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Fashion is Disconnected: exploring the potential of design-integrated, locally-based manufacturing units to reconnect designer and maker, and ultimately reconnect the consumer with the garment creation process for a new system of Fashion 2.0

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A thesis submitted to the University of Huddersfield in fulfilment of
the requirements for the degree of MA by Research

The University of Huddersfield, Department of Fashion and Textiles

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ABSTRACT

This research considers the feasibility of Localism. It examines UK garment manufacturing, identifying two alternative approaches, the so-called slow fashion and integrating technology into a lean manufacturing model. Through a review of current literature and insights from industry, potential opportunities and barriers have been identified, primarily an ageing workforce and a skills gap in subsequent generations.

By exploring the role of education, the disconnect between academia and industry, and the impact of the current system on social, environmental and economic factors, it delivers new important analysis by taking a unique inside perspective of the needs of UK manufacturing. This analysis is crucial to our knowledge and understanding of the sector's future potential, addressing the graduate skills gap identified by employers and movement towards a direct to consumer (DTC), low-waste model. Thus, the Localism model has the potential to reform education from primary to university level, increase the appeal of careers within manufacturing, encourage closer collaboration between fashion academia and industry and ultimately, transform the UK fashion sector into what could be described as Fashion 2.0

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Fashion 2.0 – Localism

This research began in 2019 before the arrival of the global pandemic. The economic and environmental future may be uncertain, yet what has also emerged is an atmosphere of hope and the possibility to build a new future, which is timely for this study (Schwab, 2020a). While Covid-19 has been devastating for many, it has also provided an opportunity, a so-called "new normal", for humanity to take stock of all aspects of life and decide what to *take through the portal* (Roy, 2020) into a new post-Covid World.

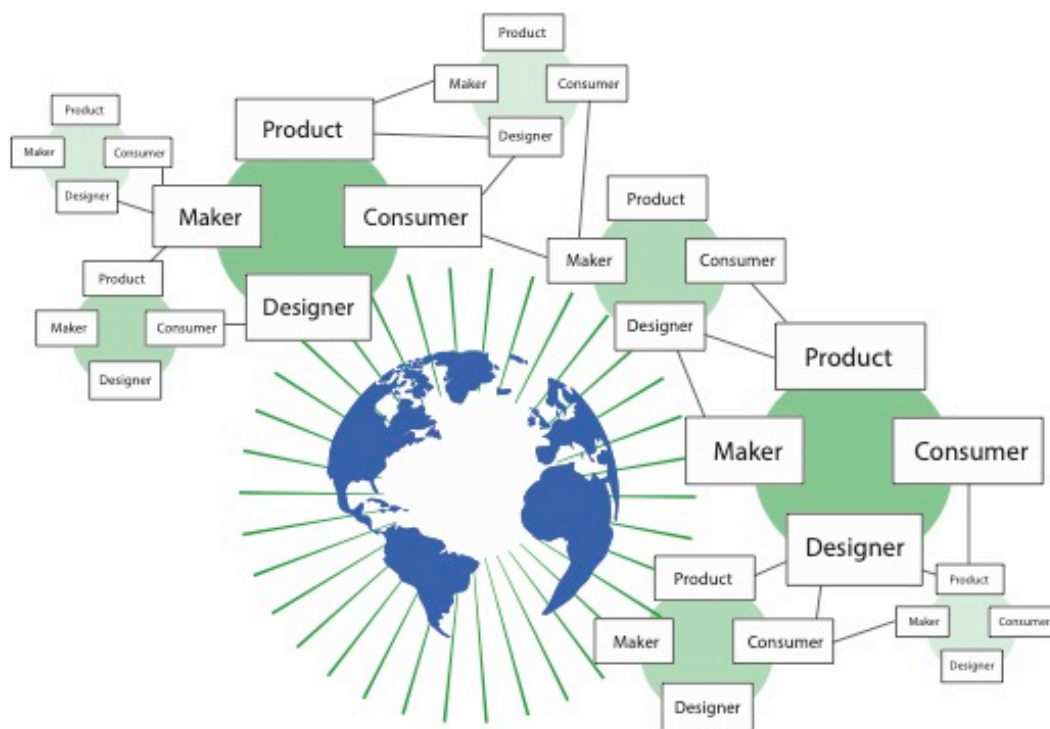
The purpose of this research is to find new systems to make clothing, to reset fashion in order to transform the sector into a new Fashion 2.0.

Driven by years of first-hand experience in garment design and manufacturing settings worldwide, yet hailing from a town in the heart of the Yorkshire textile industry in the UK, the feeling lingered that there was an opportunity to produce clothing in ways that are kinder to both people and the planet. The current structure of most mass-market fashion production means it is often designed in the UK and made off-shore. The design and make functions are frequently performed separately - across continents - creating a disconnect. The idea for this research is to focus on UK manufacturing, not to advocate a return to the past and completely re-shore production, but rather to reimagine the sector. Clothing produced closer to the point of retail, where all functions: design, pattern-making, cutting, garment assembly, promotion and shipping, could all take place under one roof—creating closer connections between designer and maker, each enriching the other's knowledge and skills, with the ability to problem-solve together. In turn, a shared culture of caring could develop, woven into both the garments themselves and extending to the end-user, the

consumer. The "story-telling" for marketing would be an authentic one, not forced, fabricated or "green-washed" (Hitti, 2019), but real. Small and medium-sized enterprises, sharing resources and equipment, giving back and enriching each other and the wider community. Large corporations could act as industry advisors, providing mentorship to small businesses, sharing knowledge and support to aid networks' organic growth. They, in turn, could receive green tax incentives. This model herein will be known as *Localism*.

Figure 1.

Fashion 2.0 - Great Transition
 Networks of SME's within the Localism Structure



Closer Connection between Designer + Maker = More Successful Outcomes
 Interconnected Micro Units = Economic & Environmental Flourishing
 Sewing Workshops between Designer + Maker + Consumer = Knowledge Sharing "Knowing through Making or Doing" (Chon p43)

If this sounds like a pipe dream, it is. Yet, this research has uncovered that there are already companies operating in similar ways in various aspects of their business (Connor, 2013; Jin

& Cedrola, 2016; D. Thomas, 2019; Clark, 2019). As the adage goes, *if someone is already doing it, then it can be done*. However, a dose of financial realism must also be considered along with idealism. The world primarily operates within a capitalistic society. Despite some fashion sustainability researchers questioning the dominance of profit in fashion (Fletcher & Tham, 2019), fashion labels can dissolve due to financial pressures (Testa, 2020). Therefore, the subject of economic viability must be a key consideration in the Localism model. Equally, to borrow a phrase by *Extinction Rebellion* co-founder Clare Farrell, who para-phrased it from the late conservationist, David Brower "There is no fashion business to be done on a dead planet" (Chanin, 2013; Extinction Rebellion, 2020). The Localism system must embed itself within and not breach planetary boundaries. One industry expert was recently overheard to say that a fashion company describing itself as sustainable is like a restaurant gleefully exclaiming to be hygienic. Being sustainable must be a fundamental part of the "new normal" for the fashion industry. However, the word *sustainability* has many definitions, none of which are definitive and agreed across the sector (K. Thomas, 2020). In this research context, it will be defined according to the Brundtland Commission (Brundtland, 1987), in that it considers the areas of human ethics, the environment and economics, as essential parts. All three of these elements will be explored to identify a suitable, sustainable framework to situate the Localism model. Furthermore, this study suggests that it is inaccurate to merely wish to sustain the fashion industry when the aim should be to move dynamically along a new trajectory towards real and lasting change. Localism seeks to *be the change* (von Busch, 2019a), to reimagine, restore, reset, and ultimately regenerate (M. Brown & Haselsteiner, 2018) the UK manufacturing sector in a new way.

The current manufacturing system separates the design and make functions, often by several continents. This system has set in motion a series of disconnects. Miscommunication and incorrect interpretations of technical and design information often result in unnecessary waste (McGregor, 2019). In addition, as the manufacturing function is separate from the (usually more powerful) retailer, a sort of "master and servant" relationship has developed, which places pressure on factory owners (Sunner, 2020). These relationships, both past and present, will be explored and compared to the proposed Localism model, which seeks to remove this imbalance. Significantly, the Localism model breaks the traditional "master and servant" relationship between retailer and manufacturer (Wright & Nilsson, 2020) by selling direct to the consumer (DTC). This model will be explored later in the thesis.

1.1 Fashion is Disconnected

This research has identified a series of *disconnects* that may have contributed to the global fashion industry's current unsustainable nature. Research suggests that mass-market fashion has become disposable, throw-away and disconnected (EAC Report, 2019; Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2020; WRAP, 2019) due to the nature in which it is designed, made and consumed. A chasm has developed between the stakeholders, designer, maker and consumer, which has caused a lack of connection and, more pertinently, a lack of *care*. This lack of care has a ripple effect and cannot be understated. This study suggests that the loss of practical sewing skills in homes and schools, even in fashion education, has harmed the UK manufacturing industry, which has helped create this care-less system. Crucially, the UK garment manufacturing sector has identified a lack of skilled machinists and other key actors, an ageing workforce and an image problem deterring new entrants to the industry

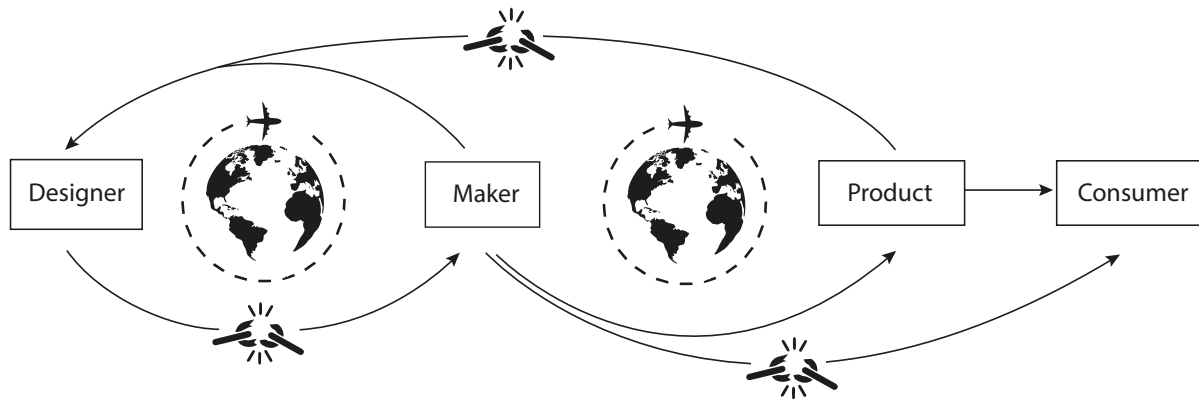
(BFC Report et al., 2015; The Alliance Report, 2015). Furthermore, a lack of inherent skills in the home means both primary dressmaking and basic repairing skills have declined, rendering garments that could be repaired being disposed of instead (Allsop & Cassidy, 2018).

Three key **Disconnects** have been identified which have been explored:

- Primarily, the consumer's apparent lack of basic knowledge of how a garment is constructed or could be repaired. This absence of knowledge can lead to a disconnect between the wearer, the garment's origins, and how it was created. It is argued that this inherent lack of skill creates disconnection and leads to garments being easily discarded.
- Second, concerning the fashion sector at large, there is an increasing disconnect between designer and maker (see *figure 1*). The current model of designed-in-the-West, made-in-the-East, even if that means the East Midlands of England, means the designer and maker may never meet. Language barriers, coupled with a lack of practical knowledge (McRobbie, 1998; Allsop & Cassidy, 2018; Earley & Forst, 2019), create a further disconnect, potentially missing opportunities to improve the outcomes which could occur through closer collaboration.
- And finally, the *outside/inside* disconnect between academics and industry. Both scholars and industry report that there has been little progress during the last two or three decades despite numerous suggestions of pathways to sustainability. Here it will be suggested that there is a disconnect between what is theoretically and practically achievable. This thesis will seek to discover a convergence of actionable ideas.

Figure 2.

Current System - Designed-in-the-West, Made-in-the-East
Creates a Disconnect between designer and maker on different continents



Disconnect between Designer + Maker = Communication Barrier + Potential Waste

Trips to Source & Develop Product = Economic + Environmental Costs

Disconnect between Designer + Maker + Consumer = Zero Connection to Product Rendering it Easily Disposable

This research proposes that the Localism model can address some of these disconnects and create new and lasting connections by rebuilding garment manufacturing within communities to nurture and value individuals and their skills. A Localism model could continue (sustain) making new clothes, but in a responsible, transparent and most importantly, restorative manner. Thus, eliminating the environmentally hazardous practice of shipping garments around the globe and reducing the incidence of out-of-sight-out-of-mind dubious production practices.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Global Garment Manufacturing

The key issue identified in the reporting of garment manufacturing is worker exploitation. Reports indicate the need for legislation to protect workers, citing large scale collaboration by “Intermediary organisations” as necessary to implement and enforce it (Buchel et al., 2018, p. 35; EAC Report, 2019). Some other pitfalls identified within manufacturing are lack of transparency and the inability for brands to access all areas of the “increasingly fragmented tiers of the supply chain” (Ashoka & C&A Foundation, 2016, p. 6) with subcontracting a common practice. Stories of the plight of migrant workers seeking a better life only to be exploited are rife within the industry and are reported globally and domestically (Hoskins, 2015; Kelly, 2020; O’Connor, 2018; Sunner, 2020; Wright & Nilsson, 2020). Basic rights afforded to workers in other industries, such as access to “child care, health care, and access to savings or credit are often non-existent for apparel industry workers, despite job conditions that heighten the need for these services” (Ashoka & C&A Foundation, 2016, p. 6). The lack of these fundamental rights highlights the disparity between skilled jobs in garment manufacturing and other areas of manufacture.

The *Drift / C&A Fashion for Good Report*, chapter 4 (Buchel et al., 2018), identified six “transition pathways” for change. These include the call for greater transparency within the supply chain which “go beyond a transactional relationship towards a partnership based on connection, mutual understanding and reciprocity.” The report focuses on implementing positive changes to worker’s rights, job creation and training, delivered with the support of unions and other legislative organisations, to hold the industry to account. Encouragement to design and produce garments with longevity, so they can become “viable assets in an economy that fosters re-use” is advised. Recommendations are also made for

manufacturers to adopt renewable energy sources or other environmental best practise, such as water treatment plants within their domestic supply chain, as implemented in Italy by men's heritage brand *Ermenegildo Zegna* (Jin & Cedrola, 2016). The Drift report identifies the need for environmental change within the fashion industry. It suggests "alternative tax mechanisms and other financial incentives can be used to stimulate change" in influencing both business investment opportunities and government policy relating to import restrictions and taxation (Buchel et al., 2018, p. 36).

Former MP Mary Creagh also recommended tax reform and green taxes in the *Fixing Fashion* report, which she repeated during a panel discussion with Fashion Revolution (EAC Report, 2019; Fashion Revolution, 2020). "At every step in the value chain, the physical presence of the fashion industry (e.g. factories) is embedded in its local ecological context, contributing to biodiversity, building natural assets and leaving a positive footprint." One transitional pathway, which the Drift report calls "Natural Capital Approaches", is perhaps the most similar to the proposed model of Localism. It urges involvement from all stakeholders to "increase the leadership abilities of buyers, designers and key strategic decision-makers to use natural capital accounting and adapt KPIs (key performance indicators) accordingly." Whilst this is aimed at large fashion brands operating in the traditional model, it encapsulates the themes of worker equity and inclusion, along with total transparency in production. Also, it includes the elements of tax reform and eco-investments, which are central to the Localism model. The final transition pathway cited by the Drift report puts the main emphasis on the consumer. It suggests power will shift from the "dominant business-to-consumer model" to one where the customer is a "user". This "fashion as a service" model, does not on the face of it, seem new; however, the inclusion

of “Local production and customisation”, enables both brands and manufacturers to “sell designs and (recycled, clean, high-quality) raw materials directly to citizens....tailoring, repair, remaking and customisation, by both retailers and specialised, local professionals, make a return” and help eliminate some of the issues outlined. (Buchel et al., 2018, p. 37).

2.2 The Fashion Industry and the Global Pandemic

The *Business of Fashion* (BoF) published its annual McKinsey report, *The State of Fashion 2020: Coronavirus Update*, reporting that year-on-year growth was set to contract by up to 30% in the global fashion sector, but forecast a bounce back in 2021 of between 2 and 4% (Business of Fashion, 2020, p.4). It also suggested spending on apparel is expected to reduce by up to 70% among US and European fashion consumers (Business of Fashion, 2020, p. 11), signalling a seismic shift in the whole fashion system, in what they describe as “anti-consumerism”(Business of Fashion, 2020, p. 17). However, the report also recognised that “It is in the developing world, where healthcare systems are often inadequate, and poverty is rife, where people will be hit the hardest. For workers in low-cost sourcing and fashion manufacturing hubs such as Bangladesh, India, Cambodia, Honduras and Ethiopia, extended periods of unemployment will mean hunger and disease” (Business of Fashion, 2020, p. 7). Regarding sustainability, BoF had previously identified emerging fashion trends titled “Getting Woke,” “Radical Transparency,” and “Sustainability First”. BoF suggested that the “consumer mindset was already showing signs of shifting in certain directions before the pandemic, (and could) completely reshape the industry’s value chain” (Business of Fashion, 2020, p. 8). The report exposes the glut of “overfilled warehouses laden with unsold seasonal stock” as a signal that the system of long lead-time production was coming to an end, as “global consumer appetite for discretionary purchases wavers”, noting that “stock

incineration, no longer feasible in times of heightened transparency and sustainability-conscious consumers” as more evidence of future system change within the industry (Business of Fashion, 2020, p. 17). Trend Union founder, and leading trend forecaster Li Edelkoort, said “The virus, I think, can be seen as a representation of our conscience... it brings to light what is so terribly wrong with society, and every day that becomes more clear. It teaches us to slow down and to change our ways”(Business of Fashion, 2020, p. 19). The BoF mainly focuses on the luxury end of the market; however, the report could be seen as a bellwether for the future of the sector as a whole, signally changing consumer habits and how the industry must adapt accordingly.

2.3 UK Manufacturing

“China has been the dominant player in manufacturing for the last 20 years, but this worldwide disaster could be the turning point that UK manufacturers need to make people realise that sourcing closer to home is a better option” (Hills, 2020a).

During the pandemic, there have been signs of change within UK manufacturing, with 50% of UK factories reporting an increase in enquiries, according to a survey conducted by *Make it British* (Hills, 2020a). The survey identified that companies who manufacture locally and source UK fabrics were more resilient to the pandemic's impact. Adding, “When the whole supply chain is local and is not reliant on crossing borders, it is much less vulnerable when something like this happens” (Hills, 2020a). Yet, a British Fashion Council (BFC) report found a severe shortage of skilled labour within the wider UK manufacturing sector. The report identified an imbalance in design and production, stating, “There is a general lack of support for clothing manufacturing in the UK and lack of recognition. The emphasis is placed on designers, retailers and brands. Manufacturing is forgotten. It needs profile.” (BFC Report et

al., 2015, p. 23). This view was backed up by The Alliance Project's investigation into domestic re-shoring. The report found "endemic skill shortages" in the UK, with both reports identifying an "image problem". The Alliance report suggested teenagers did not want to work in what they saw as "sweatshops" (The Alliance Report, 2015, p. 12). The BFC report also recognised this image problem and, together with a lack of investment in UK manufacturing, saw them as a barrier to attracting new entrants to the manufacturing sector, with little prospect of professional development and uninspiring workplaces (BFC Report et al., 2015, p. 23). Opportunities do exist for trade however, suggesting investment in the UK manufacturing sector would be worthwhile. The BFC report suggests investment should be aimed at the luxury end of the market. The report identified "an uplift in demand for UK products that have a strong British association, where branding, authenticity and tradition of well-made products are seen as a mark of exclusivity overseas" (The Alliance Report, 2015, p. 49). Both reports agree that higher-value heritage or luxury brands are more suited to UK production; therefore, the product type and market value must be carefully considered.

Based in Somerset in the UK, luxury brand Mulberry is an example of a manufacturer who has invested in training programmes for locals to become artisan craftspeople. The repatriation of UK manufacturing on a large scale is not recommended for high volume, mass-market production. Financial viability is a crucial factor, so that "Critically, where a retailer charges a premium for these characteristics, high enough margin can be made by manufacturing in the UK" (The Alliance Report, 2015, p. 52).

The key to reimagining the UK garment manufacturing sector is a change in consumer knowledge and mindset, the Alliance Report suggests. Consumer habits may already have

begun to shift, as the BoF report has already outlined above. However, the role of fashion buyers is also identified as being disconnected from the supply chain. The Alliance report cites, “a significant barrier to realising the retailer demand, is their lack of knowledge about the UK supply base. Buyers are often in their 20s, do not remember when most clothes were domestically sourced, and are often rotated between posts, hampering the ability to build relationships.” (The Alliance Report, 2015, p. 12).

The UK currently has a sizeable manufacturing sector. Still, it was once huge, as inferred by the Alliance report, supplying around 80-85% of Marks and Spencer’s clothing ranges during the 1970s and 1980s, before becoming a “sunset” industry when production moved off-shore (Hirst & Zeitlin, 1989; Phizacklea, 1990). Phizacklea notes that the off-shoring was not solely due to low overseas prices, though it was a factor. To push back against cheap imports from low-wage countries, UK manufacturers were urged to move with the times and implement emerging new technologies or “automate, relocate or evaporate” (Phizacklea, 1990, p. 9). Domestic production had been kept artificially cheap due to a garment manufacturing system that relied on low-paid labour. This low wage environment “played into the hands” of the government at the time, who wanted to reduce wages within the wider British manufacturing sector (Phizacklea, 1990, p. 11). Phizacklea noted the gender hierarchy within UK manufacturing, where “women work *for* men, but rarely *with* men” which was “cross-cut by racism and ethnicity”, describing generations of immigrants to the UK who set up their own labour-intensive garment factories after being excluded “from mainstream opportunity structures” (Phizacklea, 1990, p. 5). She goes further, suggesting that without such cheap immigrant labour during this time, the UK fashionwear sector would not have survived. This depiction from the 1970s and 1980s is strikingly similar to structures described within UK garment manufacturing during the early part of the 21st

Century, with its reliance on cheap, often illegal, immigrant labour (O'Connor, 2018; Sunner, 2020).

The cyclical nature of fashion trends could also apply to government intervention. As Phizacklea identified, the government was happy to facilitate a low-wage environment within UK manufacturing during the latter decades of the 20th Century. The attitude now, however, is that some manufacturers “feel that Government should be doing more to help protect our UK manufacturing base”, noted Kate Hills (Hills, 2020a). Kate Hills, the founder of *Make it British*, has positive recollections of manufacturing in the UK. After setting up her fashion label in the early 1990s, she became a designer for Tammy Girl, the market-leading brand for pre-teen girls, which was part of the popular womenswear chain, Etam (Morrison, 2016). Hills outlines her experience as a designer working for a UK brand, where – like M&S – 80% of the product was made in the UK. Knitwear was made in Manchester, with the rest of the range mainly made in North London factories. The proximity of the factories to the design facility made it easy for a designer to visit the manufacturers, “as a designer, it’s brilliant that you’ve got your factories that close”. If there was a problem in production or sampling, Hills said, “I could just get on a bus and go and sort it out” (Hills, 2018). While this research exposes mixed views about UK manufacturing history, it also suggests that the expertise and enthusiasm still exist within the industry to aid the transition to new models, such as Localism.

2.3.1 Hills and Hemingways

In episode 2 (2018) of her self-titled podcast, *Make it British*, founder Kate Hills describes her background as a designer and former buyer at Marks and Spencer. Graduating in 1991 with a degree in Fashion from Middlesex University, Hills explains that “in those days,

fashion students were taught how to put a garment together”(Hills, 2018). Unable to find a job as a designer, due to high unemployment in the UK sector at that time, and armed with her sewing machine and a partner, she set up her own label called Catweasle Clothing, making clothing from recycled fabrics. Hills and her partner set up a stall on Camden market and soon came to the attention of a stylist from Vogue magazine. One of their jackets ended up on Kate Moss on the cover of Vogue, and the small business took off from there.

“What was really good was, as designers we were designing it all ourselves, we were making it all ourselves and selling it all ourselves, so we were really close to our customer” Kate Hills

The scenario described above is typical of the time and was repeated by Wayne Hemingway MBE, which he recounted in a podcast with Holly Tucker called *Design with Purpose* (Tucker, 2020b). Hemingway and his wife Gerardine reworked vintage clothing and sold them on Camden market on a stall that grew into several stalls and became *Red or Dead*. In an almost identical account, Hills said her stall on Camden market was a huge success, and she earned more money during that time than she did in the preceding 20 years. This is an example of a concept that is not new. Students have always bought and upcycled garments out of financial necessity. It could be argued that it was those financial constraints that forced creative thinking. Both Hills and Gerardine Hemingway (Wayne’s then-girlfriend, now wife) were competent in garment construction and used those skills to create a direct to consumer model forerunner.

In contrast, at the time, Angela McRobbie cites designers who relied on manufacturers due to their lack of skills, suggesting that then, as now, sewing competency levels varied greatly (McRobbie, 1998). This evidence suggests that having the ability to produce their own

ranges gave some designers an advantage. Neither Hills nor the Hemingways had to rely on external production partners; thereby, they could cut costs and create an immediate connection with both the garment and its end-user.

2.3.2 Leicester

As discussed above, research already suggests businesses operating within a Localism structure would need to respect garment manufacturing practitioners' skills and pay them accordingly. 2020 saw comprehensive reporting and condemnation of human rights abuses in Leicester garment factories (Kelly, 2020; Wright & Nilsson, 2020). *The Financial Times* exposed modern slavery practices in factories supplying large fast fashion brands, BooHoo and Nasty Gal. It uncovered, "Tiny sweatshops were crammed into crumbling old buildings and legally compliant factories using expensive machines were being outcompeted by illegally underpaid humans" (O'Connor, 2020). In 2018, the same journalist reported similar findings, poor working conditions and pay below the minimum wage – reputedly around £4 per hour – in what has long been considered an "open secret" among industry insiders. The issues in Leicester had already been brought to the government's attention, published in the 2019 report *Fixing Fashion* (EAC Report, 2019). These issues are now in the public domain. *Labour Behind the Label*, a campaign group for worker's rights within garment manufacturing, was calling for more accountability to end exploitation and create transparency within the supply chain and said, "A lack of accountability can lead to situations where really serious labour abuses can flourish" (Kelly, 2020). *Fashion Roundtable*, the lobby-group and Secretariat for the All-Party Parliamentary Group, posted footage of Labour MP, Liz Kendall (Fashion Roundtable, 2020b) addressing the Ethics and Sustainability in Fashion All-Party Parliamentary Group, regarding the need for union

representation within the UK garment manufacturing sector. Kendall said, “Action is required by all three (parliamentary parties) if we are to end the exploitation and ensure not only Leicester, but the entire country’s textile industry improves its standards and has an ethical, productive and sustainable future”. This is part of a follow-up campaign led by Tamara Cincik, CEO and founder of Fashion Roundtable, pressing the government to implement some of the Fixing Fashion report's recommendations (EAC Report, 2019). Findings in the report and the positive attitude to change them were met with scepticism, anecdotally, by some in industry, who were unsurprised when all key recommendations were consequently rejected by the government (C. Turner, 2019). However, in October 2020, Fashion Roundtable reported that they had “successfully lobbied” the Environmental Audit Committee (EAC), who had agreed to “to reassess concerns around the environmental impact of the fashion industry and working conditions in UK garment factories”(Fashion Roundtable, 2020a).

As Phizacklea noted, it is not just garment workers in low-wage developing countries who are exploited. Downward pressure on retail prices in the UK and the demand for cheap manufacturing began in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with an over-reliance on low-paid immigrant workers (Phizacklea, 1990). The much-quoted phrase “the race to the bottom” has perpetuated the demand for cheap labour, allowing exploitation of garment workers, both domestically and globally, to persist to the present day. This research has illustrated that structural change within the garment manufacturing sector is imperative and suggests the transparency within a Localism model could eradicate human exploitation.

2.4 Fashion Education

In order to instigate structural change within the fashion manufacturing sector, it is important to consider education and whether it can change the course of the industry. Both the BFC and Alliance reports, and anecdotal reports from the sector, signal an appetite for returning to UK manufacturing. Yet, issues described by McRobbie during the 1990s are still prevalent today. In 1994, Steven Purvis, a factory owner in Glasgow, cited a “laughable” lack of fabric knowledge or pattern cutting skills (McRobbie, 1998, p. 117), mirroring the BFC and Alliance reports which identify the current skills shortage. McRobbie describes the disconnect designers had with their suppliers. This was partly due to their ignorance of fabric consumption and costings which left them open to dishonest practices. Designers were in thrall to the manufacturers due to their lack of practical skills. McRobbie concluded that “doing design means getting other people to do the sewing” (McRobbie, 1998, p. 118). In her chapter on fashion education, McRobbie describes the severing of ties to the “menial” manufacturing aspects of the “rag trade” in order for fashion to be taken seriously as an artform and worthy of academic study (McRobbie, 1998, p. 58). Participants in McRobbie’s study had contrasting views on which practical skills - if any - needed to be taught to fashion students. Some participants suggested students need only theoretical knowledge of production processes to get their designs produced. Others insisted that while the level of practical skills and finish achieved by students was irrelevant, they must develop hands-on knowledge of the production process through practical experience. Designers must not concentrate on design skills alone, otherwise on entering the industry, “the reality of surviving as a designer means that they must hastily re-learn how to sew and become knowledgeable about every stage in the production process.” concluded McRobbie (McRobbie, 1998, p. 59).

More recent studies of fashion education suggest that the skills gap not only still exists but has possibly widened (Romeo & Lee, 2013; Allsop & Cassidy, 2018). In September 2020, during an online live panel discussion at the *Make it British* virtual trade show, Dr Mark Sumner of Leeds University, supported the idea of handicraft in education, saying that some fashion has low value, as people don't understand what goes into making a garment (Hills, 2020c). A study by Allsop and Cassidy focuses on fashion students' lack of sewing skills. Changes to the school curriculum, resulting in basic sewing skills no longer being taught in schools, were identified as a contributory factor, resulting in fashion students embarking on undergraduate courses without rudimentary knowledge of garment construction or dress-making. Manufacturers described fashion graduates as lacking in both fabric and garment construction knowledge, resulting in an inability to communicate effectively to "realise garments" with the added cost implications when reworking garment designs (Allsop & Cassidy, 2018). Romeo and Lee report similar findings from industry professionals who, whilst acknowledging designers increasingly need technology skills such as computer-aided design [CAD], 3D pattern cutting, and understanding product lifecycle management systems [PLM], it was the lack of practical skills which caused most concern. One participant noted that while designers were very creative, their effectiveness in the industry was limited when "trying to pass designs, as they are not sure how a garment should be constructed", adding that designers needed more knowledge of product development (Romeo & Lee, 2013, p. 136). Rissanen agrees that adding business and manufacturing education to fashion design studies, in turn, makes fashion more sustainable (Fletcher & Tham, 2015, Chapter 20). Were designers and makers able to work together in the same space, as proposed by the Localism model, this could create a deeper connection, greater knowledge exchange and better garment outcomes.

