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## **Stretching Global Production Networks: The International Second-hand Clothing Trade**

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## **1. Introduction**

Arrangements of people producing and consuming in different places in the global economy are functionally integrated with one another. Conceptually understanding these links has occupied geographers who investigate “out of the long shadow of economics” the political, cultural and economic countenance of international trade (Amin and Thrift, 2000: 8; Fine, 2002; Harvey, 2006a). Global Production Networks (GPN) studies have mapped some of the changing geographies of the global economy and the impacts of broadly defined ‘globalisation’ by linking together the design of new commodities, the sourcing of constituent parts and the processes of production, transport and sale (Henderson et al., 2002; Lane and Probert, 2006; Woxenius, 2006; Hudson, 2008). Through this article I argue that the GPN approach can be ‘stretched’ to explore the trade in second-hand goods. The recycling, reproduction and retail of used objects are important sectors of transnational commercial activity that depend upon connections between different types of economic actors, who have more or less powerfully embedded roles in international networks. Secondary cycles of production and consumption have generally been marginalised in cultural and economic geography and require extensive mapping (Gregson and Crewe, 2003; Hansen, 2000).

In recent decades the international trade in used-clothing has been fuelled by the rapid circulation, consumption and disposal of garments in the Global North (Norris, 2010). The United States is the largest exporter and dispatches over 500,000 tonnes of used clothes per annum, to more than a 100 different countries (Rivoli, 2009: 216-17). The second largest (and relative to the population a far greater exporter) is the UK, which shipped 319,998 tonnes, worth over \$425 million in 2010 (UNCOMTRADE, 2011). Second-hand clothes are retailed in low and middle-income countries and the trade is habitual and widespread, although little understood by most people across both the Global North and South (Haggblade, 1990; Hansen, 2000; Milgram, 2005; Norris, 2005, Palmer and Clark, 2005). Used-clothing networks have long histories and great geographical reaches that have attracted only limited popular and academic attention (Ginsburg, 1980; Jester, 2002; Strasser, 1999). However, inter-related developmental, ethical and environmental discourses are stimulating increasing interest in this sector (Andrews, 2011; Frazer, 2008; House of Lords, 2008).

With the nascent interest in recycling and reuse, the cultural and economic geographies of second-hand trade have begun to be investigated; including in household rubbish and e-waste (Lane et al., 2009; Lepawsky and Billah, 2011; Samson, 2010). However, the arrangements

of firms – as well as charities and individuals – involved in transnational second-hand trade networks have not been adequately explored (Hansen, 2000). Kaplinsky (2000) has argued (from the Global Value Chains (GVC) position) for studies which attempt to explain how global industries are organised and governed, which extend *beyond* commodities' first life cycles. This has yet to lead to rigorous analysis of the transnational work activities that go in to reproducing and retailing second-hand commodities. The back-end of international trade has been neglected and there is a need to both map empirically and discuss theoretically how commodities are reproduced through secondary processes of (re)production (Gregson et al., 2010; Lepawsky and Mather, 2011). GPN analysis, offers a lens through which to examine the international geographies of recycling and reuse, linking used commodity production in the Global North to consumption in the Global South. In particular the GPN approach can enable us to investigate the distribution of power and embeddedness within secondary trade networks that straddle the Global North and South (Brooks, 2011).

Following from Hess and Coe's (2006; 1207) research of the mobile-telecommunications industry the GPN approach is leveraged in this article to research some examples of (a) the complex nonlinear networks of firms and charities involved in the collection, sorting and re-production of used clothing commodities in the Global North;

(b) the role of labour in the process of creating exchange-value from used clothing;

(c) the distribution of power within and between actors (charities, firms and individuals) operating in (and across) the Global North and South;

(d) the embeddedness of organisations in production networks and how diaspora populations play key roles at different geographical nodes;

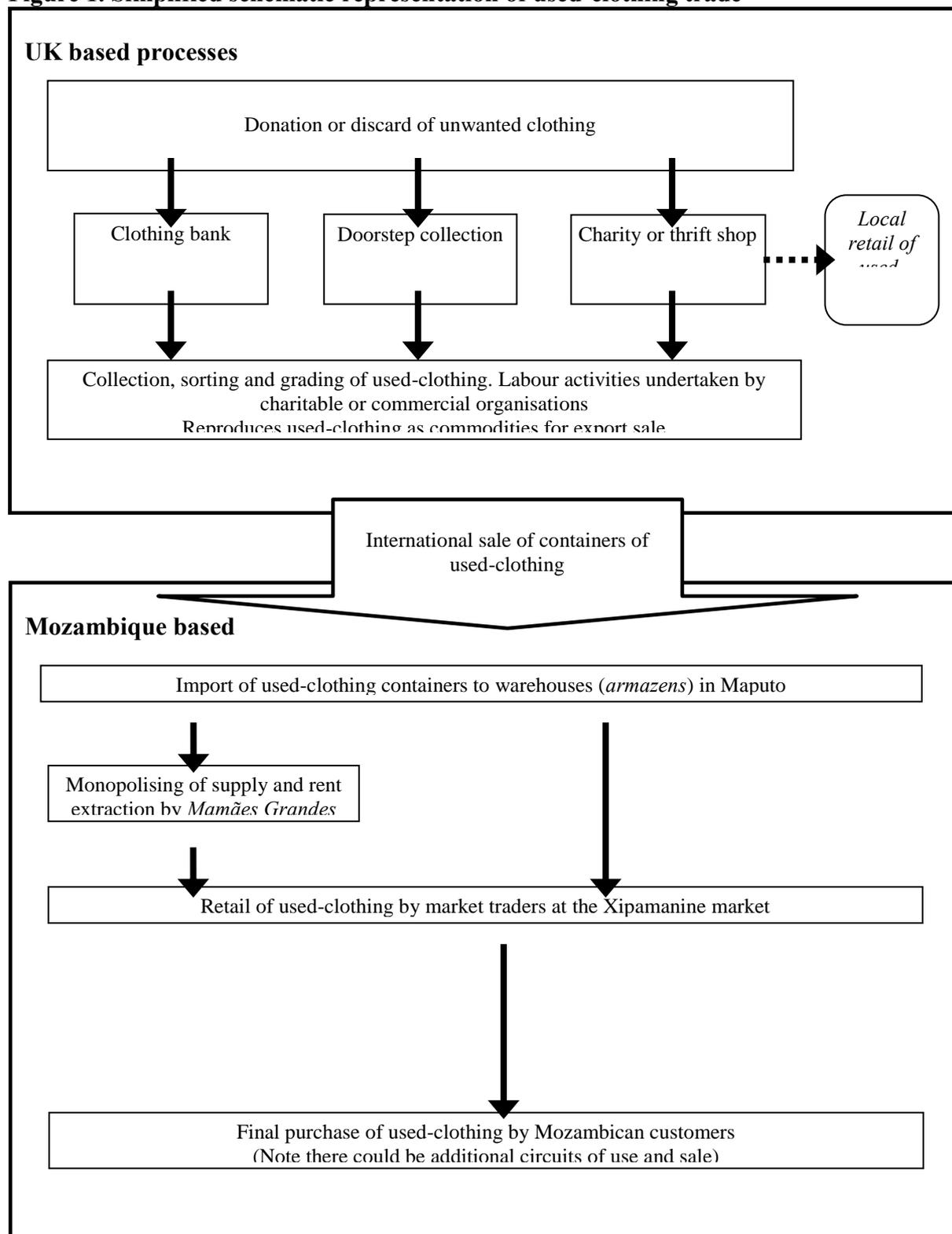
(e) the import and retail of used-clothing at a consumption node; namely Mozambique.

As with Hess and Coe (2006; 1207) the overall approach “focuses on the organisationally and geographically complex webs of intrafirm, interfirm, and extrafirm networks that characterise contemporary production systems.” In this specific context of the used clothing trade intra-charity, inter-charity and extra-charity networks can be added to the ‘complex web’. The state of knowledge regarding the web of second-hand clothing trading activities is not as developed as that in the mobile-telecommunications industry; therefore this article provides more extensive empirical sketching of the relationalities between different moments of production and trade.

