

REVEALING NEO-RACISM IN THE INDITEX COMMODITY CHAIN

by

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Every week, thousands of customers buy garments from INDITEX Corporation, but few of them know or care about where their clothes were produced. Though the customers and the garment workers are quite distant from each other, at the same time they have an extremely intimate relationship. This distance which renders the consumers and the workers invisible to each other is what Karl Marx identifies as a syndrome of commodity fetishism, a feature of consumerist societies. Their division is not a coincidence; it is systematically prearranged by the logic of neo-racism, a way of structuring relations of power between the so-called “developed world” and the “underdeveloped world.”

I argue that the progress of INDITEX Corporation is facilitated by neo-racism; a symptom of decolonization, as Balibar suggests. For understanding the specific character of this neo-racism, I propose to use Foucault’s concept of bio-political control which intervenes as an organizing force in social relations, disciplining and normalizing the death function in the era of Empire. For Hardt and Negri, 'Empire' is a new rule of structuring a world dominated by the market while binding together extremely unequal populations.

Keywords: Bio-politics, development, garments commodity chain, INDITEX, neo-racism, Empire, Third World women workers.

El fascismo se cura leyendo y el racismo viajando

Fascism is cured by reading and racism by traveling

Miguel de Unamuno

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

IMF International Monetary Found

WB World Bank

WC The Washington Consensus

CCC Clean Clothes Campaign

PREFACE

Ethel Brooks argues that there are two ways to work in the margins of Marxist theory: one studies capitalist relations using data, not only as evidence, but as a vehicle for personal accreditation in an orthodox academic mode of study; the second subverts the capitalist production of knowledge by using data as proof of lived experience and producing knowledge with an aim to build solidarity with those whose histories of exploitation you unearth.¹ The data and the analysis that I share in this thesis represents my own concerns in a proof of living as well as the solidarity that I share with the garment workers.

¹ Ethel Carolyn Brooks, *Unrevealing the garment industry: transnational organizing and women's work* (Mineapolis: University Minessota Press, 2007), 138- 162.

INTRODUCTION

There are two ways of understanding how racism is still present in contemporary relations: one way becomes evident when the life that an ethnic group represents is explicitly rejected either verbally or by means of direct violence against the members of the group. A good example can be found in the most recent law passed in Arizona which explicitly targets people for the way they look and their accent as a way of demarcating who are and are not allowed to reside in that land. The law enables the police to query the immigration status of any person even if there is only a suspicion that the person is illegally residing in the United States. It can even criminalize those who are legal citizens but that do not look like a 'legal' resident if they do not carry a document that proves their regularized condition.²

The other way is what Etienne Balibar identifies as neo-racism; this way is less perceived and is usually hidden under the disguise of progress and modernity.³ My aim in this thesis is to explore in more detail the specificity of this new way of organizing oppressive relations; I want to explore how neo-racism works through the market and by exerting control over women's lives.

If we want to understand social relations in the current era of globalization, we cannot ignore the important role of the market as a facilitator of the appropriation of material goods and the realization of personal desires. The market has penetrated every aspect of the daily life; defining it and organizing it, it creates identities, spaces and social positions. The

² BBC News, "Judge blocks Arizona's controversial immigration law," BBC News, June 29, 2010, US and Canada.

³ Etienne Balibar, "Is there a Neo- Racism?," *In Race Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities*, eds. Balibar, Etienne and Immanuel Wallerstein (London: Verso, 1991), 21.

appropriation of goods is something more than a simple economic act; it functions not only as a system of exchange, but also works as a structure of signs and strategically as a mechanism of power.⁴ Based on this idea I claim that neo-racism can be uncovered through an analysis of the garments commodity chain.

Leslie Deborah suggests that “approaching consumption through the commodity chain provides a vertical analysis that traces the movement of a product across different moments in its creation and use.”⁵ A commodity chain integrates into one single system the “production, distribution, retailing, design, advertising and final consumption for particular products.”⁶ The garments commodity chain bares and confronts two types of life, the first one is the life of the women workers who participate in the labor market, and the second is represented by the women who buy the garments. Neo-racism acts as factor of hierarchization among these two types of life.