For the proposed model of Localism to work, the absence of a skilled workforce would be a significant barrier to its success. A return to the past, to merely re-shore, is neither realistic nor desirable due to its reliance on cheap imported labour. Yet, in order to attract a new workforce, the image problem of the garment manufacturing industry must first be addressed, suggesting the UK manufacturing system needs to be completely reimagined. This research has found that designers must develop a deeper knowledge of garment construction and fully reconnect with the product development process. This would create greater assimilation and mutual understanding between the designer's creative role and the maker's practical role, and therefore must be part of this new system.

2.4.1 Education – The Joy of Making

The role of education has been cited as the origins of the skills gap identified by industry reports. Cuts to arts funding in schools and an increasing absence of sewing and repairing skills in the home have also been contributory factors. This research argues that the decline in proficient sewing skills has led to a series of disconnects within the industry. Firstly, designers of the current generation do not have the requisite garment construction skills. Christopher Neiper said he often had to “retrain” new graduate employees, as they were not “industry ready”. Neiper’s view is that fashion graduates were only trained to be clothing designers; they did not understand the manufacturing process (Make it British Live, 2020). This closely mirrors the experiences of Natalie Chanin, owner of Alabama Chanin, on opening her School of Making, which holds adult sewing classes “there’s a real lack of understanding of how clothes are made – a lot of critical knowledge has been lost” (D. Thomas, 2019, p. 98).

2.5 Sustainability in Fashion

The word sustainability might serve only as a place-holder or sign-post, a shorthand for both the industry and consumers to mean “doing the right thing” (Braungart et al., 2007). Yet, it does not accurately describe the intentions of manufacturing responsibly and rebuilding connections, as set out in this paper. Donella Meadows (Meadows et al., 2004) defines sustainability as striving for “equilibrium” or balance and the process of replenishing planetary resources, so more is invested than is taken. The view that sustainability is a process where the current generation lives in such a way that leaves the planet in better shape for the next generation is widely accepted (Brundtland, 1987; Raskin et al., 2002). Yet as others have identified, the word sustainability has “no commonly understood meaning”, saying that it not only refers to the state of the planet but “the state of human life as well” (Fletcher & Tham, 2015, p. 57). Equally, Kedron Thomas concedes, there is confusion around the “disparate” use of the term within fashion, and none which are universally accepted definitions, “The range of possible meanings, associations, and practices that are said to fall under the category of “sustainable fashion” is expansive” (K. Thomas, 2020).

Dilys Williams says we are at cross-purposes when discussing sustainability, suggesting that academia and industry are split into two camps of ecology and economy (Williams, 2019). Stephanie Phair, Chair of the British Fashion Council, said in September 2020 that the UK fashion industry was facing job losses post-pandemic, affecting up to a third of the workforce, around 350,000 people. She admitted that fashion is a significant contributor to carbon emissions, and therefore had to put sustainability as central to its post-pandemic revival. Phair concluded that both designer and high street brands “must create product at a good price point, but with sustainability in mind, that will be the solution to get the

consumer back” (Bryer, 2020). Sustainability “in mind” is a vague directive. Equally “planet before profit” (Fletcher & Tham, 2019), while objectively is the right thing to do, only suggests more areas to research (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, pp. 50–51) and does not give practical steps toward real change for either designer or high street brands to follow. Hence as Williams suggests, neither academia nor industry can agree on the best way forward (Williams, 2019).

The Brundtland definition of sustainability creates a framework in which to explore Localism. The core aim of this research is to transform manufacturing into an exciting new career prospect within this Great Transition (Raskin et al., 2002). To restore rather than merely re-shore, instead of sustain, regenerate (M. Brown & Haselsteiner, 2018) both skills and jobs within UK manufacturing via the Localism model.

2.5.1 Elizabeth Suzann

Before embarking on this research, Elizabeth Suzann had been identified as a business model operating in what this research describes as Localism. Elizabeth Suzann became a high profile brand in what was often termed as either slow or sustainable fashion (Barber, 2019; D. Thomas, 2019; Testa, 2020) and was a key inspiration in proving the viability of the proposed model in this research and that it worked in the real world. The business was started in 2013 by Liz Pape, who made everything herself initially, selling online via Etsy and to local boutiques. Her signature style of neutral basics in natural fibres proved successful, and the business grew to employ thirty staff. Everything was designed, cut, sewn, photographed, packed and posted from one airy building in Nashville. The brand’s mission statement advocated “mindful, careful consumption” to reduce waste by creating “long-lasting garments that serve many needs so you can buy fewer of them” (Elizabeth Suzann,

2020). These values are reminiscent of Patagonia founder and fashion sustainability trailblazer Yvon Chouinard in his book *Let My People Go Surfing* (Chouinard, 2006). Staff at Elizabeth Suzann were provided with a stylish canteen and lunchtime yoga sessions, and those on the lowest salary were paid at least \$15 per hour, more than double the minimum wage of the area (Barber, 2019). Garments were made in their entirety by one individual machinist, some of whom were fashion graduates. The traditional mode of manufacture is by *piece-rate*, where one person is responsible for machining one element of the garment and may be paid according to the volume of pieces they produce (R. Turner, 1995). The manufacturing method at Elizabeth Suzann created a connection with the garment and maker and a sense of achievement for the maker not attained through piece-rate. Also, the company had a large social media following and posted staff profiles, connecting the makers with customers. They reported taking staff from all areas of the business on buying and sourcing trips to give all staff both chance to travel, understand all parts of the company and feel valued. Hence the seemingly successful business model of Elizabeth Suzann, based in arguably the richest economy in the world, was worthy of closer investigation.

However, Elizabeth Suzann fell victim to the financial impact caused by the pandemic and ceased trading in April 2020. An article in *The New York Times* cited owner Liz Pape admitting that the effects of the pandemic were “too severe for us to recover from in a healthy and responsible way” (Testa, 2020). Pape declined the offer to participate in this research, saying she did not have the “emotional bandwidth” to analyse what went wrong. However, in an Instagram post announcing the business closure, Pape cited “razor-thin margins”, suggesting the business was not financially viable, which raises questions surrounding, ironically, the sustainability of sustainable enterprises and the Localism model. Whilst the company did close, Pape said she would go back to the beginning of her business

and make everything herself, which points to the Localism ethos of keeping things “small” and therefore “beautiful” (Schumacher, 1993).

2.5.2 Human Ethics and Fashion

The role of people and their value within the current fashion manufacturing system is the primary driver of this research. This research considers the maker's role and what can be done to harness these valuable skills, which are integral to support the Localism model. Areas already identified for transformation include the widespread exploitation of skilled workers (EAC Report, 2019; Hoskins, 2015; Kelly, 2020), the image problem of working in the UK manufacturing sector (The Alliance Report, 2015), the skills gap and an ageing workforce.

As mentioned in the introduction, designed-in-the-West and made-in-the-East creates disconnect, miscommunication and waste (McGregor, 2019). However, research has found other business models to follow, which rely on domestic production, often integrated within the fashion house. The vision here is for a network of small companies in the UK, based on the models outlined by Thomas (D. Thomas, 2019) in Tennessee, with Alabama Chanin, Billy Reid and Elizabeth Suzann, where the machinists are integral to the design function. The connection of the garment to the maker, and then to the consumer, is also created at *Hiut Denim*, where the machinist signs the finished garment (Smale & Brosnan, 2017), possibly imbuing the garment with care, which adds to the perceived hand-crafted and higher value of the garment. Natalie Chanin, the owner of Alabama Chanin, cited a colleague's experience working as a designer for Gap and developing product in India. Chanin said her friend saw blue dye pumped into a river at a dye-house, which children were drinking from further downriver, concluding, “If that's how I have to make fashion, then I don't want to

make fashion” (D. Thomas, 2019, p. 95). The first-hand experience of the author of this research confirms this is not an isolated incident. Placing people at the centre of an integrated design and make the Localism model ensures transparency in production, as the two functions are closely connected, rather than *disconnected*.

2.5.3 Dehumanisation

In an interview with Russell Brand (Brand, 2019), research Professor Brené Brown talked about the dehumanisation of the current capitalist system. Brown asked, “how do you create systems that are divorced from spirituality when those systems serve humans who are inherently spiritual?”. Brown talked about the dangers of what she described as “rampant dehumanisation”. She went on to talk about her work with CEO’s of large organisations, who seek her help to improve their companies. The dichotomy, Brown acknowledged, was where people and the planet are seen as commodities to maximise profits almost at any cost. In contrast, these influential leaders are “are human, and they are as desperate for the things we want such as love, oneness, kindness, as we are”. Brown has researched the topic of dehumanisation and cites the following definition, “the psychological process of demonising the enemy, making them seem less than human and hence not worthy of humane treatment” (B. Brown, 2018).

In 2018, Thomas wrote about the physical and mental after-effects the Rana Plaza factory collapse still had on former employees. Some unable to work due to a “crushed spinal cord” or “smashed kidneys” (D. Thomas, 2018). Other survivors, unable to cope with memories of their colleague’s brains spilt on the floor, committed suicide. For human beings to witness such atrocities – not in the field of war, but *a factory producing clothes* should be beyond comprehension in the 21st Century.

Were more of the clothes buying public subjected to such visions, it could be argued that fast fashion purchases might become as taboo as single-use plastic did overnight after the airing of Blue Planet II (Attenborough, 2017). Events such as Rana Plaza or those described in the Leicester factories have become the symbol of fashion's greed and obsession with the lowest price (D. Thomas, 2018). If the values of respect for human life and planetary resources were held higher in the fashion industry's - or consumer's - consciousness, these crises could have been averted.

Localism and the connections created by working more closely together could avert such tragedies in future and go further to help both humans and the planet survive and thrive.

2.6 Fashion Ecology

“There is a need to be sensitive to the Earth, for the destiny of the Earth identifies our own destiny, exploitation of the Earth is exploitation of the human, elimination of the aesthetic splendours of the Earth is diminishment of existence.”

(Berry, 1999, p. 175)

Repeated warnings about breaching planetary boundaries are beginning to stick in the collective conscience (Attenborough, 2017) but still require urgent action to avoid the collapse of humanity. Should the worst scenario be averted, the fashion industry should still strive to make in-roads into a radically new system. A system could be a series of small localised companies (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2013; Fletcher & Tham, 2019), networked to share resources and technology and perhaps be supported and mentored by larger businesses. Large corporate firms may not be relied upon to conduct generous acts of philanthropy or eco-initiatives without recompense. Still, a restructured system in the form of tax incentives could “grease the wheels”, as Chair of the Environmental Audit Committee

(EAC), Mary Creagh, suggested during an online discussion in April 2020 (Fashion Revolution, 2020).

This research proposes that any future fashion system must be viewed through the lens of sustainability, comprising of three parts; people, planet and profit. Ensuring that this generation lives in such a way that planetary resources are undiminished for the next.

(Brundtland, 1987). In other words, aiming to become “net positive”, which “simply means putting more back into the environment or society than you take out,” says *Forum for the Future’s* chief executive, Sally Uren (Gould, 2015). Fletcher and Grose predict that designers of the future will “work alongside economists, policymakers, ecologists, business leaders...to influence societal and cultural change” (Fletcher & Grose, 2012, p. 181); therefore, any future fashion model must consider these interconnecting areas.

With similar aims to this research, *The Great Transition: The Promise and Lure of The Times Ahead* (Raskin et al., 2002) sees human development as a central tenet to its vision and claims it “is galvanised by the search for a deeper basis for human happiness and fulfilment” along with the “desire for a rich quality of life, strong human ties and connection to nature”(Raskin et al., 2002, p. 43). The Great Transition is a crucial text exploring the ideal ecological framework to embed the Localism model in what Raskin describes as a “New Sustainability Paradigm” (Raskin et al., 2002). While he is realistic enough to accept the current conditions of inequality and dehumanisation make these aims unlikely in the short term, Raskin prophesied that “the cunning of history is sure to bring surprises. Some may not be welcome” (Raskin et al., 2002, p. 43). The arrival of Covid-19 could be the unwelcome surprise Raskin imagined. An albeit forced, opportunity to reset, creating the ideal “landscape” (Fletcher & Tham, 2019) in which to start the *New Sustainability Paradigm* (Raskin et al., 2002), called Localism. Three scenarios are outlined, of which the ideal plan is

Great Transitions, which “envision a sustainable and desirable future emerging from new values, a revised model of development and the active engagement of civil society” (Raskin et al., 2002, p. 16). When setting out his vision for Great Transition, Raskin noted that there would be four key actors required to move toward the New Sustainability Paradigm; governmental organisations, transnational corporations, NGO’s (Non-governmental organisations) and spiritual communities. He acknowledges the fourth as the most intangible, yet also the most important, as the “critically underlying element”. Raskin suggests that real change relies on a spread of public awareness and “the spread of values that underscore the quality of life, human solidarity and environmental sustainability” (Raskin et al., 2002, p. x). The vision set out by Raskin underpins the whole concept of Localism, and therefore the aim is to create a network of businesses that achieve these outcomes for both people and the planet.

In a fashion context, the *Drift Report* (Buchel et al., 2018) acknowledges “Transitions are large-scale shifts in societal systems that emerge over decades” which usually occur under some sort of pressure. Such as a global pandemic or an imminent collapse of eco-systems perhaps. It goes on to say, “after which a fundamentally different way of thinking, doing and organising becomes dominant and the system reaches a new equilibrium” (Buchel et al., 2018, p. 6). The description of sustainability as reaching an “equilibrium” is covered in the 30-year update of *Limits to Growth*. The authors note that little has changed for the better since the original text was published, despite “well-intentioned, but half-hearted responses” (Meadows et al., 2004, p. xvi). Meadows suggests that unchecked exponential growth, a cause of “overshoot” to planetary boundaries, and so to “Transition to a Sustainable System” the structure requires system change (Meadows et al., 2004, Chapter 7).

While this may seem unconnected to domestic garment production, the need for system change has been identified by fashion academics and industry reports alike. Although this research focuses on the human ethic angle as a departure point, “boundaries are important” (Gould, 2015). Sally Uren adds: “If your biggest impacts are societal, then that’s where you should focus...A big positive societal impact then isn’t justified at the expense of a large negative environmental one”(Gould, 2015), suggesting ethical gains must be matched ecologically.

Defined by Raskin’s “Distant Vision”, current “conspicuous consumption” will be deemed “vulgar”, as already signalled by the BoF and their suggested future trend of “anti-consumerism”(Business of Fashion, 2020). Replacing it will be pride in local, regional differences and resources, focusing on creativity, culture and relationships. Work will be a mixture of both technologies replacing mundane menial tasks and artisan based “sophisticated simplicity” businesses (Raskin et al., 2002, pp. 44–45).

In *Earth Logic*, all fashion stakeholders are urged to put “planet before profit” and do so at pace, citing the timespan before the ecological tipping point, as ten years, which the authors point out is “the same as a child’s time at school” (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 29). Fletcher and Tham set out a framework plan of “landscapes” for researchers and activists to follow. One such landscape is Localism (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, pp. 48–51) which “favours the use of nearby resources, place-specific knowledge and community self-reliance”. It also “creates a sense of rooted identity and community, which energises work” (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 48), aligning with Schumacher’s thoughts on people and place (Schumacher, 1993).

Fletcher has previously identified Localism as one of many potential “antidotes” towards fashion unsustainability (Fletcher, 2014, p. 167). In *Sustainable Fashion and Textiles: Design Journeys*, she defines part of Localism as “proximity of place of production to consumption”

(Fletcher, 2014, p. 167). Fletcher suggests that adopting a system based on Localism would result in “a less homogenous or cloned society”, which could reflect the aesthetic unique to different regions' people and place (Fletcher, 2014, p. 168). Fletcher cites *Alabama Chanin* (Fletcher, 2014, pp. 169–172) as does Dana Thomas (D. Thomas, 2019, Chapter 4), as an example of the Localism business model in action. Designer Natalie Chanin had previously worked in New York within the global fashion industry. She returned home to her Tennessee roots to pursue what she describes as “The Nurturing benefits of a small town”(D. Thomas, 2019, p. 98). Fletcher points out that “shifting to a smaller scale of activity changes the relationship between material, people, place, community and environment” (Fletcher, 2014, p. 106), which is evident at Alabama Chanin.

A report produced by Mistra Future Fashion suggested that the cut & sew element “causes only 15.6% of a garment’s ecological impact” of its lifespan (Mistra Future Foundation, 2019, pp. 14–15). Suggestions to improve manufacturing impact were delivered in a single sentence “Most positive impact within the production line can be done by switching to renewable energy, for both electricity and heat in the production process.” With 10.8% attributed to “use phase” transportation, and a 64.3% combined total for the fibre, yarn, fabric and “wet treatment” thereof, it would suggest that there is scope to reduce the transport percentage through a Localism model. Still, significant attention must be given to fabric selection and usage due to its considerable environmental load of ecological impact (Mistra Future Foundation, 2019, p. 15).

In summary, once the fabric has been produced, it would appear that transportation and energy consumption have the greatest environmental cost in the garment production process. Therefore, the proximity of actors within the Localism model could mitigate some of this impact. Geographical changes to where manufacturers are more locally situated

would create steps to *transition* toward the New Sustainability Paradigm that Raskin envisaged.

2.7 Fashion Economics

The third but equally important part of the sustainability pillars definition is economics. Profit has sometimes been pilloried among fashion environmentalists (Fletcher & Tham, 2019; Williams, 2019), who appear to see profit and planet as mutually exclusive, rather than fundamental elements within the fashion structure, that really just need to be in balance – or equilibrium as Meadows put it (Meadows et al., 2004). Yet profit is a fundamental component of business survival, providing jobs, livelihoods and tax revenue. According to Future Fashion Factory, luxury fashion alone is worth £32billion to the UK economy, noting this figure is “north of £70billion” when adding in high street spending and employs 890,000 people across the sector (Future Fashion Factory, 2019). Therefore, the proposed model of Localism must work economically in order to be a viable future fashion option. Professor Klaus Schwab, the founder of the *World Economic Forum*, sees the post-pandemic landscape as an opportunity for what he calls *The Great Reset* (Schwab, 2020a), calling for global economic, social and environmental reform.

“The pandemic represents a rare but narrow window of opportunity to reflect, reimagine, and reset our world to create a healthier, more equitable, and more prosperous future”.

Nobel winning economist, Joseph Stiglitz, noted in the 1970s that *shareholder capitalism* had not maximised societal welfare. Like Schwab, Stiglitz sees a move towards an economic model built on a system of *stakeholder capitalism*. A move towards stakeholder capitalism

would mean that company profits are used to benefit shareholders and employees, education, and the environment (D'Souza, 2020; Schwab, 2020b). Stiglitz acknowledges that many CEOs may want to do the right thing, but “they know they have competitors that don't” (STIGLITZ & BADRÉ, 2019), which keeps them locked in the status quo, which Raskin would term as Conventional Worlds (Raskin, 2010). While the word “capitalism” strikes fear into many a fashion sustainability advocate, alternative economic structures must be explored. When examining the localism model's viability, the critical factors are human ethics, minimal environmental impact, and sound economics. While the topic of economics has not been explored in-depth, it is crucial to acknowledge it as one of the key pillars of sustainability (Brundtland, 1987). Schumacher states that “small scale operations are always likely to be less harmful” and that “smaller groups will take better care of their local region” and also that “family, work and relationships established by work, are the true foundations of society” (Schumacher, 1993). This small and caring approach to work has risen in response to the pandemic. *The Good Business Festival* held online in October 2020 featured experts from medicine, sport, finance, ecology, government and retail. A key theme encouraged a new business approach post-pandemic, focusing on kindness and introducing a “conscious capitalism”. Whilst acknowledging that profit is fundamental to business, it needs to be kinder in a “Caring Economy” (Wood, 2020). In a panel discussion entitled *Capitalism After Covid*, Rebecca Henderson, professor at Harvard Business School, claimed that “capitalism is broken”. However, Henderson also noted that “we are in the midst of a transition” to a new economic future, citing research from 300 firms globally, focusing on building businesses with “purpose” to make a profit that also benefits society and the environment. Henderson said research suggests that firms that score highly on purpose-driven models or environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) are out-performing

their competitors (The Good Business Festival, 2020). Her fellow panellists, Isabelle Toledano of investment bank UBS, and Leila Kamdem-Fotso, from global auditing and accounting firm Mazars, both agreed that the public would rely on the financial sector to raise funds in order to move towards a low carbon society (The Good Business Festival, 2020).

As illustrated with Elizabeth Suzann's demise, creative, ecological and ethical values and vision are not always matched with financial ability. Kate Hills' business hit financial difficulty after a few years. She admits that designers trained in the 1980s and 1990s were very good at designing and making but were not taught the financial side and therefore had little business acumen (Hills, 2018). This is a key finding in many fashion businesses, such as Howies, who admitted, in an article called *We Sold our Eco-Dream to Timberland*, to being good at the creative role, but not at the finances (Shepard, 2008). Such findings reinforce this research argument that focus must be given to a sound economic framework. Subsequently, Hills decided to close the business and get "a proper job" (Hills, 2018). The disparity between being a creative designer who can make clothes and being a successful business person is something Angela McRobbie also identified (McRobbie, 1998, Chapter 8). This evidence suggests any business operating within a Localism structure must be economically sound.

2.8 Is Technology an Answer?

"There must be technological advance, and personal change, and longer planning horizons. There must be greater respect, caring and sharing across political boundaries" (Meadows et al., 2004, p. xv)

In *Limits to Growth: The 30-year Update*, Meadows et al. suggest there is a place in the world for technology and recall writing the first edition of their book in 1971 on electric typewriters, to the comparative ease of the technological advances and computerisation which streamlined the process three decades later (Meadows et al., 2004, p. 205). Similarly, in garment manufacturing, the use of technology can aid production without eliminating human-only sewing skills. In other words, “we can count on technical efficiencies to help ease the human ecological footprint back down below the earth’s limits with elegance and minimal sacrifice” (Meadows et al., 2004, p. 205).

2.8.1 Lean and Local Manufacturing

Lean manufacturing is an emerging fashion sustainability system based on a method developed by Japanese car manufacturer Toyota, devised in the mid 20th Century to increase economic growth by eliminating waste from the production process. The system focuses on creating value from the customer viewpoint and removing anything that does not contribute value to the end product and aims to “maximise human potential by empowering workers to continuously improve their work” (Skhmot, 2017b).

UK heritage brands Mulberry, Burberry and Church’s shoes are examples of companies that have adopted a lean manufacturing approach (Cincik, 2020). Hareesh Karambella is Director of Production at Church’s, owned by the Prada Group and has 500 employees in the UK. Karambella previously worked within production at Burberry, which has already adopted the lean manufacturing model. He is now in the process of implementing a lean model at Church’s by removing unnecessary machinery and creating space in the factory to allow the company to re-shore production of all products to the UK, currently made for them by Prada in Italy (Cincik, 2020). The so-called “seven wastes” which aim to be eliminated within the lean model are identified by the acronym TIMWOOD (Skhmot, 2017a):

- **Transportation** – time and money wasted by the unnecessary movement of products and materials
- **Inventory** – carrying too much stock
- **Motion** – the wasted efforts in the movement of people
- **Waiting** – excess time wasted between processes
- **Overproduction** – making too much
- **Over-processing** – doing more than is needed
- **Defects** – producing faulty or sub-standard goods

Academic research identifies that companies employ this method of sustainability “not to be cool”, but rather that the environmental savings of water, energy and waste, have economic benefits (Costa Maia et al., 2019). The Lean model principles have also been distilled into three core areas of purpose, process and people (Womack et al., 2007), which link directly with the proposed Localism model. The aim is to create clothing with low environmental impact and made to order to avoid overproduction waste. The process is through locally based units where designers and makers are under one roof, limiting transportation and motion waste. And the focus is on people and their professional and personal development.

Other areas for innovation to streamline garment development have been quickly implemented due to the pandemic, such as virtual range reviews, 3D sampling and 3D design (Business of Fashion, 2020, p. 32). Yet, new technology has been transforming the fashion sector since the advent of the industrial sewing machine in 1851 (Phizacklea, 1990). Benetton, the Italian knitwear brand successful during the 1980s was an early adopter of technology to streamline their business, a practice later adopted and developed by Zara (D.

Thomas, 2019) and now commonplace within the industry. Phizacklea notes that Benetton adopted a “best of both Worlds” system. They outsourced all the labour-intensive aspects of the business - manufacture and retail - and instead invested in electronic point of sales data (EPOS) systems to accurately track sales by style, colour and size. The technology took the guesswork out of the buying process and increased the buys' accuracy by reacting immediately to consumer sales data. Benetton successfully utilised methods, now known as lean manufacturing, and technology to enhance their business in what was seen as innovative at the time. They outsourced the retail operation to store owners, similar to franchisees, but without the license fee, so Benetton had zero shop fit costs. There were no stockrooms; therefore, no excess stock-holding and all stock was visible on the shelves and replenished by what was recognised as modern technology EPOS (Phizacklea, 1990; Jin & Cedrola, 2016). The Business of Fashion (BoF) reported in September 2020 that Zara’s lean manufacturing model provided flexibility for the retailer during the pandemic due to the proximity of its factories in Spain and neighbouring regions. It reportedly reduced its stock-in-trade by 19% whilst achieving an online sales increase of 74% and seeks to lower inventory levels in the future as part of its lean model (Orihuela, 2020). This low stock, speedy reaction to sales data, with reduced or zero bricks and mortar costs, is similar to a direct to consumer models (DTC), which are growing in popularity. There is increasing evidence that more brands are considering adopting a DTC model following the pandemic (Hoffman, 2020). It appears that the implementation of technology can enhance fashion businesses to varying degrees. Whether that be via, what is now considered fundamental, sales data analysis EPOS systems, or more sophisticated digital customisation technology as evident at Church’s.

Within certain parts of the fashion industry, designers have taken it upon themselves to change the system. In chapter 4 of *Fashionopolis*, Thomas highlighted three American brands who saw the use of domestic, ethical and local production as integral to their business models (D. Thomas, 2019). Alabama Chanin, Billy Reid and Elizabeth Suzann all started businesses in their respective home state of Tennessee, formerly America's t-shirt manufacturing hub. The three designers utilised machinists out of retirement and also trained their own. Natalie Chanin, the owner of Alabama Chanin, employs freelance sewers where work is awarded according to quality and timelines (not speed) of work (D. Thomas, 2019, p. 98). Finished garments are then returned a couple of days later, signed by the maker. Some of Chanin's garments retail at thousands of dollars, but she adds, "I pay my people right, I don't drive a Mercedes, I drive a Prius. I live a modest life" (D. Thomas, 2019, p. 99).

In the UK, companies have been quietly operating in what could also be considered sustainable business models. Rita Britton owned the Pollyanna boutique in Barnsley for over 50 years. She was the first UK stockist of avant-garde Japanese brands, Comme des Garcons and Yohji Yamamoto (Sherwood, 1997), appreciating their unique and uncompromising design aesthetic. Britton closed Pollyanna in 2014 but continued to develop her own label, Nomad Atelier, utilising fabrics produced in neighbouring Huddersfield and Leeds and employing pattern cutters and machinists in her native town of Barnsley. Localism in action.

"There are still women out there – in their early 60s – who were SR Gent's sample machinists. This has been a bee in my bonnet for years, getting manufacturing back in this country, because there has never been a better time to do it."

Rita Britton, May 2020 (Smith, 2020)

Britton employs these experienced machinists to produce her own label range. SR Gent was a supplier to Marks and Spencer, as was Dewhirst, some of whose machinists were employed by Hiut Denim in Wales (Connor, 2013).

2.9 Fast and Slow Fashion Knowledge

Founder of an organisation called *slowLab*, Caroline Strauss, thinks that “Slower” forms of thinking, learning and sharing...are essential to sensing and moving toward more sustainable forms of living” (Fletcher & Tham, 2015, p. 82). As Localism is being suggested as a sustainable, or regenerative, fashion business model, it will perhaps utilise fabrics in new ways. In *Cradle to Cradle Design* (Braungart et al., 2007), it is proposed that “less bad” does not always mean good, “Eco-efficiency is principally a strategy for *damage management and guilt reduction*. It begins with an assumption that industry is *100% bad* and proceeds with the goal of attempting to make it *less bad*”. The authors also suggest that, contrary to the often-repeated, buy-less-use-more ethos, products do not need a longer lifespan to be eco-effective. They go further in celebrating “creative and extravagant” use of materials, providing those materials can remain in the supply chain (Braungart et al., 2007). Braungart et al. do not see recycling as a “magic bullet” and argue that the recycled materials' quality depletes, producing instead a “downcycling” of fibres. Away from materials and looking at design, Braungart et al. offer a combination strategy of eco-efficiency and eco-effectiveness, defined respectively as “doing things the right way and doing the right things” (Braungart et al., 2007, p. 3).

Part of Elizabeth Suzann’s mission statement is still the intention to do things “the right way”, professing that the business cares deeply about both making the products and doing business in the right way. The right way, they explain, is having “respect for the people we

work with, relationships, our company culture, the environment, humanity, the natural materials we build our products from” (Elizabeth Suzann, 2020).

Fast and Slow are key themes within fashion sustainability research, with Clark first conceptualising the idea of a “Slow Fashion” movement (Clark, 2008), a topic later explored further (Fletcher, 2010; Fletcher & Tham, 2015, Chapter 6). Speeds of design in general, not specific to just fashion, are explored by David Orr in relation to human activity and its impact on the environment (Orr, 2002). In his chapter on Fast and Slow Knowledge (Orr, 2002, Chapter 3), Orr notes that the speed at which humans learn is as it has always been – “rather slow” and suggests humanity may already have all the valuable knowledge necessary for our times. Orr reasons that while the fast knowledge system has created the rise of the industrial era and rapid economic growth, the “social traps” which have resulted from that, may have an immediate benefit to those in the here and now, yet the actual costs are “deferred to others at a later time”(Orr, 2002, p. 38).

In contrast to the Slow approach, a study by Goldsworthy and Politowicz considers that “fast” or more transient fashion garments are not necessarily bad. They suggest that a “fast aesthetic could be developed - and celebrated – from the constraints and advantages of a new fast system, freed from moral approbation”(Goldsworthy & Politowicz, 2019).

Goldsworthy and Politowicz experimented with compostable fabrics, creating a shorter garment lifespan but low environmental impact. The findings presented, “the prospect of a well-designed product with an intentionally short or long lifespan, which reflects local social conditions makes the potential of a future ‘materials ecology’ become more tangible” – surmising that “The future for fashion fast and slow rests between the two, where it belongs, to include viable strategies for both”(Goldsworthy & Politowicz, 2019). However,

the authors recognised that despite advocating for collaboration across the fields of science, research and industry that “applied & commercial research can work together, but need to be viewed as different cogs in the gears of the wheels of change. Academic research is slower than industry R&D, so designing a shared supportive experience is tricky” (Goldsworthy et al., 2019, p. 49).

When applied to the current fashion system, “fast knowledge” is Fast Fashion. Instant gratification, without considering the future environmental hangover of discarded clothing or the out-of-sight-out-of-mind garment workers. Orr believes that many technological advances are enthusiastically embraced and rushed into, without considering the long-term after-effects. He cites the use of fossil fuels before discovering the effects on the climate or intensive farming without bearing in mind the social and environmental implications. When applied to Fast Fashion, Orr is saying perhaps, that slow knowledge or slow fashion would work just as well. Slow knowledge, he argues, shares prosperity within communities, but its focus is on avoiding problems rather than reacting to them. Similar to Toyota’s lean manufacturing model, which removes excess waste from the process before it has the chance to become waste. By slowing down the garment production process, through a more considered approach within a Localism model, the waste could be avoided, and the resulting prosperity shared among communities. Slow knowledge, Orr concludes, is an “elegant, resilient and sometimes complex” process which relies more on old, time-tested methods, “calibrated to fit a particular ecological and cultural context”(Orr, 2002, p. 39). When applying Orr’s theory to the proposed Localism model, research would suggest that there are lessons from the past garment manufacturing industry, which could be reimaged to fit

a contemporary ecological and cultural context. While old systems may well be “complex”, elements could be adapted and reset within a Localism structure to create a Fashion 2.0. In summary, the literature identifies that the current system is broken and cannot continue as it is. Fashion has a negative impact both ethically and environmentally, and this has long been well established. Therefore, as Fletcher and Tham urge, now is the time for action. This research has identified Localism as a potential pathway for an actionable transition towards Fashion 2.0.