Second-hand clothing GPNs commence with the act of consumption in the Global North. People, who can readily afford to buy new items, donate clothes to charities that are; outgrown, worn out, unfashionable or no longer needed, or they discard unwanted clothes as

waste for commercial disposal or recycling (Gregson and Beale, 2004). Used clothes pass through networks of charitable and commercial exchange that intimately links the richest and poorest people of the world; as the waste clothes of the former are valued and re-worn by the latter. Intricate and perplexing supply networks are a feature of the global trade (Haggblade, 1990; Velia et al., 2006). Those who donate clothing do not understand the final market, and the origin of used-clothing is not known by people who consume used clothes in countries such as India, Kenya, Mozambique, the Philippines and Zambia (Norris, 2010; Shea and Brennan, 2008; Field, 2008; Milgram, 2005; Hansen, 2000). It is worth emphasising here that used-clothes collected by charities and clothing recyclers in the Global North for export to the Global South are overwhelmingly sold for profit and not distributed for free (Baden and Barber, 2005; Frazer, 2008). This is demonstrated throughout the case studies and understanding this from the outset will help frame this article for readers unfamiliar with the used-clothing trade. The pattern of second hand clothing GPNs is set out in Figure 1.

**Figure 1. Simplified schematic representation of used-clothing trade**



This study illustrates different power relations in the used-clothing trade, focusing on the production of used-clothing goods in the UK, exports of used-clothing from the UK (to Africa and elsewhere in the Global South), imports of used clothing to Africa (including from both the UK and elsewhere in the Global North) and the retail of used clothes in Mozambique; which is employed as a signal case for second-hand clothing retail in the

Global South. Certain nodes in the second-hand clothing GPNs have been challenging to investigate and illegal and morally ambiguous practices are commonplace; as such it has been difficult to trace all the economic processes (Field, 2000; Lomotey and Fisher, 2006). The examples which are analysed through this article are not all direct connected; the same ‘things’ cannot be identified as being reproduced and traded through all the nodes of the networks, in contrast to Coe et al.’s (2004) research of BMW car production, for example. Rather, the GPN method is being stretched through the use of different case studies of activities which occur at nodes in networks which link the Global North and South through arrangements of people producing, trading and consuming second-hand commodities.

The article proceeds, in section 2, with analysis of the reproduction of used-clothing commodities by charities in the UK. This section explores how exchange-value is ‘produced’ in used-clothing commodities using Marxist political economy. Interviews were conducted with Choice Textiles, Oxfam, Help the Aged, The Salvation Army Trading Company Limited and the YMCA, and charity shops, sorting plants and head offices were visited between November 2008 and March 2009. Through interviewing the managers and directors of charitable and commercial organisations which collect, sort, and export clothing; the labour activities which occur to produce value in used clothing commodities were investigated. In section 3, interview data and published and unpublished sources are used to explore examples of how charities and firms export used-clothing commodities from the UK. The fourth section documents the networks through which used clothes are imported to Africa. This section focuses on how different trade relationships may involve arrangements of actors which are more or less embedded and powerfully integrated in networks (Coe, 2011). The power dynamics and trust between various firms and/or charities are critically investigated.

The fifth section investigates the import and retail nodes in Mozambique and explores how import firms and individual market traders interact with one another. The article provides extensive analysis of this signal case study, highlighting the labour processes in Maputo (Mozambique); an important regional entrepôt for used clothing (Velia et al., 2006). Seventy one interviews and extensive ethnographic and quantitative data collection was undertaken in Xipamanine, the largest second-hand clothing market in Mozambique, between July 2010 and July 2011. By providing in-depth analysis of this fieldwork, alongside the earlier network mapping, this article responds to Henderson et al’s (2002; 436) argument that disjunctions in the analysis of economic development “have resulted in work either at macro or meso levels of abstraction or, where empirical investigations have probed micro level processes, the larger analytic picture has often been absent, merely implicit, or at best weakly developed.”

Through mapping the nodes in sections 2 through to 4 and providing in-depth empirical analysis in section 5 this article intends to link network analysis across scales. In the conclusion power relations and social formations in the used-clothing GPNs are discussed, specifically focusing on societal, network and territorial embeddedness (following Hess, 2004; Hess and Coe 2006) and commentary is given on how the GPN approach can be stretched to analyse second-hand commodity trade.

## **2. Reproducing exchange-value in used clothing in the UK**

As Coe (2011; 8) states: “[p]rocesses of value creation, enhancement and capture are central to GPN analysis”. Investigating how labour re-produces exchange-value in second-hand clothing is therefore integral to this article. The creation of value requires the supply of unwanted clothing in the Global North. Conspicuous consumption of new-clothing produces a waste stream of unwanted clothes. In the UK, most unwanted clothing gets stockpiled, passed on to friends or family, used in the household or thrown away, but 17% enters a second cycle of production and consumption (Morley et al., 2006; 8; Gregson and Beale, 2004). Unwanted used-clothes are left out for door-step collection, deposited at clothing banks or taken to charity shops. They are donated to charities such as Oxfam, The Salvation Army and the YMCA, and are collected by commercial companies like Choice Textiles. Similar processes occur in many countries in the Global North including Australia, Canada, Germany, the Netherlands, Spain, and the United States.

The history of clothes being gifted between affluent and poor people is foregrounded in public discourse (Andrews, 2011; Ginsberg, 1980; Strasser, 1999; Lemire, 2005). Interviewees discussed how only a small proportion of used-clothes are sold in Britain and the majority is commercially exported. The production and circulation of meanings are continual process occurring within given social conditions, which establish values in GPNs (Hudson, 2008). Audiences interpret the roles of charities and ‘read’ the second-hand clothing trade in ways that are culturally constructed, but these understandings are disconnected from the real economic geography. Narratives of donating old clothing for sale in local High Street charity shops to raise funds and help the less-able are an important part of the imagery and material culture that sustains the socially embedded roles of charities in the GPN; despite only around 30% of second-hand clothing being locally retailed (British Heart Foundation, 2011; Gregson et al. 2002). The collection, sorting and export of used-clothes are also positively coded by western governments as these processes act as self-financing

recycling systems (House of Lords, 2008). Wage labour activities are undertaken to reproduce second-hand clothing commodities and these costs, as well as a surplus value extracted by charities and firms, are contained in the final purchase price of clothing sold in the Global South.

In the Global North used clothing is regarded as waste or a gift, when donated to charity, rather than as a commodity. Marx (1976) illustrated how commodities necessarily contain use-value, but that an object with use-value is not a commodity unless it embodies a labour cost that creates an exchange-value which can be realised at the moment when the commodity is sold in the marketplace. Those who rid themselves of used clothing may recognise that the clothes they donate or discard still retain - through their particular physical qualities - use-value (Gregson et al., 2007), but these acts of waste-making demonstrate that these clothes do not, for their owners, have exchange-value. The latent use-value of used-clothing is a product of the labour that was initially embodied in the clothing when it was first sold as a new commodity. Through being donated or discarded used-clothing, in this social context, is devalued (of exchange-value) and when used-clothes no longer have exchange-value they drop out of the commodity form. New labour-time is required to realise the latent use-value still embodied in used clothing and to imbue used clothing with exchange-value so that second-hand clothes are reproduced as a commodity when sold in a different social economic context. This labour-time is the work of collecting, sorting and packing used-clothing for export.