Producers and consumers are 'dialectically linked', that is, one cannot exist without the other. Though they are connected, consumers and garment producers are automatically conceived as two unrelated bodies, which carry two types of cultural backgrounds. Neo-racism negates the lived reality of the garment producers and this rejection automatically translates on the tacit approval of the consumer's life style. The dominant position of the consumer in this relationship pushes the producer into invisibility/oppression/marginality. In the logic of neo-racism, the rejection of the producers' life is an element for normalizing their exploitation and making of their exploitation an indispensable element for maintaining the life style of the consumers.

⁴ Jean, Baudrillard, “*The ideological Genesis of Needs.*” In *the Consumer Society Reader*, eds. Schor, Juliet and Douglas Holt. New York: New Press, 2002), 75.

⁵ Leslie Deborah, “Gender, Retail Employment and the Clothing Commodity Chain,” *Gender, Place and Culture* Vol. 9, No. 1, (2002), 62.

⁶ Ibid., 62.

To prove this I focus on the analysis of the Spanish INDITEX Corporation, which is considered to be the world leader in garments retailing. This corporation integrates different brands, however, ZARA is the most important brand in terms of gains and geographical dispersion. ZARA is specialized in selling products for women; most of its commodities are sold in Europe (especially in Spain) and recently it has started to move part of its production chain into the Third World countries, employing women's labor in particular.

Since the garments commodity chain is a feminized market, as Angela McRobbie suggests, this chain should be a feminist concern; the analysis of its function give us the chance for political activism across the chain.⁷ This thesis is divided into four chapters; in the first chapter I describe the feminist theoretical background that reveals the importance of race and gender determining the profile of workers in the production of apparel. Leslie Salzinger argues that women are incorporated in the manufacturing industry through a discourse that constructs them as suitable labor (cheap and docile), based on gender and their geopolitical location. The importance of these two elements is highlighted by Chandra Talpade Mohanty in the use of the category of 'Third World' women workers. This category envisages the relations of power that push these women to seek out these jobs, but it also highlights the colonial legacies that construct Third World women as marginalized and powerless. On the other hand, Maria Mies argues that defining the women workers as 'Third World' can only be understandable in relation to what the privilege of the “developed countries” means in the global economy.⁸

Robert J. Ross has suggested that, in order to achieve a real improvement in the conditions of work in the garment industry, we have first to understand this production as a

⁷ Angela McRobbie, quoted by Leslie Deborah, “Gender, Retail Employment and the Clothing Commodity Chain,” *Ibid.*, 62.

⁸ María Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor* (London: Zed Press, 1986), 114..

“vigorous cultural phenomenon” that involves different levels of social processes and “mutual dependencies” between production and consumption.⁹ In order to understand this relation better, in the second section of the first chapter I propose to employ the concept “bio-politics” that was developed by Michel Foucault. Bio-politics are techniques of power that discipline and normalize hierarchical relations among those individual bodies that are integrated as, and which constitute, the ‘population.’¹⁰

Subsequently I explain the reinterpretation of Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri of bio-political control in the current era of globalization as a means of analyzing the sources of modern neo-racism. Based on the theory of Etienne Balibar, Hardt and Negri describe a supranational neo-racism that works through cultural differentiation and differential inclusion. I link this argument with the critique that Uma Kothari makes of development in that it revives racial colonial relations by constructing the Third World as the cultural symbol of backwardness and in need of market discipline. Her critique of development makes it possible to think how the incorporation of Third World women workers in the apparel industry is a result of neo-racism in the global political economy. Neo-racism works as a disciplinary power; it targets Third World woman as suitable labor for the garment industry, but it is also a bio-political technique, regulating and administering the conditions for their incorporation into this sector.

In the second chapter I explain how neo-racism was smuggled through the development policies that emerge with the Washington Consensus. Development functions on the logic of neo-racism by differentially organizing the survival of the developed populations and the underdeveloped populations, and so forth; it normalizes hierarchical relations among them.

