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**BEYOND HEGEMONIC DRESS:  
RECLAIMING LOCAL DESIGN PRACTICES.**

Hegemony as a prevailing force, with the power to restrict and control, is prevalent in all areas of our lives. When applied to the body it is manifest in both our inner and outer selves, with the clothes that we shroud it in being representations of dominant modes of design, manufacture and consumption. Hegemonic dress in this context is positioned within a set of ideals, legitimate or not; logical or not, that result in one dominant mode/style taking centre stage. Reaction and resistant to these dominant ideological and practical modes of production can be both subtle and explicit and it is the aim of this paper to discuss alternative and activist approaches to the production of clothes as a way of moving beyond hegemonic dress. Key to this is the extent to which methods of production and consumption can be more sustainable in their execution and feed into models of social equity. To become more sustainable and less hegemonic, it is argued, that we need to question existing modes of production and reclaim local design practices as a way of bringing about greater autonomy over what we are able to put on our bodies. To live in a global, predominantly capitalist, world, is to be constantly aware of how our lives and histories merge and this in turn impacts upon our identities as fashion designers, consumers and global citizens. Thus by analysing the relationship of objects to global processes, and those subsequently conceived in a local studio environment, we are able to comment on the value of social enterprise initiatives and approaches to design activism. To this aim reflection on the authors approach to design and the shaping of 'fashion' inspired objects will be provided together with an investigation into how models of development have relevance to both our global and local selves. Taking a practitioner approach to research it will discuss theories relating to aspects of liquid modernity and global identities and show how objects can become personalised and lead to a transformation of self. Analysing along the way the trajectory of materials borne of a global context and reshaped within a local context.

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## Introduction

Bauman (2005) in his reflection on modern life proposed that we are now living in an age of liquid modernity. In this context identity has moved from a fixed to a fluid state and old stereotypes have become, if not obsolete, then challenged. Artists and designers, seeing the body as a canvas, have distorted old preconceptions of gender, race and class and proposed alternative visual spectacles of the self (Orlan, Sherman, Bowery, Wear, Shonibare). These visions can provide us with inspiration as fashion designers as we consider the extent to which clothing can distort the body and add to the debate over western vs nonwestern, traditional vs modern, hegemonic vs nonhegemonic dress. However, choices over design, production and consumption practices are still limited due to the proliferation of, mainly, capitalist fashion systems that dictate the materials we have at hand, the technology at our disposal and the opportunities for dissemination. To counter this, a growing number of designers and consumers are moving away from what are seen as restrictive forces on their bodies to ones that are more liberating and meaningful to them as individuals.

The aim of this paper is to analyse, by reference to the authors own design practice, how materials taken from a global context can be transformed into local entities and moved beyond a state of hegemony. It sets out as it hypothesis that the global fashion system has value in its transformative powers but that damaging and exploitative forces are still preventing it from being a force for good. This is due to the nature of the items being produced, the way they are manufactured and how they are ultimately consumed and disposed of. Key to this discussion is the value we attribute to clothing and an academic reading of fashion.

In his book 'Stuff', Miller put forward the proposition that *"the problem with viewing clothing as the surface that represents, or fails to represent, the inner core of true being is that we are then inclined to consider people who take clothes seriously as themselves superficial."* (Miller, 2010, p.13) These words reflect a view towards fashion and the study of clothing that was generally representative of the academic cannon for many years. Despite key studies by social analysts such as Veblen (1899), Barthes (1957), Simmel (1957), and Bourdieu (1984) fashion writer Wilson (2003) bemoaned how fashion studies were often viewed as frivolous and due to their gender status much maligned in academic contexts. However, studies into fashion, and its associated conduits 'clothing ', have now grown and provide a wealth of investigation and deep thought (Kamamura, 2005; Harvey, 2008; von Busch, 2008; Bruzzi & Gibson, 2013). In its abstract form fashion provides a link to forces of development and activism (Wallace, 2010; von Busch, 2013) and as a production process feeds into notions of social equity and empowerment (Fletcher, 2007; Curwen, Park & Sarkar, 2013).