Industrial used-clothing processing plants, such as Oxfam Wastesaver pictured in Figure 2, finely sort and grade donated clothing in to different categories. Conveyor belts dictate the tempo of work, time cards regulate employees' working days, and gantries enable managers to oversee the labour-process. These are all features of modern factory architecture utilized by capitalists to enforce discipline and enhance systematic production (see Hart, 2002). The main labour activities of sorting and packaging used-clothes are complex and sophisticated. Used clothing is separated into a multitude of specific categories and weighed, labelled and bound into tightly packed bales. Bales of sorted used clothing are new commodities produced from a circuit of labour processes that utilises material value still embodied in the waste clothing objects. The industry standard is to pack the clothes into 45 or 55kg bales containing hundreds of the same type of used clothes such as men's t-shirts, ladies' jeans or children's shoes, different combinations of bales (packing lists) are loaded into shipping containers and sold to importers in low and middle income countries (see Table 1). Labour activities have

been undertaken to collect, sort, categorise and transport used-clothes and to create the tightly packed bales of specific types of clothes.

**Figure 2. Reproducing second-hand clothing bales for export at Oxfam Wastesaver**



The labour process which are undertaken at processing plants in the Global North are objectively different economic activities to second-hand sale, whereby old commodities that retain exchange-value are resold in the market (such as on eBay or at car boot sales (Gregson and Crewe, 1997)). The used-clothes that are being re-produced as export commodities have, for a phase, not been commodities. The new labour that is required to produce exchange-value in used clothes is also not equivalent to the general material cost of merchants' activities. A merchant appropriates surplus value from industrialists by purchasing commodities at below market value, although they do have material costs of production such as financing labourers, offices and shops (Fine, 1975). As there are distinct processes of labour that are required to produces commodities. I argue that the used-clothing trade involves a production process and thus merits investigation through a GPN approach. As Coe

et al. state a GPN's "'purpose' is to create value through the transformation of material and non-material inputs into demanded goods and services" (2008; 274). The creation of exchange-value, from unwanted clothing, is the core process occurring in international second-hand clothing GPNs. The labour processes that are taking at industrial facilities in the Global North are, from a Marxist political economy perspective, equivalent to the role of labour in the production of new commodities.

The discussion so far has illuminated that the social economic context and thus territorial embeddedness are very important in the used-clothing trade. Social embeddedness enables charities to capture value creation activities. The critical 'assets' of charities historical and cultural roles are profitably utilised at the first node in GPNs to stimulate donations of unwanted clothing, which are reproduced as commodities through industrial processes. The overall pattern of the GPNs can be represented by four territorially embedded nodes: i) donations of unwanted clothing, ii) place based labour activities required to reproduce used-clothing commodities, iii) export and import processes connecting the Global North and South iv) downstream market places in the Global South.

### **3. Used clothing exports from the UK**

Once clothing has been collected it can take varied and complex routes to final markets. Help the Aged sells donated clothing to Precycle, an intermediary import-export firm, which is common practice in the used clothing trade (British Heart Foundation, 2011). In contrast

Oxfam and the Salvation Army, the two largest used clothing collectors in the UK, have their own industrial processing export facilities. Wooldridge (2006) documents some of the routes clothing donated to Help the Aged doorstep collections take to final markets. Donated clothes are transported to the Precycle depot in Reading and sold for a set price per ton. Precycle combines collections from different sources and exports them to a sorting firm in Poland. Used clothes are processed and categorised: A Grade items are sold in Polish shops, B Grade are exported to Africa, C Grade are exported to Iran, Iraq, Syria, Jordan and Pakistan and G Grade are recycled for industrial use. The B Grade items may eventually reach markets, such as those in Mozambique examined in section 5, but as Wooldridge's report and interview (03/12/08) demonstrated, tracing the transactions is difficult since the donations go through processes of amalgamation and separation from other used-clothing streams. As Lincoln of YMCA reported when interviewed (10/03/09), he was unsure where clothing is finally exported to and said only that "most of it ends up in the third world."

The shipment of used clothing, by export firms from the UK to Zimbabwe has been documented by Field:

Orders received from wholesale importers from developing countries may either be fixed standard orders or flexible regular orders as required. Payment is required in European or US currencies and, as a result, difficulties and delays are common. Following orders from commercial importers in developing countries the bales are shipped (through agents) in containers by the ton (2000: 161).

Used-clothing is normally exported in shipping containers full of sealed 45, 55 or 450kg processed used-clothing bales. The consignments are kept unopened and many traders in the intermediary stages, between bale (re)production and retail, may never see the contents of specific bales (Abimbola, forthcoming).

The final retail price of second-hand clothes contains proportionally "high transportation costs" (Wooldridge interview 03/12/08). There is a large volume of waste and low-value, poor grade recyclable rags (clothing which cannot be worn again), collected through the clothing bins, charity shops and door step collections in the Global North. Charities and firms aim to minimise expenditure on bulk transport of low grade used clothing. For example, in the UK Oxfam Wastesaver is centrally located at Huddersfield, close to major motorways to act as a national hub and minimise expenditure on road freight (Clark, interview 13/03/09). Export destinations can be determined by the cheapest shipping route to available markets and depend on existing trade geographies. Used clothing is exported around the world (see Table 1.), including as return cargo, as part of triangular trade patterns and as mark-up cargo (additional cargo added to fill excess capacity and charged at a lower cost).

**Table 1. Examples of used-clothing GPNs**

<i>Territory</i>	<i>Example of exporting and importing country</i>	<i>Source</i>
Mozambique	UK to Mozambique	Durham (2004), personal observations and interviews at Xipamanine
	Australia, Canada and Spain to Mozambique	Personal observations and interviews at Xipamanine
	Mozambique to South Africa, Swaziland and Zimbabwe ( <i>re-export of used clothing</i> )	Velia <i>et al.</i> (2006), personal observations and interviews with traders
Africa	Canada and US to Zambia	Hansen (2000)
	UK to Benin, Gabon, Ghana, Togo and Senegal	Clark (interview 13/03/09) and Ihezue (interview 19/03/09)
	UK to Kenya, Malawi and Tanzania	Personal observations, interviews with market traders and Ozanne (interview 21/11/08)
	Benin, Ghana and Togo to Nigeria ( <i>re-export of used clothing</i> )	Abimbola (forthcoming)
Non-African	Japan to the Philippines	Milgram (2005)
	UK to Afghanistan, Pakistan and Uzbekistan	Clark (interview 13/03/09) and Wooldridge (interview 03/12/08)
	Australia and New Zealand to Papua New Guinea	Personal observations in Papua New Guinea
	UK to Poland and Lithuania	Ozanne (interview 21/11/08)
	US to Hong Kong	Palmer and Clark (2005)
Within national economies	UK	Ginsburg (1980) and Gregson and Beale (2004)
	India	Norris (2010)
	South Africa	Velia <i>et al.</i> (2006)

The “Salvation Army Trading Company Ltd (SATCoL) is a trading arm of The Salvation Army” and “[p]rofit that SATCoL receives from the sale of donated clothing is gift-aided to The Salvation Army” (SATCoL, 2011). Donated clothing is processed at the SATCoL facility and exported to a limited number of large buyers in Eastern Europe (including Bulgaria and Estonia). SATCoL does not export to Africa because the continent suffers from “political unrest” and there are ethical considerations with providing “financial incentives for

senior officials” which “is an issue for an organisation with Christian values” (Ozanne, DATE). Ozanne also argued that if not handled correctly, imports could damage local manufacturing, however, used clothes can also be assumed to be a cheaper substitute for locally produced garments in Eastern Europe. Ihezic, the director of Choice Textiles, was of Nigerian descent and gave a more critical appraisal of the trade: “There are two schools of thought. One is that it is killing the local economy” by destroying clothing industries, and the other is that it creates local jobs. Analysing this relationship lies outside the scope of this article, but has been investigated by Hansen (2004) in Zambia and Brooks and Simon (forthcoming) across sub-Saharan Africa.