⁹ Robert J., Ross, *Slaves to Fashion* (United States of America: University of Michigan Press, 2004), 275.

¹⁰ Michel Foucault, *the History of Sexuality, vol. 1* trans. Random House (Library of Congress), 136-139.

Based on the idea that Third World countries were economically less progressive than the more industrialized countries, they were pushed by the World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Found (IMF) to enlarge the manufacturing industry and to orient this production towards the export. It was argued that this way they would be able to achieve the promised development since, according to these institutions; it was a good way of creating new sources of employment and competing on the global market. At the same time these countries were pushed by their creditors -the WB and the IMF- to adopt other economic measures that reduced the social assistance of the states. These measures provoked a dramatic economic crisis and reinforced the conditions of poverty and under this context of difficult survival Third World women were incorporated into the garment manufacturing chain. Development policies have different effects on women, it affects them differently depending on the geopolitical location they are in.¹¹ These measures prepared the space and the subjects that would be in position to work in the manufacturing industry.

In the third chapter I introduce my case study of the INDITEX commodity chain; I describe the factors that make it what it is today, a very successful business that expands year by year. Since its origins, INDITEX has been associated with an ideal of modernity. It emerged from an economic and political context that is characterized by the search for progress through industrialization and high consumption, two elements that where very important for defining the status of the developed countries during the economic global restructuring of the 1980's. The successful expansion of the corporation inside of Spain took place during the years after the death of Franco in a period of transition and redefinition of the Spanish society. The promotion of fashion played an important role in the reconstruction of

¹¹ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without borders: decolonizing theory, practicing solidarity* (United States of America, Duke University Press, 2004), Ibid. 29-33.

the new society, it was included on the government agenda as a strategy for following the path of modernity and industrialization.

INDITEX shows itself to the world as a progressive model in market relations. It has revolutionized the world of fashion in many senses, it has innovated with a new mode of production, more diversified, faster and apparently more accessible to people. For those reasons INDITEX is considered to be the corporation that has democratized the world of fashion. In the fourth chapter, I explore the limits of this democratization; I analyze the conditions of exploitation that shape the production chain of the corporation. I argue that INDITEX commodity chain defines the privilege position of those women who buy the garments and the subordinate position of the other women who produce the garments. The division between these two groups of women is important for maintaining the break between the underdeveloped world and the developed. Neo-racism disciplines them, differentially integrates them into antagonistic positions, and, most importantly, harmonizes their opposition with capitalist accumulation. On the other hand, neo-racism also normalizes the conditions of exploitation in this industry, arguing that these jobs are the only source that poor and unskilled women can have to someday achieve development. This is a good opportunity to revisit how the organization of gender is crucial for shifts in the world economy and the permutation of old colonial relations, between the colonizers –today the developed- and the colonized –today the underdeveloped.¹²

¹² Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Feminism without borders*, *Ibid.*, 230.

CHAPTER 1- NEO- RACISM PRODUCTION IN THE GARMENT INDUSTRY

Any time the word 'fashion' is enunciated or symbolically represented in the media, the bodies of those who work in the sweatshops are automatically hidden. Although they are connected, consumers and garment producers are automatically conceived of as two unrelated bodies that lack commonality.¹³ They represent two antagonistic positions in a global system in which their separation is indispensable for maintaining relations of dominance.

In this chapter I provide a theoretical background for better comprehending the two poles of life that the garment producers and the consumers represent as well as the way they are interrelated. I argue that by thinking about this binary relation in terms of bio-politics we can disentangle what Balibar identifies as neo-racism – the structure and discourses through which it works. Neo-racism is a new form of justifying the incompatibility of life-styles and traditions between the old colonies and imperial powers.¹⁴ My aim is to provide the tools for understanding how incompatibility operates in garment production.