As clothing changes through the forces of fashion we see written on the cloth, etched into the seams and sculpted onto the body, the sum of our identities, our development endeavours and our hopes and dreams (Collin & Godfrey, 1998; Miller

& Woodward, 2011). As stated by Goodrum (2001) the body becomes “... *a surface to be inscribed upon, transformed and manipulated by various hegemonic and institutional regimes.*” (Goodrum, 2001, p35). Being able to read these items can give us insight into just where we are at with sustainability and the lessons that can be learnt from globalization (Lurie, 2000; Fry, 2009; Boradkar, 2010).

Globalisation, as a process and critical framework for discussion, has been explored by many economists, writers, artists, philosophers over the years (Rostow; 1960; Shonibare, 2004; Bauman, 2011). However, the manner and means through which it has been promoted has been strongly criticized and it seems that definitive proof that it has been a success still very much lies in the balance (Papanek, 1971; Chambers, 1997; Monbiot; 2000;). It has been argued that globalization has been akin to Americanisation and that rather than solving the problems it set out to achieve, such as poverty alleviation, employment and income generation, it has actually exacerbated them (Ritzer, 2000, Lee, 2005). This has been attributed to the fact that the logic of globalization has, in many cases, been aligned to the logic of development, which in turn has been aligned to the logic of modernization and economic growth (Schumacher, 1978; Sachs, 1992). Tracing its roots back to Rostow’s infamous stages of growth, where he charted out the path to mass consumption and leisure, the mantra emerged that you couldn’t have development without economic growth and the easiest way to do this was through mass production where economies of scale gave greater profits (Rostow, 1960). Bringing down labour bills and penetrating global markets became a priority as companies outsourced to countries where labour was cheap and employed rigorous marketing campaigns on ‘undeveloped’ nations. Consume our product and you too will become a global, modern citizen they seemed to be saying and consume we did. Nowhere has this been more prevalent than within the fashion industry.

This approach to production and in particular its prevalence within western fashion systems, though, can cause problems in seeking to move beyond a hegemonic state of dress due to the lack alternative choices. Leading us to question the extent to which “*by wearing mass-produced clothes (do) we become mass produced people*” (Harvey, 2008, p1).

This paper is a reflection on and discussion of local design processes and how they have potential to feed into notions of sustainable and global development. It uses, as case study material, two specific clothing items that have been designed and constructed by the author as part of an ongoing research interest in the potential for clothes recycling and the embedding of political narratives in her work. Derived from a studio-based environment in an inner city area in Leeds, UK, attitudes and approaches to modes of production are explored through reflection on the items and their relationship to wider social, political and environmental concerns. It draws on previous theoretical research related to modes and approaches to development that have promoted more equitable modes of living and those that have been more damaging in their execution and promotion. Its overall aim is to provide a platform

for discussion into the re-sustainablising of clothing production through the critique of relevant literature and practices.

This paper progresses through a review of relevant literature, reflections on methodology and previous research and the positioning of a number of practice-based outputs, undertaken to further contextualize the author's own work and that of others. In the process it invites the reader to absorb terminology from related but distinct disciplines in order to form a critical framework from which we can start viewing clothing and its production. At the root of this lies the contention that there is a relationship between local and global production, the extent to which this is empowering and sustainable being dependent upon our attitude towards materials, technology and ultimately development. The following chapter kick starts this discussion by considering 'fashion' in relation to aspects of 'glocal' and 'grobal' production and outlines perspectives on design activist activities and social enterprise initiatives. The preceding chapters illustrating the practices of these through the eyes of a designer intent on examining the contention that waste cannot exist and that being involved with 'fashion' need not necessarily be a damning thing. Arguing that when used to its full political potential, clothing – its manufacture and wearing – can be a strong force capable of changing attitudes towards our inner and outer selves.