Oxfam primarily exports clothing to Benin, Gabon, Ghana, Senegal and Togo; 50% of total volume is exported to West Africa, 25% to Eastern Europe and 25% to the Middle East. However, by value three times as much goes to West Africa, including a greater proportion of low-weight and high-value garments (e.g. t-shirts), whereas bulky cold weather items (e.g. coats) are exported to Eastern Europe (the negotiation of shipments are discussed further in section 4). Oxfam sells clothing “to small companies. Tends to be individual what you would call an entrepreneur... [who] may have funding through family or community; African nationals” (Clark, interview 13/03/09). Policy makers at Oxfam have become aware of the potential negative impacts, as raised by Ihezic, whereas previously they prioritised their own fundraising. As Clark (interview 13/03/09) observed: “The difference between YMCA is the rag trade isn’t going to impact their work”. Oxfam has established some small-scale local processing activities in Senegal, to provide local employment and embed employment generating and value enhancement activities there, as well as commissioning a report on the impacts of the trade (see Baden and Barber, 2005). As a large international development NGO, Oxfam occupies a broader geographical space than many other UK domestic charities, such as Help the Aged or YMCA, and so is responsive to a different scale of accountability. The Salvation Army also took a broader scale approach to morality, but as Ozanne discussed, their actions were ultimately responding to “Christian values”, rather than economic development in the Global South. With these examples we see how moral and ethical issues “are articulated across a variety of geographical scales and through a range of temporalities” (Jackson et al. 2009: 12).

Investigating used clothing exports was challenging and these economic processes are not often publicised. Clothing donors are unaware of the processes detailed above and could cease to donate clothes if they knew of the commerciality of the used-clothing GPN (Andrews, 2011; Boffery, 2011; Shea and Brennan, 2008). Firms and charities in the Global

North may be unwilling to discuss the trade as they want their commercial activities to continue to occur in a concealed backstage, in contrast to the foregrounded charitable acts of donations (Gregson et al., 2007). UK High Street stores, charity publicity material and collection bags use ethical marketing imagery and play an important role in stimulating donations. Knowledge of product circulation is developed through these nodes (Hughes et al., 2008). This is similar to how the advertising and marketing activities in new clothing GPNs are publically visible, whereas labour conditions at the production nodes are concealed (Lane and Probert, 2006). The next section explores how second-hand clothes are imported to Africa.

#### **4. Networks of Used Clothing Import to Africa**

Imports of used-clothing to the Global South are the primary source of clothing for many poor people especially in Africa (Hansen, 1995; 2005). Used-clothing is officially accounts for only 0.6% of the international clothing trade (Velia et al., 2006: 4). Nevertheless; exports from OECD countries were still valued at over US\$1.9 billion in 2009 (UNCOMTRADE, 2011). The importance of the used clothing trade for Africans becomes apparent when one looks beyond these global figures. In volume terms used-clothing is frequently the main imported consumer item and accounts for over 50 percent of the clothing market in many sub-Saharan African countries (Baden and Barber, 2005: 1; Frazer, 2008; Hansen, 2000).

Documenting all the different trade patterns in the import of used clothing to Africa is unrealistic as the GPNs are widespread, varied and often concealed (see Haggblade, 1990; Forrest, 1994 and Table 1). Containers of used clothing destined for Africa can transit via global hubs such as Dubai, other transport nodes in ‘the Gulf’, or export processing zones in India, which obscure their final destination to exporters, as well as their origin to downstream retailers and consumers (Canam International, 2005; Field, 2000; O’Connor, 2009; Wooldridge, interview 03/12/08). Used-clothing vendors in Soweto Market, Lusaka, Zambia were confused as to where used clothes came from were interviewed (27/05/08). They believed the garments came from Germany when the clothes were recognisably – through the names of brands and logos – items first sold as new commodities in Britain (this confusion may be because used clothes have transited via Germany). Equally, in Mozambique several vendors interviewed at the Xipamanine Market thought used clothing came directly from China, because of ‘made in China’, although I identified, by examining labels and branding, that the clothes had first been consumed in North America. Ethnographic research of the

trade in used cars and ships has also demonstrated that informal networks which circumvent official political and economic institutions predominate (Beuving, 2006; Dobler, 2008; Gregson et al., 2010). These types of trade patterns are difficult to trace and the architecture and governance may be unknown by individuals and firms at both ends of the network, which can inhibit their mapping using the GPN approach (Brooks, 2011). Examples from original fieldwork and published sources (Abimbola, (forthcoming), Durham (2004), Field (2000), Hansen, (2000), and Rivoli (2009)) are analysed in this section to depict different moments in the links between the (re)production of clothing in the Global North and retail in Africa.

Multiple factors influence the export destinations for used clothing including transport costs, local socio-political contexts, trade liberalisation and the removal of import bans on used clothing, which are all externalities that can lead to rapid shifts in markets (Rivoli, 2009; Wegulo, 2004). Charities and companies in the used-clothing trade “need to be constantly changing and adapting” as access to markets is “volatile” (Ozanne, interview 21/11/08).

Hansen also notes:

The emergence and disappearance of specific countries, among them Rwanda and Zaire from the top ten importers indicate how quickly African used-clothing markets change. African markets are very volatile, not only because of civil strife and war as in the case of Rwanda and Zaire, but also in terms of legislation guiding the entry or prohibition of secondhand clothing import. (2000: 116)

Used-clothing GPNs should, therefore, be analysed as shifting *processes*, rather than fixed *structures*. Firms and charities respond to changes conditions, trade legislation and utilise global trade infrastructure including shipping routes, container hubs, motorway networks and import regulations. Markets shift more than the production nodes, as the place-bound activities are tied to the supply of unwanted clothing, for which used-clothing collectors compete. In contrast, demand often exceeds supply in African marketplaces (interviews in the UK and Mozambique). As the British exporter Intercontinental Clothing explains: “it is certainly not competitive as far as selling is concerned because you always have (if you are any good) more customers than you can supply” (quoted by Field, 2000: 161).

The cost of transport and access to markets with poor consumers – who can afford only low-value used clothing and not higher-value new clothing – dictate the overall pattern of the used-clothing trade. However, other factors are also at work beyond the macroeconomic geography, including the transnational diasporic networks which link supplies and markets. East Europeans and West Africans in the UK link the (re)production of used clothing commodities to foreign markets. There are different types of used-clothing trading

relationships, differentiated by the degree of coordination between the production and consumption activities. These are categorised as ‘coordinated’ and ‘non-integrated’ models. These two groupings are abstractions and simplifications of a more complex reality and actors can be involved in both models or flip between them. They are not binary definitions, but a continuum; between a hypothetical single firm (or charity) undertaking all the activities, to a fragmented network of unrelated small independent firms (and/or charities), linked only by short-term, uncoordinated, fluctuating transactions connected by price signals.

Coordinated GPNs depend on social histories of close North-South relations, which have enabled links to be established to connect clothing (re)production to consumption, which facilitates value enhancement for the participating actors. This form of productive activity is best explained by Fine’s (2002) thesis that considers the co-construction of value in the links between production and consumption as a circuit, rather than a linear chain of activity driven either by consumer rational choice (demand) or production for passive consumers. Diaspora populations and cultural connections between the Global North and South reinforce the viability of second-hand clothing (re)production. Other indirect processes which connect the global North to Africa also facilitate the used-clothing trade; neoliberal policies reinforce the creation of market societies, whilst simultaneously undermining local clothing production and ancillary industries (Gibbon and Ponte, 2005; Hansen, 2004). Clothing trends are also forged and reinforced through fashion styles which are disseminated through cultural media and returning migrants (Sassen, 1998; Wiegratz, 2010). Fine warns, though, that such connections are ‘dominant, not universal nor determining characteristics’ (2002: 115).

The coordinated trade patterns of GPNs co-exist with less integrated networks. Abimbola argues that in the used clothing trade, in general, there is “information asymmetry” in the relationships between exporters and final retailers. This asymmetry between the UK and West Africa is partially alleviated by coordinating activities and establishing networks of trust between firms. Igbo (a West African ethnic group) apprentices who serve importers based in Cotonou (Benin) work in British second-hand clothing firms to help assist the sorting of second-hand clothing:

Large-scale importers of second-hand clothing send an apprentice to the British exporting company, where the apprentice would act as a quality assurance person. He makes sure that what is sent to the West African market is what the people would buy. At the same time, he also helps his boss overcome the information asymmetry problem that is stacked against him by inspecting what is actually exported to him (forthcoming: 11-12).