The chapter is divided in four sections; in the first part I describe the different debates concerning the participation of women in the garment industry that have been raised in feminist and postcolonial research. These studies provide the first elements for understanding the role of gender and race in the organization of the garment industry. Third World women constitute the majority of the labor force in this economic sector. According to Leslie Salzinger, these women are constructed as suitable labor by a discourse that organizes global

¹³ Michael Billing, "Commodity Fetishism and Repression: Reflections on Marx, Freud and the Psychology of Consumer Capitalism," *Theory & Psychology*, Vol. 9, No. 3 (1999), 318.

¹⁴ Etienne Balibar, "Is there a Neo- Racism?," *Ibid.*, 21.

production.¹⁵ This discourse sees Third World women as cheap labor; however, Salzinger argues that they are not inherently cheap labor but rather merely constructed as such in a discourse that she defines as “productive femininity”. This statement is very important for my research since it is precisely through the analysis of the processes that construct Third World women as suitable (cheap) labor that we can understand how neo-racism operates.

In the second section I introduce the term 'bio-politics'; I explain its meaning and how it can be applied to the study of garments industry. Bio-politics is a technique of control that emerges with the rise of modern State. According to Foucault, bio-politics is a technology of power that administers life and death as it targets and divides populations. In order to understand how this administration of life and death works, Foucault references the example of 'State Racism,' a new “acquisition of power over man insofar as man is a living being, that the biological came under State control.”¹⁶

Based on Foucaultian theory, Sharad Chari argues that bio-politics and race control are basic components for the advancement of capitalist relations. In order to understand how this triadic relation works I analyze Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri's theory of *Empire* in the following section. Influenced by Étienne Balibar these authors consider that there is a new form of racism in the current era of economic globalization that articulates global inequality. This neo-racism recycles colonial domination and epistemologically constructs a part of the world population as 'backwards'.

There is recent literature that describes ‘economic development’ as new way to justify racism. According to this research, race is smuggled into culture through 'development'. Development initiatives construct the Third World as the symbol of backwardness and need of

¹⁵ Leslie Salzinger, *Genders in production: making workers in Mexico's global factories* (Berkley/ Los Angeles/London: University of California Press, 2003), 15.

¹⁶ Foucault uses technique and technology of power as synonymous, see Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” Ibid., 240.

intervention. Although the category race is not present on these initiatives, they are subtly influenced by the argument that culture is the reason why some population is more “developed” than the others. In the last part of this chapter, I connect this argument with Hard and Negri’s interpretation of imperial racism to trace the main elements that shape neo-racism.

1. 1 Approaching garment industry from a feminist perspective.

Literature Review

The conditions of exploitation in the garment industry are a main concern in feminist research; the debate surrounding the subject has been approached in different ways. On the one hand, there is research about the social, material and historical factors that determine Third World women’s exploitation in the garment industry.¹⁷ This area of research explores the friendly relationship between patriarchy and capital accumulation, and it is mainly influenced by Marxist theory and postcolonial critique. This research provides the theoretical background from which I construct my argumentation.

On the other hand, there is the recent study of transnational solidarity among sweatshop workers and consumer networks. This area of research has been helpful in two respects. Since its focus is on disclosing the potential of transnational advocacy networks, this area of research offers a constructive perspective in the field.¹⁸ It gives voice to these huge and complex transnational organizations, and helps to identify the different routes that these organizations have taken in order to react against the power of transnational corporations. This research has also contributed to demystifying the conception of Third World women

¹⁷ Robert J., Ross, *Slaves to Fashion*, Ibid., 276.

¹⁸ See Shae Garwood (2005), Angela Hale (2007) and Ethel Brooks (2007)

workers as victims without agency; they portray the history of their activism as makers of their own empowerment.

Although the contribution of this type of research is significant, I consider imperative to keep the attention on the factors that put Third World women in exploitative jobs such as those offered by the garment industry. If I insist that this area of research should not be abandoned it is because the exploitative dynamic of this industry can vary over time. In fact, it tends to re-adapt itself to initiatives that are promoted as improvements in the general conditions of labor and that are associated with the idea that capitalism can have a human face. This can be found in how development discourse validates the incorporation of Third World women in the garment industry as an efficient way of empowering them and involving them in progress of their own communities,¹⁹ undermining the fact that these jobs are among the most unjust in the world.