## Review of Relevant Theory and Practice

Bauman (2005) proposed that to live in the world today is to exist within a state of liquidity in which nothing is permanent and our identity, in particular, is subject to extreme 'fluid' forces. In viewing dress within this context he argued that :

*" you must 'lose the ponchos' which were so much en vogue last year, since if you wear a poncho now, 'you look like a camel.' Donning pinstripe jackets and T-shirts is over, simply because 'nobody' wears them. And so it goes, if you don't wish to sink, keep surfing; and that means changing your wardrobe, your furnishings, your wallpapers, your look, your habits—in short, yourself—quickly, and as often as you can manage."*(Bauman, 2005, p ??)

This connection to liquid life .....

Globalisation has brought its advantages and allowed for all manner of amazing communications and connections. It has opened up the world and at the same time made it smaller and more accessible. Sharing and engaging with global products has fostered a homogeneity that has given an impression of harmony, that we are all the same, that old differences and conflicts are dyfunct, we can be like the 1980's Benetton adverts if only we bow down to the god of globalisation.

Ritzer (2003) provided a compelling discussion into ways of viewing items made under the guise of globalization citing two dependent but very distinct processes namely 'glocalisation' and 'grobalisation'. These he argued gave way to the production of 'something' and 'nothing' respectively. The 'something' borne out of 'glocalisation' being *'generally indigenously conceived, controlled and comparatively rich in distinctive, substantive content'* whereas the 'nothing' from 'grobalisation' was *'generally centrally conceived, controlled and comparatively devoid of distinctive substantive content'*. (Ritzer, ??) This provides an interesting context within which to analyse garments derived from a traditional, local setting with those borne out of a global, mass production system churning out millions of the same shade, cut and finish - dilemmas between the two modes of production having been a source of much discussion by sustainable fashion experts and designers alike (Fletcher, 2007; Curwen et.al., 2013; von Busch, 2013). In seeking to become more sustainable the questioning arising over which methods holds the most promise for a more sustainable future.

Grobalisation, Ritzer argued, originated from an entity wishing to grow but from a centralized position and usually for economic growth and profit, citing examples such as Starbucks and Macdonalds as companies who had adopted this approach. The 'nothing' they produced being defined by its sameness to other products and perpetuated by the establishments of non-places, such as shopping centres, non-people, such as telesales operators and non services, such as credit cards. Companies such as Primark and H & M, and the clothing they produce seeming at home within this context.

Glocalisation, attached initially to Japan's appropriation of global products in the 1980's, on the other-hand was defined as a local interpretation of the global

resulting in unique outcomes in different geographic areas. It was found more likely to be undertaken under social enterprise structures that placed emphasis on the integrity of the product and its links to social, political and cultural values of the producer<sup>1</sup>. The resultant 'something' being seen as intrinsically more valuable and distinctive but potentially of much less appeal to a wider audience, usually due to cost, distribution and availability (Ritzer, 2003). There are obviously value judgements embedded in these thoughts, and critics have highlighted how in many instances the poor, whom globalization was meant to help, do not perceive the products from globalisation as 'nothing' and don't have the resources to engage with the global products (Rumford, 2008). For them eating in MacDonalds, shopping in Primark is preferable, by nature of being accessible and more democratic, to elitist delicatessens and exclusive designer-wear. Also could it not be argued that this is the dream of design for all proposed by Papanek all those years ago (Papanek, 1971) - positioning people, objects and places as 'somethings' and 'nothings' merely showing elements of snobbery and elitism (Rumford, 2008). Especially when there is such an economic argument to people's access to certain products and services – if you don't have the money you are not in the game. However, of course the potential for a democratic outer has been seen to hide a darker, undemocratic inner when we consider the policies and production environment under which they have come about (Ritzer, 2000; Monbiot, 2008).