This arrangement is mutually beneficial for creating value, as the exporter utilises the free expert labour of a worker who is aware of the styles and preferences in West Africa. The importers have some influence over the grading process and the apprentices acquire skills and capital which enables some of them to start their own businesses later in Cotonou, as they receive payment from their masters when they return to West Africa. Abimbola's case study provides an example of how individuals can establish new links in second-hand clothing GPNs. The role of Igbo apprentices illustrates how some used-clothing trade networks are highly coordinated; (re)production is undertaken for a specific retail market and downstream client. However, the pattern cannot be generalized and Abimbola argues that the development of this trade pattern is connected to a deeper Igbo culture of apprenticeships. As Hudson (2008; 424) has identified "successfully maintaining such circuits necessarily involves often-subtle processes of regulation and complex intersections of material and social relationships and practices in the formation and definition of value."

Hansen traces the movement of used clothing from the United States to Southern Africa, again illustrating the importance of socially embedded ties. Many wholesale exporters in the Global North are "recent immigrants who know the potential of the second-hand clothing trade from their former homes in Third World countries." This includes people of:

Jewish and Middle Eastern background with long-term involvement with the textile and clothing trade, and more recently established firms with backgrounds in south Asia, particularly India and Pakistan, some of whom are recent immigrants to Europe and North America from Africa (2000: 110).

One dealer with a Middle Eastern background whom Hansen interviewed grew up in Zaire and left to establish an export firm in Toronto, and an Italian exporter 'had lived in pre-war Rwanda, where he became familiar with the popularity of this trade' (2000: 110). The firms Hansen documents may not coordinate all the activities from collecting donations in the Global North to final retail in Africa, but her examples demonstrate how some exporters and importers are embedded in GPNs.

Firms require critical assets to establish and embed themselves in the used-clothing trade. One of the largest private companies in Tanzania, Mohammed Enterprises Tanzania Limited (METL) was an established manufacturing company producing textiles, clothing, soap and bicycles, which became involved in the used-clothing trade in 1985 following trade liberalization (Rivoli, 2009). Over 10 years METL grew to import 4,000 tons of used clothing per month, predominately from the United States. METL was already territorial embedded in Tanzania and was able to command this node in the GPN, because it had sufficient capital

and well developed trade assets, such as warehouses and distribution networks. Many Tanzanians had diasporic connections in the United States and Europe and could link METL to supplies of used-clothing bales and enable the development of transnational network embeddedness. Trust was very important: “relationships were needed to keep unhappy surprises [low-quality clothing] in the bales to a minimum and happy surprises frequent enough to engender continued loyalty” (Rivoli, 2009: 238).

The importance of diasporic links and long-established networks of trust in many used-clothing GPNs demonstrates how such patterns cannot be explained by a strictly neoclassical model of market equilibrium. There is not perfect cost minimization when firms and individuals invest in building relationships and may depend on family or kinship ties. Neither can there be perfect supply and demand correspondence, as the production of specific used-clothing commodities is dependent on the exogenous input of unwanted clothing (albeit stimulated, e.g. by leaflet drops and the positioning of clothing banks). Trading relationships built on shared cultural heritage and linkages between the Global North and South, such as Igbo traditions of apprenticeship, networks of Tanzanians in America and longstanding Indian trading families in Southern Africa are vital to coordinating some profitable used-clothing GPNs (Abimbola, *forthcoming*, field research in Mozambique, Ihezue, interview 19/03/09; Hansen, 2000; Rivoli, 2009). The importance of history, institutions – especially the role of charities in the second-hand clothing trade – and social structures must be recognized in trade geographies (Lawson, 2005).

Second-hand clothing GPNs which have less coordination between export and import firms or charities are arguably more difficult to research because the most powerful individuals, which have captured value enhancing processes in the networks are aware of the exploitative relationships that exist between different nodes. Separating activities – rather than forming embedded networks of trust – can provide a profitable business opportunity for the powerful actors involved in the trade. Gibbon and Ponte argue that governance is a “functional division of labour along the chain – resulting in specific allocations of resources and distributions of gains” (2005: 163). Their text is framed as GVC rather than GPN research, but Gibbon and Ponte’s analysis is informative as in the second-hand clothing trade the membership and incorporation of different firms and charities in GPNs influence their opportunities for accumulating profit.

Oxfam’s export processing activities are not integrated with downstream African “entrepreneurs”. Clark (interview 13/03/09) said that clients “have to” accept a mixed

packing list of clothing bales within the shipments of used-clothing. African importers are not permitted to select the items they would prefer and receive variable shipments including desirable warm weather items such as T-shirts and shorts, as well as less popular heavy coats and suits. Undesirable used curtains, overcoats and nightgowns have been observed for sale at low prices in Xipamanine and other Mozambican, Kenyan, Malawian and Zambian markets places. The social formation, where demand normally exceeds supply, is utilised by Oxfam and other exporters enables them to profit from less desirable bulky cold weather and unfashionable items and accumulate a greater total income. The governance of the packing list is an important activity that suppliers such as Oxfam and Ragtex (discussed below) are able to control and this allows them to capture value. Exerting power here maximises their profitability and demonstrates how exporters in the Global North have ascendancy over their customers in the Global South. Abimbola (forthcoming) describes how this affects African importers:

[T]he problem for those who do not have representatives in the sorting factory is that they never know exactly how many units of a certain item are in a consignment until they get the [packing] list that is sent to them (forthcoming:17).

The social formation, where demand normally exceeds supply, is utilised by the exporters who are more powerfully embedded in the trade network through possession of strategic assets in the Global North, including collection and processing facilities. This enables them to profit from combining shipments of the most demanded used clothing commodities with compulsory purchases of less desirable items. Therefore they accumulate a greater total income from the overall volume of used-clothing items they collect and (re)produce as commodities. Suppliers who are not closely networked to clients in the Global South, such as Oxfam and SATCoL, are able to control what is exported through their embedded roles and their locational advantages.

Field also documents how exerting power at the export node enables charities and firms to maximise their profitability:

Because of the high returns from quality clothing and the limited availability of high quality donations in the UK (i.e. the cream percentage), it is common for textile merchants to include a small proportion of low-grade clothing into a higher-grade category in order to maximise profit (2000: 159).

Furthermore, Intercontinental Clothing (quoted by Field, 2000: 160) stated that: “[i]f you do the grading properly (like we do) then there is not vast profits. Whereas if you put things in that people will just about accept without complaint then there is more money to be made and

obviously you get a lot more for it". These examples illustrate strategies implemented by firms in the Global North to increase the profitability of used-clothing export (re)production, which reduces the opportunities for African companies to extract value from the import and sale of second-hand clothing commodities. This evidence would suggest that the enrolment of import firms in GPNs which lack coordination to the re-production process, would not enable them to "upgrade" and amass further profit accumulating activities (Coe, 2011).

By examining the route of a single blouse, Durham (2004) 'followed' from Leicester to Zambia, an example of a GPN can be mapped. This example is anecdotal, but illustrative of the complex pathways used clothes follow to final markets. The blouse Durham followed was first donated at a Scope (the organisation for people with cerebral palsy) clothing bank operated by Ragtex UK, a rag merchant, which collects about 95 tonnes of clothes a week from around 200 recycling banks in the Leicester area, some of which are licensed charity banks and others are purely commercial (Ragtex UK, 2011). Ragtex donates £100 a year per licensed bank to Scope for use of their name. The blouse was processed at Ragtex's textile recycling plant in Leicester and packed into a 45kg bale containing similar blouses (as was observed at Oxfam Wastesaver) and exported to Beira, Mozambique (clothing is also exported by Ragtex to elsewhere in southern Africa and Pakistan (Ragtex UK, 2011)). From Beira port, the shipment was taken by road to Chipata in Zambia. The bale was then the property of Khalid, an ethnic Muslim Indian clothing wholesaler, who is one of around 100 merchants in Chipata from the same part of Gujarat (Durham, 2004). Durham was not able to trace all the transactions and the connections between Ragtex and Khalid is not known "a slight veil is thrown over the old-clothes business... Khalid buys 20 container loads of clothing from Leicestershire a year and sells the bales off to small traders." The bale containing the blouse was finally purchased by Mary, a Zambian market vendor and sold in the open-air Kapata market in Chipata.