Other example is the emergence of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), a term that companies have adopted for proving that they are willing to behave in harmony with the safety of society and the environment as well.²⁰ This idea has been embraced by companies in the attempt to clean up their image, usually through the incorporation of codes of conduct that protect workers from abuses of their contractors or through the founding of altruistic projects. However, this initiative has not really resulted in a modification of their production system where the roots of exploitation are found. The way CSR is being employed by apparel retailers operates in the frame of neo-racism, creating the illusion of helping others who are thought to be needy and incapable of helping themselves, when in fact they have been placed

¹⁹ Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, "Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers': An Analysis of Women's Employment in Third World Export Manufacturing," *Feminist Review*, No. 7 (1981), 87

²⁰ David P., Baron, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Social Entrepreneurship," *Journal of Economics & Management Strategy* 16, Issue 3 (2007), 683.

into exploitative positions that impede them to escape from poverty. This is an aspect that I explore in more detail in the chapter four.

Awareness of Third World women's participation in the garment industry originally emerged in response to the economic global restructuring that finished with the Keynesian Welfare State.²¹ Caroline, Danloy, Shahra Razavi and Ruth Pearson observed that after the implementation of neoliberal policies in many Third World countries there was a significant enlargement of the percentage of women in paid labor, the manufacturing industry being the principal sector absorbing them.²² These new jobs were oriented to the exportation, "in low skill manufacturing- notably in garments, footwear and electronic products."²³

As masses of women were enlisted in the garment industry and their incorporation was seen as an efficient path for integrating them in the development project, feminists started to question how much these jobs were actually empowering them.²⁴ A pioneer study exploring this situation was *The Lace Makers of Narsapur*. In this book Maria Mies describes how conceptions of women's proper roles and caste relations place the poorest women of India in very low paid activities. Without leaving what is considered their proper sphere, these women sew shawls that are mainly exported to the First World.²⁵ Since this activity takes place inside of the home it is not perceived as work, but as a leisure activity. They do not even have control on the sale of the products they make because this is an activity reserved for the men.

²¹ Lourdes Benería, *Gender, development, and globalization: economics as if all people mattered* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 2.

²² Caroline Danloy, Shahra Razavi and Ruth Pearson, *Globalization, Export- Oriented Employment and Social policy* (Great Britain: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), 1, 2.

²³ Ibid., 2.

²⁴ Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, "Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers, Ibid., 87.

²⁵ María Mies, *The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian Housewives in the World Market* (London: Zed Press, 1982), ix.

As Mies highlights, these women were part of an informal based industry that “enabled the accumulation of wealth by some traders and ensures the impoverishment of the workers.”²⁶ Even though their work did not count in the formal economy, the contribution of these women was very important for the stability of the national economy.²⁷ With this argument Mies adds the first basis of what Danloy Caroline (et al.) explains in more detail; many poor countries that specialize in manufacturing for exportation and depend on the production of garments would probably not be able to compete in this sector without the participation of women in the lowest link of the apparel chain.²⁸

Mies work was also very important for challenging the argument that paid labor was the solution for improving gender inequality.²⁹ This aspect was later examined by Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, who claimed that the relations by which women are integrated in these types of jobs remain exploitative and are ineffective dissolving “the subordination of women as gender.”³⁰ After conducting research in different parts of the world concerning the conditions of exploitation in these new jobs, they conclude that “rather than ending such subordination, entry into wage work tends to transform it.”³¹ Elson and Pearson explained that the manufacture industry was relocated to the Third World because in this location there was a suitable force available “which offers a ratio of output to money costs of employment superior to that which prevails at existing centers of capital accumulation in the developed countries.”³² These authors found that a dominant belief circulated among transnational

²⁶ María Mies, *The Lace Makers of Narsapur: Indian*, Ibid., ix.

²⁷ Ibid., ix.

²⁸ Caroline Danloy, Shahra Razavi and Ruth Pearson, *Globalization, Export- Oriented*. Ibid., 3-4.