We all encounter the 'nothings' from globalization. They are the drinks container bought to hold our morning coffee only to be discarded 15 minutes later. They are the high street bought dress discarded after a few wears due to changes in body, identity or just to keep 'on trend'. They are the many products designed with inbuilt obsolescence in mind shorting their life and condemning them on some distant scrap heap (BAN, 2002). They are the things that those concerned with sustainability bemoan and despair against and they are becoming globally more freely available. Writers such as Braungart (2009) were right in their contention that waste needs to be eliminated from the design process and that more needs to be done to tackle issues to do with waste, particularly as they apply to clothing and its production and disposal (Fletcher, 2007). Many interested in sustainability within the clothing industry advocated a 'closed loop approach' as the only way to address the vast environmental problems associated with inbuilt obsolescence (Reiley, K., & DeLong, M., 2011). Raising the question of how to get this loop working, especially when distances between production and disposal can be so far apart and stopping clothes falling out of the loop can be so hard.

Recycling is one way of entering this loop and for many is viewed as an activist activity (von Busch, 2008; Fuad-Luke, 2009; Julier, 2013;). It is often undertaken as an alternative to conventional modes of consuming new clothes and also a way of producing pieces that can be brought to the market place in new forms thus prolonging the natural life of the original piece (Ketchupclothes, AntiForm, Good One, Junky Styling, von Busch, Redmuttha etc.) In Ritzer's terms turning a 'nothing'

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<sup>1</sup> Fair trade products could potentially be viewed under this context where emphasis is placed on the locality of production and the unique qualities that arise from this.

into a 'something' by a process of glocalisation. At the root of this activism is often the desire to investigate anti-consumption approaches to clothing design, social enterprise and ways in which people are able to have without buying, make rather without consuming. This approach to design and production is often chosen over more conventional forms of make due to a concern with overconsumption and a desire to tackle sustainability at a local level but for a global necessity. As such a conscious effort is often made to source only found or discarded materials and to practice local production by the establishment of design studios equipped with appropriate machinery. In many ways this form of production conforms to Ritzer's notion of glocalisation by being distinct in nature and similarly subject to pressures of globalisation in the form of mass acceptance, availability and price.

This form of redirective practice also appears consistent with notions of design activism and social enterprise, advocated by writers such as Julier (2013), Fry (2009), von Busch (2009) and Fuad-Luke (2008), who saw value in a reorientation of design practice and the embedding of design thinking as a way of solving wicked problems in this case landfill, air miles and unethical practices in global clothing production. For many it is done out of love for the industry and for the creative potential (and relatively low costs) that such design and production entails. Von Busch(2008), terming his approach to clothing production as 'hacktivism,' put this succinctly when he stated that

*"Hacking is a matter of dedicated and systematic curiosity of understanding a system, reverse engineering it, finding a suitable place for intervention, plugging in and keeping the power on. Hacking is to modify and advance a system because you love it, not because you hate it."*(von Busch, 2008, p20)

Initiating change thus appears at the root of many activist definitions. Fuad-Luke, for example, defined activism as *"...taking actions to catalyse, encourage or bring about change, in order to elicit social, cultural and/or political transformations."* (Fuad-Luke, 2009, p6). The change here being the way in which we consume, produce and design. As a designer this has always been part of the game. As we adapt to innovations in textiles and modes of manufacture we change the shape and form of things. We mix up references to give a 'new' take on things and present these to an ever-hungry public. This, of course, in itself is not strictly activism since whilst the catalyst may be to encourage people to wear shorter skirts, for example, in many cases it is not going to be significant to bring about deeper social, cultural and political change. This is because we are changing the outputs of our endeavours but not altering the underlying implicit system of production and consumption. To do this means to radically change our opinions and structures of design to turn them from things of horror into things of beauty.