2.10 Direct to Consumer (DTC)

“Department stores will be gone In the next 3 to 5 years...it’s a fundamental change in how business is done. Direct-to-consumer is the future,” so said KP McNeill, business associate of Billy Reid. Reid describes his business as a vertical. By vertical, Reid means that having available fabric and manufacturers is integral to his business. The DTC model allows Reid to retain 60-70% of the retail margin to plough back into his business. This percentage is approximately what leading retailers set as their intake margin – but they have store overheads, rent and staff to pay. Reid can pass on savings to the consumer without the risk of bricks and mortar or plough it back into his business (D. Thomas, 2019, p. 102).

In a panel discussion at the online Make it British trade show in September 2020 (Hills, 2020c), Rita Britton claimed that her direct-to-consumer model produced a low 1% rate of returned purchases because she does not provide a free-returns option. Like Reid and McNeill, Britton feels that the pandemic has brought about a much-needed sea-change within the UK fashion industry and welcomes the fact that “the high street will never be the same again” (Smith, 2020). It is worth noting that Britton operates at the luxury end of the market, which allows a significant margin to afford UK manufacturing and fabrics.

In the wake of the pandemic, US designer swimwear and lifestyle brand, Mara Hoffman in an open letter to email subscribers and Instagram followers, described the passing of her twentieth anniversary in business as a time to search for more meaning and purpose. She noted the impact of the pandemic on her business in an Instagram post on 13th September 2020. With production halted, forced staff reductions and unsaleable excess stock, Hoffman said this acted as a catalyst for change the company had long considered, “it kicked us off our hamster wheel” (Hoffman, 2020). This forced change and subsequently the desire to “examine all our parts to make changes and decisions to sustain our company and our vision” is something that Donella Meadows discusses in *Limits to Growth*. Making changes in order to sustain is vital to note here. As with this research, the point is not a total cessation of the industry, but finding ways to change not merely to sustain, which means to keep things as they are, but rather, as Donella Meadows suggests, *change the structure of the system*.

Womenswear brands Mara Hoffman (Clark, 2019) and Maggie Marilyn (Davis, 2019) are beginning to change the structure by moving away from the traditional wholesale fashion calendar seasons and into a DTC model. Hoffman observes her reaction to change as one sparked by how she felt. The feeling that carrying on as before felt wrong, and the shift to less volume and more season-less, timeless dressing felt right. In her chapter on *Transitions to a Sustainable System*, Meadows vision for system change can be based on what is already in place. Tearing things down to rebuild in a new way is not required to achieve “equilibrium” and work within planetary boundaries. Instead, she says:

“The same combination of people, organisations and physical structures can behave completely differently, if the actors can see a good reason for

doing so and if they have the freedom, perhaps the incentive, to change.

Such a transformation need not be directed centrally: it can be unplanned, natural, evolutionary, exciting, joyful” (Meadows et al., 2004, p. 237)

Similarly, New Zealand sustainable brand *Maggie Marilyn* also announced the decision to move to a DTC (Direct to Consumer) model, cutting out the retailers and their wholesale mark-up. The DTC model enables both brands to lower their retail prices, avoid over-makes and pass on the saving to the consumer whilst retaining liquidity within their businesses. “Faster, Stronger, Bolder” is how Hoffman described the move and estimated the reduction in retail prices to be up to 30% (Hoffman, 2020). After graduating in Fashion and Sustainability, *Maggie Marilyn* owner Maggie Hewitt decided she had a choice to either “turn away from the industry altogether or take on the challenge to build an ambitious, passionate brand that proves protecting people and the planet is wholeheartedly possible” (Davis, 2019). *Maggie Marilyn* is seen as somewhat unique in the industry in making it a founding pillar of the company structure to use local manufacturers, ensuring transparency within the supply chain. Hewitt holds photoshoots inside her factories and sees the individuals who make the clothes as a fundamental part of her business. Their importance is such an extent they are likened to family members, “I think it’s becoming increasingly important to know who is making our clothes”, Hewitt says, “They are as much a part of our lives as we are of theirs” (Davis, 2019).

Chapter 3: Methodology

Earth Logic: Action Research Plan suggests a series of potential “landscapes” to follow, with the intent to pave a real and *active* pathway to a new fashion future. Localism being one such landscape. Fletcher and Tham advocate an action research method, which adopts a collaborative approach between theory and practice, with cycles of action and reflection (Heron & Reason, 2001, p. 1) and so is appropriate for this study. Fletcher and Tham note that action research “works *with* rather than *on* people” (Fletcher & Tham, 2019, p. 23). Therefore, when applied to this study, the methodology works *with* industry instead of *about* it, in an attempt to address the disconnect highlighted in Chapter 1. Heron and Reason developed action research after highlighting the disparity between researchers “who have all the ideas”, observing people or asking questions, concluding that “the trouble with doing this kind of research, is that there is often very little connection between the researcher’s thinking and the concerns and experiences of the people who are actually involved” (Heron & Reason, 2001, p. 1). As this research comes from an inside industry viewpoint, employing an action research approach aims to connect the researcher with the participants more closely to understand the issues better.

A range of academic literature was reviewed, covering the framework subjects of ethics, economics and ecological projections, within which Localism could be embedded. Historical literature focusing on the role of UK manufacturing was also reviewed to contextualise and ground Localism in an industrial reality.

Primary data was collected during interviews with key industry professionals, some of whom added to the discussion of UK manufacturing history with recollections of lived experience. Due to the author’s substantial industry experience and knowledge, a

phenomenological, semi-structured interview approach was taken (Leavy, 2014) to focus on the participants' lived experiences. Leavy suggests that important data can be inadvertently left out during a more structured approach. Here the methodology allowed the interviewee to "spill beyond the structure" (Leavy, 2014, p. 285), allowing alternative concepts and key themes to emerge and be explored further.

The interviews were scheduled just as the first UK lockdown was enforced. Consequently, interviews were not conducted face-to-face; instead, telephone, Zoom, and email were utilised to generate, collect and record the data (Flynn & Foster, 2009, p. 119). In addition, some pre-arranged interviews had to be abandoned due to furloughing status or participants involved in the manufacture of PPE, though this has not been detrimental to the study.

All interviewees were previously unknown to the researcher.

The participants, who all agreed to be named, were:

- David Raey, a Production Director with extensive experience setting up manufacturing for Barbour in the UK, Warnaco in the US, and with a long career working for three prominent Marks and Spencer suppliers: Dewhirst, Bentwood and Cavendish (for interview transcript, see Appendix 1).
- Katrina Armitage; 36 years experience designing and supplying womenswear to mid-market brands on the UK high street, such as Phase 8, Wallis, Monsoon and House of Fraser (for interview transcript, see Appendix 2).
- Fazane Fox, owner of Production Lab, a business providing sampling, product development, sourcing and production services (for interview transcript, see Appendix 3).
- Amanda Riley, a designer with extensive overseas experience, having lived and worked in Milan and Hong Kong, supplying brands in the UK and USA. Amanda is the

founder of both Fashion Rebellion and the Fashion Factory, is a keen environmentalist and Extinction Rebellion member. Set up in 2010, the Fashion Factory teaches children between the ages of 8-16 to sew and upcycle (for interview transcript, see Appendix 4).

- A short email interview with Brant Richards, co-owner of Hebden Bridge-based menswear brand, HebTroCo, was conducted. (for interview transcript, see Appendix 5)

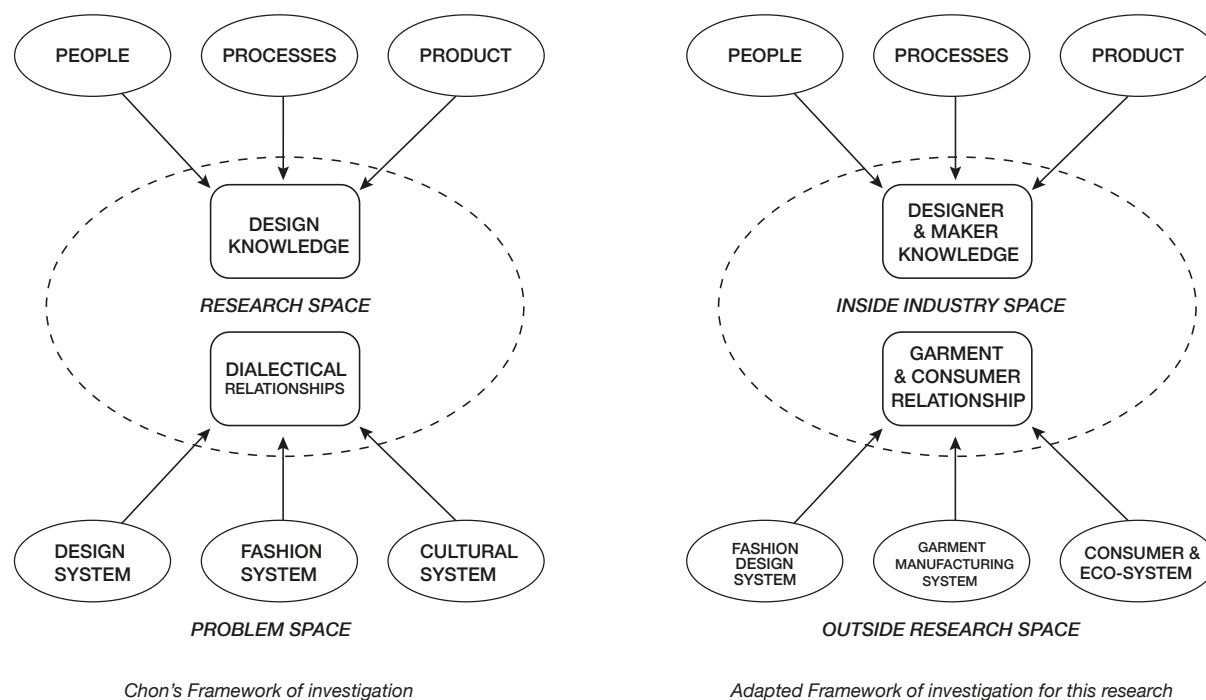
Off the record conversations were also held with various fabric suppliers, factory owners and Kate Hills, founder of Make it British and a board member of UKFT.

Qualitative data collected during oral interviews were transcribed and grouped into key themes to understand lived human experience within the fashion industry (Kawamura, 2011, p. 104).

In *Exploring Research Space in Fashion: The Fluidity of Knowledge between designers, individuals and society*, Chon describes the exchange of design knowledge as “fluid” (Rodgers & Yee, 2017, p. 73), involving designers, individuals and society in a meaning-making process. This framework aligns with the aim of this research to address the disconnected nature of the current fashion system between the stakeholders in the process, that of designer-maker-consumer. Chon’s framework of investigation (see figure 2) fits the approach of this research. Also, it aligns with Heron and Reason's theory that traditional research can often disconnect the researcher from the subject (Heron & Reason, 2001).

Figure 3 illustrates Chon’s framework when explicitly adapted to this research.

Figure 3.



This study has been conducted from an inside industry perspective, where the researcher is an experienced fashion industry professional and therefore draws on that experience to exchange design knowledge. Referencing Olsen & Heaton 201, p81, Chon highlights the designer's knowledge moving from tacit to explicit through a process of “knowing through making or doing” (Rodgers & Yee, 2017, p. 74). The transfer of knowledge and ideas from the designer to the maker and back again, then further transferred to the end-user, is a central tenet of this research; therefore, it is essential to study the interplay between creative thought and action to assess levels of connection or disconnect.

An ethics review was undertaken before starting this research (see appendix 6). The participants were given an information sheet about the study and how their data might be used (see appendix 7). All participants signed the attached consent form (see appendix 8).

Chapter 4: Results

Interviews were conducted with six industry professionals. After careful consideration, four interview transcripts were selected for analysis, with the short email responses from the fifth participant used to support the arguments presented.

4.1 UK Manufacturing: Stuck in a time warp

“(UK) Quality is not good enough, in my opinion. Service is not good enough.”

The industry experts’ general view was that while many UK factories had gone out of business by the end of the 20th century, the ones that remained **failed to invest** in “new efficiencies”—resulting in, as one interviewee put it, “factories that are stuck in the 1990s”. Other participants strongly agreed with this view.

“Many UK factories are operating in a 1980s or 1990s methodology.”

One womenswear designer and developer agreed that many entrepreneurs who set up in the 1980s and 1990s “did the best they could with what they had at the time”, but with the event of mass off-shoring, “they are not going to wait around for 30 years for it to come back”. All participants agreed that quality, technical ability and service lagged behind overseas facilities. Cost of production in the UK varied according to the industry experts, with one saying they are “not as expensive as you think” and another expressing surprise that prices were so high.

All agreed that the UK cannot compete on Fast Fashion, low priced product, but that there is an opportunity to service what KA described as “the middle”, women earning over £30,000 who were looking for quality pieces with longevity, where factories could expect orders of

300-500 per style, but “not 5000”. All agreed that the luxury end of the market was well catered for in the UK. All expressed disdain, but full knowledge of, the dubious and well-documented practices of Leicester factories.

4.1.1 Service levels

Levels of service were described as poor, with one reasoning that admin staff were often unaffordable, “To give them their dues, they often don’t have enough staff to give you good service”. This expert explained that when launching her own business, she sold her house to raise capital and moved back with her parents, and so had some insight into the financial struggles facing UK manufacturers. Brand owner BR cited frustration at factories that cannot follow sampling processes. However, he admitted to being without prior industry experience, “we are marketing people really” (see appendix 5). To counter this, many manufacturers have anecdotally expressed frustration at being sent incomplete instructions or inaccurate tech packs from customers with little to zero experience of garment construction or manufacturing, expecting the manufacturers to fill in the gaps in their knowledge. The manufacturers can unfairly get the blame for inaccurate sampling from those who they, in turn, see as time-wasters. BR suggested that UK factories should not offer low minimum order quantities (MOQs) to deter time-wasters, saying, “it actively makes me avoid manufacturers who offer that (low MOQs) (see appendix 5).

4.1.2 Failure to forward plan

Disorganisation on the part of UK manufacturers, coupled with a lack of clear communication, was also a shared frustration cited by participants. These views were backed up by Kate Hills, founder of Make it British, an organisation created to promote UK suppliers and manufacturers and connect with potential customers. Hills said, “If you happen to call them when they have a gap in production space, they will see you, but

otherwise... it's just lack of planning". KA expressed admiration for those entrepreneurs who set up their own small units servicing the luxury sector, but voiced concern regarding the rigid nature of the fashion calendar and the inability for brands to think outside of this calendar and "create drops on a monthly basis", citing that the production units operate on a "feast or famine" basis where orders all come at once, followed by fallow periods of inactivity (see appendix 2).

4.1.3 UK Manufacturing of the Past – Marks and Spencer

Recollections of the successful history of UK manufacturing focus on the positive impact and measures needed to reimagine the sector. Marks and Spencer (M&S) was considered the benchmark of the UK clothing sector. One expert interviewee has extensive experience working with M&S in various capacities in garment production, spanning an entire career. Starting as a trainee work-study engineer on the factory shop-floor, he rose through the ranks to Manufacturing Director and held positions at three of the largest M&S suppliers.

"They (Marks and Spencer) dominated the UK high street, and they were held up around the world, not just in clothing, but for everything – best in class."

(see appendix 1)

The expert went on to explain how M&S reshaped the way business was done in the UK; they were part of the Cadbury's report during the 1980s and 1990s. His opinion was that M&S implemented good business practise across their supply chain, working *with* their suppliers rather than above them.

Their influence over the UK manufacturing sector cannot be overstated. They insisted suppliers trained their employees correctly, and the participant went on to complete a

degree at the insistence of M&S. Added to that, the retailer always paid on time. If suppliers were short on work, the company would supply another order. To sum up, the expert said simply, “One of the best-managed supply chains I’ve ever seen in my life. If you go into Barbour today, you’ll see it’s got a very modern slick, fast, efficient supply chain. And it’s based on M&S principles”. The shadow of Marks & Spencer’s impact looms long and large, though contrary to this participant’s recollection, evidence in the history books describes an opposing viewpoint.

4.1.4 Leicester

“I would say 98% make abroad. In fact, the only ones in the UK are the designers that sell for £200 plus. So mainly, anyone who makes in the UK who isn’t in that bracket is in Leicester, which, as you know, is very questionable sourcing, and they might be making really quick jersey, two seams, and they’ve got it really going through like a conveyor belt” (see appendix 2)

All participants, and many other anecdotal recollections, expressed full knowledge of the disreputable practices in Leicester factories, and none would consider using them for their production.

Production company owner FF admitted she had lost “a lot of money” and had made many mistakes in her early years of business. She described the “one time” she had worked with a factory in Leicester, yet despite being located in the East Midlands herself, refused to do so again. When the researcher recounted a warning from a fabric supplier in Leicester, who, when asked for a recommendation for a reputable garment manufacturer in the city, replied, “No, because they are all rogues”, FF wholeheartedly agreed.

“So, we used a Leicester factory once. And I still have a thousand pairs of knickers in the room next to me, with holes in, care labels caught into the binding, and it was an absolute mess. He won’t give me my money back; I’ve got to take him to court. He subcontracted it as well. I turned up to do the AQL (Acceptable Quality Level), and he was like,

“I’ll take you to the factory down the road”

I was like “, What do you mean the factory down the road?”.

He said, “They’re being made down there. Our factory’s burnt down”.

I said, “What do you mean your factory’s burnt down?!”

I was like, OK, and when I got there, nothing was ready. A thousand pairs of knickers were supposed to be ready for me to inspect. Nothing had been sewn. I said make sure those production samples are the same as the sample I’ve approved. “Yes, Mrs F, we will do that”, and then when it got to my client, every single pair got rejected. So yes, he’s an absolute rogue! One of my girls who works part-time for me, who we’re now going to employ full-time, works part-time for him as well, and they were made to work during lockdown (the first one when it was against the law). She has no idea what’s going on; they haven’t been communicating with her, she doesn’t know if she’ll get paid. She said the environment is toxic, it’s just awful. So, no, I would never use the Leicester factories.” (see appendix 3)

4.2 Differences in Mindset - China and UK

All participants discussed comparisons to working with China. When citing differences between UK and Chinese factories, the key theme is attitude, mindset, and ease of work.

One participant said,

“I saw them [the Chinese] do things I did not think were possible, in terms of attitude, drive, commitment. Factories being built in days, roads to the factory... I saw major facilities coming together in a matter of – a month!” (see appendix 1)

Another industry professional, who had worked as a product developer in the UK for a Chinese based womenswear supplier, expressed amazement that she could get garments made more easily in China than in the UK, “working with people in another language was easier. I thought, am I doing something wrong?” (see appendix 3). This view was also held by BR who said it’s easier to work with the Far East (see appendix 5). These factors led most of the participants to prefer overseas production to UK, yet all expressed a keen desire to make in the UK again and support British industry. Also, worth noting here, are the views of former designer AR. She described meetings with her boss in Hong Kong, where he was “screaming” during an argument with a supplier over 10 cents, to save money across a 500,000-piece order. From experience, this is an accurate depiction of the mass-market end of the industry, and one which caused AR to leave the industry completely (see appendix 4).

4.3 World Leading Manufacturing: Portugal, USA and Sri Lanka

Sri Lanka were identified as model on which to base a new approach. DR described the transformation of the industry there over the last 20 years, as inspiring.

“They went from cut and sew sheds, where you had to send in all your own fabrics etc, into one of the most advanced manufacturing [facilities]– they design, make their own textiles, they manufacture” (see appendix 1).

America has heavily invested in Sri Lankan factories that were described as “totally eco-driven”. He said there are many factories that are carbon neutral, producing their own solar power and water processing activities, “they put water back into the rivers that is cleaner than the water they’ve taken out!” (see appendix 1)

The inevitable upward mobility shift in worker aspirations and prosperity, was identified by DR, causing rising wage costs and the desire to find more appealing office-based employment “sounds familiar doesn’t it?” he added. But instead, Sri Lanka have worked with this set of circumstances, and changed the structure and nature of work, investing in artificial intelligence and other “immersive technologies” so they are not completely reliant on cheap labour.

4.3.1 USA

An example was given of a production facility in America, which when built, will house 2000 employees, in areas of IT, Design and manufacturing. Many of the traditional manufacturing roles will be overseeing technology to produce the garments. Seen as a vision for the future, this gives large (unnamed) brands the opportunity to offer customisable options made and delivered to the customer within 48 hours. Crucially, this factory of the future has had significant investment from the US government.

4.3.2 Portugal

Factories in Portugal were praised for their willingness to achieve whatever the clients requested, they are also largely vertical with mills either incorporated into their

manufacturing factories, or very close by. All the latest machinery is available, meaning their customers can offer the highest quality products to the marketplace.

4.4 Fashion Ethics and Sustainability

The topic of sustainability was met with scepticism by the experts, who question whether it is a passing trend and citing that many consumers are being “sold a pipe dream”. One supplier said she is regularly approached by new businesses expressing a wish to be completely sustainable “but once they realise the costs, then it’s not so attractive to be sustainable”. This view was corroborated by another interviewee who felt the public were being green-washed.

“We gave away our power 20 years ago when we allowed everything to be price driven. The public might want to kick the fast fashion habit and be ethical...but they can’t kick the addiction to price” (see appendix 2)

4.5 The Future: State-of-the-Art, Inspiring Environments and Higher Wages

Factories in Sri Lanka and Portugal were recognised among interviewees as being more modern and efficient than their UK counterparts. In Sri Lanka “every one of them is way ahead of the UK” and also, they fully understand the customer, the need for quick-turn product and how in “5-10 years, no one will accept anything that hasn’t got true provenance and is eco-acceptable” (see appendix 1), citing further examples in ways the UK sector is being left behind.

The industry experts assessed the current UK manufacturing system as old-fashioned, but keenly expressed a desire to produce in the UK and had suggestions on how future factory facilities could be reimagined. The desire for “**state-of-the art**” facilities was mentioned

frequently, citing changes as having a positive effect on workers and possibly making the job of a machinist more attractive. **English Fine Cottons** in Dukinfield, Greater Manchester was highlighted as a rare example of a modern factory environment “light, bright, airy - a place you would like to work – not like the dark old mills” (see appendix 3).

Some key points identified for change by the industry experts are as follows:

- **Increased wages:** rising wage costs in developing countries mean they are becoming less competitive with the UK. All industry experts felt that wages had to increase in the UK. One expert put it “We’ve got to pay them more. Why should I be paid more than them? It’s skilled work” (see appendix 3)
- **Developing Vertical Facilities:** In many off-shore manufacturing factories the experts cited fully vertical facilities, meaning they either have in-house fabric production capabilities or those facilities are nearby “their next-door neighbour makes the fabric”. One UK supplier noted that even when manufacturing garments in the UK, she still imports fabrics from Portugal because of higher quality, but admits this increases the overall price. (see appendix 3)
- **Marketing the job of a machinist:** “It CAN be glamorous” to new entrants and a suggestion that improving the working environment “make it young and cool, somewhere exciting for people to work”. (see appendix 2)
- **Invest in state-of-the-art factories and modern technologies:** A lack of the latest machinery means that many UK factories have failed to keep pace and achieve the same high level of manufacturing finish to a garment as their overseas counterparts.
- **Government investment** is needed to bring UK manufacturing into the 21st century in terms of eco-technologies and production efficiencies.

- **Education for Buyers:** to fully understand the production process and fabrications.
- **Fashion Education:** more thorough practical skills of sewing and pattern cutting.
- **Industry awareness** “I didn’t even know what a supplier or product developer was at Uni” more collaboration between academia and industry.
- **Green tax incentives and tariffs on imported garments** to benefit UK manufacturing, although AR was sceptical about this,

“Because people that own those businesses are probably friends with government ministers, why would they want to cap free trade or make them pay a Green tax, when he’s invited him on his super yacht next weekend?” (see appendix 4)

4.6 Practical Skills Education

Many participants cited concern regarding the skills shortage spanning generations, since the incidence of off-shoring. Therefore the subject of how to re-introduce or up-skill a new workforce was discussed.

Amanda Riley (AR), a former high street designer, had insights from the perspective of someone who had worked in the industry, but had decided to pursue an alternative career. Riley started a sewing school from her home in 2010, to teach children between the ages of 8-16 how to sew, repair and upcycle garments. This new career path was driven in part, she said, by her concerns of the environmental impact of fashion. AR acknowledged the growing appetite for a return to UK manufacturing, though had concerns about the ageing workforce and said the problem is “all the workforce is over 40”. As other interviewees and historical literature supports, AR felt that problems within UK fashion began during the off-shoring of

the 1980s “the industry has been completely and utterly destroyed since the 1980s I believe” (see appendix 4). Regards the Localism model, AR felt it was the right approach, though recognised there was a generation gap in terms of practical skills knowledge which needed to be addressed because, she said “we’ve now got a nation of kids coming out of school and they know how to sit in front of a computer, but they don’t know how to use their hands at all” adding “It’s not all going to be about design, we need people who can use their hands” (see appendix 4). She felt sewing skills should be first taught at home “I believe every household should have a sewing machine in it, so you can do basic things for yourself” and said it gave the opportunity to earn money at any age, saying she had an order book when she was 14 and making clothes for friends. AR is in talks to roll out the programme to schools in an online format and is a firm believer that sewing skills help kids mentally, and the industry generally with at least one of her former students going one to study fashion at degree level (see appendix 4).

As the literature suggests, the skills gap begins in schools and then continues into further and higher education. Participant KA mentioned that her own daughter was studying on a fashion degree course in London. She expressed disbelief at the lack of hands-on practical lessons her daughter received and instead was taught by KA’s sister, a pattern cutter, how to construct garments for her final collection.

AR made the decision to leave the industry after feeling disillusionment with the reality of the day-to-day job. Her sentiments echo many anecdotal conversations with designers over the decades, who cite the pressure to be creative within financial confines, as “soul destroying” (see appendix 4). FF said out of her class of 30 fashion students, only “4 or 5” are still working in the industry, the rest are doing other things. AR explained that her original view of fashion as “an artform” had been eroded, and blamed the use of psychology

in advertising for the rise of Fast fashion “for making us feel that we’ve got to have new things all the time”. Adding “it’s like a weapon on your brain to get you to buy stuff - so the consumers aren’t going to change”. In this, her view was shared by KA, in that the industry has served the low-cost Fast Fashion model to the consumer, and this will be a difficult “addiction” to break (see appendix 2).

Research findings concur with the literature in identifying that the lack of practical garment repair and construction ability, in that it is increasingly absent throughout the education system. As mentioned by both DR and FF, the prospect of a return to historical “dark satanic mills” is not attractive. Yet, were the factories, not factories in the traditional sense, but instead somewhere “young and cool”, then training people to construct and repair garments might feed into a reimagined sector of Localism - were the wages high enough. This will be explored in the following chapter.

Chapter 5: DISCUSSION

5.1 Barriers to Change - UK Mindset, Failure to Invest, Absence of Skills

In her ANTI_Fashion Manifesto, renowned trend forecaster Li Edelkoort stated that we are in the 21st century, but our fashion system was stuck in the 20th century (Edelkoort, 2015).

The Rana Plaza tragedy would arguably not be out of place in the 19th (D. Thomas, 2018).

The findings in this study prove that Edelkoort's assessment of the current fashion system is accurate, with both primary research and the literature confirming this view. Evidence uncovered in this research has found this to be especially pertinent in relation to UK manufacturing. DR said even the most modern UK factories are "stuck in the 1990s" and cannot compete with places like Sri Lanka on eco-efficiencies (see appendix 1). FF agreed with this view and said the same applies to Portugal for technical ability and service levels (see appendix 3). Both quality and service levels were lacking within UK manufacturers and described as "not good enough" (see appendix 3). One participant defined this as "the British laissez-faire attitude", adding that it "pervades a lot of Western democracies, they've had it too easy for too long and just got lazy basically" (see appendix 1).

Anecdotally, difficulty working with UK factories is a common complaint, which more than one participant supported. One participant said that working with China was easier "I used to deal with the Far East, far less problems there!" (see appendix 5), a view which is also widely held within the industry.

While reasons for UK manufacturing giving poor service and failing to invest in technology point to financial pressures and the inability to afford administrative staff, this also highlights a culture of missed opportunity.

Figure 4.

Barriers to change



“So far, however, sustainability efforts in the industry have not yet managed to add up to a transformation of the fashion system, and the fashion industry shows signs of initiative fatigue and slow progress”

(Buchel et al., 2018)

- *Absence of Skills
- *Aging Skilled Workforce
- *Image Problem

- *Fixed Mindsets
- *Low Tech Environments
- *Low Wages

The above quote from the Drift Report encapsulates the so far stunted progress towards fashion sustainability. While much has progressed in improving the environmental impact of textile production, actual garment manufacturing has been pilloried – is as Edelkoort pronounced – for being stuck in a bygone century.

This research set out to focus on the people who make our clothes. It has uncovered, that in the UK, a severe shortage of practical skills, beginning in the home, then an absence of practical making skills in schools and further education. Lack of skilled workers, the image problem of the industry and associated low pay, are the number one barrier to improving the prospects and flourishing of the UK manufacturing sector.

5.1.2 Investment in Technology

The research findings indicate that UK factories miss out on business because of poor organisation, failure to invest in “state-of-the-art” technology, and even simply having the wrong attitude to work. These are barriers that can be easily overcome. Research shows that participants are sanguine about prospects for the UK manufacturing industry. The investment could create a world-leading system of clean, green manufacturing bases as witnessed in other countries, embedded within local communities, drawing from local resources and existing knowledge – Slow Knowledge – as in evidence at Rita Britton’s brand, Nomad and at Hiut Denim. Investing in skills training could create a green revolution and pathway into a New Sustainability Paradigm (Raskin et al., 2002) of modern workplaces, such as English Fine Cottons, as referenced by FF (see appendix 3). A system change, to one of Localism, has the potential to create exciting and creative job roles in the UK in the production of high quality and long-lasting clothing.

However, Orr cautioned against over-enthusiasm for new technology without first considering social and environmental impacts. Technology should not replace jobs for humans in the workplace but rather enhance the production process as identified by Meadows et al. Reducing environmental impact through water treatment works, or generating solar power in the garment production process, should become a new industry standard.

DR questioned who would pay for this investment, citing the US facility that received funding from the US government. MPs and industry experts alike suggest that the UK government needs to do more. The current rhetoric on creating a green future must be backed up by both solid investments for new modern workplaces, as outlined at English Fine Cottons, but also in the form of import quotas. If UK companies were prevented from

importing vast amounts of cheap Fast Fashion product from overseas, two things could happen. The first would be that they would look to domestic production. The second could be that smaller quantities of higher-priced goods could still be imported. There is neither the machinery nor skill to produce certain types of garments to a high enough standard in the UK, so some form of global trade would need to continue.

5.1.3 Manufacturing Reform and Legislation

Both FF and KA believe that practical job roles can be made exciting and even glamorous (see appendices 2&3). The transition to this new Localism-based Fashion 2.0 could generate genuine connections between stakeholders and a sense of pride in the clothing produced and pride in the local area. The issues identified in the literature of lack of connection due to geographical distance, or lack of practical knowledge, could be overcome by introducing technology and embedding this within a design and make integrated facility.

