool with Yamamoto and where the narrative is articulated by voiceover: he recalls their first encounter: ‘My first encounter with Yohji Yamamoto was in a way an experience of identity. I had bought a shirt and a jacket. You know the feeling. You put on new clothes, you look at yourself in the mirror, you are content, excited about your new skin. But with this shirt and this jacket it was different. From the beginning they were new and old at the same time. In the mirror

I saw me, of course, only better – more me than before. I had the strangest sensation – and I have no other words for it – I was wearing the shirt itself, and the jacket itself...and in them I was myself. ...The label said Yohji Yamamoto. Who was he? What secret had he discovered this Yamamoto – a shape, a cut, a fabric – none of these explained what I felt. It came from further away, from deeper. This jacket reminded me of my childhood, and of my father, as if the essence of this memory were tailored into it – not in the details, rather woven into the cloth itself. The jacket was a direct translation of this feeling, and it expressed father better than words: what did Yamamoto know about me...about everybody?’

Wenders experienced his new clothes as some kind of medium of ‘translation’ – where the clothes were distinctive, singular and seemingly self-contained, yet personal and allowed an experience of something deeper, both sensory and mnemonic at once. It was as if the jacket was old, belonging to a personal history and experience, but which could not be explained by the usual ways of talking about fashion – describing the shape, cut, or fabric. At the same time, the source of this experience was the fabric, or at least what Yamamoto did with it – something of the essence of ‘memory’ seemed to be ‘woven into the cloth itself’. And this had significance not just for the individual (consumer). But for the ‘we’; for the ‘everybody’. In the movie, Yamamoto says “In thinking about clothing I am thinking about people.....I am always thinking about people, to talk with, to meet with – this is my basic interest – “what are you thinking, what are you doing, how are you living your life” – then I can approach making clothes.’ Disarmingly simple, Yamamoto’s approach to making clothes is to consider the flow of life – thinking, doing, living – as a precondition of forming cloth. Later in the movie he exclaims: ‘...sometimes I am shouting in my mind, I am not a fashion designer I am a dressmaker....’.

How can we understand fashion in this sense – both as identity mediation and a mediation between the self that is the body and the self that is memory (or sense of past and others) resulting in a greater (weightier?) sense of one’s own physical presence? Perhaps these are related – the self that is the body and the self that is memory. Memory is an easy term to use for what is a complex realm of experience – for Wenders, memories of the past became part of his physical experience of and relationship with a Yamamoto jacket, a jacket which allowed him, or taught him, something about himself – about how he could be in the jacket. Early in the film, a discussion opens and revolves around the famous book by German photographer August Sander (1876-1964) and his book *People of the Twentieth Century* (a series of photographs of working people, which began in 1911); the photographs coincidentally have held a long fascination for both Wenders and Yamamoto. Yohji explains that his

attachment to 'old photographs' takes him back to a time 'when people couldn't buy anything...when they were forced to live with very simple things....'.

'At the beginning of the 19th century, if you were born in a not very rich country, then the winter was really winter for you – it's very cold – so you need your coat, this is life, this is a really coat for you, this is not for fashion...so the cold is so ...and you feel so cold, and you cannot live your life without this coat...it looks like your friend, it looks like family.... I feel strong sense of jealousy. if ...if people could wear my things in this way, then I would be so happy'.... When then the clothes or dress or jacket or coat themselves are left on the floor or hang on the wall, in that case you could recognise...this is John, this is Tommy...this is yourself...you can recognise yourself (in your coat)'. 'People don't consume the clothing. They live life with the clothing. I say to myself, I want to make something that good.'