## **Identity**

### **Mass production**

This section has shown how clothing production can be viewed along the lines of two distinct but connected entities namely glocalisation and globalisation. They are characterised by the production of 'something' or 'nothing', which in turn is defined by the presence or lack of distinctive qualities and mass appeal. Recycling with its potential to convert a 'global nothing' into a 'glocal something' appears an

interesting lens through which to reflect upon methods of moving beyond hegemonic dress (*tackling sustainability on a global level whilst providing potential enterprise opportunities on a local level*). The following discussion of methodology, and the presentation of case studies exploring different aspects of globalisation, further highlights how as clothing designers and producers there still exists choice over the means through which we fashion cloth and how this can contribute to sustainable development.

## Research Themes and Inspiration

Literature concerned with the nature of globalization and items produced under both global and local contexts appears therefore to hold interesting insight for us as designers as we consider both the production and distribution of sustainable clothing outcomes. This is especially true within the context of the recycling of global clothing and ways in which products can go from being 'nothing' to 'something' through the vagaries of fashion and identity formation. Our relationship to development is also crucial particularly as it relates to our concept of the future. To this end we can draw on readings of the future from popular culture and consequently fashion (Piercy, 1979; Martin Margiela, 2010; Chalayan, 2008). In this we often see two dialectically opposed scenarios namely utopia and dystopia. We imagine that sustainability lies within the utopian realm of our world and thus dystopia becomes our foe.

In her utopian world and recounted in her book *Woman on the Edge of Time*, Piercy (1979) prophesied how clothing would perform two functions – it would be hardwearing, functional and made from natural materials. Agriculture and bioscientists paving the way for innovations in fibres that came naturally dyed and finished. The other function related to the need for attractiveness, uniqueness and individuality and to this end Piercy proposed extravagant and elaborate structures that were either vintage pieces shared around the community or one-of pieces that naturally biodegraded. In the dystopian world the distorted and exaggerated body forms dictated more by stereotypical renderings, were covered by garments that were derived from digital and virtual contexts and all about portraying an ever changing identity.

Whilst this is just a story, a piece of fantasizing about the future it does make us think about what is possible and just how far away from a sustainable future in fashion we may be. Elements of the story have come true – we can grow leather, we know which materials biodegrade, organic cotton is readily available, clothes swaps proliferate on the outskirts of the mainstream and much has been done to adjust modes of production to be more equitable and less polluting. However we also have elements of dystopia within the system. Workers rights are still routinely ignored, mountains of waste litter the road on the quest to be 'fashionable' and materials and finishes are not developed with the environment in mind. We have the knowledge but it seems that the political and social will to change things is still dormant.

The first that comes to my mind, and which has been a recurring theme in my work, is our relationship to design, production and manufacture. We know it can be a liberating experience. The act of making, of manipulating cloth to create an item has so much potential to feed into our creative selves. It is the thing that attracts our students to our fashion design courses as they explore ways of imagining new identities, silhouettes and materials. It is the thing many designers seek autonomy and empowerment in – setting up small enterprises based around 'craft' approaches

to make and distribution as a way of opting out of what are often seen as more exploitative practices (Greer) . On a personal level I choose my production methods as a way of seeking to be a more ethical fashion designer and as a response to waste I see around me on a daily basis. But the route to being able to practice this as a designer has not been easy. Acceptance into the market place is still much maligned and opportunities for this form of 'activism' are limited in terms of support, penetration of the market and overall business sustainability. There is still a reluctance from customers to buy items made wholly from recycled garments and there is the sticky area of cost – this form of production and make is more labour intensive and clothes made under these types of systems are unlikely to be able to compete with items on the high street. They thus become 'exclusive' and conceived as 'designer' – they fit into the Ritzer's concepts of being a 'something' when to succeed in a business sense perhaps they need to more of a nothing. Rethought and reworked forms of production and make do need to be devised so that sustainable fashion design and fashion becomes the norm. This can only come about via innovations in teaching, making and the identities we want to project onto our bodies.