However, as has been discovered, the UK manufacturing industry is not regulated, and buyers sourcing from overseas find it increasingly difficult to monitor the “increasingly fragmented supply chain” as detailed in the literature.

Many in the industry work in responsible and transparent ways but are tarnished by the “rogues” operating under the radar. These backstreet practices must be stamped out. As was suggested in the reports analysed in the literature review, legislative measures must be implemented and enforced. Industry bodies such as UKFT work closely with the government and would be best-placed to drive this initiative forward to reform the UK manufacturing sector.

Of course, if more designers could make patterns, samples, or even short production runs themselves, they could create their own transparent manufacturing facilities. Micro units

are growing in the UK in various forms. They could be replicated within a Localism structure, ensuring that garment workers were adequately trained and valued, in line with those working for Alabama Chanin or the former Elizabeth Suzann. Besides, brands who operate in this way could incorporate sewing and repairing workshops into their businesses, thus creating an additional income stream and reduce waste in the fashion system.

For those businesses wishing to continue out-sourcing production, adopting closer relationships with more conscientious manufacturers is paramount. Taking the example of Maggie Marilyn, forging closer bonds and making the factory owner and workers feel more a part of the brand would strengthen relationships and lead to better outcomes for all concerned. This vision of fashion sustainability is aligned with Raskin's Great Transition; post-covid and post-Brexit, this must be the short, medium, and long-term goal for UK manufacturing.

Figure 5.



Yet, there are further barriers to overcome, namely the current shopping habits of the fashion-buying public, as well as the absence of skilled garment workers in the UK. The following sections examine how these barriers can be surmounted, with real-world examples.

5.2 The Commercial Realities of Localism

Primary research suggests that UK businesses operating a Localism model would need to be positioned at the upper-mid or luxury end of the market. KA suggested the typical consumer income threshold should be upwards of £30,000 per annum to afford UK made clothing, reasoning that no one earning less than that amount could afford a “£50 blouse” (see appendix 2). KA also noted that the industry “gave away its power” 20 years ago when it became purely price-driven and went off-shore in search of the lowest manufacturing prices during the latter half of the last century. The move taken by clothing retailers to “chase the cheap needle around the globe” has driven the current low-price environment and has supported the continuation of Fast Fashion. Low-cost manufacturing relied then, as it does today, on low-wage countries and their ability to keep wages low, thus avoiding upward social mobility, which puts pressure on wage increases. The lesson of off-shoring is that it has taught consumers that clothing is cheap to manufacture, and therefore inexpensive to purchase. The hidden cost is that consumers are unaware of how or by whom the clothes are made. And so, the link between the manufacturer and consumer has widened and thus become disconnected. One way to rectify this is to utilise a Localism model, with transparency of localised production and higher retail prices to pay higher wages.

Nevertheless, this research acknowledges that adopting a Localism model would exclude large sections of society that rely on inexpensive clothing. Buying clothing could be argued as a democratic right, and that everyone living in the UK – one of the wealthiest countries in the world - should be able to afford to buy new clothes. However, as this research has found, for the current fashion system to be sustained, it means that fellow humans must suffer. Low prices have resulted in the so-called race-to-the-bottom of the Fast Fashion, low price sector. Black Friday prices in November 2020 reached as low as 8p in the UK for a dress from *Pretty Little Thing* (Blackall, 2020). Whilst selling an item of clothing at such low retail prices may seem like no more than a frivolous loss-leading marketing gimmick to gain attention, it shows an explicit lack of care. A lack of regard for the person who has made the garment and ignorance about the landfill into which the garment will inevitably be disposed. To continue the current fashion system is both unsustainable and morally unacceptable. Again, a fundamental *lack of care* is responsible. So this research urges the adoption of the Caring Economy (Wood, 2020) in the form of Localism to stop dehumanisation and reinvent the fashion sector.

As this research highlights, educating consumers is a vital part of enabling the transition to Fashion 2.0. As has already been established, to facilitate the higher wages that UK production would require, retail prices would also need to be higher. AR identified that clothes were more expensive during the 1970s and suggested that consumers instead revert to saving up for costlier items. She questioned “what is wrong” with returning to shopping habits of half a century ago, “in the 70s, you see something you like, save up for it, and you anticipate getting it, then you get it. You’d look after it, and you’d WEAR it!” (see appendix 4). The thoughts of AR align with what this research has recognised as Localism, but could

also apply to so-called Slow Fashion. AR adds “Why can’t we go back to producing *less*, but higher quality, paying a bit more for it and it lasts longer?” (see appendix 4).

Fundamentally, this is what Localism would produce; high-quality clothing in smaller quantities. If, as Kate Fletcher suggested, fashion brands were derivatives of their locale (Fletcher, 2013, p. 168), it would create a diversity of choice within the market place and encourage a healthy competition of creativity – to revitalise rather than stifle, creative output.

5.3 Investment in State-of-The-Art Factories

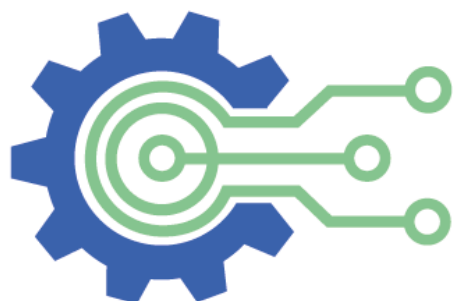
When questioned about the Localism model, DR was somewhat disparaging and suggested such methods are essentially “cottage industry”, saying they are ineffective for producing any kind of volume. Although volume is not the aim of Localism, and this view could be seen as out of step with what is required to create Fashion 2.0, it is still worthy of note as it is likely that prominent players will still exist in the industry. However, the Localism model could potentially be scaled up. Large wealthy retailers could incorporate UK manufacturing bases into their businesses or start their own. Instead of buying up smaller brands, they could invest in their own UK based, ethical manufacturing. Fully transparent and cutting out the middle man, with the potential to be financially sound, with the proper management. Both DR and FF said factories in the UK in the 21st century needed to be state-of-the-art. FF insisted that any government investment given to English Fine Cottons should be replicated for a “manufacturing hub”. She suggested that this factory should have the latest machinery to rival Portugal and be positioned in the Midlands “away from London,” saying the capital had enough smaller units (see appendix 3). Whether in the Midlands or the North, such a state-of-the-art manufacturing hub would need substantial investment. DR noted that the Americans have also invested in Sri Lanka, where even moderately sized factories are

“better equipped than the UK”, and there is widespread integration of technology in the form of artificial intelligence and “other immersive technologies”. DR said lots of factories are 100% Carbon-free (see appendix 1), so if this is achievable in Sri Lanka, it can also happen in the UK.

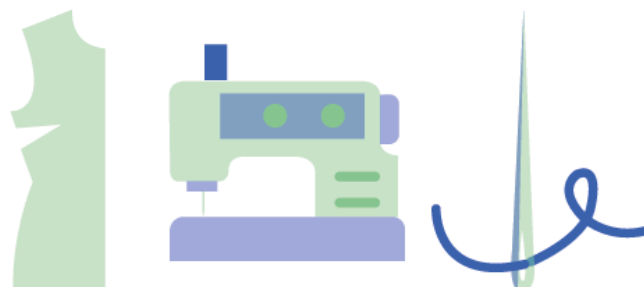
Richard Jessop, of pattern cutting software firm Gerber, during a Make it British webinar, *How Do We Future-Proof the Textile Industry in the UK?* (Hills, 2020b), cited Inditex, the parent company of Zara. He said they “make and buy” in the same place, adding, “I see no reason why we can’t do that in the UK”. He agreed with Kate Hills that the government needs to invest in manufacturing and noted that “Portugal has access to EU funds, allowing them to access the latest digital technology” and be “ahead of the game”. However, Hills pointed out that “the government doesn’t acknowledge our industry, as its made up of lots of small firms, rather than a few big players like in the car industry” (Hills, 2020b). The link between car and fashion manufacturing comes up frequently in research. The TIMWOOD method of Lean manufacturing as devised by Toyota, as implemented by Burberry and others, provide evidence of a more efficient and environmentally-friendly system for fashion. The efficiencies of car making were identified by both production expert DR and Richard Jessop and could be easily adopted by smaller design and make Localism units. As such, Lean manufacturing is an area worthy of further investigation outside the remit of this paper.

Figure 6.

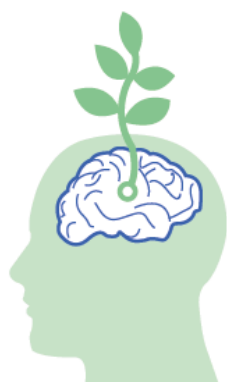
Essential Components for a UK Localism Model



Investment in Technology



Focus on Practical Skills Education



Adoption of Growth Mindset



Balance of Economics, Ethics and Ecology

5.3.1 Embracing Technology

The interview with DR highlighted the efficiencies created by technology in creating clean, safe environments for employees who were fully in-tune with the consumer's needs and demands in a speed-to-market model (see appendix 1). Yet, using technology in this way could suggest an increase in harmful fast-response fashion, bought without thought and quickly cast aside. The disconnection would still exist between who made it and the end-

user. Also, the production speed potentially eliminates customer anticipation, as pointed out by AR, who advocated a return to a slower system as in the 1970s. Implementing technology purely for speed and efficiency merely serves more of the same Fast Fashion this research seeks to move away from. It would be a continuation of *Conventional Worlds* rather than moving towards the Great Transition (Raskin et al., 2002).

At both the Fashion Question Time panel discussion, *Mass Consumption: The End of An Era?* (Fashion Revolution, 2020), in April 2020, and again at the *Copenhagen Fashion Summit*, Kate Fletcher has said, “people think technology is the answer, but it is not the answer” however, while it may not be *the* answer, this research has found it could be *one* answer. Many in the manufacturing sector disagree with Fletcher’s view and suggest technology has its place in fashion. Just as EPOS systems emerging during the 1980s streamlined the buying process for Benetton, technology is now being implemented in advanced modern manufacturing facilities.

In Sri Lanka, DR identified that water taken out of rivers is re-processed as part of the production process and returned the river cleaner than it was taken out (see appendix 1).

According to Meadows definition, this appears to be sustainability in action, whereby the use of technology is putting back more than is taken from the earth’s resources.

As the industry cannot keep “chasing the cheap needle around the globe”, sooner or later, the retailers will run out of countries whose cheap labour can be exploited. Therefore, the answer must lie closer to home.

This research comes from the viewpoint that people will still want new clothes, so alternative manufacturing processes that are ethical, ecologically efficient and economically viable are needed. The Localism model builds on traditional manufacturing structures of the past but crucially advocates for more variety within individual job roles. Jessop highlighted

that technology could remove some of the labour-intensive processes within garment production but said robots do not have sufficient manual dexterity to eliminate humans from the supply chain (Hills, 2020b). DR concurred with this assessment, implying that the fashion manufacturing sector needs to think outside traditional parameters and embrace the latest technology to become world-leading. Jessup cited the Nissan car manufacturing plant in Sunderland as a manufacturing model that could be transposed into garment manufacturing (Hills, 2020b). This view was shared by DR, who, when interviewed said, he was definite that technology was essential if the UK is to strengthen its manufacturing capacity. He said, “Making a jacket is like making a car; you just bend a bit of metal like you do fabric” (see appendix 1).

Concerning the lack of skilled workforce, cited by all participants in this research, Jessop too acknowledged the issue, saying that finding experienced people to sew was “a big issue” but added this “the car industry learnt this years ago; you have to make the job really exciting” (Hills, 2020b). This view was shared by both KA and FF and points to something that is not often recognised that people want jobs they enjoy. FF cited EGG banking as her inspiration for making clothing manufacturing young and cool, saying when working there as a student, they had “a great canteen and slot machines, cool things to do” (see appendix 3). These might not immediately spring to mind as top of an employer’s list of essentials. Still, the combination of what this collection of industry experts say adds some substance to the idea of what Localism factories could be. Places where the sharing of creative and practical skills of garment construction merge with new technologies to create multi-layered, “exciting” as Jessop said, jobs of the future Fashion 2.0 Localism model.

Whilst harvesting research data from webinars may not be traditional within the field of academia, during the pandemic, it has afforded direct access to capture the views and

evidence from industry experts in what is a fast-moving topic. Gathering this data means it can contribute to knowledge and point both academia and industry in the most realistic and workable direction, and at the accelerated speed urged by Fletcher and Tham (Fletcher & Tham, 2019). It is imperative that fashion *as a whole*, both academia and industry, absorbs the variety of lived experience spanning decades to affect real and lasting change. It is not hyperbolic to suggest that humanity's very future relies on an immediate change of course, and that applies in no small part to fashion.

5.3.2 Vertical Factory Models – David Neiper

Menswear brand owner BR already produces all of his range in the UK, though he found sourcing good quality, affordable fabrics difficult (see appendix 5). However, some manufacturers in both the UK and America are leading the way and are already doing things in a progressive yet Local manner. In an interview with Kate Hills at the Make it British Live online trade show in September 2020, Christopher Neiper OBE said, when his fabric suppliers went off-shore, the family-owned company decided to become vertical and start knitting their own fabric. Concerning UK manufacturers, he wondered why more did not do not do the same “I don’t see why we can’t all do this”, he said. David Neiper is an over-40s womenswear label based in Alfreton, Derbyshire and was established by its namesake 50 years ago (Make it British Live, 2020). His son, and current Managing Director of the firm, Christopher Neiper, has been recognised beyond the industry for his philanthropic work in the locale. One example is his leadership in the building of a new high school in the area. An advocate of the Slow Fashion movement, his business is an example of Localism, which, like most ideas, is not new. David Neiper is a vertical factory knitting its own fabric and has recently installed a digital printer to print its own fabric. They pride themselves on employees' long service, suggesting that other manufacturers do the same and “be known

as the best employer in your areas” to attract the best staff. As highlighted by FF, who suggested that pleasant working environments were vital in attracting and retaining staff, Neiper also sees this as key to the success of his business.

The company owns five factories, each solar-powered, and operates a “Just in Time” manufacturing system, only producing the fabric they need. They can eliminate MOQs as they make the fabric, which Neiper said creates 95% product sell-through at full price. The David Neiper model is an example of how many, if not most, UK manufacturers could and should operate sustainably and direct to consumer (Make it British Live, 2020).

Production expert DR cited Sri Lankan factories are being at the forefront of eco-efficiencies, yet David Neiper appears to have quietly adopted similar processes in the UK. The David Neiper factory is an example of Localism in action. Neiper not only has adopted technologies to make ecological savings, but he also notes that avoiding transportation costs of overseas production makes his business leaner and able to adopt the “just-in-time” method. While this is difficult for outside suppliers to plan, the just-in-time model works within a vertical Localism structure. The manufacturer makes only the amount of fabric it requires for orders already placed. In a broader context, Neiper has proved - which his OBE testifies - that by reaching out to the wider community and helping build a new school, he has created a loopback system to encourage school leavers into working for him and other local firms. This business model has been in existence for 50 years. David Neiper stayed in business when others did not, possibly because it chose to “automate” sections of its production process rather than “evaporate” (Phizacklea, 1990, p. 9). Also, David Neiper has invested in people. As KA and FF both suggested, the maker's role can be creative and enjoyable, and at David Neiper, this would appear to ring true and, as such, is encouraging for a Localism business model.

5.3.3 Working Mutually – Access for All

At David Neiper, they have exhibited methods in dealing with potential issues such as fabric procurement by producing it themselves. He wondered why more UK based companies do not do the same; the benefits are zero MOQs as the firm only makes what it needs. This model requires serious financial investment, though it could be developed as a shared facility among smaller networks of local companies. Owner of HebTroCo, BR claimed that working in collaboration with other local businesses was the future “I think any decent business these days HAVE TO WORK MUTUALLY – it’s just something we do” (see appendix 5). This research uncovers an appetite for working in new ways, such as the Localism model, sharing resources mutually beneficial to local businesses and their communities.

FF talked enthusiastically about *English Fine Cottons* in Dukinfield, Greater Manchester also cited in Fashionopolis. FF said the firm secured government funding to re-open the former cotton mill and had transformed it into a “beautiful” clean, modern, light and airy space, adding it is somewhere people would like to work. If public funds were available to a mill producing yarn, it can be reasonably assumed that such funding would be available for garment-making facilities. The Localism model could reimagine the days of French couture houses, where clothing was made on the premises. More realistically, it could lead to the sharing of more extensive facilities, which networks of smaller businesses could tap into. In the Localism model, access to shared state-of-the-art facilities would help elevate the concept out of the “cottage-industry” mould and into a new sustainability system, not limited to environmental sustainability, but with the ability to sustain businesses and livelihoods. Shared facilities by smaller Localism companies could help alleviate the need for massive individual investment and financial risk and enable small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to compete in the marketplace at a high level, utilising the latest facilities.

5.4 Economics

While this research does not oppose the idea of profit before planet (Fletcher & Tham, 2019), it is apparent that businesses must be able to survive and thrive economically. The pandemic's initial impact was enough for Elizabeth Suzann to stop trading, with the loss of 30 jobs. Were the company more financially robust, it may still be in business. As FF noted, "it's not bad to want to make money". However, more than that is the need to exist within a capitalist society while conducting business ethically within the planet's carrying capacity.

Kate Hills' business also hit financial difficulty after a few years. She admits that designers who trained in the 1980s and 1990s were very good at designing and making but were not taught the financial side and therefore had little business acumen (Hills, 2018). The disparity between design and business skills is a critical finding in many fashion companies. In an article called *We Sold our Eco-Dream to Timberland*, the co-founders of Howies admitted to being good at the creative role but not at the finances (Shepard, 2008). This research recommends that focus be given to a sound economic framework and suggests that a business studies module would benefit fashion design students. Subsequently, Hills decided to close her business and get "a proper job" (Hills, 2018). The disparity between being a creative designer who can make clothes and being a successful business person is something Angela McRobbie identified simultaneously (McRobbie, 1998, Chapter 8).

While the notion of a so-called caring economy may appear feeble and non-descript, it calls to mind Raskin's prophesy that change will require the intangible element of changing perceptions, as well as co-operation by governments, NGO's and large corporations (Raskin et al., 2002). Mary Creagh suggested the wheels for larger firms "could be greased" with tax reform to encourage the implementation of cleaner, greener processes. Besides, imposing quotas on imports could make domestic production more appealing. If the costs of

importing clothing were to become prohibitive, retailers might be more incentivised to integrate local manufacturing into their business model. (EAC Report, 2019; Fashion Revolution, 2020). Brand owner BR suggested 0% corporation tax as incentives for new firms (see appendix 5). Tax reform and incentives, paired with publicity drives to encourage consumers to be mindful about purchases, could contribute to a more robust financial situation for both individual companies and the economy in general.

5.5 Skills and Education

The literature review suggests that many fashion students and industry professionals cannot perform basic sewing tasks. This skills deficit leaves them unable to repair an item of clothing and instead potentially discard it. As has been established, if a designer understands how to construct a garment, they have inherent knowledge to pass on to the maker, in what Chon called “fluid knowledge” (Rodgers & Yee, 2017). Implementation of these skills starting in school could evoke a “Joy of Making”, which could lead sewing hobbyists to become skilled operatives in the industry, as witnessed by AR and her former students completing degrees in fashion (see appendix 4).

In terms of further and higher education, industry frequently cites a lack of appropriate skills from graduate new designers, who are not trained to be industry-ready (Make it British Live, 2020; Romeo & Lee, 2013). This research suggests the glut of candidates only interested in design positions has led to the flattening of salaries in the sector. At the same time, equally creative roles for pattern cutters go unfilled (see appendix 3). In this research, AR recognised the loss of skills starting at school age in the UK, prompting her to open her fashion sewing workshops for kids, Fashion Factory (see appendix 4). The interview with AR focused on her work with children between the ages of 8-16, teaching them the “life-skills” as one parent affirmed, of sewing, repairing and upcycling garments. Allsop and Cassidy

suggested that due to changes in the school curriculum, these skills are no longer being taught in the same way within schools, if at all (Allsop & Cassidy, 2018).

Focusing on practical skills at an early age has a two-fold effect. First, it can give young people the understanding of how clothes are put together and the skill to make basic repairs, extending garment life and imbuing something of themselves into the garment. At a more advanced level, basic dress-making skills could ignite an interest, or even passion, in learning how to make something to wear from an inanimate piece of cloth. This inherent knowledge is how many people got into the industry during the last century, wanting to move from dress-making and into fashion as an “art form as AR confirmed (see appendix 4). FF remarked that she was not aware of other job roles within the sector while studying for her fashion degree. She said had she been told about the role of a product developer; she would have been interested “as that is what I ended up doing” (see appendix 3). Whilst AR ended up leaving the commercial fashion industry; she has utilised her practical knowledge to pass on to the next generation, noting that she believes it is good for mental health to get into the “flow” of making something with your hands. Recognising the importance of practical skills – not just to the industry but also to individual mental health - could be a critical contributing factor in creating the system change necessary for the Localism model to work.

If students arrived at university already possessing the requisite sewing skills, as Allsop and Cassidy noted, many assume they already do (Allsop & Cassidy, 2018), their skills would easily transition from that of a home dressmaker to professional garment construction standard. Having the ability to sew is a vital skill within the industry. Even for creative designers who will never end up working *as* manufacturers, they will undoubtedly work *with* them, and therefore will need to be able to communicate knowledgeably with suppliers, as

has already been discussed in the literature review (McRobbie, 1998; Romeo & Lee, 2013; Allsop & Cassidy, 2018).

The UK Fashion and Textile governing body, UKFT, has been working with universities for several years in their MADE IT initiative ('MADE IT', 2020). Fashion degree courses partner with garment manufacturers, and students are walked through the complete production process. This venture is a step forward and should be integral to all fashion degrees, which are generally conduits to a career within the industry. Participants in the study and anecdotally in the wider industry suggest that greater integration of undergraduate fashion students with industry during their studies is imperative for British manufacturing's future success.

The other essential element regards education is attitudes to consumption. AR felt strongly that education in fashion consumption should begin with school-aged children, "I blame advertising for making us feel that we've got to have new things all the time". She went on, "we don't need as much as they're telling us we need", she went on to say she thinks advertising should be banned as "it's very powerful, especially for young people" (see appendix 4). This view was shared by Kate Fletcher during the Fashion Question Time panel discussion, who said that "the education of this age group is mainly handled by the marketing department of brands", adding that "there isn't a coherent critique of consumption practises in the UK" (Fashion Revolution, 2020). This evidence, both from the industry and academia, proves the disconnect between the fashion industry and education. And highlights that the opportunity exists for primary and secondary education to completely reshape the next generation, both as conscious consumers and new entrants into UK manufacturing and Localism models.

Rana Plaza was an horrific building structure failure, but unfortunately, many fires and other atrocities in garment factories occur regularly yet go unreported. Were the realities of Fast Fashion production part of the school curriculum, it could positively transform the attitudes of the next generation. It is not unrealistic to compare the dangers of Fast Fashion to knife and drug crime. While the production of Fast Fashion may not directly affect young people in the UK, their blind consumption is undoubtedly directly affecting one of their counterparts in another part of the globe.

As Sir Tim Smit, founder of the Eden Project, said, “we have to decide whether we want to be good citizens, or head-at-the-trough consumers” (Tucker, 2020). As Raskin, Meadows and Brundtland proclaimed, it is incumbent on this generation to pass on an undiminished planet to the next. Part of that mantle must equip them with the practical skills and knowledge of how to repair what they have, how clothes are made, and, most importantly, how best they should buy and consume them.

5.6 Sustainability – Consumer Habits

All participants expressed the wish to source more from the UK, and this view is backed by reports of consumers also wishing to purchase more ethically made clothing. According to Mintel, this is something consumers will be actively searching for in the near future. They report that “Transparency among fashion retailers is becoming more expected, as customers are keen to understand the true origins of their purchases” (Baram, 2020), strongly suggesting there is a market for a network of Localism based businesses in the UK. DR noted that Sri Lankan factories were already up to speed with consumer requirements and that “they understand about the fact that, in 5-10 years no-one will accept anything that has not got true provenance and is eco-acceptable” (see appendix 1).

The BoF McKinsey report identified a sea-change in consumer spending habits in what it termed “anti-consumerism” (Business of Fashion, 2020). While counter reports suggest spending on Fast Fashion has been business-as-usual, both industry and academia are sensing that times are about to change. All participants in this research were fully aware of consumers' perception of becoming more conscious of sustainable fashion, but all were pretty pessimistic about it becoming a reality. AR said, “people feel the need to say, well it’s not going to change unless the consumers change, but that’s going to take a really long time, that’s like trying to turn around a massive ship” (see appendix 4) suggesting the onus is on the industry to change. KA was also sceptical about consumers expressing the wish to be more sustainable when faced with the economic reality at retail, citing it as an “addiction” to price. FF reported the same view; when brands approached her to develop a sustainable product, costs were often prohibitive, so the brands changed their ethos. It would appear that despite the plea to put “planet before profit”, the simple fact is that economics – both household and in business – play a key role in decision making. The Guardian reported that consumers are beginning to push back against the Fast Fashion phenomenon. It cited one Twitter user who said, “Educate yourself on fast fashion, and I promise you those 4p Pretty Little Thing bikini bottoms won’t appeal to you as much” (Blackall, 2020).

Findings in this research illustrate that an individual’s financial situation or constraints are often the real driver behind consumer purchases and take precedence over ecological or even ethical concerns. This research aims to encourage a localised manufacturing model and a potentially smaller approach to improve local communities and stop the unnecessary shipments of cheap goods damaging the planet. Yet, it is not naïve enough to expect large retailers to cease business-as-usual. Personal experience suggests large firms do, however,

in the main, operate within the law, yet if the law has loopholes that facilitate exploitation, then the law must be changed.

Disenfranchised former designer and Extinction Rebellion activist, AR was optimistic that a greener form of UK manufacturing could be developed with green tax reforms but stressed that the clothes produced must be of better quality to buy less and last longer. Mintel produced a report in 2020 (Baram, 2020), suggesting that increasing awareness among consumers could already be creating an appetite for the changes identified as necessary by AR (see appendix 4). Figure 4 illustrates Mintel’s findings on shifting consumers habits.

Figure 7.



Source: Mintel

5.6.1 Changing Mindsets – Lessons from Other Sectors

There are two key ideas to consider from outside the fashion industry that has transformed consumer habits in other sectors. The first is the programme Blue Planet II had on illustrating the devastating effects the use of plastics had on marine life (Attenborough, 2017). After airing, the use of single-use plastic seemed to acquire taboo status almost

overnight. The appearance of innocent sea life triggered an about-turn in consumer patterns. Secondly, Slow Fashion's concept is often compared to the Slow Food movement (Clark, 2008; Fletcher, 2010). It is possible to make another comparison with food, relating to a consumer mindset. This example is one regarding the vegan food movement.

Campaigners have long been advocating a diet rich in plant-derived food and eschewing consumption of animal-based foods such as meat and dairy produce (Fulkerson, 2011). Yet, January 2020 saw massive awareness surrounding the “Veganuary” campaign, with a marked availability of meat-free and dairy-free foods visible in every supermarket and increased plant-based food sales. The BBC reported that the increase was due to a combination of consumer health concerns, prompted by the “Veganuary” initiative to encourage a month of veganism, supported by social media, celebrity, and influencer vegans (Jones, 2020). Vegan foods such as meat-free and non-dairy products are now part of the UK supermarket mainstream. A previously inconceivable paradigm shift in traditional eating habits has now occurred. Therefore, it is not unthinkable that the same mindset shift cannot also happen away from Fast Fashion and towards more ethically and ecologically produced clothing.

This research suggests that a consumer awareness campaign based on the merits of buying clothing produced within a Localism framework could mean that *this* food comparison might also help shift public perceptions of clothing consumption, as it has with food consumption. Mintel reports that consumers take a more “holistic” approach and consider their food choices from an ethical and physical perspective (Falcao, 2020). There is growing discussion regarding tracing garment provenance and transparency in production, so it may be that the consumer who wishes to eat more ethically may also want to wear more ethical brands.

Lessons must be taken from both Veganuary and the Blue Planet. Sustained public awareness, with a thought-provoking campaign, such as the Google “shop local” campaign (McGonagle, 2020), could spotlight local brands' work within communities. It could also play up their exclusivity through small, limited-edition production runs, which might, in turn, build desire and anticipation as in the 1970s, as cited by AR. Conversely, documentaries showing Rana Plaza type disasters or films highlighting the realities of global clothing production practises, such as *The True Cost* (Morgan, 2015), have done little to dampen consumer “addiction” to cheap, Fast Fashion. Industry bodies and education must undertake a sustained public awareness campaign. It should be supported by activists and the government to highlight the benefits outlined in this paper that adopting a Localism model would bring.

In summary:

- **UK Manufacturing’s failure to invest in the latest technologies** has left it decades behind overseas competitors. **Customer service levels are inadequate in UK manufacturing**, and a complacent attitude has seen them superseded by overseas counterparts.
- **The absence of practical skills needs to be urgently addressed by both education and the industry.** Most **UK factories cannot produce the high level of technical skill or quality** required compared to the product made off-shore.
- **Government initiatives are required to create modern factories** which could be **shared by SME’s** giving access to brands at all levels of the market.

- Similarities with the Slow Food movement exist, and a **public awareness campaign could affect positive change towards brands that make fashion locally and ethically**. This would lower the carbon footprint and enrich local communities.
- **Clothes are sold too cheaply in the UK** and do not reflect the level of manufacturing skill involved. Consistently low retail prices maintain the reliance on low-wage countries for fashion production.

However, a **large-scale adoption of the proposed Localism model could exclude sections of society** and their ability to afford locally made clothing.

Chapter 6: Conclusions and Further Research

Localism Model in Action

Localism was the name given to the system proposed at the start of this study. The idea was that small designer units incorporating in-house manufacturing could provide skilled jobs to the local community. The need to ship goods around the globe would be eliminated, thereby lowering the carbon footprint. The out-of-sight-out-of-mind disconnect in the designer-maker-user identified in the introduction would be non-existent. As participants and the literature illustrates, there is an opportunity to fundamentally transform the UK fashion system via Localism and the lives of the people and places that will be part of this new system.

This study has focused on fashion manufacturing in the UK and the feasibility of a Localism model. Figure 1. illustrated the proposed structure, comprising varying sizes of fashion design and make businesses linked through shared local resources. Localism is a model that could be replicated across the world, drawing on each region's distinctive differences. As such, Localism could push back against the current homogenisation of fashion. Shopping districts of most major global fashion hubs carry the same merchandise, resulting in the so-called race to the bottom to entice the consumer with low retail prices. Mintel reported that consumers would be increasingly looking for clothing with a traceable provenance, and Localism can provide this. Locally produced fashion, imbued with the region's characteristics, can spark creativity with all stakeholders working closely together.

Ultimately, allowing a series of interconnected Localism businesses to emerge could form part of a new paradigm, providing more choice for the consumer and a renewed culture of individuality and more vital communities of creative enterprises.

“ If we are wise – which sadly we now know we aren't – we will start up again with new rules and regulations, allowing countries to get back to their knowhow and specific qualities, introducing cottage industries that would flourish and grow into an arts-and-crafts century, where manual labour is cherished above everything else”

Li Edelkoort, DeZeen, March 2020

Crucially, Localism can lessen harmful effects on the planet by lowering the carbon footprint of mass-manufactured Fast Fashion and its rapid disposal. Transportation costs have been identified as the most significant drain on energy outside textile production, so keeping everything made in one place would diminish this factor. To encourage the extended wear of a garment, businesses should be given incentives to promote buy-back or repair schemes, as in evidence at Patagonia and Hiut Denim, among others.