The 'fashion' of Yamamoto is not to be confused with high street or the kind of off-the-peg branded fashions that are available in response to consumer trend, modishness, celebrity or stereotypical mimicry – the phrase 'being in fashion' can be misleading for just this reason. Yamamoto exemplifies a form of fashion that historically emerged from artisanal dressmaking or 'avant-garde tailoring', as some call it. Wenders had remarked how Yamamoto possessed a picture of Jean-Paul Sartre by Henri Cartier-Bresson, which remained on the floor during one cutting session, as 'he was simply fascinated by the collar....the material, fold and image of the collar.' Throughout the film, Wenders attempts to capture Yamamoto, as Sanders captured his figures – as they emerged from a 'lifeworld' around them, as their very physical appearance and facial or physiognomic features expressed their embeddedness in that world. Yamamoto's life, growing up in Tokyo, was a life full of women, and dominated by his mother, a dressmaker, whose work filled the house (and the void left by his father, forcibly conscripted and died during the Second World War). Yamamoto's studio, as depicted by the film, is an intense and perpetual, if not obsessive, community of assistants and junior designers, working together on the studio floor as if choreographed. The tactile, sensory and visual dimension of their working methods are so apparent...as if theory or planning or research played little role. Yamamoto explains: 'I start first with the materials, with touch – then I go to the forms... but, which is first or which supports which, I don't know. For me, the touch comes first, then I start to imagine the shape on it, by it.' The sense of touch, of the texture and visual surface of the fabric, is where he starts – but where this quickly involves an intimate knowledge of the 'lived' everyday life of the people who will wear these clothes. Wenders described his 'method' in terms of his bodily movement – '...stand back, look, approach again, grasp, feel, hesitate, sudden activity,

and then another long pause....'. The creative process is not primarily mental or ideational, but physical, sensory and perceptual. Yamamoto has to inquire into the 'life' of his subjects, then by moving round his model (in the studio) explore the possibilities for making that life appear, as an articulation of social empowerment – the ability to move out into the world and assert one's identity.

The second half of 'Notebook' is concerned with Yamamoto's up and coming show in Paris – a highly charged launch of a new season with a lot of media exposure. While Yamamoto is frank about the ruthless business tempo of fashion production – 'You cannot stop – not for one season; otherwise they will say "he's finished" – he represents himself frankly, as childlike, self-absorbed, and dominated by a compulsive interest in how the fabric of cloth can be shaped in a way that evoked the craftsman's love of his materials. Wenders conveys how they had spoke about craftsmanship and the 'craftsman's morals' – '...to build the true chair, to design the true shirt, in short, to find the essence of a thing in the process of fabricating it'.

Wenders notes: 'After a while I began to see a certain paradox in Yohji's work. What he creates is necessarily ephemeral, victim to the immediate and voracious consumption, which is the rule of his game; after all, fashion is about here and now. It only deals with today, never yesterday. By the same token Yohji was inspired by the photographs of another time, and of the work clothes of an era when people lived by a different rhythm, and when work had a different sense of dignity. So it seemed to me that Yohji expressed himself in two languages simultaneously...the fluid and the solid; the fleeting and the permanent; the fugitive and the stable'.

Yamamoto continues: 'We have to make a 'true' jacket or a 'true' shirt.... What is the cutting of a true shoulder, what is the cutting of a true sleeve...? We can spend hundred hours on this cutting....and enjoy it....otherwise you can't do the fashion business'.

The materiality of fashion is the 'essence' of the craft of Yamamoto's fashion design – where the materiality is not some stable and permanent substrate of life in a world of flux. The 'fleeting and the permanent; the fugitive and the stable', noted by Wenders (above), refers not to a crass dialectic of the modish and the classical, or equally not to a naturalist metaphysic of transient design and permanent materials. Yamamoto's fashion concerns the persistent historical need for the empowerment of identity

through a continual adaptation and assertion of the latent corporeal propensity for intention and action in a world solidified by social prescription and norms. Yamamoto's fashion measures human liberation to the extent that the embodied experience of the human subject can be actualized as an expression that is as aesthetic as it is social. His clothes do not remain in the ossified world of entrenched accepted behaviours (where even trends and modish exhibitionism is an accepted behavior); rather, they are more subtle and more potent in one – they actualize the senses of the body and re-inscribe the senses within the laboring processes of the everyday. Ontologically, Yamamoto deconstructs the enduring rationalist dichotomy in fashion design, where the 'outer' garment is an 'expression' of an 'inner' intentionality, and where intentionality is purely subjective. Here the 'inner' and 'outer' are co-joined and intentionality is formed through the desire to intervene in a world that is as spectacularly beautiful as it is hostile. Through fashion the human subject actualizes their identity for intervention in the social everyday in search of beauty. This 'beauty' is not immanent to the world, but created through the intersubjective commotion made possible by social intervention.