## **Experimentation/Innovation/Sampling**

The following case studies contain reflection on aspects of design, make and identity formation.

### **The Global Denim Project**

Jeans are a classic case of a global product and have almost become a uniform being made, distributed and marketed throughout the world. We take it for granted that everyone will have a pair of jeans in their wardrobe and rarely question what impact this may have on us on a philosophical, environmental or cultural basis. When we do, however, we find all manner of disturbing truths and situations many attributed to the salient features of globalized production (Labour behind the Label, 2014). We also see how a garment can become embedded within a political ideology and become a projection of our ideals about the world (Miller and Woodward; 2011).

Involvement with the Global Denim Project was centered upon the creation of new denim garments that would allow for a further exploration of how the material of denim could be transformed and the life cycle of the material extended (Miller & Woodward, 2011). Jeans discarded by participants of the research project were cut in half with one leg being used to test the physical materiality of the items (i.e. in terms of strength and length of time before the material would naturally degrade) and the other being used to test the psychological materiality in terms of participant's attachment to the objects. Since all of the participants were discarding the objects a key aim was to convert all of the legs into something 'new' but drawing upon narratives from interviewees as inspiration for the design process. To begin the design process research and development was carried out to establish inspiration for form and shape and the type of garment to produce. An interview was conducted with a customer who was looking for someone to convert jeans that no longer fitted him, into a garment he could wear on stage and would fit into his lifestyle as a drummer in a band. A waistcoat with a large sheepskin collar<sup>2</sup> was developed and reactions gained. When questioned the client expressed his joy at the use of details that to him had been very important on the original pair of jeans. He recounted stories of when he first bought the jeans and details such as pockets and frayed edges become interesting revelations as he tried on the garment and noticed them in unexpected places. He also expressed pleasure at the fact that the jeans were back on his body having been discarded in his wardrobe due to the fact that the fit was now wrong, out-of-date and they were a little tight

The design of this initial waistcoat led to the design of garments for the Global Denim Project in that importance was placed on the utilization of details and also consideration for the narratives that had been gleaned from the interviews carried out by Woodward. Within these narratives were tales of 'outdated' fits, a scruffy aesthetic no longer appropriate to their current lifestyle and in many cases a movement from a casual state into one that focused on their roles within a professional workplace. Within this context their own tired and outdated jeans became part of an old identity and thus destined for the skip or charity shop.

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<sup>2</sup> The sheepskin was found discarded in a bin and fitted perfectly with the 1970s theme and the customer's style and musical tastes.

Inspiration also came from an old 1980s Leigh Bowery jacket whose work was firmly embedded in the notion of transformation and helped to inform shape and style (Greer, 2005). To reinvigorate the material, and in the process the jean legs, a pattern based on a smart fitted jacket was developed to represent this transition from casual to professional. In an attempt to highlight the femininity of the cloth and to move away from the 'unisex' nature of some of the garments that the interviewees had expressed a desire to get away from, bust cups were inserted and a nipped in waist accentuated by pocket details and pin tucks running across the back of the garment. Working from a flat pattern the jeans legs were cut to lay flat and the process of actually working with the fabric began. It presented several challenges not least because the jean legs were all from different weights and types of denim and also had many design features that needed to be cut around or incorporated into the final piece. However, generally the piece came together well and had merit in its construction and aesthetic appeal.