Higher Retail Prices

However, retail prices would need to be higher in order to pay living wages to the makers. But again, surveys confirm consumers are willing to pay more for ethically produced clothing. As in the 1970s, when clothing was more expensive, it had to be saved up for but was then looked after, as one participant noted. So, higher value garments are treasured and not so easily discarded. The counterpoint to higher prices is that it could exclude certain sections of society on a low income. Yet, as also in the 1970s, clothing which was too expensive to buy would force people to make their own. Lack of skill and time pressures have driven this past-time out of the mainstream, but the advent of working from home and

the prospect of real culture change following the pandemic allows for more time to relearn such skills.

Government Quotas

A culture change would require government intervention to stem the tide of cheaply made Fast Fashion from overseas. Applying quotas would force companies to seek UK production. However, as has been reported, bad practice also occurs in the UK manufacturing sector. Therefore strict regulations must be introduced and correctly enforced to drive out this scourge from the industry.

The Case Against Localism

Whilst the idea of Localism may be too idealistic to some, this research has discovered that some businesses are already operating in this way. They design and make their ranges in-house or sometimes outsource to local freelance machinists, supporting the local economy. Most either offer a repair service or a buy-back service, inspired, undoubtedly, by sustainability pioneers Patagonia. Others share their skills and knowledge through workshops or by selling their patterns and fabrics to encourage customers to produce their versions of the designer's styles. These businesses are in the UK and America, highly developed and high wage countries. This is evidence of Localism – though it may be known by another name – in action, and therefore proof that the concept works.

The idea of Localism was met with lukewarm enthusiasm with some of the participants. This was about a misconception that a Localism model could service a return to mass-market manufacturing in the UK.

It could not.

Localism based businesses seem to thrive best when offering something unique – Hiut Denim, Alabama Chanin - or are based on a strong ethos or functionality, such as Patagonia.

UK Manufacturing Past and Present

After exploring the literature outlining current and historical garment manufacturing, this research has discovered that in the UK, at least, little progress has been made during the last thirty to forty years. In Britain, historical literature shows the government deemed manufacturing as less important than service industries, resulting in a depletion of the sector and the loss of vital skills. The mass off-shoring during the 1980s left the UK garment manufacturing sector decimated, resulting in a legacy of ill-feeling, an image problem and an unappealing career prospect for graduates and school leavers, which still exists. The main manufacturing area thriving in the UK is in Leicester, which in 2020 was exposed as rife in modern slavery practices.

The sector is not regulated, and any attempts at complying with audits can easily deceive authorities through the practice of subcontracting. Factories are always independent of their customers, leaving them open to top-down pressure from larger customers, typified by a “master and servant” relationship imbalance. Retailers place downward pressure on factories to produce clothes for lower costs. The industry has subsequently taught the consumer that the retail prices for clothing are low, and therefore, the consumer demand for cheap clothing is high. Retail prices have been kept artificially low by pursuing lower manufacturing costs in low-wage countries or UK based sweatshops.

The disconnected nature of the master and servant relationship is replicated by the consumer’s ignorance of how the garments are produced. Localism eliminates this issue by incorporating manufacturing into the business.

Human Exploitation

While profit margins have increased, the living standards of garment factory workers have not. The relentless pursuit of increasingly lower prices – or “chasing the cheap needle

around the globe” – has resulted in widespread human exploitation, both in the UK and overseas. This is fundamentally and morally wrong. As human beings, we must protect our fellow man. As a fashion industry, we should ensure no harm comes to those who produce our clothing, but moreover, they should be adequately remunerated for what is skilled work.

Also, this pursuit of lower-cost manufacturing has created another disconnect between the designer and the garment maker. Being separated by continents can often lead to miscommunication, time-wasting and costly mistakes. Besides time and money, opportunities to develop shared knowledge between the two disciplines have been lost. This is to the detriment of both actors in the process; and weakens the UK fashion sector as a whole, as a glut of designers heavily outweighs the balance of individuals with practical expertise. An over-supply of design candidates has meant salaries for designers have barely increased during the last two decades. Meanwhile, the practical skills of pattern cutters are in high demand.

The Importance of Economics

The literature urges us to put the planet before profit to avoid human exploitation and environmental destruction. Yet, this study has proven that businesses can go bust even with the best intentions, with the loss of many livelihoods. Therefore, business skills must be taught to fashion undergraduates, and smaller start-ups access proper financial support.

The Future

The prospect of extensive improvements to garment manufacturing in the UK was met with a mixture of enthusiasm and scepticism by participants.

The introduction of the latest technology is of paramount importance, but a change in attitude is vital if the UK competes effectively against their overseas counterparts. UK manufacturers are often defended against the charge of being challenging to work with. Reasons given for not responding to inquiries are cited as the potential customer's fault due to their lack of experience in the sector. This is not so. All those interviewed, including the author of this research's personal experience, disagree with that assertion. It is disappointing, though not surprising, to discover that the consensus is that manufacturers in the UK simply have the wrong or "laissez-fair" attitude. It was best described by industry expert DR, who said like most Western democracies, they have had it 'too good for too long'. This is a damning indictment and a great shame. Yet, it also offers little hope for a sustainable future. If UK manufacturing cannot thrive due to systemic lack of care, our clothing will continue to have to be made overseas, with all the attached damage to humans and the planet. Many developing and developed countries have taken the time to learn English and crucially have a *hunger* for the work, making it easier to do business with places like China and Portugal. They also have the latest machinery and skilled people to operate them, producing garments to a much higher standard than those in the UK.

For Localism to thrive, and crucially for the fashion industry to even continue, requires a fundamental paradigm shift throughout the whole industry.

While by no means comprehensive, findings from this study suggest the following changes:

- The manufacturing industry needs to be **appropriately regulated** by a body such as UKFT.
- **Government must provide investment for new technologies** and **tax incentives** for larger companies to invest in UK based manufacturing.

- **Tax breaks could also be given to smaller start-ups.** Providing financial support to SME's to **share manufacturing resources** and incentivise small business to make their products in the UK economically.
- **Quotas could be used to limit the volume of cheaply manufactured goods** flooding the UK market, to allow more competition for UK based producers.
- Focus must be given to **developing sewing skills at a young age** in the hope of fostering a love of making, which could inspire individuals to pursue new careers in the garment manufacturing sector.
- Universities and the industry should work together to **focus on gaps in practical skills** and identify opportunities to develop creative roles in **pattern cutting and product development, not just design.**
- Tax incentives and financial grants should be awarded to **encourage businesses to focus on employee development and well-being** and strive for B-Corp status, inspired by the Toyota Lean Manufacturing model elements. This would make the sector more appealing to new entrants.

This research has uncovered an issue with mindset and attitude to work, highlighting an opportunity for change. The entire fashion sector must grab this opportunity. The onset of Brexit and predicted changes to consumer spending post-covid have created a platform for the fashion industry to remodel itself. This research has proven that there is enough will, enthusiasm and ideas within the UK fashion sector to transition into a *New Sustainability Paradigm*. What this could look like is only limited by the imaginations and determination of the actors within the system. However, the research identifies that technology must play an

essential role in the future of UK manufacturing; how this implementation of the technology would occur warrants further investigation.

Following the last pandemic in 1920, the world entered a period of economic growth and creative flourishing known as the Roaring Twenties. Perhaps, following this pandemic, a new era could emerge, but instead of roaring, it could be the Regenerative and Restorative Twenties. A renewed appreciation and enlightenment in recognising the contentment of flexible working and a return to sewing and other making skills gives a glimmer of how the fashion world could transform via Localism. Rather than the boom of the 1920s, followed by the bust of the 1930s Great Depression, perhaps Raskin is correct. The 2020s will be the *Great Transition*, or the Great and Regeneration through a landscape of Localism, and Fashion 2.0 will be born and flourish.

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and building a brand with integrity is at the very heart of this inspiring conversation with renowned designer Wayne Hemingway. A true example of creativity supporting and championing the strong values and vision that Wayne holds for the future.

Born in the seaside town of Morecambe, Wayne shares his story from the early days selling second hand clothes at Camden Market to building a renowned fashion label that did things differently. We also discuss the valuable work Wayne does with

Hemingway Design, and his focus on affordable and social design and the

regeneration of British seaside towns all whilst putting community at the heart of

every project. Wayne share's insights into his attitude and approach, one that actively seeks change rather than waiting for it to happen, all with the mantra that we should use our relatively short time on this earth to make a positive impact.

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Appendices

1. Redacted Interview Transcription with David Reay (DR)
2. Redacted Interview Transcription with Katrina Armitage (KA)
3. Redacted Interview Transcription with Fazane Fox (FF)
4. Redacted Interview Transcription with Amanda Riley (AR)
5. Email Interview with Brant Richards (BR)
6. Ethics Form
7. Participant Information Sheet
8. Participant Consent Form

Sharon Jones

MRes Fashion and Textiles

University of Huddersfield

SJ 00:00:20: After reading your article about Covid19 and how we adapt, your thoughts on how the World can reset and what this means for manufacturing in the UK, I just wanted to find out your views, where you think we're heading and what the future landscape could look like for UK manufacturing?

DR: 00:00:50 In the short term the factories will fill up as they did in recent times. There was a push back to UK manufacturing – I can't remember what drove it - in the last 5-10 years and what happened is that the factories filled up with work. The problem that I had with is that – you know, most of the factories are either micros or SME's /owner managed – and they were just so pleased to get over the absolute drought of work, that they just flooded their factories and some of them over-planned their capacities to make sure they had plenty of work. The service levels weren't as great as they could have been and they did not invest – or did not appear to invest in my view – in any efficiencies. 00:01:43 So we had a lot of factories that were full, operating in a 1980's and 1990's methodology. That kept the prices high and as a result – I don't know the facts and the details or the data to support it – but I suspect, because I've been both a manufacturer and a buyer if you like, with Barbour and with my own business, as sourcing director or whatever, I suspect that companies put up with it because they needed the capacity and then moved away pretty quickly after that – you know, they could see what I could see.

00:02:22 SJ – All my experience is working with off-shore factories, and coming back to the UK, I found there are very different attitudes to work...

DR: Yes

SJ - what you said about being stuck in the 1980's, that definitely rings true in my experience

DR: Yes, yeah

00:00:39 – **SJ I think there is the willingness there, but I think we're quite a long way behind, not even in terms of technology, but in terms of attitude to get the job done, compared to the Far East...**

00:02:50 DR – Yes, yep

00:02:53 **SJ – ...so perhaps it's a mindset shift that needs to take place?**

00:03:05 DR – Yep, yes, I mean I think probably the biggest one I saw was in China. I saw them do things I did not think were possible, in terms of attitude, drive, commitment. You know, I saw factories being built in days, I saw production lines being laid in, I saw roads being built to the factory, I mean there were... I saw major facilities coming together in a matter of – a month.

00:03:23 **SJ – As they (the Chinese) have just demonstrated with the building of the hospital in a week (Wuhan)**

DR – Yeah, fully operational. We've done it on the UK with a building that's already there (conversion of London's Excel Centre into Nightingale Hospital). That attitude that it took to get that hospital up – in the UK – is what's needed across our industry.

00:03:41 **SJ – I agree. Going back to what you were saying about the attitude, certainly in my experience in China, it's like, well we don't know how to do that, but come back to us and we'll work it out, we'll get back to you when we've figured out how to do it...**

00:03:55 DR – Yeah, yeah

00:03:56 **SJ...and that's definitely missing here. It's like – no we don't do that...**

00:03:59 DR – No

00:04:00 **SJ - ...and that's the end of the conversation, which I've found really frustrating**

00:04:16 DR – Yes, that's the British laissez-faire attitude. It actually pervades a lot of Western democracies, they've had it too easy for too long and just got lazy basically.

00:04:57 **SJ – So in terms of the industry in the UK going forward, do you see it being a mass re-shoring? In your article (Covid19) you were talking about micro units, moving towards an eco-methodology. Could you explain a bit more about that please?**

00:05:14 DR - The countries, the off-shore manufacturers, the off-shore companies, the brands, have developed very advanced methodology. For instance, I recently spent time in Sri Lanka and was really surprised, how in the last 20 years they've gone from cut & sew sheds, where you had to send the fabric in ecetera, into one of the most advanced manufacturing – well designer, they design now. They make their own textiles, they manufacture.. and many,

many of the big factories are American invested and are totally eco-driven. There are lots of factories that are 100% carbon free footprint. They have their own solar power. They take water out of the rivers to do textile processing, they put water back that's cleaner than the water they've taken out...

00:06:16 SJ – wow, that's fantastic

00:06:17 DR - ...and they're very, very advanced and educated people. And I'm connected very closely to something called [The Columbo Innovation Tower](#) and the company that took me out there, AOD, are a Sri Lankan Textile University who are connected to Northumbria University here in the UK as well, at the University of Fashion and they work under license from Northumbria, Northumbria license the degrees that they give out, so they work to a really good standard. 00:06:52 And they're above and beyond that standard on their own two feet now and they are, they've taken about a third of the Colombo Innovation Tower and they've not only got, they intend to become the hub for South East Asia, that's where they're headed. They see things like rising wage costs in Sri Lanka now, despite their efficiencies and people are expecting a better and better standard of living and they're finding it not easy to recruit, because people want more digital driven or office based employment, which sounds very familiar doesn't it?

00:07:36 SJ - Yeah, exactly. (similar to Chinese workers not returning to factories after CNY)

00:07:37 DR – So they've decided that their approach is to take what they have and grow it, and they've got some amazing facilities going on in there. Big investments in artificial intelligence, digital....erm.....um... immersive technologies, stuff like this you know?

00:08:13 SJ – And do you think it is relying on the same amount of man power or is it more that technology's taking over?

00:08:20 DR – No, no, they're very technically advanced. I mean like in any of these countries, you've got the pop shops and you've got the SME types, who are moderately equipped. Everyone of them is way ahead of the stuff in the UK is all I can say.

00:08:38 SJ – Yeah...

00:08:40 DR – It's primitive. These guys are well beyond the UK and they're bigger players. Ones that are invested by the US, you're talking about some of the biggest brands in the World, invested into Sri Lanka. And they are...hyper efficient, semi-automatic, the efficiency levels that they hit and they use less and less labour to assemble what they need to assemble. And they are the point of what they would describe as "Lift and Shift". You know, if they decided to come over here and set up units...cos I was out there trying to encourage them to work with our um, our sector in our industry here.

00:09:26 SJ – Mmm

00:09:27 DR – What I discovered was, they don't need it, you know? They could just come here and do it. Set up a company, with a British flag and some of them have actually got footholds here already. And they understand about the customer and they understand about the quick-turn and they understand about the fact that, in 5-10 years no-one will accept anything that hasn't got true provenance and is eco-acceptable.

00:10:04 SJ – The part about “less and less labour” bothers me, how does that work? Does it mean that manufacturing as we've known it, is really a thing of the past?

00:10:17 DR – I would say so yeah... it is if you want to make any margin or make any volume. And even in volume, we talk about micro factories, I've seen companies building reshoring facilities for instance, in the US, and one of the big facilities that I can't tell you too much about, they're building it as a facility to house 2000 people. That will go from IT design, on screen, with a famous brand, where you can personalise your own product, into manufacture and delivered to the customer on the doorstep, within 48 hours.

00:11:08 SJ – And that's what people want isn't it? They don't want to wait, they want it now

00:11:09 DR – And that's from fresh air, that's not from making it up, then sticking a bit of embroidery on it.

00:11:19 SJ – So the jobs are there, but they are less hands-on and more technology based?

00:11:23 DR – Yes

00:11:24 SJ – Is that what you think?

00:11:26 DR – Yes, and I think that um.... Well go on, I'll let you lead cos I've got some thoughts on what you said in your email as well...

00:11:34 SJ – No it's alright, I'm happy for you to continue. It's quite an unstructured interview and I think because I'm not a student that's straight out of college, I've got my own views and my own experience and a lot of what you've said I recognise and I understand. It's just that you've worked a lot more in the UK and worked with 3 massive M&S suppliers. I worked in their Head Office in Baker Street for 6 months on placement when I was a student, so that was a complete eye-opener. And at the time, they were the head of the high street, they were the number 1, and it was the ultimate placement to get. And then they decimated the high street (should have said UK manufacturing sector here)

00:12:08 DR – They dominated the UK high street and they were also held up in the world not just for clothing, but everything they did. Best in class...

00:12:20 SJ – a benchmark of quality

00:12:22 DR – I mean they advised on the Cadbury report in the 80's and 90's which restructured businesses completely. They introduced legal requirements for directors to make it less dodgy and things like that. I was a director in those times [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

00:12:44 DR – I started, believe it or not, I started in the factories as a trainee work study engineer, which is like a manufacturing engineer if you like. And when I started, I worked in a factory making men's shirts and ladies blouses. The ladies blouses were for the customer Marks and Spencer, and in those days, Marks and Spencer bought the fabric, sent the fabric to you and you gave them a price for making it and you quoted a price where you could not make any profit, you basically just covered your costs. They were so tight on price...

00:13:24 SJ – So even then, manufacturers were losing out? Was it the kudos of saying “we work for M&S” that would attract other customers?

00:13:33 DR – No, no, no, I'll tell you what happened. They were retailers, they would send enough fabric to make say, 10,000 blouses, and because it was all very paper driven, they didn't computerise til the 90's, because it was all paper-driven, you would make the 10,000. Because they didn't really understand how to do fabric costings, you could get about 11,000 out of it and you delivered the 11,000 and what they did, they paid as soon as your stock hit their door, that's the strength that they had. So you made 10% extra turnover on the same amount of fabric. Then you'd get some accountant phoning up and saying “hang on a minute – you've over-made the contract” and you'd say “Oh did we really? I'm awfully sorry, we'll try not to do that again, but really it was your fabric and the instruction was just to cut it up and make it” you know? So that's the early stage of that and that's really how M&S started to understand industry. Then they gradually pushed more and more onto the supplier. Buying your own fabric, having your own technicians, to eventually having your own design, and they turned the whole thing from a CMT operation, into a full package operation.

00:15:00 DR – And I lived through all of that and I saw all of that and I mean it gave me a living for 20 years. And I was absolutely... I mean I couldn't get enough of it. They trained me as well, which was wonderful, they would force my employers to send me to colleges, to university. Which they would never have done unless M&S bullied them into it. And you know what? There was plenty of margin in there. It's just that, as in the original thing I described to you, you had to find a way of allowing them to think they were not being taken for a ride., and tell them that you were struggling, but that you would do your best, you could make good margin on it, because they were getting good prices in the shops. And it was all the other stuff you know, it was paid on time. The fact that if you went to them and said “look I've got a real problem here, I'm about to run out of work” they'd just find you some work you know? It was very good.

00:15:50 SJ – Yeah...

00:15:51 DR – One of the best managed supply chains I've ever seen in my life. And I've taken a lot from that in the supply chains I've set up around the World. If you go in Barbour today, I ripped out what was there, which was Dickensian, and you'll see they've got a very modern, slick, fast efficient supply chain. And it's based on M&S principles.

00:16:09 SJ – And what a shame that M&S couldn't carry that forward...

00:16:13 DR – There was two problems, two very simple problems. Number one; they didn't understand anything outside of the UK. They tried in America, they opened retail stores out there, they brought that chain of shops...

00:16:27 SJ – Brooks Brothers was it?

00:16:29 DR – Yes, it was. They just didn't understand, but when I went to live in America, then I understood what it was all about. Americans don't understand chain stores like Marks and Spencer, they don't see any value in them. With them it's either TK MAXX and the, what do you call them... the cheap chains stores

00:16:53 SJ – like Target and Walmart?

00:16:54 DR – It's either that or its top end and they'll pay a fortune for top-end. And there isn't anything in between, so its dominated by department stores and cheap brand, mass volume and M&S just didn't fit. And M&S tried to sort of explain to the Americans that this was really good, but the Americans just looked down on them and disregarded them. I mean they don't like the British anyway in reality cos they regard them as the colonial....they're not going to put up with any Brit going over there and telling them what to do.

00:17:31 – And the second this is, the reason they're in a mess is purely and simply what they're making, nobody really wants to buy.

00:17:41 SJ – No.

00:17:42 DR – I don't think there's anything, well, when they went out and well, when they went off shore, we pleaded with them... I was running a business which was up to about £100 million turnover, I was manufacturing Director and we pleaded with them, cos we could see what was coming. They let us put a bit off-shore and really understand it, so that if and when the big day came, we could really deal with it.

Rick (Sir Richard) Greenbury the Chairman and Chief Exec at the time, [REDACTED] he wanted on his gravestone, "The man who made a billion pounds of profit out of M&S" – which he did – and the same man who did it all with UK manufacturing, 85% of it with UK manufacturing or whatever it was.

00:18:33 DR – And he did it and what he did the next year, [REDACTED] he sort of blustered about and stumbled around and tried to organise it and

let some work go off-shore and stuff like that, and what happened is the flood gates opened. He took his finger out the dye, the dye burst and it went all over the worlds and they lost control of it completely.

00:18:54 DR – I think they've probably just got control of the quality standards and all of that stuff, but ...but what they make, nobody wants.

00:19:07 SJ – They used to have 2 stores in Huddersfield, but the main store closed last year and it was the sort of lynchpin of the town...and that closing down was a major blow for a lot of people. But yes you'd go in there and nothing had really changed since the 70's, the shop fit was the same – the food was probably doing really well, but they'd not really moved with the times... which is such a shame, because when I was there in the 90's at Head office, it was such an exciting place to be. The head office was like its own little world – I'd never seen anything like it. And like you say, they looked after people and anything was possible...

00:19:45 DR – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

00:20:23 SJ – I don't know because Richard Greenbury was the Chairman when I was there, I mean I was student on placement and I had to go down there one day, I had to go down the back steps and the hand rail was grey plastic, then you got so far down and it changed to a kind of mahogany handrail and I knew I was in the wrong place!

00:20:40 DR – They used to invite you in for lunches with like linen table cloths and the waiters wore white gloves...

00:20:50 SJ – Yes! Even in the design studio, if it was someone's birthday they would just ring down and order drinks and snacks! It was something I'd never experienced..

00:20:59 DR – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] What they did was they took out everyone

who seemed to know what they were doing. I saw people leaving M&S who were really good and I saw all the turkeys left behind, and I thought this is typical. In bad times all the good people flee, and all you're left with are the ones that couldn't find another job. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] they took out a huge critical mass of people who knew what they were doing. And that really imploded them at that point.

00:22:48 SJ – I think that people who know what they're doing, tend to pose a bit of a threat to people who have got themselves in a position of power – but don't know what they're doing...

00:22:56 DR – Correct. But that never bothered Rick Greenbury, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] he wasn't threatened in any way by any of them, he would allow all the best people to come through. And the same for me, when I was in senior management, the stronger the better for me, you know because they would perform better.

00:23:18 SJ – Yeah but that's because, in my experience, you're obviously good at your job and you're not threatened by people better than you... I had one boss who was ex-Nike and she would give credit in public anyone who had a good idea and equally take it on the chin for the team if one of us made a mistake. In contrast I had another boss who was only happy to pass the blame.

00:23:50 DR – I know what you mean cos I've stalked the corporate corridors for over 20 years. I've had me throat slit on a couple of occasions of people who felt threatened by me! You don't go for the reasons they say, you just have to take it. Take what money you can get out of it and get out.

00:24:11 SJ – Yeah exactly. So...

00:24:15 DR – So you were talking about the links into education? I wholeheartedly agree.

00:24:20 SJ – Yeah? Good!

00:24:21 DR – I'll take you back in time to when I was a young lad and I started in the factories. And in those days, the women in the factories, you would have, two generations of women working in the factories, mother and daughter. And then, the granddaughter would be coming through school, and then the granddaughter came home from school and they had tea, all the talk round the table would be what went on at the factory. And the granddaughters would get wrapped into it and the granddaughters would come to work too. When the cull happened, I mean they went down so rapidly, it created not just the shockwaves that you'd lost your job, but you had to go and work in the supermarket, but it was the shockwave that it was done so viciously and cold-bloodedly and there was a kind of a hatred that came through in those people. So if those grannies and mothers are still alive, they will do

everything in their power to stop the young ones going into the factories. And that will be one of the reasons why those people find it so hard to recruit. So it's not only the fact that the kids are growing up and they want something better, it's the fact that the inbuilt hatred or bitterness or whatever.

00:25:45 DR – However, there's a kind of fourth generation coming through now. And I think the fourth generation could be seized on.

00:25:54 SJ – Yes that's what I'm kind of thinking. And I think it could be reimagined in a different way. I worked for [REDACTED] for nearly 15 years and I know all about margin. I was in charge of a brand where I had to beat the targets all the time. I had to take my design hat off and put my business hat on and say "do we really need a hood on that hoodie?" and so I understand that. But all the time I've been around and been in meetings, where one of my bosses - the owner of a massive importers in Manchester, and was sitting across the table at a factory in China, and he said "one of us is going to lose money here, and it's not gonna be me". And I thought, "Oh God" you know? I think there's got to be another way where everyone can win a little bit...

00:26:32 DR – Yes.

00:26:33 SJ – I think ecologically, we can't keep shipping cheap stuff around the world.

00:26:44 DR – No

00:26:43 SJ – I sent you that link to the company in America? (ES) They're turning over a few million a year, it's not massive, but not tiny either, it's not cottage industry and I think that could be used as a model, for micro units where you're not just seen as piece rate. I've been in SR Gent and Double 2 shirt factories as a student and you're horrified at how quick they worked and how loud it is and how noisy...

00:27:05 DR – Yep, yeah

00:27:07 SJ - ... and you think no wonder people don't want to work in factories, where everyone can go to university now, where they couldn't then. But I still think there is a path forward...

00:27:13 DR – Did you have a connection with, did you have access to the Alliance Report?

00:27:21 SJ – The Lord Alliance Report? Yes

00:27:23 DR – Yes

00:27:25 SJ – Were you involved in that?

00:27:26 DR - Well. Kind of. I tried. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

00:27:33 SJ – No

00:27:34 DR – [REDACTED]

00:27:40 SJ – I was going to ask if you could recommend anyone for me to speak to, but I guess not her then?!

00:27:44 DR – No, definitely not, but it's not there now, its closed down.

00:27:47 SJ – [REDACTED]

00:27:48 DR – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

00:28:14 SJ – Oh right...

00:28:44 DR – That whole textile growth programme worked reasonably well. There about £30million of government money got pumped into the industry and they did a reasonable job. I tried so hard to get involved and [REDACTED] wouldn't let me anyway near it [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

00:29:01 SJ – [REDACTED]

00:29:02 DR – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

00:29:27 SJ – [REDACTED]

00:29:28 DR – And that, at least drew attention to the industry. There was a report behind it, which you might want to get your hands on it if you can – it was by Kurt Salmon. It was commissioned by the government and it was put together by Kurt Salmon. And they pointed out – what was it – like 10 years ago? Something like that, 15 years ago? They pointed out that, economically, it was possible to re-shore, fundamentally. Not everything, certain products with higher margin and stuff. And that's become more and more the case because since then, I would say that efficiencies have increased 100% on the actual manufacturing possibilities. I'm embedded right in the middle of the whole collapsing of the supply chain, and the relevance of the whole thing, I understand it outside in and inside out. My network is attached to a lot of very advanced digital businesses in this area who are digital creators and digital masters coming through. And also, I understand the big boys, the Browsewares, all the 3D design and Gerber and all that claptrap. Gerber who are great at cutting fabrics and try to tell you that they are great at cutting fabrics and other stuff and they're not really.

00:30:55 SJ – I don't know anything about that, that's completely new to me...

00:31:00 DR – They're all good at what they do if they stick to their stuff and talents, they're brilliant. But they all try to do everything for everyman and you know, nobody has got the one-stop solution. There are a lot of jigsaw pieces to put together. And that's what's driving these people like the Sri Lankans and the Americans, they're driven by using best practise and choosing which parts of the developments they want, then setting guys like my digital experts here to fill in the gaps in between.

00:31:40 SJ – Needs a bit more joined up thinking by the sounds of it?

00:31:42 DR – Yep

00:31:46 SJ - Looking at training in the UK, I know you said there initiatives that are forward-thinking and that are going to make a difference here. Who do you think is doing it right at the moment?

00:32:03 DR – I haven't seen it first-hand. I've seen people do it. And I've seen... that's why I'm scared for all the country with people coming in (??). I've seen it done well in other countries, but I haven't seen it done well here. I do believe it exists. I think Burberry are putting some efforts into their place in Leeds, although I haven't been into the factory for about 10 years. Jenny Holloway in London, probably comes the closest to it, she's got the factory and the academy next door...

00:32:44 SJ – Yes I've been there actually. I got the first set of [redacted] samples made there.

00:32:48 DR – Jenny, bless her soul, I've know a long time since she was a buyer at Marks & Spencer would you believe.

00:33:01 SJ – I have been in touch with her to interview her, so it is ok to say I've spoken to you – is that alright?

00:33:03 DR – Oh yes of course. Jenny's put her wholehearted effort into what she's done and she like a lot of people had a feeling in her heart and an idea in her head, and kind of made it up as she went along. She started off, she left M&S, she went wherever she went, and she was always a buyer merchandiser type of whatever. Then when she had a belly full of it and left I don't know what she did, I think she did something and failed, like we all do and like I did. And then discussed with her husband, because he's a good guy and he's in the industry as well, and she said I want to start a design blog and he - well if you've ever met Jenny, you can always her words ringing in your ears – I'm sure he would agree to anything, anything she wanted really. So she set up this design blog and started getting busy with that and championing the cause for young designers. And then what she decided was that they needed some samples, so she got a couple of sewing machines. And it kind of went from there really and it kind of got bigger and bigger. I went to see her originally, it was about 7 or 8 years ago now I think, she had a sample room the size of a factory you know? It was enormous. And

basically, she was sustaining some many of the up and coming design people, sample making facilities, and then she went into production and she would do production runs. And I went down to see her recently, just as she was opening this new tailoring academy thing? You know she's opened it?

00:34:45 SJ – Yes I do, I went down there a few times, and I never met Jenny as she was always too busy, but they made the first set of samples for the [REDACTED] and it's a fantastic set-up with the factory downstairs and the sample department upstairs where they're working with designers...

00:34:59 DR – Yep, yeah

00:35:24 DR – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

00:35:29 DR – But also, yes she does run on very tight margins. If you look at the factory, it's 1990's manufacture, all pushed down a central thing... (line) you know. It's not exactly advanced.

00:35:44 SJ – to me that looks like a factory. I've not been in the high tech factories that you have. So what make that 1990's and...

00:35:54 DR – Too much work-in-progress, it's not slick enough, it's not smart enough. They're spread by hand, they're cut by hand. It's primitive. Next door, she's built this tailoring academy and she invited me down for the launch and it [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] the General Manager or the Chief Exec of ASOS was there. Presumably because they back the company?

00:36:30 SJ – Yes they back her

00:36:31 DR – I think without them, she'd go bust...

00:36:34 SJ – Yes

00:36:35 DR – And they had this facility set up and they're working with Gieves and Hawkes I think?

00:36:49 SJ – I've not spoken to her yet and this COVID is a blessing in disguise as a lot of people aren't working, they're at home, so we're trying to get together, she said she'd answer my questions over What's App..