Materiality is not simply the physical stuff of the cloth, but the fabric as it is being formed by hands that are somehow inspired by its material constitution...texture has a textuality...a narrative of a form of life not out of which it emerged, but into which it could emerge. This aspiration to enter or intervene in the contemporary lifeworld, as a new design or new fashion line, was not an arrogant interruption of the everyday, but a way of allowing the everyday recover some of its sense of itself and its past. 'You can only make a good show if you have a strong sense of the material'. Yamamoto never uses terms like 'design' or 'pattern' or 'style'. And he prefers black – all his clothes, at least in this film, are black. Colour, he says, carries meaning and all he wants in his clothes is the interrelation of material and form. In any case, he smiles, 'when all colours are mixed it becomes black'. Black is also like a form of forgetting, or putting aside of the complexity that might compromise the relationship between material and form. In using 'men's' clothes to enclothe women, he dismantles the historical dominance of social signifiers as they are so embedded in the history and conventions of design. The language of his clothes is not governed from the 'outside' by the transcendental signifiers of gender relations so much as from the inside, from the specific relation between the human body and the shaped material – how the person inhabits the clothes and so moves into the world. Yamamoto's clothes are also famously 'loose' and not tightly cut – the body is not simply covered or hung with clothing. The clothing is the means in which the body finds its sense of self and identity, and the space between garment and body is where this can happen over time.

In Wenders concluding section of the film, he returns to his observations on Yamomoto 's company and how they worked together. He states: 'So I looked at them as if they were a kind of film crew....and Yojhi among them was a director shooting a never ending film...his images were not to be shown on a screen...if you sat down to watch his film, you find yourself instead in front of that very private screen, which any mirror that reflects your image can become, to be able to look at your own reflection in such a way that you can recognise and more readily accept your body, your appearance, your history, in short yourself...that it seems to me, is the continuing screenplay of the friendly film by Yojhi Yamomoto.'

The film thus ends with a dance of hands – his assistants, all sitting on the floor over paper, drawing. This coda suitably reminds us of the way fashion begins not with an act of genius and intention but of a constructing the conditions for collective creativity – fashion begins and ends with intersubjectivity (the sharing, exchange and synthesis of sensations, feelings and perceptions by a group within the orbit of the design studio, and the social landscape of viewing subjects into which the dressed individual walks). Wenders had raised a question about style, signature, design – the usual markers of value and thus property. Particularly running up to a major seasonal launch, designs are kept secret. Not for Yamamoto. He can show them to anyone – there is no secret. The 'secret' emerges out of the process, the labour and stages that brings clothes to the catwalk – his assistants and community of the studio, his finished work as it is worn by the models. The final completion of the idea is a collaborative act....no one can copy this. It is the language of the company. Wenders says 'so you are not afraid that somebody will steal your language'. 'No: no body can do that'.

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We like the term 'fabric'. It evokes the 'stuff' of the materiality of clothing – is it the source of all clothing and for fabric to become fabric there is a very fundamental unity of human and material nature. Fabric is often used as a synonym of 'cloth', and looks 'natural', but in reality is formed through specific processes of intertwining separate strands of yarn or thread, themselves spun from raw fibres of wool, flax, cotton. Within the film, the fabric is a metaphor for the juxtaposition and interconnection of video 'notebook' imagery, of Yohji's clothes (as series, and the way he 'designs' his clothes), of the contemporary cityscape, and of identity itself – our lives, as a series of strung narratives of social experience. The 'urban

phenomenology' of fabric is another way of saying 'fashion', but fashion in the sense in which this film – *Notebook on Cities and Clothes* – uses (or defines, or exemplifies) the term. Fashion, in this film, is a form of socio-existential empowerment – in using clothing as a means of both restoring coherence to a fragmented and compromised selfhood, and doing this through recovering the integrity of some basic material conditions of social life. The means and methods Yamamoto uses in the fabrication of his catwalk creations are disarmingly simple and – cutting, drawing, stitching, overlapping, and so on. It is as if his clothes are workers' clothes, or more accurately perhaps, a new non-uniform standard-issue dress for the non-alienated labourer – not a 'liberated' labourer, for that is not an option, but a labourer whose alienation becomes the stuff of personal *self-re-creation and embodied expression*. Yamamoto makes the quotidian characteristic of our enclothement the very conditions of our journey to selfhood.