The waistcoat was developed in a more organic way and really did represent the waste from the research project. The production of the jacket had utilized larger pieces of denim taken from the lower legs and had left more fixed, functional and secured design details such as zip and fly and waistbands behind. These were presented to the dress stand and manipulated in such a way as to construct a sleeveless jacket. In this state pockets got twisted and a jean waistband became a cowl neck. Working with material and old garments in this way can present challenges for the pattern cutter and maker since there is so much that is unknown about how the pattern will fit onto the fabric available and how details may be incorporated onto the body in places where they wouldn't have originally been - the waist as a cuff feature and pockets on the back of the garment, being examples of this. Of course this is also the beauty of this style of making since there is always an element of the unexpected, of the garment evolving before your eyes. There are times when a strict pattern is just what is needed and at other times a necessity to get onto a dress stand and mould the material around the body. Making it fit and altering finishing details so that the garment looks authentic, as something that has not just been patched together but has its own identity and style. We are never able to really leave the original garment behind but in its transformation we are able to learn something about its trajectory and how it may have been conceived and constructed in the first place. The meditative act of sewing also provides us with time to spend with the garment and the material from which it is made, as it was and as it will be. It allows for reflection into just how the items have come our way and what our role as designers may be for the present and future.

### **Cross-cultural Designing**

Responses to the work of Yinka Shonibare took a similar approach to the Global Denim Project in that found and reclaimed materials were used but in this case no garments were used and the process of designing the garment came from the adaption of a traditional garment, in this case the sari and joining it to a fitted bodice

block<sup>3</sup>. The design of the dress and the 'African' fabric used provided a focus for the contextualization of themes such as hybridity, globalization and aspects of post-colonialism and identity

In responding to the work of Yinka Shonibare<sup>4</sup> and the communicative power of cloth it was felt text from the cloth should be incorporated into the piece and that motifs, silhouette and fit should also be used to communicate non-verbally issues that seemed pertinent to those explored by Shonibare. Within this context hybridity was taken as a central theme and a mismatch of pattern and motif together with converging cultural designs were taken as design inspiration. Drawing on the contention by Shonibare that, "*hybridity, a term that itself has come in and out of fashion within the contemporary art discourse is a contamination of different cultural elements. The term stands for anti-purity, anti-essentialism*". Focus was given to elements that would have resonance to cultural elements of design but when placed together or out of context would have potential to carry meaning.

This was achieved by contrasting the energy of the 'I Love Africa' Chitenge with the racist overtones of the 'plantation workers' print fabric which shows two figures – one white with red trousers and a pipe, the other black with a bundle balanced on his head and what almost seem like shackles on his feet standing between palm trees. The origin and indeed date of this material is unknown having been unearthed at a boot sale although it would appear to be from the 1950's in terms of design, fibre content and weave. What it would have been used for is also unknown so it is hard to comment on original intention and message behind the design. A contemporary analysis of the design, however, points to notions of colonialism, power and global trade and production – all themes important in the author's theory and practice of design. The 1950s fabric being used to represent notions of colonialism/ globalization / westernisation was formed into a tight fitted bodice and inspiration was taken from 1950s pinups and sexualisation. The images of the 'plantation' owner juxtaposed with the 'African' worker highlighting the basis on which trade and economic power were developed and the 'Made In Kenya' pointing

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<sup>3</sup> This was done for the purposes of a wedding dress in which the intention was to marry two different styles – one originating from an Indian context and the other from a UK context. This was to represent a mixed marriage of two cultures and became an important consideration in the development of design features and selection of seam lines and fabric.

<sup>4</sup> In responding to the fabric, reference was made to previous garments conceived and made by the author. This included a jacket that on occasion had caused a reaction in the form of certain looks and had always been a source of interest. When wearing it there was often the worry that it would be construed as out of my 'culture' and concern over the interpretation others may have of it. Like many of the clothes made under Ketchup Clothes it was made from found and reclaimed cloth, in this case having come from a friend with a shop selling 'ethnic' products in Chapeltown Leeds who had a bag of African fabric that she couldn't sell. The jacket provided a link of the time spent in Africa working alongside Zambian tailors as they fought to maintain their livelihoods against the tide of imported secondhand clothes and a reminder that cloth and pattern are inextricably linked to our both our past and our future. The jacket as an object has been a form of contact on many occasions with viewers often having commented on the look of the fabric and words that run down the side of the sleeve. Incorporated into the design are the words *YA MTU HUPANGWA NA MUNGU (Your path is determined by God alone)* running down the sleeve, a direct communicator to the outside world for those who can read Swahili.

to an industry and sector subjected to governmental and non-governmental assistance (or hindrance)<sup>5</sup>.