²⁹ Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, “Nimble Fingers, Ibid., 102.

³⁰ Ibid.,

³¹ Ibid.,

³² Ibid., 90.

companies and governments about women from Third World that constructed them as the perfect labor force from which to profit.³³ These women were conceived not only as cheap labor, but as docile and discipline workers who, indeed, are “less inclined to join trade unions, than men; and to be naturally more suited to tedious, repetitious and monotonous work.”³⁴

This belief was also addressed by Leslie Salzinger; according to her, Third World women workers were constructed as potential garment workers “within specific understandings of who they are and what the work requires.”³⁵ She proposed the term ‘productive femininity’ for understanding the structure of meaning, constantly present in transnational production, “through which workers, potential and actual, are addressed and understood and around production itself is designed.”³⁶ Salzinger argues that “docile and dexterous women are produced in production relations; they do not autonomously enable them.”³⁷ Contrasting with Elson and Person, she stresses that scholars fail when they state that capital is dependent on its access to very cheap Third World women workers, since that argument confuses cause with consequence.³⁸ For her the suitable labor force does not exist, but it is manufactured in accordance to transnational corporations needs. This statement is very important for my argumentation, since my aim is to prove that Third World women are constructed as suitable force for the garment industry in the frame of what Étienne Balibar calls neo-racism, a symptom

of the era of ‘decolonization’, of the reversal of population movements between the old colonies and the old metropolises, and the division of humanity whitening a single

³³ Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, “Nimble Fingers, *Ibid.*, 90.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 93.

³⁵ Leslie Salzinger, *Genders in production: making.*, *Ibid.*, 15.

³⁶ *Ibid.*,

³⁷ *Ibid.*,

³⁸ *Ibid.*,

political space, (...) a racism which, at first sight, does not postulate the superiority of certain groups or peoples in relation to others but ‘only’ the harmfulness of abolishing frontiers, the incompatibility of life- styles and traditions.³⁹

In order to understand how neo-racism operates through the garment industry, most important is to understand that this industry synthesizes old colonial forms of oppression. This aspect can be read through the theoretical work of Cynthia Enloe. She observes that garment companies moved their production to the Third World searching not just women's cheap labor, but following “patterns of racial and regional inequality.”⁴⁰ She argued that, indeed, those First World companies that were not able to move their production to the Third World also followed racial patterns for hiring their labor force; this was the case in the United States where these companies employed mainly black women and women immigrants from Third World.⁴¹ Although the way Enloe understands race is unclear, her argument suggests that garment jobs are exclusively for segregated populations that share common past of colonial oppression.⁴²

³⁹ Etienne Balibar, “Is there a Neo- Racism?,” Ibid., 21.

⁴⁰ Cynthia H., Enloe, *Bananas, beaches and bases: making feminist sense of international politics* (London: Pandora Press, 1989), 154.

⁴¹ Ibid.,

⁴² Other aspect that makes Enloe influential to my own research is that she explored the case of Benetton, an Italian garment company that at the end of 1980s became the “model of the way to do business” subcontracting informal work. □ In the third chapter of this dissertation I followed some of the aspects that she brings in the analysis of Benetton for describing my own study case: the model production of Zara, a Spanish garment-company that completely transformed the concept of clothing fast production. After twenty years Zara has advantage over Benetton in many aspects, not only in her model of immediate production, but in its overexpansion across the world.

That garments production is as much about the production of racialized bodies as the making of profits is an argument that was also anticipated by Chandra Talpade Mohanty.⁴³ According to this author “Third World women workers have a potential identity in common, an identity as workers in a particular division of labor at this historical moment.”⁴⁴ She suggests the importance of using Third World women workers as a categorical term for understanding how gender, race and class determine the processes of production and labor distribution in a global scale. Using this category we can unravel how relations of exploitation or recolonization are being restored in the current context of economic globalization.⁴⁵

Mohanty explains that racialized ideologies of masculinity and femininity circulate in each of the webs that compose the global commercial arena.⁴⁶ These images construct the legitimate consumer and the legitimate worker who differentially represent two types of life and success. The meaning of what a consumer or a producer/worker is differs tremendously depending on their location in the unequal global system.⁴⁷ She considers that the legitimate consumer in global capitalism has turn to be also known as a citizen whose definition “depends to a large degree on the definition and disciplining of producers/workers on whose backs the citizen/ consumer gains legitimacy.”⁴⁸ Applying this idea to my own case of study I argue that in the logic of neo-racism the citizen/consumer is the archetype of a successful

⁴³ Carla Freeman, *High tech and high heels in the global market* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2002), 36.