00:36:59 DR – Well she's making facemasks

00:37:01 SJ – Is she? That doesn't surprise me. I listened to the podcast with her and Kate Hills and she came across as such a dynamic and altruistic lady

00:37:12 DR – She is, she’s brilliant. If she said to you, down tools and march on London, you’d do it. She’s a real suffragette.

00:37:23 SJ – Yes you get that impression, there’s a guy across the road from Fashion Enter, he’s an embroiderer. And he said “it’s because of Jenny that I’ve got this business. She pushed me to do things I didn’t think I could do and it’s all down to her that my business has grown”. And I just thought what a fantastic accolade. So I’ve heard a lot of high praise for her and I’m looking forward to speaking to her.

00:37:54 DR – No she’s tremendous. She’s got this tailoring academy going now and the core principle of it is great. She’s managed to get Opitex (?check), Gerber, people like that to work with her and probably give her very, very generous terms on the equipment. And it’s advanced equipment and it’s a showcase for them, because she gets a lot of publicity. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] I thought this is not a micro factory [REDACTED]. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] what she had isn’t a micro factory, it might be now, now they’ve

had time to sort it out. They might have proper engineers working on it and stuff like that, but all it was, was an extension of what she had next door, a few sewing machines with a huddle in the middle.

00:39:22 SJ – So how do we change that then? Because it sounds like a massive skills deficit. I don’t know if you know of Li Edelkoort, she’s a Trend Forecaster from Trend Union in Paris. She talks about Fashion – and she is referring to high end designer fashion, but it all trickles down – she says that “we’re in the 21st Century, but we have a fashion industry that’s stuck in the 20th Century” – or you could even say 19th.

So what is it we need to do, and do you think it’s possible given the mindset of the British people?

00:35:56 DR – Well you need people like me on board. You need to get people like me on board and get them to co-ordinate the actions of manufacturing engineers who are pulled in from all overseas. They are suppliers of digital equipment, suppliers of manufacturing equipment and tie the whole thing together properly in a series of projects

00:40:30 SJ – Do you have much contact with Adam Mansell and UKFT?

00:40:33 DR – Yes, yes, yes, I know Adam very well. Adam is the Chairman of the Future Fashion Factory project and I sit next to him on the steering board. I know him extremely well. I know Huddersfield University extremely well.

00:40:50 SJ - You must know Bill MacBeth as well then?

00:40:51 DR – I know Bill MacBeth very well, I know Steve Russell, I know them all. They're brilliant guys. I've got those guys harnessed in the last few days. Jenny Holloway is already making PPE equipment, Kate Hills contacted 25 of us to get together on a Zoom call...

00:41:15 SJ – Oh that's right yes, you said

00:41:17 DR- And everyone is locking in together so quickly and so well, and I've taken it on myself that because they don't have much manufacturing up here (Newcastle) they're mainly design-led micros and SME's, that I reached out across the country and across the World actually but mainly across this country, and I've got the Future Fashion Factory People on board now. What was missing with the equipment was firstly the specs, well we've got the specs now, but secondly, where do you get the actual textiles from?

00:41:48 SJ – Yes, I did wonder that

00:41:49 DR – Because the whole thing was sourced internationally, textiles, finished goods everything and there's a lot of people stepping up now. There's guy at Rolls Royce, Brian, who does Rolls Royce interiors, has got his test team in scientific labs working on the equivalent processes and fabrications to be able to use and there's a whole load of stuff coming together.

00:42:14 SJ – That's fantastic isn't it?! So when the pressure's on, we can come up to the plate?

00:42:20 DR – Oh yes, and at a pace, a real pace as well.

00:42:24 SJ – Well, I don't want to take up too much more of your time and I can't wait to transcribe it all, as it's been so fascinating talking to you,

00:42:34 DR [REDACTED] I'm very happy for you to use my name...

00:42:44 SJ – ([REDACTED] it's more about people's concepts and ideas [REDACTED] you've got a seat at the top table of the of fashion, of the industry. So if you can't make it work, what needs to be done? Is it government initiatives, is it tax breaks, is it fundamentally..(the government doesn't value the industry enough?)

00:43:05 DR – I think it starts with government initiative and the rest of the stuff has to mesh in. Something has to fund it, I can't fund it. You'd be surprised at how little I earn to be honest

00:43:15 SJ – I probably wouldn't

00:43:16 DR – Cos what I do now, I give advice out all over the place, I've just given you about £2000 worth of advice.

00:43:24 SJ – When I'm a millionaire I'll pay it back I promise!

00:43:36 DR – I can tell with you you've got a passion for design and I think you might just do something about it. That's why I'm being as open as I am.

DR – They don't understand

00:44:30 SJ – I think Jenny Holloway is right, people want newness, they want excitement. People often don't think about the manufacturing, the making, who makes it and the value of the person who makes it and the skill involved...

DR – Yes, yeah

00:44:58 SJ – It's not factory work, it's not packing boxes, you know I can make clothes, I made my own wedding dress, but could I do that over and over again to a high standard? I'm not sure I could. That skill has been lost and listening to you, maybe we don't need to get it back in the way we had it before and perhaps it needs to evolve and perhaps be more technology based?

00:45:20 DR – Let me tell you, there's some of the best people in the World, who I cannot name, are building facilities in the US, which are – and they've kept away from any form of traditional US manufacture.

00:45:39 SJ – That makes me a bit sad though...

00:45:40 DR – They're building them in the rust belt and they are bringing in techniques from advanced manufacturing. One of the big things I've got here is that I'm very close to Sunderland University, who have got a faculty called AMAP – Advanced Manufacturing in Automotive Practise, and they basically mesh into Nissan with very, very advanced manufacturing practises, artificial intelligence, robotization, the whole thing. And you know what? I worked at Nissan when I first left Barbour and making a car is the same as making a jacket you know? You take a bit of metal, you bend it, you put some bits in it, then you polish it up and they send it out you know? It's just different. The only difference is the specifications and the engineering qualifications and the safety and all the rest of it. It's just the same as making clothes. So these guys in the States are adopting that methodology and they're bringing in trainers from off-shore to train people in what to do, so these trainers are coming from some of the most advanced factories in the World. And so they'll start on day one with trained people and it's all funded by the US government. So from day 1, these youngsters will enter a brand new environment. It isn't like the old satanic mills. It'll be a whole different attitude. Have you ever been to Pentland?

00:47:18 SJ – No, I mean they owned most of JD, but I never went there

00:47:22 DR – Well you go down to Pentland Head Office and see what it feels like, it's fantastic. When I was in Los Angeles as the VP (or whatever the fancy title was called) of Authentic Fitness, which was a 500million division of Warnaco at the time, and 250million of that was stuff we were making for Speedo under license to Pentland, [REDACTED] I got repatriated, forcibly by the US immigration people. And I went to see, what's he called....Rubin?

00:48:09 SJ – Oh yeah, Andy Rubin

00:48:12 DR – I went to see Andy Rubin, I spent the afternoon with him and his finance guy, trying to convince him to fly out to California and buy a business to make the product. In the end, they decided not to do it. Because they were getting a cheque every month for \$1million in license fees. And summised, why should we have the hassle? Let's let them do it, why should we get involved? And it did survive in the end, [REDACTED]

00:48:48 DR – But, going into – and this is 20 years ago – when I went into their main facility, which is in London the whole thought behind it, the attitude, the whole approach was completely different, It was quite incredible. And PVH, in the States. They are like that, they've got the same attitude.

00:49:19 SJ – Yes Pentland did bring in all the social and corporate responsibility to JD. We all had to learn about Modern Slavery and they were on the ball about all that sort of stuff but did not have any dealings with the day to day running of the business...

00:49:30 DR – No, no, they're just a holding company.

00:49:38 SJ – Well it's been very fascinating speaking to you David and I hope that we get chance to meet up in person. Thanks so much for your time. What I feel has come out of the conversation is how you think technology is the driver, whereas I think my ideas are a bit more "homespun" but from what you're saying, that's not the right direction...

00:50:00 DR – No it's got to be technology driven. Homespun won't last. Homespun is cottage industry and that won't work. It's got to be technology driven. Still small, small scale. Again, this facility in the Rust Belt, they're going to have 2000 people, but it won't be one big production line, it'll be groups of 3 and 4 people.

There will be 250-500 micro units in there, each one dealing with its own bit. You know, get it in, turn it round, get it out. You know, quick turns, bang, straight out, same day.

00:50:40 SJ – Yes that's very interesting. It sounds like its expensive, so a micro-unit is not accessible for a start-up company really is it?

00:50:50 DR – No it's not, not at all, that's why it's got to be funded from somewhere. It's like Nissan, you and I couldn't fund Nissan. The Japanese had the money to do that. Even the British government didn't have the money to do it.

It might be that we've got to accept that the parent is a US or Sri Lankan, not the Chinese please God...

00:51:15 SJ – No but you think about the Dysons and the Bransons, we've got enough billionaires in this country that make stuff and create stuff, and you know...

00:51:26 DR – Yep and the other thing as well I would say is that 5-10% of the UK's commercial needs would be for now the best we could expect to re-shore.

00:51:40 SJ – Really?

00:51:41 DR – Yes. You're not going to get much more than that back. You might be lucky but, I don't think so. I think it's got to be the higher end, the better margin product.

00:57:01 SJ – Yes definitely. One factory owner that I spoke to in London said that we “need to get the government to stop the cheap imports, then I can pay my machinists £20 per hour”. That's again the 1990's type of production of the type that you think is obsolete or becoming obsolete.

00:52:12 DR – That's what Jeremy Corbyn would do, that's why nobody voted for him

00:52:22 SJ – Yes I know, we can't go backwards

00:52:28 DR – I came through all that, stop the imports and lame duck companies, that's why Britain became what was known as the “sick man of Europe”. It got into such a mess and the unions brought the entire country to a standstill, the 3 day week and all the rest of it. Do you know what they got in return? They got Margaret Thatcher and she just smashed the whole thing to pieces. They got what they deserved and people hate her, many people hate her, but if she hadn't have done it, it would have been like Churchill. If he hadn't allowed Coventry to be bombed flat and millions of people lose their lives, then we probably wouldn't have won the war you know?

Tough times, take tough decisions for tough leaders.

And that's what we got from Margaret Thatcher. I didn't particularly like some of the things she did, but at the end of the day she saved me. I had a job, I had a career, I was able to build a career. But prior to that, I was just handtied (can't make out that word?) by the unions.

I was running a clothing factory. Here's one for you, as the manager of a clothing factory, before I went to speak to the girls on the factory floor, one to one, I had to pass it through a union official. Imagine that? They decided if I could engage the girl on that subject. And guess

what? The union decided that they wanted to have a special office for the union official to sit in, on the occasion that they visited – as a consultant to management.

00:53:58 SJ – When I was at JD some of the girls said “I’m going to join a union” and I said “Why?” My mother-in-law was a manager in the NHS and she said they can’t do anything, don’t bother. I come from an entrepreneurial background, all my family started with nothing and built businesses, so I’m not with the union mentality.

00:54:01 – DR – I’m from the North and I understand what rich folk do to poor folk, so you have to strike a balance. But it’s got to be a realistic balance.

00:54:32 SJ – That is what my research is about fundamentally, but I’ve certainly learnt a lot today and I’m going to take on board a lot of what you’ve said. It’s to try and create a bit of change in a small way, I don’t want it to just be in a book somewhere, so I’ll keep you updated.

00:54:48 DR – Please do, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] **It’s more about your ideas, it might only be a sentence. It’s more about your concept that it needs to be technology driven and that we’re falling behind places like Sri Lanka..**

00:55:19 DR – Technology driven, but it’s got to be LED, that’s the important thing. Led and driven. You’re not going to get anywhere with little pop shops, piddling about, it’s got to be led and driven. It’s got to have a purpose, it’s got to have measures. It’s got to have all the efficiencies you’d expect from an automotive facility.

00:55:41 SJ – It’s interesting that you’ve made that comparison, because a lot of fashion writers talk about the Slow Food movement and they look at Slow Food with Slow Fashion, whereas you’re looking at the automotive industry which is much more technologically advanced, which seems to be the direction in which we should be moving. So I’ll be quoting you on that – not the off the record stuff!

[REDACTED]

1:00:19 SJ – It seems technologically we’re quite behind then really, where we could catch up, where we *should* catch up, we should be leading...

1:00:33 DR – We're decades behind... It's not just buying one special machine, there's no magic bullet. There's things that need to be connected up; training required, commitment, loyalty, funding and the bravery to do it.

I then express my optimism that the UK can become a World leader in fashion manufacturing again and he agrees. I question why it's not being done, but he assures me that the FFF are making great strides...

1:02:22 DR - They are at the Future Fashion Factory to be fair. The HRC (?) have funded it for the last few years with £5million. We've just completed the first year, we've invested about a £million worth of funding into projects which are leading us into the 21st Century and beyond. And it's been match-funded by those companies by £2million. So it's a proper commercial enterprise with another 4 years to run, so that will come together.

At the minute, it doesn't really involve cut and sew.

00:00:00 KA - I've been doing a bit more research and I've been getting so het up! Ask as many questions as you can about making in the UK, and all the people that are flag waving need to go and do a bit of research!

00:00:26 SJ - Yeah 100%. Could we start with you introducing yourself and giving us a brief overview of your experience in the industry please?

00:00:35 KA – Yes, Katrina Armitage, manufacturer, I've been manufacturing for 36 years. I came from design (inaudible) what else can I tell you? Dealt with all the major high street stores, been responsible for a lot of high profile ranges within those stores, so when the budget were good and we could do special ranges...

00:01:30 SJ – Are you willing to name some of the type of stores you worked for?

00:01:31 KA – Definitely, so my main customer has always been Wallis, I worked with DP's (Dorothy Perkins) before they went too cheap. Monsoon was another big customers. BHS I worked with since 1992, but then slowly slowly, when Philip (Green) took it over.....we did a bit with him but then it got too cheap. Phase Eight....did I mention Monsoon?

00:02:14 SJ – Yes you did, that's good. Just so we know where you fit (which level of the market). So, where so you think things started to go wrong, what sort of time?

00:02:28 KA – If I'm honest, things started to wrong probably, you know where the landscape started to change was when Zara really took hold of the High Street. Time was I suppose 8-9 years ago, not that anybody made the sensible decision to possibly give them a run for their money – they didn't. What they did was, you go up to the buying office and they'd say "Oh, we kind of want to be a little bit of mix between M&S and Next" instead of saying "we want to be us". Nobody had the courage of their own convictions. So, the money men got too involved and there was no-one at the top saying "sod it, let' do that on a lesser margin". Those sort of creative decisions weren't getting made.

00:03:21 SJ – You made a really good point the other day when you said we are creatively stifled (on LinkedIn). What do you mean by that?

00:03:30 KA – What I mean is the design teams would come out with really ambitious ranges for me to put forward, but by the time that went into selection and then it went into rack-ups, and let's look at it and do we need it and then the merchandisers come along and say yeah but this, that and the other and did it sell last time. Was it too early, was it too ambitious, what was the landscape like at that time, there was no creativity. Creativity is impulsive. It's instant..

00:04:09 SJ – Taking a risk

00:04:10 KA – Yep, and if you were talking about the same dress four or five weeks down the line – it's gone. You're not gonna feel the same way, you're gonna be sick of looking at

it. So there was no...this was all done to please shareholders.
It was all done to please people who just wanted bottom line.

There is a brand that I want to name but I don't want it to be made public..

00:04:37 SJ – No, no, I won't...I mean I might just use the essence of your ideas, rather than just quoting you...

00:04:42 KA – Well I spoke to the Brand Director of XXX and she said she loved it when they first started the brand, it was creative, if we saw something we loved, it didn't matter if it didn't fit in if we loved it, the customer loved it. The instant reaction was – we loved it and the customer would walk in and they loved it. But as soon as they got bought out and there were money men at the top of it, they had to justify why they were buying it. You can't justify that. You hold a garment up and go "look at it, I just love it", the woman going out on a Saturday evening....but the justification of it all just brought everything to a standstill.

00:05:26 SJ – What you're describing is identical to my experience.

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15 years and for the first 10 - obviously it was not womenswear it was men's and boy's sports product for the first 10 years it was run by people who wanted the best of the but..

00:05:42 KA – Passionate

00:05:43 SJ – it was all about the product and then 5 years ago (more) they had a bit of a switch around and it became about the numbers and the numbers were more important than the product. The person in charge was the buying director, who cared about the numbers and not the product and we used to say "you can't have a Buying Director who doesn't care about the product!"

00:06:02 KA – How can you have a buying director who doesn't know about product? That's not a buying director, that's a merchandiser

00:06:43 SJ – Yet the profits surged. And that's what it's all about. Like you're saying it's a very soulless existence and I wonder what drove the stores to focus on money – was it that they felt the customer was not as daring perhaps?

00:06:25 KA – I think they're spoilt for choice, I think they're too saturated. I think the choice should be more limited because there's so little manufacturing going on with good

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designers.

All the way down the line, margin has made us really sacrifice what has ended up in the stores.

And going back to what she's asking me to do know, this online woman, I've been doing a scout round some of the factories in London, and there's no way that any London factory can make for anyone that wants to sell anything below 80 quid.

00:10:50 SJ – Oh no...and why should they? (make for anyone who wants to sell for less, as they will lose money)

00:11:35 KA – Exactly. They're on London money and if you want to make anything for the UK high street, it's got to be outside London. You've got skilled machinists who will comfortably work for £10/11 an hour outside London, inside you're looking at £12 plus and then it's questionable what their ability is. I got a price off Jenny at Fashion Enter yesterday, I was so surprised. These jumpsuits have got a making price of between 25-28 quid and the woman has got them online at £167 / £169 and its lovely, it's right for her customer. So I got a price from [REDACTED] and she said I need £55 a garment.

00:11:50 SJ – [REDACTED]

00:11:52 KA – I mean the disparity is just laughable. So what you were saying Sharon about us being caught in the 90's is absolutely right. Because I sat down and I started working it out if you could make X an hour, then this is a bloody good making price, but you need to be set up, you need to be state of the art and they are not.

They are, honestly it's cottage industry.

If they're getting the sort of [REDACTED], [REDACTED], [REDACTED] people like that selling at 250, they're getting 80 garments and they're getting paid 70 quid a garment, that's lovely...

00:12:48 SJ – That's [REDACTED] is it?

00:12:55 KA – No, that's the luxury factories in London, some of the machinists left me and went and set up their own little units, which is brilliant, but then you're relying on drops and its generally twice a year. So they get really really busy all at the same time, then they've got sod all else to do. They're not working for people who should be forward thinking, and thinking "well I'm gonna present my range, but I'm gonna drop it on a monthly basis"

00:13:30 SJ – Getting back to [REDACTED], the last time I was there they had a massive order for Tesco, like 10,000 polyester skirts...

00:13:35 KA – That's downstairs. I only wanted 100, so she wouldn't let me go downstairs. I mean I get it. I was speaking to one of the Head Designers [REDACTED] yesterday and I said to him - because I used to use him as a freelancer and he's really good - and I said how do you feel about making... and he was like "Oh my god, if we could put that online, British brand..." And I said to him, we've got to think about building this from the bottom up.

Because we gave away our power 20 years ago when we allowed everything to be price driven. So the public might want to kick the fast fashion habit and be ethical...

00:14:20 SJ – ...in theory

00:14:22 KA – In theory, but they can't kick the addiction to price.

00:14:25 SJ – No. We've taught the customer that everything will go on sale. We've taught them that everything is cheap. And so many people contacted me on LinkedIn saying "I'm really passionate about sustainable fashion" and I wonder what does sustainable fashion mean to you?

00:14:46 KA – Well they're getting fed this greenwashing aren't they? We've sourced this cotton in Ethiopia, where everyone's working for a bag of rice a week, do you know what I mean Sharon? They're selling them a pipe dream.

It makes me so mad, there's a whole show going on about Made in the UK and I mean - who for? Who's making? What? These shows are promising people things that they can't deliver.

00:15:15 SJ – Do you mean [REDACTED]?

00:15:20 KA – That as well [REDACTED], but that's not made in the UK. But they're just basically trying to put people together. You know, it's like the old fashioned dating game, it's like speed dating. [REDACTED] so it's really really mismatched.

00:15:44 SJ – Do you think there is the talent and skill here – I know there are some top-end producers here in London and they are at the designer end of the market, but do you think – obviously it would have to be above high street for the prices. Certainly the things I got made here were good, but they were from a Turkish owned factory, but do you think we've got the mindset number one, and the ability number two, to really have a go at rebuilding the manufacturing industry here?

00:16:20 KA – I think no, we don't have it. I think we could get it, it all depends how we market it. I think having gone into [REDACTED] and seen her training school, she relies on the local job centre and that is not gonna work because they're just ticking boxes. They're just going to the job centre and they're just sending them – they don't want to be machinists. So we've got to market it to the young...well they don't even have to be young.. to people who haven't got any work.

It CAN be a bit glamorous...

00:16:57 SJ – I agree. There's a company in America called Elizabeth Suzann. It's not the kind of gear that you or I would be interested in, but it's all natural fabrics, linens, wools and silk, and it's quite a seasonless product; smocky type dresses, loose fit elasticated waist pants, there are not fastenings I've noticed, so there are Japanese kimono style jackets. She's got a very particular look, the colour palette is muted, she markets it around artists and potters and all the rest of it. But she's got this factory in Nashville, Tennessee and it is designed, cut and made – and some of the machinists have got fashion degrees - they've got persian rugs on the floor, beautiful pot plants etc... I showed one of my friend who is product developer

and she said " I want to work there". They make to order, sell DTC and when an order comes in one person makes one item in its entirety, so "Sharon you're making this pair of trouser, Katrina, you're making this dress" – from start to finish. And you probably sign it and put your name in it, so you put a little bit of love from the machinist. So you're not banging out collars or pockets all day, you are making something from start to finish.

And they retail probably between \$100-300, so they are above the high street and I think that sort of model...

[REDACTED]

00:18:41 KA –

[REDACTED]

To me, someone like your friend Tamara (Cincik), who has got a foot in the door of government, because there's enough talented people like yourself and David and enough people with passion to drive it forward. I was kind of thinking of this ES model, she's turning over maybe \$7million so its not a massive company, but its not cottage industry either

00:19:32 KA – Yeah but it's not shabby is it, blimey I'd like to have that at the moment

00:19:36 SJ – Exactly. So my thesis is to build up a network of people like that with a government initiatives, but David said no, you need technology, you can't have a line of machinists that' from a past era...

00:19:52 KA – No, its soul destroying

00:19:57 SJ – He said no-one wants to do it. M&S decimated the industry, the mums and grannies worked in the factory and came home to the dinner table talking about to it the young girl at home, who then also went to work in the factory. But once M&S went to work offshore, there's so much bitterness towards Marks & Spencer – even now...

00:20:12 KA – Yes

00:20:15 SJ – They're trying to work with mills around here and they're telling them where to go, I've heard that from a few different people. He said they had such a massive effect on the industry, positively when they worked here and then negatively when they left, that it need to be something new and it needs to be based around new technologies, which I hadn't considered really.

00:20:38 KA – No I hadn't, I hadn't. Because I'd walked into a few of these factories and said "come on, I pay £6 for this in Romania, surely if I give you like 12-14 quid?" they were like "What? No way" 40-50 quid. I thought, hang on a minute, these are factories that I

used to used before I went abroad in 2000, 1998 or whenever it was that we first started going to Romania. (Before) then we were making in places like Liverpool and there were young guys that were owning the factories, putting their own money in and really trying to make them as modern as they could at that point in time. But everybody did the max exodus and all these boys went out of business. So you don't have them around anymore. You can't wait 30 years and expect them all to be still hanging around. And the frightening this is that, China is up and running again and people have got short memories. And they will want the price and they will say "Alright, we won't be buying anything 'cause we've got this glut of stock and we're going to have to manage our way out of this. If it's not too trend driven we can put it in next year." So you're going to have a whole gap where no body's going to be making anything, so it'll have a knock on effect..

00:22:00 SJ – But don't you think that model itself is finished? Buying 1000's and 1000' of one item and backing one horse? The DTC model - obviously there's a whole other faction of the marketing and getting people to find out who you are – without the retailer. DR was saying there's a company in the US – and the difference between there and the UK is that the government invest in the industry – as they do in France and Italy – they value the fashion industry – they've invested in the infrastructure and in the equipment and you can order something online, made to your specifications and in 48 hours have it delivered to your door. And that's what people want. But I'm a bit resistant, I think hang on a minute.

The way forward, we can't copy China and India and try to be cheap, but I think we have to go down this new way of working this technology route, whether that is direct to consumer, but the whole industry needs a big shake up and needs turning on it's head.

00:23:05 KA – It is and I think it's going to take years for that to bleed down to the likes of Wallis, if they're still around, of this World, if they still want to sell a blouse at 30 quid. That is going to take years to bleed down – if ever. We're global now and maybe it will never happen. Maybe if it's under 50 quid for an easy simple top, it will always be made abroad. Maybe there's a place for it. But certainly there's a place for us to open up this whole trench of what I call this middle... not a woman who is on very low income. Nobody under £30k a year can afford to buy a blouse at 50-60 quid. There's just no way. But there are a hell of a lot of people who can.

00:24:02 SJ – I think there are a lot of people out there with money and once you get past the student stage of buying cheap and second hand, once you can afford to buy nice things, you want something that is beautifully made that you might keep for years.

00:22:17 KA – There is. And she'll go from £50 a blouse to £250 a blouse to £500. You don't want to enter into the sort of Net-a-Porter £800, £1200. Again, I spoke to a factory yesterday, about these jumpsuits and I said to her "what sort of making price would you want for this?" and she said 90 quid. Bearing in mind, she contacted me. So I said who do you make for? And she said *Erdem* (sighs) and I thought who the...

00:24:46 SJ – But he's right at the top of the fashion pyramid, he's not getting any volume is he? They can charge Erdem 90 quid but they have to have a sliding scale don't they?

00:24:54 KA – Yeah! So we're missing that whole bit in the middle and I just feel now, that after I've been doing what I've been doing for the last week or so, that I need to be getting together with Tamara, with you, with David and saying OK, how can we go to the government and – you know, it's going to be a thankless task unfortunately, but I think it will mushroom. I think it will open up so many possibilities...

00:25:18 SJ – [REDACTED] Even getting all this PPE. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] I've heard people say why are we putting everything in China's basket, why are we so reliant on them and then when we have a big crisis, we haven't got anything. And yet within a week, you've got people at Rolls Royce developing the fabric, we've got everything here, and I asked David how we can do that? And he said when it needs to be done here we can do it and at pace. So I wonder if there's people in government who recognise that there are opportunities here and it's not always about price and there are people who are willing to pay more and I think it would have a positive effect on the industry, creating jobs and not just feed by and led by the bottom line...

00:26:16 KA – Yeah, exactly that, I agree with you. And I think that as we said the other day, space is going to open up on the high street, people are gonna want to put their ideas out there. I was approached by someone that I know really well, she is a buying director at a big store. And she said can we not just develop something for online, she said I can't do this anymore. I said yes ok, I mean that's something I'm doing anyway, beavering away in the background, to get my own little manufacturing base up and running again, but I don't want to make it abroad, I want to make it here. I want to be that mid price. I want to be that £90 for really nice relaxed... what would you wear getting off a long haul flight, do you know what I mean? That sort of stylish, you're going to meet friends in the middle of Manchester, at The Ivy whatever, you know what are you gonna wear you know? So it's that level. But I want to make it here.

00:27:18 SJ – And added to that as well, I don't want to exploit people in factories. I want to see like the ES model where there are people who really love making stuff and I think we've knocked that out of – I think it goes right back to schools. We've taken all the creativity out of schools. That's part of my research really is getting the "Joy of Making" going. I emailed [REDACTED] the other day, then she blinking put it in a post on LinkedIn!

00:27:42 KA – Oh, you can't do that!

00:27:54 SJ – [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

00:28:03 KA – My daughter's at [REDACTED] and she is doing the [REDACTED] course. [REDACTED] But she was making her final collection and she was struggling as she was going to have to you know, make her own garments. And she said, "I'm really bad at stitching Mum, I'm much better at designing". And I said, "well who's shown you and what classes did you have about machining?" And she's like, "we haven't. We've got to sit in the sewing room, and there's a technologist that walks round and says 'oh don't do it like that, I think you'd find it

easier like that'. And so she went to my sister, who's the pattern cutter I told you about, and within 5 minutes she was instructing her "this is the best way to do it". Now she feels really upset, cos she's learnt how to stitch, but she doesn't have to send in her final collection (due to the pandemic), they're doing it digitally. But I said it's a feather in your cap, it's fine. She's [REDACTED] and they're not training them to machine.

00:29:14 SJ – No, and I think we're missing a trick there and that's part of my research, to have design and manufacturing together in one building, because then your daughter is the designer, working with your sister the pattern cutter who says "make it like this" but if your daughter knows how to construct something then she can say "how about if we cut it like that?" "Oh right yeah, we can cut it like that". But you need to have some knowledge of how to make things. All the young designers I've worked with recently, they can draw a picture of a garment, but when the factory in China says we can't make this, you need to be able to instruct them. You need to know how to do it...

00:29:51 KA – Mmmmm absolutely.

00:29:53 SJ – And I think we've got a bit of a gap in our education system there.

00:29:55 KA – Mmm we have, we have.

00:29:58 SJ – I could bang on about this all day! (laughs)

00:30:00 KA – I know!! Yesterday I nearly rang you up a day earlier - do you know what I'm going through to get these garments made?! I just feel I want to get cracking on it. I don't know how to it Sharon...

00:30:12 SJ – No I know, speaking to you and David, he said you'd be surprised how little I get paid(?) Tomorrow I was due to speak at a Sustainability conference at the university, but it got cancelled and the keynote speaker was Kate Fletcher who is the number one sustainability expert in academia and I thought, I'm going to get in there and talk to her. People like yourself and David, there are enough people with experience and talent and we should get together with academia and create a groundswell to create change...

00:31:01 KA – Yes. We're not joined up are we?

00:31:12 SJ – If you have to go that's fine. You've given me loads. And it's not just me interviewing you for this, once we get out of this lockdown, I think this is going to continue and grow, there are lots of opportunities for us all to get together and make things happen.

00:31:29 KA – No I really wanna do it. I even said to one of the factories down here, someone I've used for years, then couldn't use him anymore cos we went abroad, and I feel really sad about that, but we still keep in touch cos he was actually downstairs to my office. And I've spoken to him recently and I've said look you know, can we start this up, can we get this situation going in your factory? And he said, yes, I'm open for anything. Cos he was going to go abroad to Morocco. He was actually gonna go and link up with a Moroccan guy and a factory and bring [REDACTED] and go out to Morocco and produce. Whereas we always produced in his factory. And I think he's been put off now by what's

been going on. But I think you know, there's a phenomenal opportunity for us to do this, as long as you can accept there's 300 to make or 500 to make, not 3000.

00:32:21 SJ – Yeah...that's the thing. But it will build from there, it'll grow

00:32:26 KA – It will, it will... I think we should get together in a couple of weeks Sharon and see where we all are and I'm gonna invite Tamara (Cincik) and we could put something together so she could lobby a government minister or... I don't know, who would it be?

If it was Tony Blair and he invited everyone to Number 10, that was all the Cool Britannia wasn't it? Vivienne Westwood...

00:33:01 SJ – Katherine Hamnett? Would it be someone like the Department of Trade and Industry? I think seeing the country mobilise over this PPE and it's on Panorama isn't it? It's come to everyone's attention that fashion factories in the UK can make PPE, and I think that's sort of brought it into their consciousness and now's the time to strike isn't it? While the iron's hot.