The series of processes which occurred in Durham's case study in Mozambique and Zambia are comparable to those which were observed in Maputo, where ethnic Indian merchants also sell bales to small traders, discussed in section 5. Durham illustrates the range of different actors involved, including a charity and firms and individuals with different cultural heritages, critical assets, and capitalisation: Scope (a UK disability charity), Ragtex (a long established British rag merchant), Kahlid (an Indian expatriate wholesaler), Mary (a Zambian market trader). The web of connections is difficult to trace and auditing the social and economic impact of the donation of clothing items is incredibly challenging. The donated

blouse was mixed with both other charitable collections, but also non-charitable inputs (which were not facilitated by the licensing of a charities name). The blouse could even have been mixed in with illegally acquired clothing as Ragtex has been prosecuted after carrying out house to house collections without a licence (North West Leicestershire District Council, 2011). A clothing item donated at a Scope owned bank (which to the donor would have looked comparable to the Ragtex bank), rather than a licensed one would likely have followed a completely different route to final market.

In this section the import of used clothing to Africa has been explored and analysed through categorising different used-clothing trade activities as being either more coordinated or less integrated GPNs. My analysis has extended to consider how social and economic conditions have influenced the evolution of the used-clothing GPNs. The discussion in the remainder of this article will examine how individual Mozambican market vendors are marginalised in their interactions with more powerfully embedded firms at the micro-scale.

## **5. The used clothing trade in Maputo, Mozambique**

Used-clothes are imported to the port of Maputo from Australia, Europe and North America. Understanding exactly what transactions occur at this node is difficult. Customs delays are commonplace and importers and “*agentes*” (agents) (whom were unspecified and not discussed further by research participants) negotiate both “*impostos*” (taxes) as well as additional “*taxa*” (charges). Interviews and informal discussions have alluded to unofficial payments and bribes being paid, which are commonplace in the used car trade (Brooks, 2011). Integration to in local power structures is key to profitability for most firms in Mozambique and the continuing process of state capture by a narrow elite, through the governing Frelimo party perpetuates corruption (Söderbaum and Taylor, 2008; Sumich, 2010). Used clothes are imported primarily by Indian traders which have commercial links to the Global North. The Indian traders are connected to, and provide electoral support for, Frelimo politicians (Pitcher, 2002). All of the import firms which were researched in Maputo: AHP Commercial, Almadina Commercial, Europatex LDA, Fatah Trading, M.Mawji and

Sons, Mohiba Enterprises, Sabah Enterprises and UMUT World Connection were managed by people of South Asian origin. One supervisor from UMUT World Connections agreed to be interviewed, on conditions of anonymity.

UMUT purchases clothing in shipping containers (containing 300 45kg bales) with the allocation determined by a packing list, comparable to Oxfam's export shipments procedure and that detailed by Abimbola (forthcoming). On average UMUT purchases two or three shipping containers per month, which is far fewer than METL in Tanzania (see Rivoli, 2009) although comparable in size to some of Oxfam Wastesaver's West African clients and to Kahlid in Zambia (Durham, 2004; see section 4) and larger than some of those which Abimbola (forthcoming) documents in West Africa. There are also import businesses in Maputo such as Fatah Trading and Sabah Enterprises, which were observably larger. These limited examples do not give a representative picture of the firms which are involved in the import of used-clothing, but they do indicate that there are different sized companies rather than there being a single model which is common to Maputo and other African GPNs. Importing shipments of used-clothing from overseas markets requires significant capital, as well as trading relationships with upstream firms or charities. This may include the type of embedded, coordinated roles Abimbola (forthcoming) and Hansen (2000) document; however the specific dynamics of the relationships importers in Mozambique have with firms and charities at export and production nodes are not known. Amongst the firms and charities researched in the UK, Ihezue (19/03/09) was the only interviewee who had an answer as to the origin of imports to Mozambique, responding "mainly UK".

**Figure 3. Shipment of second-hand clothing being unloaded in Maputo near Xipamanine Market. Note the similarity to the bales of clothing produced at Oxfam Wastesaver in Figure 2.**



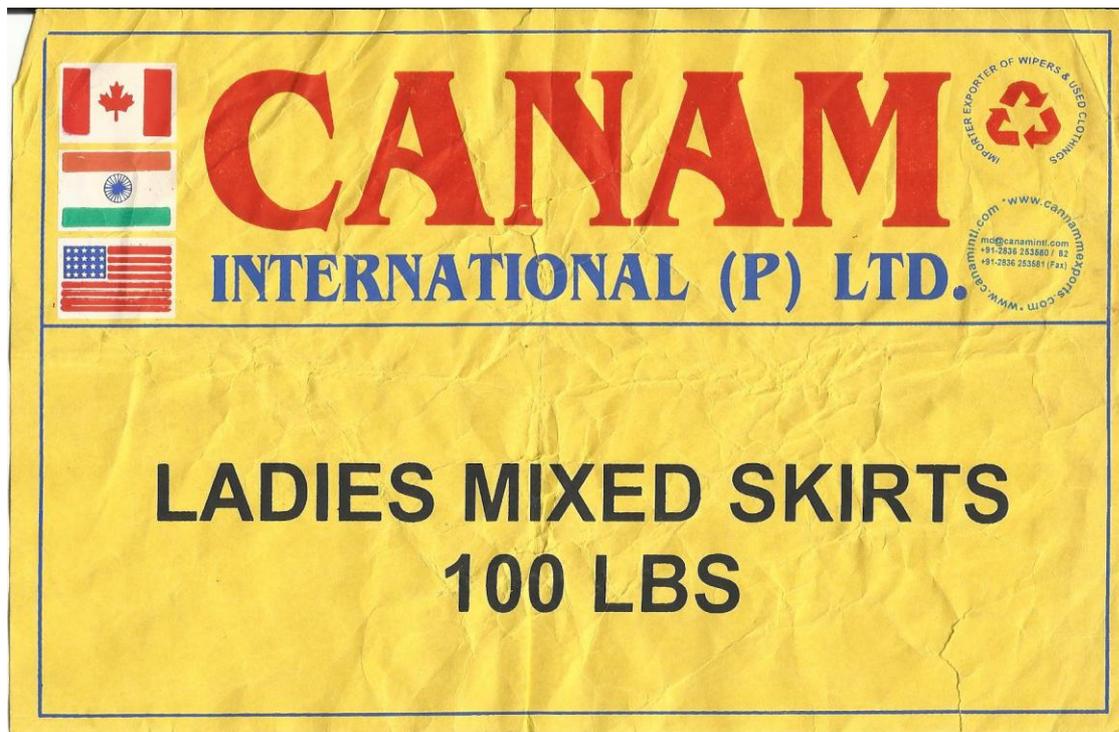
One method to trace the import of used clothing is to inspect the labels attached to bales, which occasionally have information about the exporting company. Figure 4 shows one such label from Canam International (P) Ltd. Information from the Canam website highlighted how they export clothing from North America to grading facilities in India (also reflected in the flags on the label) and re-export processed second-hand clothing to East Africa. Canam undertakes sorting and grading at Kandla, India “employing about 700 people” and utilise low labour costs and incentives in a “special economic zone” which “enjoys logistical advantage [to] customers spread over Africa, South East Asia and North America<sup>1</sup> (Canam International, 2009)”. The Kandla port is strategically located as a hub for labour-intensive processing activity, “between” the collection nodes in North America and retail in Africa

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<sup>1</sup> The return trade to North America is of premium vintage clothing (see Palmer, 2005).