⁴⁴ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts: Ideologies of Domination, Common Interests, and the Politics of Solidarity” in *Feminist Genealogies, Colonial Legacies, Democratic Futures*, ed. M. Jacqui Alexander and Chandra Talpade Mohanthy (London: Routledge, 1997), 8.

⁴⁵ Ibid. 7.

⁴⁶ Ibid., 10.

⁴⁷ Ibid.,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 5.

liberal project and enjoys freedom and the benefits of consumption, while the producer/worker is exactly the opposite; she represents a liberal failure, a poor and unqualified laborer who has no other option than being employed in the garment industry.

The argument that Mohanty uses was originally taken from Mies, she argued that the definition of consumer/citizen cannot but signify privilege, power and consumption in global economics.⁴⁹ Mies claims that in a global scale privilege is bound to consumption.⁵⁰ Since the more important centers of consumption are localized in the developed world and the production is mainly located in the underdeveloped, she argued that exploitation and accumulation are organized among these two regions.⁵¹ One region “is getting developed at the expense of the other, which in this process is getting underdeveloped.”⁵²

'Commodity fetishism,' the mis-recognition of the social realities of a consumer object's production as inherent and objective qualities of that object,⁵³ is a Marxist concept that can be helpful for understanding the barrier that separates the consumers/citizens from the producers/consumers. Illustrating how this concept functions in the context of garments consumption Michael Billing explains:

the relationship between the label and the retailing outlet in which the object is purchased can also be imagined in relation to my sense of self. But the social relations beyond the label are forbidden territory. My goods in order to be mine and to be enjoyed as such, must be separated from the bodies which have created them. I must

⁴⁹ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Women Workers and Capitalist, *Ibid.*, 10.

⁵⁰ María Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale: Women in the International Division of Labor* (London: Zed Press, 1986), 114.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 39.

⁵³ Karl, Marx, *Capital: Volume 1, The Process of Production of Capital*, Trans. Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling (Moscow: Progress, 1887), 72.

not imagine those strange hands which once touched my precious possessions, including those which now lie next to my skin.⁵⁴

Producers are related to “consumers in a contradictory, even antagonistic way.”⁵⁵ However, at the same time both consumers and producers live side by side, sharing the history of commodities. According to Mies the more that consumers ignore the conditions under which their commodities are being produced, the more possibilities there are for exploiting the labor of those participating on the production process.⁵⁶ In order to subvert this antagonism, Mies calls for a feminist consumer liberation, pushing First World women to realize their privilege position at the expense of Third World women producers. This liberation would take place once First World women disengage themselves from consumerism, demystify the commodity, and recognize their oppressive role in the course of capitalism.⁵⁷

Problematizing this antagonistic relation from another perspective, Robert J. Ross has suggested that in order to achieve a real improvement in the conditions of work in the garment industry, we have first to understand this production as a “vigorous cultural phenomenon” that involves different levels of social processes and “mutual dependencies” between production and consumption.⁵⁸ He considers problematic that these two sides, production and consumption, are poorly explored as the same entity. Angela McRobbie has also urged feminists to re-conceptualize the barrier that separates these two entities.⁵⁹ Indeed, she blames academic feminism for enlarging the gulf between these two sides by approaching them

⁵⁴ Michael Billing, “Commodity Fetishism and Repression, Ibid., 319.

⁵⁵ María Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, Ibid., 232.

⁵⁶ Ibid.,

⁵⁷ Ibid., 227.

⁵⁸ Robert J., Ross, *Slaves to Fashion*, Ibid., 275.