The worker and owner (if we can indeed call them that) straddle the bust and draw attention to notions of femininity acted out through clothes and the author's own identity as a woman (and an Essex woman at that!). Cultural notions of femininity were further explored within the photo shoot, which saw the piece transform in terms of the covering of the body through the drape and positioning of the zari. The cut lines, pleating and drape of the piece was heavily influenced by eastern, in particular Indian approaches to pattern cutting in the form of a sari-derived design. These design features were further contextualized within a photo shoot that took place in the quintessential 'English' village 'Holmfirth', famous for the TV series last of the Summer Wine, in which a variety of poses based around 'Nora Batties' doorsteps were photographed.

In reflecting upon the pieces developed as a response to both the Global Denim project and Shonibare's work key elements, important to the work were identified. These included climate change, development/globalisation, manufacture and hybridity. Climate change was embedded within the overall production process and the contention that the only way to tackle sustainability is to tackle overconsumption, thus the focus on found and reclaimed materials. Whilst the original garments were developed as 'samples/examples and as ways of testing out patterns before cutting in more expensive cloth they become reused in the sense that they provided for reflection and discussion within an art/design context. In relation to development and globalization, imagery and silhouette were used as a way of provoking discussion into traditional and modern states, visualized in the clothing of the figures on the fabric and the style of the pieces. The use of the sewing machine in a studio environment acting as a link to the Industrial Revolution and the conflicts that still exist between how and where things are made and their ultimate consumption. Hybridity was borne out of the marriage of two different styles of identity – in the case of the 'Shonibare' inspired dress represented in cut and fabric motif and the global denim project by way of transformed unisex into gendered. Linking into notions of fluid identity and the option for transforming the visual appearance of self through the use of cloth, clothes and background.

### **Conclusions and Discussion**

The drawing up and positioning of conclusions in relation to the value of recycling, local production and its relevance to sustainability has come about through two dependent methodologies namely the review of secondary, theoretical debate and the examination of reflective thoughts derived from engagement in practical activities that are alluded to in the literature – including recycling, social enterprises

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<sup>5</sup> Quite often this is a gender issue since much of work carried out in the clothing industry is still done by women with 'nimble' fingers and was cited as a major criticism of Shonibare's work. Much of the manufacture of his work is hidden since although we are looking at work he has designed and conceived it is not actually done by his hand. We were able to marvel at the exquisite way in which the items were made but not actually know who had made them and under what conditions.

and activism. Reflecting on the theoretical debate, this has been assisted by author's engagement with development agencies on a practical level and with producers operating in both the UK and abroad (including India, Africa and Nepal). Translating this into practical applications, approaches to development and the role of technology, in particular notions of 'appropriateness' advocated by development critics has also framed the nature and way in which garments have been designed, produced and consumed with an emphasis on community engagement, empowerment and poverty alleviation (Schumacher, 1978; Chambers, 1997; Fletcher, 2008) This has included the establishment of a social enterprise to test notions of activism, the production and sale of a wide range of garments made from recycled materials found in the author's locality to gauge customer and market and the delivery of workshops to disseminate techniques as a way of reflecting on 'sustainable' practices.

Spaces of make and interaction have also formed the platform for the communication of ideas and provided an important source of contextualization and analysis. Within this context it was found that the ways in which participants, particularly under the guise of development and financial inclusions projects engaged with clothing and its remake led the way to a transformation of self. This was also borne out by the ways in which the objects themselves were transformed and inspiration for this process came from the writings of Bauman and practitioners such as Sherman and Bowery (Greer, 2005; Bauman, 2005; Sherman et. al, 2012).

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