(Lucy Norris, personal communication 05/02/10). Similar hubs in “the gulf” are used by Help the Aged’s downstream clients, although for re-export rather than processing activities (Wooldridge, interview 03/12/08). The economic geography of global shipping routes may make transport from North America to East Africa (through the Suez Canal) via India cheaper than direct shipments to Maputo (also avoiding Somalian pirate activity, likewise shipment from the UK may come via Port Said or other hubs, although this geography has not been mapped). India is one of Mozambique’s top ten trading partners and Mozambique has a small trade surplus with India (Overseas India Facilitation Centre, 2010), which may reduce the cost of the return (India to Mozambique) cargo route, although this assumption presumes the surplus Mozambican exports are of bulk container-shipped commodities.

**Figure 4. Discarded Canam clothing bale label found in Xipamanine Market**



The import firms in Maputo have specialist secure *armazéns* (warehouses/stores) where used-clothing bales are stored and sold. Their local role in GPNs are both geographically and commercially limited. They work only in Maputo; import containers of used-clothing and break these bulk imports back into individual bales. Individual market traders then directly purchase bales from them in cash at set prices. The import of used-clothing into Maputo is irregular. This inconsistency of supply is an outcome of how the used-clothing GPNs are processes dependent on existing transport infrastructure. Paulo, who is a market trader that sells used shirts, was interviewed in February 2010 and said there had been a “*crise*” (crisis) and a serious shortage of bales around the general elections in November 2009 when few boats made shipments into Maputo. In contrast, when there is a surge of imports the cost of bales can decrease. At these times the *armazéns* actively market them to traders and Paulo has received text messages advertising new and discounted used-clothing bales. *Armazéns* attempt to speed their rate of transactions in order to regain the capital to purchase another import of bales and generate further surplus. Rapid transit of goods through networks allows firms to achieve valorisation and the rate of transactions are important determiners of profitability in GPNs (Lane and Probert, 2006; Woxenius, 2006). It should though be noted that the importance of controlling the pace of capital flows and the tempo of acts of exchange is widely known in and beyond heterodox economics (Harvey 2006b; Lawson, 2005; Marx, 1976).

Shortages of used-clothing bales are also created by informal speculators known as “*Mamães Grandes*” (literally, ‘Big Mothers’ – a predominately female occupation, although some men undertake this work). The *Mamães Grandes* are privileged clients of *armazéns* who purchase large numbers of bales (50-100). This is advantageous for *armazéns*, as transactions are completed more rapidly. *Mamães Grandes* attempt to form an oligopoly working just outside the warehouses, buying up available stock; particularly of desirable clothing (e.g. shorts) and are especially active when there is a shortage of clothing bales. *Mamães Grandes* have good personal contacts with *armazéns* and market traders, illustrating the importance of micro-scale social embeddedness. They contact market traders when they monopolise supply and force traders to pay them a premium above the *armazéns* advertised price. A 100-300mt premium was a common level of rent-extraction by the *Mamães Grandes*. Maria discussed paying a 300mt (approximately US\$10) premium on a bale of trousers. *Mamães Grandes* are able to speculate through the GPN as via specific social formations they have better knowledge and understanding of how Xipamanine and other Maputo markets work and closer ties to the market traders, than the culturally and ethnically distinct *armazéns* merchants. Their role also depends on having sufficient capital, acquired through being early entrants into the trade in the early 1990s, which positions them in a more powerful role relative to market traders.

There are two main risks for firms and individuals in the second-hand clothing GPNs in Maputo; currency fluctuations and poor-quality clothing bales. Importers contracts with suppliers in the Global North are agreed in US Dollars (as Field (2000) also found in Zimbabwe). When the Mozambican Metical weakens against the US Dollar the importers pass increased costs on to the poorer market traders. But when the dollar falls against the Metical the price of bales will not be reduced by the relatively powerful importers. Traders had complained to importers about this process and have lobbied the municipal council, but have been unable to leverage change. Sergio (interviewed 11.02.10) who sells boy’s t-shirts complained that groups of market traders are treated “*sem seriedade*” (without seriousness) by importers and local authorities.

The rising price of bales is a common cause for complaint amongst used-clothing traders, but the greatest challenge to their ability to extract value is bad quality stock. Used-clothing is inherently variable in quality and is determined by the sorting process and unscrupulous operators can include low grade items (see Abimbola, forthcoming; Field, 2000). Market traders only know what category of clothing they are buying and are not permitted to examine the contents of clothing bales prior to purchasing them. They can be lucky and get

many items in good condition, of the right size and which are stylish, or they may be unfortunate and open a bale to find items that are ripped or rotten, too large and unfashionable. The opening of a new bale is called a “*totobola*” (lottery). A good bale can be very profitable and can double or triple their investment, whereas a poor quality bale can significantly erode their capital. The powerful *armazém* businesses do not offer refunds on bad quality clothing, as they want to maintain their value extraction at this node. However, the small traders are not completely powerless and can attempt to undermine the *armazéns* control of the purchase process. Judite, described paying a bribe of around one or two dollars to an employee at the warehouse when buying a bale of skirts in November 2009 and asked the labourer to select a good bale for her, without the knowledge of the *armazém* manager. In contrast, some long-established traders have built up relationships with *armazém* firms and reported that they have been able to exchange bales on rare occasions, but this is not normal business practice. These examples illustrate the importance of micro-scale networks of trust in GPNs.

Understanding the relative profit accumulation at different nodes in the GPN requires a critical reflection on the labour activities which are occurring at each node, and the temporal passage of used-clothing, as temporality is a fundamental feature of profitability in capitalist trade (Harvey, 2010). In Maputo, Market traders, may for example sell shirts for prices equivalent to twice the bulk purchase price, and this may well be a higher percentage mark-up than the *armazéns* gain from selling complete bales, but examining the rate at which capital flows through the GPN is just as important to consider. Market traders frequently remain with the same stock for a long time and thus they are ‘loosing’ money; as utilising capital to achieve valorisation depends on the movement of commodities. The traders themselves repeatedly reported how it is the day’s relative “*movimento*” (the movement of goods, turnover or rate of trade) which determined how profitable their work had been. These factors combined with the variable quality of second-hand clothing commodities limit their extraction of value or opportunities to upgrade.

## 6. Conclusions

The complexity of international trade has in general made the GPN approach difficult to implement. There are practical difficulties for a researcher in being able to command knowledge of the exact social and economic processes that occur at every node in global networks (Coe et al., 2008; Sarasota, 2010). In the second-hand clothing trade this is

compounded by the concealed commerciality, which is hidden from clothing donators who are ignorant of the final market for second-hand clothes (Lomotey and Fisher, 2006; Shea and Brennan, 2008; interviews with traders). Second-hand clothes are equally mute as to how they are reproduced as commodities, so their origins are not understood by retailers and consumers in the Global South (Durham, 2004; Hansen, 2000; Jester, 2002; Mathiason, 2004). Furthermore, illegal practices are widespread making trade patterns difficult to map (Forrest 1994; Pitcher, 2002; North West Leicestershire District Council, 2011). These factors obscure complex webs of activity which are perplexing even for actors within the GPNs. The case studies in this article do not offer complete cross-sections of the second-hand clothing trade; there are not clear links of production and exchange that can be traced between all the nodes in the United Kingdom, Mozambique and elsewhere in the Global North and South that have been discussed. Some common patterns in this sector have been identified and this conclusion will offer further analysis of the different types of embeddedness; societal, network and territorial, which are required for the development of second-hand clothing GPNs and how the nodes articulate with each other (Hess 2004; Hess and Coe, 2006).