00:33:30 KA – But also what worries me is who are these factories that are making it and what sort of disparity on the making prices. You know are they doing it because...

00:33:40 SJ – [REDACTED]
I know [REDACTED] went into Leicester and tried to clean it up a bit, there was like a government initiative there?

00:33:56 KA – But you can't fight that, you can't fight that.

00:34:00 SJ – Yes, [REDACTED] is the supply chain manager for BooHoo and she said there are lovely family run factories in Leicester, why don't you get your [REDACTED] range made there? And I said "no way. I don't want them tainted with that". Because they are "audited" in inverted commas, and then they've just got little bedrooms with about 10 women in at £2.50 an hour. I don't want that, I don't want any of that.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Via Zoom

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

00:05:10 SJ – I think I got it a little bit wrong – I thought you'd got a factory; do you have your own factory?

00:05:16 FF – No. We work with factories, some of them on a CMT basis, some full service, but mainly UK CMT, we've got a couple in Portugal that we do full service with, but mainly CMT yeah.

00:05:28 SJ – Can we start by you introducing yourself and telling a bit about what you've done and what has led you to this point please?

00:05:16 FF – I started my business as a womenswear label, about 9 years ago now. I was high end silk womenswear tailoring, you know for the office for the working woman. But at the same time, I was still working for a big garment supplier. We were a fully vertical Chinese owned company supplying people like Marks and Spencer, Hobbs, Jaeger, Monsoon.

00:06:14 SJ – Based in the UK?

00:06:15 FF – Yes, we were based in the UK but all the production was done in China. I was the Senior Account Manager and I would manage the process from start to finish. I was there for 7 years and started the label in my 6th year, but you can't do both. I was travelling to China 5 times a year and if you're running a business you've got to give it 100%. I actually won a competition in conjunction with ASOS marketplace and a company in London called Fashion Angel. And they gave me 6 months of free mentoring. Through that we looked at the business and all the figures and everything and realised that I'd got all this experience with production, got all these contacts with factories. Needed some extra

income into the business to help me market the fashion brand. So, I decided to set up the Production Lab. What I did was, I sold my house, went back to live with my parents, obviously gave up my job! And then started the Production Lab just to bring some cash in. But obviously because it was such a unique idea at that time, we were getting busier and busier and at first, we were doing Chinese production, because that was my background, but it's so far away, the MOQ's were really high and you don't have as much control over it because it's so far away.

So, then I looked into UK production in about the second year. I'll be honest, I had quite a lot of disasters. Really, there are some terrible factories in the UK. It was mind-blowing to me that I could get something made in China where they speak a different language and they couldn't achieve the same thing here.

00:08:20 SJ –

That is completely my experience of working in the UK and it's not just about price. To me it's about attitude. The attitude is completely different here...

00:08:29 FF – Oh yes. Yes absolutely. And I lost so much money, I just thought, this is insane – is it me or...? What's wrong? But eventually I did find a couple of factories I was happy with and I still work with. But I had a lot of businesses that I was working are quite small and even though they want to produce small quantities, they can't afford the prices in the UK either. And I thought I need another route. I'd been contacted by someone in Portugal, so I went over to Portugal for a couple of days, visited all the factories and started working with Portugal. Which was the best decision ever, because they have a brilliant attitude, they really look after you, the facilities are amazing, the fabric supplier is like their next-door neighbour. Even in the smaller units, if you want to do smaller quantities, they still have better machinery than in the UK, for example. So, their finishes are a lot better. It's only 2 hours on a plane, their English is really good....so yeah, that was a really good thing to bring into the business.

So about 4 years ago, I had my son and I decided at that time, the label wasn't making any money, not enough money anyway. I was so busy doing the production...

00:10:00 SJ – I was going to say - you went from having a full-time job and a label to having a label and a full-time business!! You replaced one with the other, didn't you?!

00:10:09 FF – Yeah, I didn't make a big song and dance about it, I just stopped and thought right we're going to do the Production Lab now. So, once I'd come back from maternity leave, I employed my first person. Now there's 4 of us and we have part time freelancer. We've increased turnover year on year which has been really good, although we've dropped a bit this year cos of Covid. So, I have a full-time designer, full time garment tech, part time pattern cutter and there's myself that's full time. We work across loads of different product types, so although my background is silk blouses and dresses, we've done men's, children's, women's, soft lingerie, socks, sportswear, swimwear, dog clothing, a luxury dog-coat brand – entirely made in the UK – so you can imagine how expensive they are?! What else have

we done? Anything we can stitch and have a go at. One client we're making a water hammock for, like a lilo...

00:11:30 SJ – Never a dull moment then?

00:11:32 FF – Never a dull moment! We've done some incontinence pants for children, but made them really stylish. Yeah, so we get unusual products like maternity or breast feeding. Yeah, I think the products that no one else wants to do!

00:11:50 SJ – That's really interesting – (I then explain my background and reasons for the research) I know China, India and Turkey production and have witnessed exploitation, the air miles, the shipping miles and so I really wanted to work with the UK again. I explain I remember we made things here years ago and that I did a 6-month placement at M&S and the off-shoring in the 80's-90's. When I tried to find UK suppliers, I found it really difficult as you've said. Reluctance to work with me and ██████ – Fazane laughing in agreement. The attitude seems all wrong, different to China – the can-do attitude.

So, the clients you work for and the UK factories you use, is it purely price, or quality of manufacture or the service?

00:14:04 FF – Quality is not good enough, in my opinion. Service is not good enough. To give them their dues, the often don't have enough staff to give you good service. And some of them are a bit scared of me, because they knew I was going to do it properly. Because of the supplier manual I have. We have proper tech packs. We want to come in and do a proper quality check. They're thinking "we won't get anything past her!" and I think "Why?! Why wouldn't you be doing a quality garment anyway?"

Price isn't too bad, it's not as expensive as you think. It's just when you have everything together, because no one's fully vertical here, you have to pull in a lot of things and that's what makes it expensive. Whereas in Portugal, a lot of them are making the fabric in the factories, so it's a lot cheaper. Even for the UK, I'll import my fabric from Portugal and ship it here.

But yeah, the skills aren't there really. And the workforce is definitely getting older and I do worry, like in 10 years are we going to have any really skilled seamstresses? I don't know.

00:15:40 SJ – Did you see the MiB webinar last week with the guy from Gerber?

00:15:43 FF – No I didn't.

00:15:44 SJ – It was really interesting, he was making comparisons between the car manufacturing industry and clothing. That we are very low on technology in the UK and are decades behind places like Sri Lanka. He said machines can create a lot of efficiencies but we still need people to sew, as robots can't sew to the degree that humans can, so we still need people to sew but no one wants to be sitting on a machine for 8 hours a day.

So, with that in mind, what do you think we could do to make the job more attractive?

00:17:32 FF – Well, we have to pay them more for a start. We're going to have to pay them a lot more. You can't be paying them minimum wage. They shouldn't even be on minimum wage, as you say they are skilled workers and their skills are probably better than mine, so why should I earn more money than them? But then that just puts all the costs up here, it's a difficult one, but they've definitely got to pay people more, because you're right, they can sit in a call centre and get paid twice as much.

00:18:06 SJ – And they won't break their nails in a call centre. Do your customers squeeze you on price? I explain my experience, going to Turkey for instance. Factories found it funny that English customers didn't negotiate – like my Indian boss did. Do you find that your customers squeeze you on price and you then have to do the same to your suppliers?

00:18:41 FF – Some do, not as much as when I worked at the suppliers and I was getting squeezed by people like M&S daily. No, your right customers here do tend to accept the price, but my business model is, I say to them "look if you want a cheap price, you're going to get a cheap garment". So, one of my things is that everyone is paid properly and everyone's paid a fair price for it. And when they start squeezing you down, I say, you're going to get a cheaper garment. Or the service is not going to be as good, the more you squeeze them down. And I'm always proved right. I've had one client who's kept doing it to me – a kidswear brand - and it's caused all sorts of problems. The factory care less because they're not making as much, yeah, everything has to be done cheaper. So, it doesn't work squeezing people down on price and we've got to stop doing that.

00:19:44 SJ – So your customers have to pay more and their customers have to pay more – it might not be a massive amount, but prices do have to go up to reflect the cost of making it don't they?

00:19:58 FF – Oh absolutely, but we've got this whole fast fashion industry and people can't see why they have to pay x amount for our garment when they can get a dress from Boohoo for 10 quid? They just not understanding how it works. If I sit down and explain to someone "how do you think they got to that?" they'll say (shocked) "I didn't think about it like that" I've even had buyers in factories in China saying "there's actually a lot of work that goes into this isn't there? That's why the prices are so high!"

00:20:33 SJ – We both went to the University of Derby – I talk about my views on the gap between academia and industry perspectives and how we can cross-pollinate and create positive change.

00:22:23 FF – My biggest frustration at Uni – I did a year out and really saw what the industry was all about. I came back and said this is not really life, this is not how it works, why are you giving me 6 weeks to make one dress, when I would get 6 hours!

They need to have – at college level even, real life experiences with industry people coming in and doing lectures or live projects where you actually work with a factory to get a collection made. Right at the very beginning I left university, my boss was in shock, she said “what did they teach you at Uni?” I said “how to draw pretty pictures” ...

00:23:14 SJ – Like what? What sort of skills did she think you were lacking?

00:23:16 FF – I just didn’t know what a garment supplier was. I don’t think I knew where I was even going to work, if I’m honest. I didn’t know what Pantones were... That’s really surprising cos I went to Derby.

00:23:30 SJ – Who was the course leader?

00:23:33 FF – Anne Muirhead

00:23:35 SJ – She ran the HND when I was there. It was Anne Fern and Marilyn when I was there, but they’d probably left then.

00:23:40 FF – Marilyn was still there

00:25:45 SJ – I talk about my sewing past, designers I worked with in latter years who didn’t know how to sew or garment construction and the significance the skills gap has on the industry.

00:25:10 FF – On my first day of Uni we were taught how to use the sewing machine, with a dotted line on a piece of paper. I’d already got a fashion label, I thought “What am I doing?” What a waste of time. So yeah, you’re right. Even buyers don’t know what fabrics are. It should all just be real life, like real life projects, this is what happens in industry. You should work with a factory, design a garment, look at all the different fabrics and learn about all the different fabrics, where they come from and all of that, really early on.

I mean I have done a bit of consulting, they are starting an MA in Garment Manufacturing at LCF, something like that. It’s one of my old lecturers that’s set it up, Ella Sharp – do you know her? They’re writing a course, specifically for garment production, but I think it’s a bit late...

00:26:12 SJ – Better late than never though.

00:26:15 FF – It is going to be an amazing course, but again when I first went in, I said “I’ve got to be honest, I don’t understand anything you’ve written on its cos it’s in (unintelligible) speak!”. We don’t talk like that. And I’ve been out of University for a very long time, so I said “If you gave me that course, I wouldn’t really know what it was about”. Just use plain English, and they did take that on board.

So yeah, they need to be doing it at college at University. I mean at my college – I did a BTec – that was brilliant, hand-on. We made stuff all the time, really quickly, we made all the blocks everything.

00:26:58 SJ – Yep, that’s what we did. We had a shirt project and drafted our own blocks. Christopher Bailey from Burberry, was there before me, so it was a great course. I already knew how to sew, but that was dressmaking – this was garment construction and manufacturing. So, they smoothed off the rough edges and it was great, it really was.

So, we’ve covered quite a lot....so you don’t do any China production now, or do you?

00:27:28 FF – We can if people want that. I’ve still got the factory there if people want it, but to get a really good price, you’ve got to produce 1000’s. Or it’s not really worth it.

00:27:40 SJ – And how are your customers with sustainability? Do you think it’s a trend, a bit of a buzz word or are people genuinely wanting to make less of an environmental impact? (long silence)

(Laughs) I can tell by your face what the answer is!!!

00:27:58 FF – So, yes, they want to, but once they realise the costs, then it’s not so attractive to be sustainable. I’ve had people come in “we want to be entirely sustainable and want recycled fabrics” this that and the other. Then I give them the cost and they go “oh, so maybe we can put something else in there just to bring the cost down”. One client I had, his collection was made entirely from recycled materials, it was amazing. But obviously the cost prices had to be really high and he’d not made as much profit as he thought he would and now he’s asking me for China production. I said “what about your sustainability credentials?” he was like “Oh I’m not bothered about that anymore”. (laughs) Which is really sad.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

00:29:21 SJ – When I see Stacey Dooley and Panorama type things, I think “well that’s what a factory is” (in China / India) even nice factories, most people would not want to work there. So how do we make it fairer, how do we make it more... I hate to say “sustainable” because I think it’s just become a bit of a trend and has become a bit of a meaningless statement.

00:29:43 FF – Yeah it is a trend

00:29:45 SJ – And recycled polyester is still polyester, it's still bad for the environment. So, it is purely about cost? And that's not greed, because if he's not making any money, then he doesn't have a business, does he?

00:29:58 FF – Yeah and it's not wrong to want to make a profit or to make some money either. so, it's a difficult one, I don't know either!

00:30:08 SJ – I don't know why I thought you'd got a factory, is it something you'd ever consider?

00:30:15 FF – No (it was a definite “no”)

00:30:17 SJ – Haha! Loads of people say that!

00:30:20 FF – I couldn't do with the stress to be honest. Maybe I could if somebody else ran it for me and it was just part of my business, but I can't ever see me getting that big. I wouldn't want to get that big.

00:30:34 SJ – Yeah. Because it's too much responsibility? Financial wise?

00:30:38 FF – **Yeah.** Like the bigger you get, the scarier it gets. It is something I've thought about, because I just think “Oh I could do this so much better myself”, but... I don't; think I'd want the stress, you've got a lot more staff and...

00:31:00 SJ – machinery and things that can go wrong...

00:31:02 FF – Machinery... yeah, I don't think I would, unless there was a perfect opportunity to buy the whole thing with all the staff and everything.

00:31:11 SJ – So what is your, cos obviously you're in the East Midlands, what is your view of the Leicester situation? Is it overblown, is it accurate? Obviously, I've got suppliers in Leicester, a fabric supplier and asked him to recommend a manufacturer and he said “Nope” I asked why and he said they were all rogues.

00:31:33 FF – I would absolutely agree. So, we used a Leicester factory once. And I still have a thousand pairs of knickers in the room next to me, with holes in, care labels caught into the binding, and it was an absolute mess. He won't give me my money back, I've got to take him to court. He subcontracted it as well. I turned up to do the AQL (Acceptable Quality

Level) and he was like "I'll take you to the factory down the road" I was like "What do you mean the factory down the road?". He said "They're being made down there, our factory's burnt down". I said "What do you mean your factory's burnt down?". I was like, OK and when I got there, nothing was ready. A thousand pairs of knickers were supposed to be ready for me to inspect, nothing had been sewn.

00:32:15 SJ – Oh God

00:31:33 FF – I said "You make sure those that production matches those production samples, that I've approved." "Yes Mrs Fox, we will do that". And then when it got to my client - every single pair got rejected.

So yes, he's an absolute rogue! And, one of my girls who works part time for me, who we're now going to employ full-time, she works part-time for him as well, and they were made to work during lockdown (the first one when it was against the law).

She has no idea what's going on, they haven't been in contact with her, she doesn't know if she'll get paid...She said the environment is absolutely toxic, it's just awful. So, I would never use the Leicester factories.

00:33:08 SJ – I know. I've got 2 teenage daughters who want to buy fast fashion, they say "Can I get this it's only a fiver?" And I say "No! You can't even buy the fabric for that, let alone think about how much the machinist is being paid!" Apart from a couple of decent factories we have both worked with, it's not really a great picture in the UK is it? What would you like to see in a UK factory for you to use them more?

00:33:40 FF - So the government needs to invest in really amazing...have you ever been to English Fine Cottons? I've been there a few times and had a look around. The government has given them something like £6million for all this machinery. That's what they need to do for a garment factory. A state-of-the-art garment factory, maybe in the Midlands - London's got loads of little units - in the Midlands with all the top machinery that you see in Portugal, and really train everybody up, make it a really nice place to work... I mean English Fine Cottons - it's amazing. It's beautiful, its big and airy and clean, it looks like a nice place to work. Just make it really nice for people.

And maybe just market the job differently, make it *sound* glamorous like being a fashion designer.

00:34:59 SJ - I did a talk in a school once as the teacher's said the students didn't know what they could do with art "they think all they can be is an artist or an art teacher". Perhaps that's the same with fashion? There lots of other roles, you can make a fortune if you're a good pattern cutter.

00:35:14 FF - EXACTLY! And designers are paid the lowest, I'd imagine.

00:35:17 SJ - Yes, advertised salaries for experienced designers are the same now as they were 15-20 years ago. And house prices have tripled! But there are so many designers out there, they can keep salaries low.

00:36:00 FF - Yeah if they'd have said at Uni there's all these different jobs... I don't even remember them talking about that. I just thought "I want to be a designer and that's it". If they'd have said "you go into pattern cutting and you'll earn twice as much as a designer". Or garment technologist or product developers that pull it all together. Yes, you get to travel! If someone had said to me I'd be good at being a Product Developer, I'd have been really interested in that, because obviously that's what I ended up being.

I was very lucky to get that job, so when the boss interviewed me and she'd seen my final collection, which was rather crazy! And she had a job for an M&S designer. I walked in for the interview and she went "I hated your collection" (laughing). I said "Oh thanks!". We're really good friends now and she said I did it to see how tough you were, if you'd cry or whatever. But we got on really well and she said "I think you'd be bored as an M&S designer, but go away and design me a collection for M&S and we'll see". I went away and 2 weeks later I thought, she's right I can't do it and I was about to email her to say thanks, but it's not for me. But she emailed me and said "I can't stop thinking about you, I think you'd be really good as my assistant". She was the account director, so I became the account director's assistant, then worked my way up to product developer, which was an amazing opportunity. If I'd have known that was a job option, I'd have gone for it. I had no idea about anything I think (laughs).

00:38:00 SJ - It would be good to change that, as there are so many thousand graduates chasing a few hundred jobs

00:38:05 FF - Even in my class, there's probably 4 of us who are still in the industry, everyone else has gone off to do other things – out of a class of 30.

00:38:15 SJ - Asks if FF had Caroline Coates as her Business Studies Lecturer (I graduated a few years before FF at the same Uni)

00:38:20 FF - I can't remember - I appear not to remember much!

00:38:45 SJ - She was Helen Storey's business partner and their business had just gone into administration. Caroline wrote a book with the DTi called *Designer Fact File* (shows FF my copy), in it, she tells the warts and all story of how to run a fashion business. It is the top end of the industry, which I think is what many people imagine when we talk about fashion - the peak of the pyramid. Not the rag trade where everyone is employed and everyone shops and where all the damage is done.

She said you need minimum £50-100k to start a business, which made me realise I needed to get a job! Perhaps it's better not to know? When I get that big factory sorted, I'll give you a ring!

00:40:13 FF - Yes definitely!

00:40:18 SJ - But coming back to the government, a lot of people have said that the government don't really understand the retail or manufacturing sector. But they also say like you that we need state of the art factories...One guy I spoke to, aid even the bet factories in the UK are decades behind other countries, so we need some investment from somewhere...

00:41:07 FF - If they can do it for English Fine Cottons...

I think they could, make an amazing place where people would really like to work. When I was a Uni. They (EGG Banking) had a call centre and it was a big warehouse but it was decorated really young and cool and there was loads of interesting things to do, like slot machines and a really nice canteen and it was all just really young and cool and we could do that with a factory! And make it really exciting for people to work.

No one wants to be working in a dark mill, which is what a lot of (trails off). It just looks really miserable. You could make it really exciting, like somewhere you really want to go to? Like a big manufacturing hub – it'd be amazing.

You need to get 6 million off Boris!

00:00:48 SJ – Thank you so much so agreeing to be interviewed. When I looked through Instagram, it looks like we’ve got similar backgrounds and have similar views of the industry, but appear to have gone down different routes. So I’m interested to hear about what your experience of the industry is and what are your views of it now going forward and a little bit about what you’re doing?

00:01:03 AR – OK. Well you’ve caught me at a good time really. So basically yeah, I studied, did my degree at Kingston, then I worked in Milan, so I worked in the luxury end for a while, then I went out to Hong Kong and worked there for a few years. It was supplying big brands in the States, Limited Express and stuff.

I said to myself that I only wanted to be there for a couple of years and I did only stay a couple of years, because it was kind of how I thought it was going to be. I’d spent a lot of time working in India as well. When I left there I carried on working for a really big Indian supplier, back then we were supplying Brazil and American places. Now they’re supplying Zara and Urban Outfitters and stuff.

And so I did that on top of other things I was doing, probably for about another 15 years. So I was kind of supplying that industry for a long time until I got to the point...well, I got head-hunted as well by Arcadia, but it just left me cold really. It’s kind of destroying something I’d always loved. For me, fashion was always a form of art. And fast fashion just basically destroyed that completely.

And so basically, 10 years ago, I decided to launch my own little fashion school. And also, I was offered some jobs, but there weren’t any part time jobs in fashion at all and I’m a single parent, so basically I just wanted to be at home with my son.

So I thought, right well I’m gonna do what I would have LOVED to do when I was 8,9,10 years old. So I launched a Fashion Factory. I just put some posters on trees locally and it kind of took off straight away.

00:03:20 - so the only problem was – well yeah, it’s been brilliant, but the problem with it – and actually it’s a great thing, but kids would join and then they’d never want to leave. S there’s only so many kids I can teach you know? So I couldn’t teach loads of kids, then say “No you can’t come anymore” you know?

I could do odd holiday workshops and one-offs, but I couldn’t really ask people to leave if they loved it so much.

But then also, you have to keep coming up with new stuff all the time, which is kind of defeating the object a little bit! I’ve done that for 10 years now. I was asked to do a book as well, so I did a book and we’ve done fashion shows.

One of my students is now at London College of Fashion and she’s been coming to me exactly half her life and she’s 18 and she’s in there sewing for me now!!

00:04:38 SJ - Wow!

00:04:35 AR – What do you want focus on?...do you want me to carry on?

00:04:38 SJ – Yes you can carry on! Really, I too worked for big suppliers that supplied all over Europe and the High Street. I also worked for JD Sports for nearly 15 years, so I've worked for a supplier and a retailer. During my year out I worked at M&S Head Office, I was working with Orla Kiely before she was Orla Kiely, so I worked all those kind of people and trend forecasting companies before WGSN. So feel I've got a broad range of experience from across the industry and like you, worked with China and India and the creativity and the love of it, kind of gets by passed for the sake of profit. It's all about profit. And I hear so much about organic cotton and recycled polyester and I think really, it's about the people who make it and about their skills and about how they're getting squeezed and squeezed for the sake of fast fashion. And it's the people at the bottom who make it that get squeezed.

What I'm looking at is not to take everything away from them, but to reinvigorate the industry in the UK.

00:05.42 AR – Well this is it...

00:05:46 SJ – My attitude has changed even during the course of this research. Some people I've been speaking to say even the factories in the UK are stuck in the 90's. We're so far behind places like Sri Lanka

00:05.52 AR – Yep

00:05:46 SJ – It's all tech based and I'm like – yes but what about the skills? But you still need skills, just different skills, not 8 hours a day on a sewing machine.

00:06.06 AR – Well, I mean it's coming back to this country. I've done this for 10 years now, and my plan is to upscale. To be able to take it online which I'm just starting to put together now. Basically, I don't know if you saw? I did the facemask tutorial

00:06:24 SJ – Yes,

00:06.25 AR – And that got into The Telegraph and The Daily Mail, so I thought, if I quickly put a holding page on my website, then I can get people's email addresses and then when I launch it - hopefully in October – then I'll already have customers. To get more people upcycling, but also for complete beginners. To get younger people more interested in it, you know? They're selling a lot of sewing machines to younger people now and the thing is, we...I mean I started using a sewing machine when I was 8 years old.

00:07:05 SJ – Yep same

00:07.06 AR – And I believe every household should have a sewing machine in it so you can do basic things for yourself. And if you can learn to do that at a young age, you can always work, you're always going to be able to make some money.

And the problem is, we've now got a nation of kids coming out of school and they know how to sit in front of a computer but they don't know how to use their hands at all. And from what I've been reading, you know, manufacturing IS coming back to this country and the workforce is all over 40 years old. We need younger.... And they think... you know, it's not all gonna be about design, we need people who can use their hands.

00:07:51 SJ – Yes

00:07:52 AR – Otherwise, what are we gonna do? We actually need a labour force in this country.

00:08:00 SJ – Yes, I completely agree. Part of what I'm looking at education and I don't know if you've heard of it but there is a movement in Sweden called "Sloyd". It's in schools and it means to make something with your hands" wood work, metal work or sewing. I was telling my husband and then thought "hang on, that's what I did when I was at school!" I am 50 this year and I remember doing domestic science and home economics. I had to make a metal coat hook and powder-coat it.

00:08:24 AR – (laughs) yes! Sloy is it? Sloyd, oh ok. Well I had this girl from London School of Fashion and she did some pattern-cutting for me and I said "how come your pattern-cutting is so good?" and she said "oh at school, we had to learn" and it was that actually.

00:08:52 SJ – I'm actually embarrassed to say, but I've got 2 teenage girls, 14 & 16 and they can't sew on a button. I worked full-time and commuted but I grew up sewing at my Mum's knee. I made my wedding dress, my bridesmaids dresses..

00:09:00 AR – Yeah

00:09:01 SJ – I see blinds and think "I'm not going to pay £100's for them, I'm going to make them!" and it's such a joy to make something from a piece of cloth into a garment.

00:09:11 AR – They've proved that it's really good for self-esteem, for mental health issues, when you get in that Flow kind of space. There's nothing negative about it at all. Which is why I'm trying to launch Fashion Rebellion into the World, so I can get it out to more people, but particularly younger people, to get them upcycling. The problem with upcycled clothing at the moment is that no one is leading the way. It looks like it's Circus outfits a lot of it. Even Great British Sewing Bee, they're just destroying what's...who'd wanna wear that?! You should be inspiring people to do it! Because I've been doing it 10 years now, I think I can do it really well and it's actually not that easy.

00:10:01 SJ – Have you been approached by any schools to work with them?

00:10:09 AR – Well it's interesting, part of Fashion Rebellion, part of the business plan that I've written is for schools. My local school, where my son went, is registered as an Eco-school. Have you heard of eco-schools? It's the biggest educational programme *on the planet* 19.5 million schools (?pupils?) around the World taking part.

00:10:38 SJ – And what defines an eco-school?

00:10:39 AR – They have to have certain things in place that they're doing. All sorts of things, but then they get a badge. I haven't had a look into what they do, but they have to reach targets and things. They have to have a school council made from kids from the school, they have to report back on it and stuff. So it's a really good idea. So they're registered as an eco-school so I've been talking to the Deputy Head and she wants me to teach in school. I said it has to be done by my new method which is e-learning, so they're all on tablets or phones..

00:11:23 SJ – Well that's the perfect time isn't it?

00:11:25 AR – Yes it is perfect timing and I'm meant to do assembly for them in September, which I need to talk to her about, cos I think maybe it'll be October or something? I think I might have to move it back a bit, but I'm going to have to think about doing my first school assembly, cos that's where we're gonna have to start.

It's going to have to be young children, you know and getting it across in a way that they can understand. Not just statistics and a load of figures thrown at them. We need to make some sort of planning how to do this assembly, letting kids come up and stuff like that, so they really understand it, it's the only way it's gonna change.

00:12:03 SJ – I think because they've cut arts funding from schools, there's a woman - because I'm not on a course, it's all research – but there's a woman that I'm working with and she's doing a PhD and she was a teacher and OFSTED inspector. And she said there's a direct link between cuts to Arts funding and a decline in kids mental health. She's doing her research on stitch and how that can benefit kids mental health. It's really important because not everybody is a mathematician or scientist, some of us excel by using our hands and making things.

00:12:35 AR – Absolutely and it makes me.....awwww, it's the same as nature. People are going to go mad if they don't have nature around them. We're human beings, we're meant to use these fingers for doing things with and it's really like... if I've sat there and made something I feel GREAT afterwards.

00:13:09 SJ – And it's frustrating when the needle breaks and the machine jams – I learnt at a young age you've got to be calm with a sewing machine!! Sometimes you have to unpick something, but even then when you've gone through all those challenges – you do feel fantastic and it fits you at the end of it.

So I was going to ask you if any of your students go on to work in the industry, But obviously, if they're going on to do Fashion degrees, then it does spark something in them?

00:13:30 AR – Totally, totally, absolutely yeah. For example one of them, her Mum wrote to me the other day and said this is the best life skill you could have given her. She's just finished her degree in Civil Engineering – well, it IS engineering, it's engineering but with floppy fabric. It's so good for so many different parts of the brain. It's good for problem solving, working out how things fit together, it's just so good for bits of your brain that you can't just sit there and do looking at a computer. It's so important that we have it, so you know, if they haven't gone into design then it'll stand them in good stead. Forever

00:14:19 SJ – I think as you said, you grew up sewing and that helps when you are speaking to a factory as you know how a garment is constructed. You're not just the designer who draws the pretty picture. It's quite interesting you saying a lot of students just want to be designers – it's kind of the glory job really? A lot of the young designers I recently worked with, didn't have sewing skills and didn't know about garment construction and everyone just wants to draw the pictures. So how do we get that back into schools, obviously it's people like yourself and rolling out the teaching of those practical skills?

00:15:00 AR – Yes, if you look at DePop who are in 147 countries and they've got 2 physical stores in LA now, and on there you're getting more and more kids who are upcycling stuff to sell. And I think they're realising that if they learn to use a sewing machine, they can make really cool things really simply. They don't have to go on to be a fashion designer, but they can have a side line, they can earn money for themselves. You know, by the time I was 14 – my Mum recently found it – I had an order book! In my spare time, I'd be making stuff to sell and I'd be earning money. And if they know they can do small things – even like make scrunchies – sell them and make money, it gets them thinking creatively. It doesn't all have to be a certain way. There's other things you can do, you can do so many things with it really.

00:16:06 SJ – You're very busy then with your sewing classes, despite lockdown, do you find that you still have a steady supply of students? Is there still a lot of interest?

00:16:18 AR – You know, I didn't advertise in 10 years. Not even once, It was all word of mouth. And I didn't want to be overwhelmed with advertising and..., but what I've realised is that I've done that for 10 years and now I need to take some time and use what I've learned and take the tutorials online and doing it that way, because I need to get it out to

more people. I've said what I'll have to do is occasional masterclasses here for kids and not my weekly classes.

00:17:06 SJ – Once you've recorded it, then you've done it.

00:17:16 AR – They can do it at home, they can get together with their friends and do it. They can take it into schools, they can put it out anywhere really.

00:17:26 SJ – What are the ages of the kids and is it all girls or boys and girls?

00:17:30 AR – As I'm a womenswear designer, (laughs) I've had to say look, c'mon! But I have had boys come and they want to make girls clothes, but I can't make separate things. So it's all been girls, because it is predominantly girls but I've had boys here that have absolutely loved it, which is why taking it into schools would be brilliant...

00:17:58 SJ – I think so, yeah!

00:18:00 AR – Because I just teach it a different way. I treat it as if you're driving a car, there's an accelerator here and they're loving it. I had one boy at Christmas and he was really into rugby and he was like a proper bloke and he came and he made this upcycled pencil case and he loved it and he stood up at the end and he said *"I like sewing club better than I like football club!"* I said "can you put that in writing please Louis?" and he went "yes you can".

00:18:36 SJ – I could see you rolling this out to all schools – look at the Bodycoach – it could be replicated in all schools. Is it mainly a sort of Junior school age then?