The repetition in design form that we find in Yamamoto is, therefore, the opposite of the uniformity of the 'corporate', with its simultaneous dissolution and homogenization of social identity. The significance of clothing as a material condition of social identity is in its direct impact on subjective perception and the motivation of the human subject to self-empowerment. Identity, for Yamamoto, begins with the human body, and not with images or representations of social rank, profession or even gender. Identity becomes irreducibly individual and process-based as it is facilitated by a clothing that appeals directly to the condition of the social in intersubjectivity. The 'social' demanded by fashion does not denote a commonality that reduces particularity, but heightens the need for it.

Fashion is thus the opposite of *costume*, and in the example of Yamamoto, it can resist the growing arbitrariness and nihilistic disinvestment in the value of clothing in our society. The growing panoply of visual styles and languages offered by the global market and its designer brands is gradually rationalizing the subject's need for empowerment, and re-inscribing that need within the realms of leisure (not work). What is required is a fuller understanding of fashion – and this must begin with an improvised phenomenology, whose relevance is directed to the overwhelming yet little researched phenomenon of organizational urbanism. How does clothing empower the organisation's own aesthetic production, along with its facility for appearing and acting in the 'city'? How is the city used by the organisation as a regulatory framework for policing and governing the human body? What difference does this make in 'creative' cities – or fashion cities, mediacities or 'cities of culture'? The cultural cosmopolitanisation of the city can entrench older forms of conservatism, or equally, banal uniforms of leisure wear. Yet, how is fashion the means through which the relativism and unpredictability of both market and city are manifest in the spaces the organization blindly assumes are its own? How can fashion

make such organisations reflexive and a site for the cultivation of the conditions for social intervention – making the city creative?

So as far as our ‘improvised phenomenology’ goes – or at least our attempt at constructing a pre-theretical framework for a phenomenology of fabric (not just fashion, but the material constitution of fashion in and through the articulation of the human body in the world), then what has this discussion on ‘Notebook on Cities and Clothes’ generated? We suggest, ‘towards an urban phenomenology of fabric’ we need to progress through the following investigations:

This is what we end up with – as a preliminary schema for research into the phenomenology of fabric.

Phenomenon	Activity
Design/designer	<i>Process</i> : creative method as speculation on the relation between the human subject, the body, the world.
Fabric/materiality	<i>Enclotement</i> : the human experience of dressing [perception, taste, preference, social judgements, etc.) constituted through the interconnection of body, social regimes and codes and organisational space.
Labour/embodied worker	<i>Identity</i> : self-awareness, sociality and symbolic communication, consumption and cultural mobility (the life of the worker in the organisation as mediated by fashion).
Organisational urbanisation	<i>Dressing</i> -- the organisation as always in state in dressing or being dressed, and the dynamic relation between the enclotched organisation and eclotched worker.
Contemporary metropolis (the city)	<i>Locatedness</i> -- the organisation in the world: market as global society, creating expansive horizon for cultural reflexivity, representation and expression.

Notes

(1) All quotations from the film were transcribed by the authors.

(2) Wim Wenders (1989) *Notebook on Cities and Clothes* ["Aufzeichnungen zu Kleidern und Städten"], Axiom Films/Road Movies Filmproduktion (Berlin).

(3) This paper is working towards a dialogue between OS and Fashion Theory. The latter, which has a distinctive provenance in art, design and cultural history, tends to revolve around the products of fashion and to a lesser extent the producers. It spans products and fashion 'houses' (clothes, designs, designers, styles, signatures and brands) as well as their socio-market contexts (consumers and markets; retails and outlets; other agencies, supply chains, media and the demands of the business; entertainment; glamour and celebrity, street styles and fashion as sub-culture) (for an overview, see Craik, 1994; Breward, 1998; Entwistle, 2000). For us, the spatial entity of the organization is a subject still awaiting attention from fashion theorists.

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