Second-hand clothing GPNs reflect differences in the levels of economic development between the Global North and South. The trade traces a gradient of inequality between affluent populations, who readily consume and dispose of clothing and the poor; for whom opportunities to purchase new clothes are constrained by poverty. The nature of second-hand clothing GPNs are also determined by the societal embeddedness of different actors, which are important in enabling access to unwanted clothing. Charities in the UK monopolise the collection node because of their historically embedded role in accepting unwanted clothing. This is sustained by the material culture which surrounds donations, such as High street charity stores, social obligations to gift to charity and ethical narratives of clothing recycling (Gregson et al. 2002). The pattern of activity is dependent on a set of social interactions beyond those which can be narrowly defined in a single commodity chain (Fine, 2002; Hudson, 2008). Companies are less able to stimulate donations of clothing and this creates a barrier to entry for commercial operators although some have formed licensing agreements with charities (such as in the example of Scope and Ragtex) and recent reports suggest the collection activity is becoming increasingly commercialised (Andrews, 2011; Boffery, 2011; British Heart Foundation, 2011).

In section 2, I outlined how exchange-value is reproduced in second-hand clothing commodities. In the UK, only the two largest charities in the used-clothing trade; the

Salvation Army and Oxfam, have the organisational capacity and economies of scale to undertake their own processing and export. Small and medium sized collecting charities such as Help the Aged and the YMCA sell used clothing to export processing firms like Precylce and Choice Textiles which are able to amalgamate collections of used-clothing. As Canam International (2009) state “it is very important at this stage to forge alliances directly; therefore we encourage Thrift stores, Charities and other [n]on-profit organizations in North America and Europe to associate directly with us”. This quote from Canam reiterates the importance in establishing links to charitable donation organisations for private companies in the Global North. However, trust and relationships can be difficult to establish. Interviewees illustrated that the industry is marked by distrust and price fluctuations. Charities are cautious in their dealings with commercial actors, requiring “payment in advance” (Clark, interview 13/03/09) before shipping used-clothing.

Diasporic networks have shaped some second-hand clothing GPNs allowing for collective action to enable the extraction of value in different places. Abimbola (forthcoming), Hansen (2000) and Rivoli’s (2009) examples illustrate GPNs which link nodes of reproduction and consumption through cultural, ethnic and social ties that can facilitate the re-production, export and import processes. By contrast, other second-hand clothing GPNs lack coordination between different nodes and the extraction of value is concentrated in certain nodes in the networks. Export charities and commercial operators that collect, sort, and reproduce used-clothing commodities are adept at capturing value creation activities. Oxfam does this through the packing lists; which require the compulsory purchase of less desirable types of clothing and the discussion by Intercontinental Clothing alluded to power inequalities, which are determined by supply and demand imbalances that enable exporters to “cheat” importers by adding low quality clothing to consignments (Field, 2000).

The GPNs discussed in the in this article are best considered as a series of processes which are influenced by strengthening and wreaking networks of trust, varying social embeddedness, fluctuating transport costs and negotiated import policies, rather than being networks that are structural determined by fixed infrastructure, capital or regional specialisation. The interviews with Help the Aged, Oxfam and SATCoL highlighted how patterns of used-clothing trade shift at the macro- and meso-scales and have an “ever changing face” (Canam International, 2009). At the micro-scale used-clothing traders in Maputo discussed how they had lost income when there has been insufficient supply, due to fluctuations in the import process.

It has been important to examine GPN activities at different spatial scales (Henderson et al 2002). The micro scale case study from Mozambique highlights how transactions between individual market traders, *Mamães Grandes* and *armazém* firms allow powerful actors to capture profit making activities to the detriment of subalterns. The *Mamães Grandes* were early entrants in to the trade who have specialist knowledge and connections with both Indian importers and African market retailers. They are able to engineer value creating activities through speculation to the detriment of individual Mozambican traders. Relative to import firms in the GPNs, individual market traders face challenges not borne by upstream actors. Threats to achieving sustained valorisation are mediated through the lottery of the purchase of sealed bales, which may contain very low quality stock that do not enable profitable returns on investments. The informality of market trading, rather than retail being undertaken by a vertically integrated firm separates the retail activity from the more profitable meso-scale import of containers of bales. Maputo's used-clothing retailers lack agency and have not been able to organise themselves to challenge the more powerful importers. Social formations weaken their ability to bargain for improved terms of trade. The low profit levels prevent individual traders from upgrading to become importers and Mozambicans working as market vendors in Maputo lack diasporic links to suppliers in Australia, Europe and North America, or the other enabling social factors and sources of capital which have allowed importers such as UMUT and METL (in Tanzania, see Rivoli (2009)) to become embedded at import nodes. The continued embeddedness of firms at this node in Mozambique may be facilitated by their ability to circumvent customs charges and/or their close association with the governing Frelimo Party (Brooks, 2011; Pitcher, 2002). Importers in Mozambique have social agency and are able to control profitable node in GPNs. These importers are dependent on trade links and shipping routes to the Global North and the used-clothing commodities they receive are determined by their connections to exporters.

Using the GVC approach Morris and Barnes (2009) and Kaplinsky and Morris (2002) illustrated how in the new-clothing trade the massive size and dominance of western retailers enables them to concentrate their buying power, forcing producers in the Global South to accept the greatest risk. Similarly, Dolan and Humphrey's (2000) analysis of food supply chains that link Britain and Africa showed how production is coordinated by UK supermarkets and how risks to achieve valorisation are thereby concentrated amongst African *producers*, rather than UK based *retailers*. In second-hand clothing GPNs the nodes of (re)production and retail are reversed, although the power relationship between Global North and South is consistent with Dolan and Humphrey (2000), Kaplinsky and Morris (2002), and

Morris and Barnes (2009). However, the geography is not a simple North/South division as arrangements of charities, firms, individuals and diasporic communities bridge and control profitable activities in different territories (Hansen, 2000).

Second-hand clothing GPNs bring cheap garments to the Global South because (re)producing used clothes cost less in labour-time than manufacturing new garments. There is an incentive for leapfrogging ahead in innovation among individual actors to produce more efficient GPNs (Hess and Coe, 2006). Used clothing represents a very efficient way of supplying clothing to markets in the Global South. This leads on to the question of how are the gains shared between actors in the GPN? In the second-hand clothing trade there are some distributions of profit which are not normally observed in capitalist trade, even in GPNs with “ethical forms of coordination” (Hughes, 2008; 363). Charities in the UK extract value because of their historically and socially embedded roles in accepting donation of used clothing, although their revenues are being marginalised by the increasing commerciality of the trade (Boffery, 2011; British Heart Foundation, 2011). Profits are also amassed by exporting and importing firms which straddle the globe such as Canam, Choice Textiles, METL, Precycle, Ragtex or UMUT. These companies’ profits certainly exceed the income earning opportunities of individual market retailers in Mozambique who lack access to capital, power and the critical international assets which would enable them to play more profitable roles in GPNs.

Stretching the GPN approach to investigate the ‘back-end’ of globe trade has been methodologically challenging and understanding the various social and economic processes that occur at different nodes in secondary trade networks is difficult (Brooks, 2011). Used commodity trade flows are frequently fragmented and therefore less rooted in a modernist conception of production and consumption (Beuving, 2006; Gregson et al., 2010; Latour, 1993). There is a need for in-depth empirical work, because of the underdeveloped state of knowledge. Geographers need to take the economics of waste production, recycling and second-hand trade seriously (Gregson et al., 2010; Lepawsky and Mather, 2011). In addition, Starosta (2010) has made a convincing argument that GPNs (and related approaches), fail to explain the very nature of the object of their enquiry beyond describing the immediate outer manifestations of trade systems. This presents a challenge for GPN research (Coe, 2011). What has particular been important in grounding this article is the discussion (in section 2) of the cultural political economy which surrounds the reproduction of exchange-value in second-hand clothing; stretching GPN research in this direction can enrich the theoretical contribution of this field (Fine, 2000; Hudson, 2008). It is not sufficient to say that market

forces, such as the availability of donated clothing in the Global North, which are in demand in Africa, make GPNs. Investigating the material culture which surrounds activities such as used clothing donation can also enable geographical research to extend beyond the immediate manifestations of chains and networks. Mapping both social and economic processes across and beyond networks may allow us to understand how the poor, such as individual used clothing traders in Maputo, are disadvantaged in capitalist trade.

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