00:18:40 AR – No it's Key Stage 2 & 3, so it's basically the upper end of primary and the lower end of secondary school.

00:18:58 SJ – So 8 to 14?

00:19:00 AR – Yep, 8-14 or can go up to 16. But its just to get them started and I've worked out an entire programme, an entire system and how they would move up through it. You get the rookies first and then you go up. So what I'm looking at is getting it launched to the general public first and then trialling it in this school...

00:19:30 SJ – Do you know Jenny Holloway? From Fashion Enter, the manufacturers in North London? (I go onto to explain about FE and a possible link to Amanda)

00:23:05 AR – Well I am an environmentalist and an Extinction Rebellion supporter. For me, obviously how workers are getting paid is very important to me, but for me, the reason behind what I'm doing, my drive has always been the environment to be honest with you and the fact that one t-shirt is 2700 litres of water, which is 900 days of drinking water for one person. Which is 2.5 years of fresh drinking water.

00:23:45 SJ – I've worked in the industry for so long and believe it's not going to stop, people will still want new clothes. So how do we make what we make, last longer, have more integrity? I grew up in Huddersfield with mills all around, and they still produce fantastic woollen worsted fabrics, it can't be washed, but I want to see how we could utilise it closer to home? It sounds a bit "League of Gentlemen" but make things locally, using locally skilled people, so we don't have to ship things halfway across the globe from China or India to the UK, but we can make things here from what we've got. I've seen the red rivers close up. So if people still want new clothes, how do we make that work better?

00:24:45 AR – Yeah, I think we need to look at how our psyche... I mean I blame advertising for making us feel that we've got to have new things all the time. We don't need as much as they're telling us we need. I think advertising should be banned from using psychology in their advertising. I think it shouldn't be allowed basically, because I think it's very powerful, especially for young people. I think that would be a good start, but it's difficult isn't it? Because all those people that own those businesses are probably friends with government ministers and stuff and why would they want to cap free trade or make them pay a Green tax, when he's invited him on his super yacht next weekend?

00:25:50 SJ – Yes. A lot of the people I've spoken to who are trying to change the industry – without meaning to sound sexist – are women. I think women are more inclined to care and part of my research viewpoint is that really we just need to care more. We need to care about the planet, care about people that make our clothing and care about what happens when we've finished using them. "We can just give it to someone else" But they might not want your leftovers, and why instead can't we make something with integrity from natural fibres, that is made to last and we can repair it?

Patriarchy

00:26:23 AR – Men have been in charge – the White Man shall we say – men have been in charge for too long. Men just want to get together and create armies to destroy each other. They want all the power, they want to take everything for themselves. MOVE OVER and let the women take over – you've messed it up for long enough! We need to clear up the mess that you've made – you've not done a very good job of it. Go away!

00:26:55 SJ – Someone I work with, a client, she used to work in Singapore. They had this work conference (last year) and the keynote speaker was Barack Obama. Her boss posted on LinkedIn "my biggest takeaways were this, this this and this" She commented "my

biggest takeaway was when he said we should let women run all the countries of the World for 2 years and see what happens.” And I think, Yeah!

00:27:19 AR – Yeah exactly and a lot of men I know are also saying the same thing.

00:27:20 SJ – Yes definitely. We’re just not power hungry are we? We just want a better World and for things to slow down a bit.

00:27:29 AR – I think because we actually give birth, we think about how humans of the future might feel as well. Whereas men – not all of them, but maybe (incoherent 89 or 99%) are just in the here and now and “what have I got for my dinner?”. When’s my new car arriving or whatever it is.

I don’t know, but it needs to change and it needs to change fast. It isn’t really changing fast enough. I’ve just been watching the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a sort of Zoom meeting that they had going on. Was it Anna Gedder (?) who is Head of Sustainability at H&M and she’s sort of rattling off what they’re kind of doing, “it’s important that we do this, it’s important that we do that” but there’s no figures from them, there’s no evidence of what’s actually happened... **(BoF 15.09.2020 – Google Matrix)**

00:28:22 SJ – It’s just Greenwashing I think, sorry...

00:28:47 AR – And I just think, you’re saying that, but when it is going to actually start happening?? When is it *PHYSICALLY* going to start happening you know?

For me, I don’t understand why – well I do understand why - that people feel the need to say, well it’s not going to change unless the consumers change, but that’s gonna take a really long time, that’s like trying to turn around a massive ship.

What is wrong with the government saying to Primark – and I’ve actually just written to the CEO of Primark –

00:29:19 SJ – Yes I saw that (on Instagram)

00:29:22 AR – And what’s wrong with them saying, look we’re going to put some caps on free trade, because they are taking whatever they want from the Earth and putting whatever shit they want to put in the Earth....

00:29:41 SJ – Look after lockdown. People were saying that they thought things would really change and then look at the queues outside Primark and Sports Direct. I get it that people don’t have a lot of money, I get that. Many academics think that’s it’s up to the consumer to change, but I disagree, I think it’s up to us in the industry to create change... if it’s in front of them, they’ll buy it

00:30:00 AR – Not when they’re using psychology!! Let’s face it, it’s like a weapon on your brain to get you to buy stuff - then the consumers aren’t gonna change.

00:30:11 SJ – No.

00:30:14 AR – You know? So these people are just allowed to TAKE whatever they want OUT of the Earth and it's just free trade, you can do what you like! What's wrong with saying, you're only allowed to take a certain amount, make a certain amount, then you get a massive green tax if you go over it?

What is wrong if, like in the 70's, you see something you like, save up for it and you anticipate getting it, then you get it and it'd be great. You'd look after it and you'd WEAR it you know?! Why can't we go back to producing *less*, but higher quality, paying a bit more for it – it lasts longer.

00:30:56 SJ – Mmmm, I agree.

00:30:58 AR – One reason why I think that wouldn't work is because they're so worried about their competitor coming along to undercut them. If you could stop that, if you could put a cap and say, you're not allowed to sell a t-shirt for UNDER £5. That's what needs to happen. The government DO need to do something like that...

00:31:21 SJ – And in the 80's before everything went offshore, M&S produced 85% of everything in the UK and there were factories up and down the land. One of the guys I've interviewed worked for 3 of the M&S suppliers. He was saying that it's not just that they were a great company, but they put down the foundations for how business was run in this country. They ensured that his employer paid for him to be educated through university, when an order was placed they paid straight away, they had such a positive effect on the industry. When they went offshore, they decimated the industry here. Here in Huddersfield, people there say that even now there is such animosity in the area that M&S left. When I talk to people in the industry here about (a large scale) return to manufacturing, they point to all the factories operating in the black market, that even the audited factories in Leicester, loads of them are in bedrooms somewhere, subcontracting for £3.50 an hour. It is brutal.

00:32:38 AR – Really?

00:32:38 SJ – Margin is the most important thing and it's profit over planet and people, all the time. And I'm like you, probably from a different angle, but how can we turn that around?

00:32:59 AR – Um so basically, from what I understand is that they needed take manufacturing offshore and make it much cheaper, so that they could have lots of premises to sell it through? But now, we're going away from that because you don't need all those staff, you don't need the premises anymore because it's all going online, is that why it's coming back? Because all the high street is closing down. People aren't going out, they're buying online, so it must be the reason it's coming back, right?

00:33:40 SJ – Yes, I think, certainly when I worked at [REDACTED], I worked with a girl who had worked for NIKE as a production manager, and she used to say that there “aren’t anymore cheap untapped corners of the world, there’s nowhere that we’ve not yet discovered where it’s much, much cheaper than China!” (said in exasperation at the buyers pushing for cheaper and cheaper prices). At Chinese New Year, they’d shut down for a month and when they came back, and (only) half the workforce would come back. They’d go “hang on a minute, I don’t want to work in a factory 18 hours a day for 6/7 days a week, I want to stay in my own town and open a shop, like my cousin has done”. Because a lot of them don’t live near the factories do they? They live in the provinces and live in dormitories on the factory premises, and it’s a crap life! So, if the dollar rate went down, or the factories had to train up a new workforce after CNY, then prices increased. So they were looking for speed-to-market, certainly from a [REDACTED] point of view, so that’s why they were looking to Leicester, where they didn’t particularly care about quality. Working for the [REDACTED], I found that UK factories are not hungry for the work. When I wanted to see them, explaining it was for the [REDACTED], some could only fit me in in 6 weeks time!! Compared to China, India and Turkey who are on it straight away “we’ll find a way and get back to you”...

00:35:16 AR – But that’s lacking here. Yeah, it’s weird isn’t it? [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

00:36:06 SJ – So you don’t work directly in the industry at all now then?

00:36:15 AR – You know what? I just had to get out. It made me sick in the end. It was just making me sad. I dunno... OK, for a start, particularly working in Hong Kong, the people....you would always get....I mean I could hear my boss on the phone to buyers in America, *screaming*, screaming and fighting over half a cent on a garment...because we’d make 500,000 of one thing. And it was just...it was so... I dunno, I just hated it in the end. I just thought this is just so...so, vile. So then I came back and I worked for a very short while for a supplier to M... and I did this and that, and I didn’t really like any of it. And I just thought, I want to do....and I stepped out of it for 3 years. I started painting, oil painting, but then I started doing commissions for people. I wanted to be in fashion but I didn’t want to do it the way it was happening. So painting for 3 years, sitting in my loft, it gave me time...

00:37:44 SJ – Sounds great

00:37:44 AR – I know, but I was doing big paintings! By the end of it, I was like, my God! It just gave me time to think how I wanted to be in fashion and do it my way? Then, as I said, I put posters on trees and loads of kids came on that first day and I thought, ok. I NEVER thought I’d come back to my sewing machine after all those years and just you know, Oh My

God. It's an industry that has just been destroyed. It's been completely and utterly destroyed since the 80's I believe. The 70's were great! (laughs) but since the 80's – mass production. I blame the Victorians and the Industrial Revolution. This is where it all started to go wrong you know? And you know, also we never had people as walking billboards, I mean THAT (points to a NIKE Swoosh) walking with a massive tick on you... I can't be part of that. I just can't be part of anything that is more concerned about a couple of cents, then it is about the chemicals that it's putting in to the Earth and destroying nature. I can't bear it. I can't bear it, I can't be part of it. I think it's evil! (laughs)

00:39:08 SJ – Yeah, I know what you're saying....

00:39:18 AR – We all need clothes, but what is it? 150 billion garments are produced every year and that works out... I worked it out to quite a lot per person (approx. 21 items per person on the planet). And when you think about it, people in developing countries, they're not buying clothes every month. *At all!*

00:39:38 SJ – No, there isn't enough FOOD to feed everyone...

00:39:40 AR – It's all for the Western World and we don't *need* all this, buy it then throw it away, buy it then throw it away. What is that? The psychology of everything, it's feeding our children's.... Its making them unhappy as well. You're not this or you're not that if you haven't got this latest thing. I can't stand that either. I think just from a mental health point of view, it's not something I want to be part of. I don't see anything positive about it, whereas what I'm doing, the upcycling, there's everything positive about that. It doesn't even have to be that you're saving the planet. If you wear a garment, if a garment is in service for - it's always numbers isn't it? – if it's in service for just a few more months, it just reduces everything. It reduces the carbon output right down. Even if you're not really into recycling or upcycling, just the fact that you are... the mental health benefits, you know? Also, it can bring people together, you can do things with other people, there's just so many good things about it. And creativity as well. So it's a winner on every level. I think more people would do it if they knew how to do it.

00:41:10 SJ – Yeah, in the same way the BodyCoach has gone round the schools and got kids exercising, I can really see yours working. I saw your tutorial, you're very clear online how to do something. I can see it being rolled out to schools and being part of the curriculum. I think that is what we need. Like you said, even if they don't end up working in the industry , knowing how to make something gives you an appreciation of things in the shops...

00:41:30 AR – Or even being able to repair, it's very *empowering* for kids to be able to do that. They actually do love it. Creativity, like you said, they need it. For mental health we need it. I really believe that, well we know that. We know that.

00:41:55 SJ – I agree with you, but also, I’m an eternal optimist and I think that there’s a better way for us to save the industry. People will still want to buy new clothes and so I think there’s got to be a better way to produce clothing – not fashion – clothing that’s desirable, that people like to make and that lasts. Like a Patagonia sort of model...

00:42:15 AR – Yes something that lasts. It’s got to be quality over quantity. We do need to embrace that, we’ve got to. I mean there’s no other way forward than to do that. Otherwise, there’s gonna be tears, it’s not gonna be pretty out there.

00:42:33 SJ – I Googled today “Is this the end of the World?” (laughs) My Mum’s friend is convinced it is. We’ve had fires, floods - the plague!

00:42:44 AR – Do you know what? After my son was born ok – so this was one of the reasons I also got out of fashion – I was listening to this very old climate scientist speaking on the radio, you know, like a very wise old guy and just at the end of his interview he said “put it like this,” – because they were like “well how bad is it then?” Cos this is like 18 years ago. He said “put it like this, if the environment was like a waterfall, we’ve just gone over the edge”. And I went, right that’s it, I’m out of it and I’m not going back. I mean I have suffered from eco-anxiety ever since, which is why I was out with Extinction Rebellion at the weekend putting signs on Holland Park Avenue and things like that you know? Because they’re not really telling the truth about what’s going on, you know? They’re just taking as much as they can before it runs out (Schumacher) because they know it’s gonna happen. And, there is going to be... well you think – I don’t like to talk to the kids about it as I don’t think it’s a good idea to scare them, but my personal feeling – it’s not gonna be good...

00:44:10 SJ – No, I know. Are things changing in London, in terms of cycle lanes? I saw all the pictures. I lived in London years ago and my friend lives there and was sending me pictures of Oxford St during lockdown and how there was nobody there...

00:44:24 AR – Do you know what? During lockdown, because I live near Ladbroke Grove, it’s just round the corner, I’m really close to the centre of town. And I’ve got a tree close, a bit too close but that’s alright, to the back of my house that I planted 14 years ago and its now big. And um, during lockdown the birdsong that I woke up to every single morning, right in the centre of London – it was incredible. So I’ve been putting fatballs out there – GONE! They’re completely gone. That has really upset me, it has really upset me, you know. It still hasn’t gone, but you can feel it creeping back. I’m near Westminster, I’m right on the edge of three boroughs. I’ve got on that side of the road is Westminster, on that side of the road is Kensington and Chelsea, and this side, I’m just inside Brent. In Chelsea and Kensington they’re putting them everywhere apart from where all the really rich people live, so they can pull up their cars outside the really big expensive shops. So we spent 2 hours the other night from 3:30am, putting spray paint everywhere

00:45:40 SJ – Oh yeah I saw that!

00:45:44 AR – all the green bicycles? That was me that! And Westminster council, they’re amazing, they’re doing it. Brent – nothing. But I’ve got my stencil out and I’m going to be

doing a bit more round here. So it's different for different boroughs you know? All you can do it do what you can, but I mean...

00:46:10 SJ – I think a couple of things you've said about the industry about the tax breaks and the green tax on imports, I think that, I agree with that. And this guy I know in London who has got a factory said if we can stop the cheap imports coming in, I can pay my machinists £20 an hour. At the moment, they can go and get a job in Tesco's for the same money. I'm paying them £10.50 an hour which is a good salary, but in London they can work in Tesco for the same price. Government intervention is key.

00:46:44 AR – totally. We do need it from both ends. We need it from the government and we need it. What I'm going to be doing is, I know somebody who personally knows Paul Marchant, the CEO of Primark, so I've used that to send him an email – I don't know if he's gonna reply to me. If he doesn't reply to me, I'm thinking about doing a thing down outside Primark on Oxford Street, do you know what I mean? And start pushing a bit that way. Um because we need to know, we need to know. I've asked him questions and we need to know what's going on. And know that they are actually doing something. So all we can do is just keep pushing really. And hopefully get more people to sign up to this programme and do more. I've had a really good response. I've gone from nothing to 450 subscribers on the YouTube channel and I've had about 450 people sign up for the website.

00:47:50 SJ – You can get people from all over the World

00:47:55 AR – This is it. And I know a couple of journalists, so when I launch it, I want to get it written about as much as possible. So people know, so they don't go "How do I upcycle something?" There's no go-to place for teaching them. And if they can do that and wear that and if I can get them to cut down on what they're buying, because they've made this great new thing instead, you know like I've been doing here for 10 years, then that's gonna help as well.

00:48:38 SJ –

00:49:02 AR – I said to Paul Marchant, you know they've got warehouses with millions of stuff that's not moving. That could all be made into new stuff – cos that's what I've been doing. I've worked in fashion prediction, so I know he's gonna like it. You might reduce your orders that are going out, but we've got to find a way.

00:48:32 SJ – There's loads of deadstock in China where people like [REDACTED], as soon as the lockdown started they just cancelled the orders. Anything that wasn't on the sea, they wouldn't have it, so they have loads of deadstock over there....

00:49:42 AR – Yeah, they're crushing people out there. So, you know.....hmmm

00:49:48 SJ – But as you say that could be utilised...it could be reworked in a different way.

00:49:55 AR – totally, it is possible...

00:49:56 SJ – The key IS education, once people have the keys to change things. It's been great speaking to you Amanda, that you so much.



01.07.2020

Sharon Jones

MRes Fashion & Textiles

University of Huddersfield

1. What were the biggest challenges you faced initially with regards to getting your garments produced?

I suppose the MOQ needed was one issue, but now I'm in the industry I am actually violently against manufacturers basically wasting time with small start up brands and vanity projects. Our first order was 220 pairs from our kickstarter project. I hate seeing tiny MOQ's - it actively makes me avoid manufacturers who offer that now.

So really cash and confidence were what was a challenge.

2. How easy / difficult was it to source fabrics and find manufacturers in the UK and what were the main issues – if any – can you give examples?

For garments, the UK is largely hopeless for UK made cloth. We source from UK companies, but it's always overseas cloth now.

We got badly burnt with idiots in Lancashire (two) who claimed they could make stuff we could make jeans out of.

Oh - other than Hainsworth in Leeds who we've had great success with. Expensive though!

3. What are your views on UK manufacturers? This could be anything; ease/difficulty of working relationships, attitudes/approach, proximity of suppliers, communication, speed of production etc. Is there anything you would like to change?

I'm constantly amazed at suppliers who can't follow sampling processes properly, and are happy to send us garments that in no way resemble the sample we sent them to copy. Without comment. it happens frequently.

I'm also now used to deadlines slipping, production qty and size mistakes.

I used to deal with the far east - far less problems there!

- 4. Do you have any plans to have your own manufacturing facilities, is it something you could bring in-house? What would the main benefits or barriers be?**

We are marketing people really. We are controlling manufacturing a lot more than we used to, but have no firm plans to bring employees in to work with us and will continue to expand our suppliers to spread our risk.

- 5. Do you belong to any industry bodies, and if so, how helpful have they been. If not, what are your reasons?**

No

(SJ: Has since joined Make it British to source a scarf manufacturer)

- 6. What incentives or initiatives do you think could be implemented by the government or a governing body such as UKFT that could help small independent labels thrive in a climate of fast-fashion/cheaply made garments?**

Frankly other than massive taxation on imports, the only thing that would help is official made in Britain status being enshrined in law more.

Many people sticking soles on shoes and sewing on labels to make things "british". Which aren't.

0% corp tax for british manufacturing :-)

- 7. Finally, do you have anything else you could offer in terms of advice for following a similar business model? What are your views on Localism as a business model and do you think a network of similar mutually supportive businesses in the area, might both benefit you and also be a sustainable model for the future?**

I think any decent business these days HAVE TO WORK MUTUALLY - it's just something we do.

We're 4.5years in and things seem to be going well - but it's hard to say really.

I spend a lot on Facebook ads...

We put in decent size orders...

Ethical Review – Limited or Significant Risk Form B

APPLICABLE TO ALL STUDENTS and STAFF

NB: This form must be completed for all research involving direct contact with humans (e.g., interviews, questionnaires)

Please type your answers; hand written forms will not be considered by the ethics panel.

Undergraduates and taught postgraduates, please complete and return via email to your Project / Dissertation Supervisor along with the required documents (shown below)

Staff and research students, please complete and return via email to the school research office sadapqadmin@hud.ac.uk along with the required documents (shown below)

SECTION A: PROJECT & RESEARCHER INFORMATION

Before completing this section please refer to the School Research Ethics web pages which can be found using [this link](#).

Students should consult the appropriate ethical guidelines. The student's supervisor is responsible for advising the student on appropriate professional judgement in this review.

Please ensure that the statements in Section C are completed by the student and supervisor prior to submission.

Project Title:	Fashion Localism: Can a reimagined system of locally based, Design-Integrated Manufacturing Units, provide the foundation for a Sustainable Fashion Future?
Name:	Sharon Jones
Student number:	U1972299
Course:	MA by Research, Fashion & Textiles (PT)
Supervisor:	Dr Jade Lord
Project start date	23/09/2019
Risk level:	Limited <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Significant <input type="checkbox"/>

SECTION B: PROJECT OUTLINE

Please provide sufficient detail for your supervisor to assess strategies used to address ethical issues in the research proposal

<p>Aim / objectives of the study These need to be clearly stated and in accord with the title of the study. (Sensitive subject areas which might involve distress to the participants will be referred to the Course Approval Panel).</p>	<p>Project Aim This research aims to see if Localism is a viable option in producing sustainable fashion in the UK, at a local level in the spirit of community commerce.</p> <p>Project Objectives The issues surrounding sustainability in the fashion industry are multi-layered and complex. The research will be focusing on localism in manufacturing, specifically in the UK.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key factors which contribute to the success or economic viability of these businesses, whilst being locally made and their skilled workers earning a living wage. • Identify any barriers to change - specifically a skills shortage and look to how new initiatives could be implemented in order to give the manufacturing industry wider appeal as a creative career.
<p>Brief overview of research methodology The methodology only needs to be explained in sufficient detail to show the approach used (e.g. survey) and explain the research methods to be used during the study.</p>	<p>Informal interviews, questionnaires and personal recollections (either face-to-face or via email) will be collected and analysed through a qualitative approach.</p> <p>Observation in a manufacturing setting will be compared against analysis of academic papers and documentary reports.</p>
<p>Does your study require any third party permissions for study? If so, please give details, e.g., company permission</p>	<p>Factory Owners, Former Factory Workers, Industry Professionals prior to conducting any interviews.</p>
<p>Participants Please outline who will participate in your research. If your research involves vulnerable groups (e.g. children, adults with learning disabilities), it must be referred to the Course Assessment Panel.</p>	<p>Participants will include UK factory owners, sewing machinists working in industry today and those made redundant in the UK due to historical off-shoring. Brand owners operating within our definition of Localism will be interviewed, either face-to-face or via email questionnaires.</p> <p>Representatives for industry governing bodies and those involved in other aspects of the industry in a professional capacity; such as a company owner who has created production monitoring software in the UK.</p>
<p>Access to participants Please give details about how participants will be identified and contacted.</p>	<p>Some participants are existing contacts known to the researcher in a professional capacity. Others have been contacted tentatively to discuss willingness to take part in the research.</p>

	Contact will be made as above. Suitability for the participants will depend on how their business aligns with the criteria of Localism.
<p>How will your data be recorded and stored? Please confirm that as a minimum this will comply with the university data storage policy and the Data Protection Act. Please indicate also any further specific details.</p>	<p>I confirm that all sensitive/ confidential data will be stored on a secure university system (i.e. K drive) Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> (provide further details if No)</p>
<p>Informed consent. Please outline how you will obtain informed consent.</p>	<p>All participants will be aware that their participation is completely voluntary and they may choose to withdraw at any stage during this process without having to explain why.</p> <p>An information sheet will be provided to all potential participants before the commencing of any research work either a hard copy or an electronic copy. This will include following information.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why this information is being gathered from them and what it will be used for. • Who is undertaking the engagement work and who it is being undertaken for, including contact details • How/why they were selected to be invited to take part • Even if they agree to take part, they can change their mind at any time, without giving an explanation. • What they would be asked to do if they agreed to take part. • The level of anonymity and confidentiality we can guarantee. • What the information will be used for, how it will be stored, and how long it will be kept. <p>A participant will be asked to sign a Consent Form to record informed agreement to take part. The example provided by the University will be used as a basis for this. The informed consent letter will be provided in a language convenient for the interviewee.</p>
<p>Confidentiality Please outline the level of confidentiality you will offer respondents and how this will be respected. You should also outline about who will have access to the data and how it will be stored. (This should be included on information sheet.)</p>	<p><i>The data recorded will comply with the University of Huddersfield data storage policy and the data protection act. They will be stored on the 'K' drive or BOX, and not USB's or cloud storage. Any photographs containing faces, names, personal details or signatures will be blurred or cropped to comply with participant confidentiality. Nobody other than the MRes. student (visiting researcher), or the MRes. supervisor will have access to the data. All signatures and personal information will be blurred out and protected when included in any reports.</i></p>
<p>Anonymity Do you intend to offer anonymity? If so, please indicate how this will be achieved.</p>	<p>Yes. All audio files and transcripts will be saved using a file name to maintain the confidentiality of the interviewee. Names, Organisation/Institution, Date information will be abbreviated for data identification.</p>

<p>NB for most projects anonymity should be offered as standard unless there are compelling grounds not to.</p>	
<p>Harm Please outline your assessment of the extent to which your research might induce psychological stress, anxiety, cause harm or negative consequences for the participants or the researcher (beyond the risks encountered in normal life). If more than minimal risk, you should outline what support there will be for participants. If you believe that that there is minimal likely harm, please articulate why you believe this to be so. If there is potential for harm to the researcher (physical or psychological) please include attach a risk assessment.</p>	<p>As fashion is a very competitive business, there is a lot of secrecy regarding sources and names/locations of factories, as well as the names of key workers.</p> <p>In addition, as brands often work ahead by 1-2 seasons, there is commercial sensitivity surrounding the disclosure of details of future ranges.</p> <p>Participants will not be asked to disclose details and information deemed to allow the researcher to gain knowledge which could be made public and give competitive edge to their competitors, will be kept confidential by the researcher.</p>
<p>Does the project include any security sensitive information? Please explain how processing of all security sensitive information will be in full compliance with the "Oversight of security - sensitive research material in UK universities: guidance (October 2012)" (Universities UK, recommended by the Association of Chief Police Officers)</p>	<p>No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>If yes, please provide further information.</p>

Retrospective applications. If your application for Ethics approval is retrospective, please explain why this has arisen.

SECTION C: SUMMARY OF ETHICAL ISSUES

Please give a summary of the ethical issues and any action that will be taken to address the issue(s).

RISK	POTENTIAL IMPACT	LIKELIHOOD	MITIGATION
To researcher when Visiting unfamiliar Premises.	Physical or Psychological Risk	Extremely Low	Leave details place/time of visits research company prior to visit
RISK	POTENTIAL IMPACT	LIKELIHOOD	MITIGATION
Disclosure of Sensitive business information Financial or sourcing nature	Lose Business as a Contact	Low	Be mindful not to ask Questions which are sensitive to business & confidential

SECTION D – ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS CHECKLIST

Please supply to your supervisors copies of all relevant supporting documentation electronically. If this is not available electronically, please provide explanation and supply hard copy

I have included the following documents:

Information sheet	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Consent form	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable <input type="checkbox"/>
Questionnaire	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Interview schedule	Yes <input type="checkbox"/>	Not applicable <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

SECTION E: STATEMENT BY APPLICANT

I confirm that the information I have given in this form on ethical issues is correct.



Signature: _____ Date: 17/01/2020 _____

Please note, you must obtain your supervisors signature before submitting this form.

Affirmation by Supervisor

I can confirm that, to the best of my understanding, the information presented by the student is correct and appropriate to allow an informed judgement on whether further ethical approval is required



Signature: _____ Date: 17/01/20 _____

SECTION F: RECOMMENDATION ON THE PROJECT'S ETHICAL STATUS

For Undergraduate, or taught Postgraduate courses, this section should be completed by the Supervisor and submitted to XXXXXX as part of the assessment submission.

For Research students or staff, this section should be completed by the Ethics Panel and uploaded to Wisdom.

Having satisfied myself of the accuracy of the project's ethical statement, I believe that the appropriate action is:

Approve	
Approve subject to recommendations [please specify]	
Approve subject to conditions [please specify]	
The project proposal needs further assessment by xxx	
The project needs to be returned to the student for modification prior to further action (details of required modifications must be provided)	
Reject	

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name & Role: _____

Participant Information Sheet

Research Project Title: Fashion Localism: Can a reimagined system of locally based, Design-Integrated Manufacturing Units, provide the foundation for a Sustainable Fashion Future?

Purpose of the Research

The purpose of this research is to investigate Localism in UK garment manufacturing for my MA by Research into Sustainable Fashion Practises.

As a UK brand / supplier / manufacturer, your knowledge and expertise would be invaluable in informing the future of the UK fashion industry in a sustainable way.

This research aims to contribute towards positive change, by adding to the existing academic and documentary reports, with valuable industry knowledge and opinions.

Background of the author

Sharon Jones is a fashion industry professional with working for the UK High street as a designer and product developer for over 20 years. Most of that experience comes from working with overseas manufacturers and being witness to some of the practises which have given rise to fast-fashion and the current disposable nature much of clothing now has.

This experience shaped the thoughts and theories now put forward in this research. The idea that by focusing on smaller locally based manufacturing that is integral to the brand and its design ethos, that we can build a network of quality clothing brands that provide artisan skills for workers and ethically produced long-lasting clothing.

How your information and contribution will be used and store

Any contribution is purely voluntary and at any point, you may withdraw from the research, without explanation. No reasons need to be given and any data collected from you can be destroyed if you so wish.

This data is being collected as part of a research project by MRes candidate, Sharon Jones in the Department of Fashion & Textiles of the University of Huddersfield.

The information that you supply and that may be collected as part of this research project will be entered into a filing system and will only be accessed by authorised persons of the University of Huddersfield or its agents or its collaborators in this research project.

The information will be retained by the University and will only be used for the purpose of (a) research, and (b) for statistical and audit purposes. By supplying such information you consent to the University storing the information for the stated purposes. The information is processed by the University in accordance with the provisions of the Data Protection Act 1998.

What happens to the data collected?

With the permission of participants, interview data will be audio recorded possibly with supporting notes. All the data collected, will be transcribed and transferred to a computer ensuring the data protection by password. All the data will be anonymised before storage. Name of the participants will not be revealed in any outcomes of the research. Also, other information that can help to identify people, such as job title, age, gender, length of service, and strongly expressed opinions will not be revealed in any outcome of the research.

Will I be paid for participating in the research?

No

Should you require any further information please contact Dr Jade Lord at the School of Art, Design and Architecture, University of Huddersfield.

Criminal Records check (if applicable)

Not Applicable

Who has reviewed and approved the study, and who can be contacted for further information?

Dr Jade Lord

Email: j.e.lord@hud.ac.uk

Name & Contact Details of Researcher:

Mrs Sharon Jones

Email: sharon.jones@hud.ac.uk

Phone: 07814 652012

Participant Consent Form

Title of Research Study: Fashion Localism: Can a reimagined system of locally based, Design-Integrated Manufacturing Units, provide the foundation for a Sustainable Fashion Future?

Name of Researcher: Sharon Jones

Participant Identifier Number: U1972299

- I confirm that I have read and understood the participant Information sheet related to this research, and have had the opportunity to ask questions.
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without giving any reason.
- I agree to take part in the above study

Name of Participant: _____

Signature of Participant: _____ **Date:** _____

Name of Researcher: Sharon Jones

Signature of Researcher:  _____ **Date:** _____