⁵⁹ Angela McRobbie, *In the Cultural Society art, Fashion and Popular Music* (USA and Canada: Routledge, 1999), 32.

separately. In an attempt to reduce this distance, my work explores the space between these two poles for identifying the factors that intentionally regulate their division; my aim is to show that this division is a result of the institutionalization of neo-racism.

1.1.1 The rise of bio-politics

Before moving to my argumentation, it is important to identify the theoretical background from which I stand as well as the concepts I will rely on. My work is mainly influenced by Foucaultian theory as well as its revisions in the works of Sharad Chari, Michel Hardt and Antonio Negri. I also use literature on development that explores how racism is smuggled into the development policy. Bio-politics and neo-racism are the main concepts that sustain my work; I apply them in order to connect the two types of life that the garment industry estranges: the consumer/citizen and the producer/worker.

The term 'bio-politics' stems from the theoretical work of Michel Foucault; but as Roberto Esposito explains, it has roots in the development of geopolitics as well as the study of tactics and political strategies for controlling populations and territorial rule.⁶⁰ Bio-politics is described as the intervention and regulatory control of the population on the era of bio-power that, according to Foucault, was inaugurated by a profound transformation of sovereign power.⁶¹ This shift occurred during the seventeenth century with the transition from the monarchical power to the power of the modern State. From that moment power was concentrated in administering, penetrating and controlling all the dimensions of life; killing ceased to be the highest function of power but was rather reinvented as a way “to invest life

⁶⁰ Roberto Esposito, *Bíos Biopolitics and Philosophy* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 16.

⁶¹ Michel Foucault, *the History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Ibid., 136- 139.

through and through.”⁶² This power was the sophistication of control; it became more acceptable and invisible because it abandoned the repressive force as a main tool for controlling. It presents itself as producer of pleasures, forms of knowledge, truth and discourses.⁶³

According to Foucault this bio-power, or power over life, took two basic dimensions: the subjugation of human bodies and the control over entire populations. He highlights that capitalism would not have been possible without the organization of life along these two poles since they facilitated the “insertion of bodies into the machinery of production and the adjustment of the phenomena of population to economic processes.”⁶⁴ The first of these two poles were centered on the control, discipline and optimization of the bodies’ capabilities.⁶⁵ Its mission was the administration and organization of human bodies and their integration “into systems of efficient and economic controls.”⁶⁶ This is what he calls disciplinary power and its main characteristic is that it produces docile bodies while at the same time it reduces their political force.⁶⁷

Disciplinary power imposes a rule that all individuals should followed. It differentiates and hierarchically organizes the capabilities of the individuals and makes each of them to follow the rule, and so forth. It produces their conformity with this order, normalizing

⁶² Michel Foucault, *the History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Ibid., 139.

⁶³ Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” in *The Foucault Reader*, eds. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 61.

⁶⁴ Michel Foucault, *the History of Sexuality*, vol. 1, Ibid., 141.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 139.

⁶⁶ Ibid.,

⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, “Docile bodies,” in *The Foucault Reader*, eds. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), Ibid., 182.

exclusion and hierarchies.⁶⁸ He affirms, it “is exercised through its invisibility: at the same time it imposes on those whom it subjects a principal and compulsory visibility”⁶⁹

The second dimension took the form of intervention and supervision of bodies as a whole; this second pole of bio-power that he identifies as bio-politics of the population,

present at every level of the social body and utilized by very diverse institutions (the family and the army, schools and the police, individual medicine and the administration of collective bodies), operated in the sphere of economic processes, their development, and the forces working to sustain them act as factors of segregation and social hierarchization, exerting their influence on the respective forces of both these movements, guaranteeing relations of domination and effects of hegemony.⁷⁰

These techniques of power⁷¹ did not exclude the disciplinary power at all; bio-political control integrated disciplinary power for addressing individuals as part of population and kept them under surveillance, train them, use them, and punish them.⁷² Since their discovery, bio-politics had been at the service of modern states whose general objective was to preserve the stability of their own populations and protect them against extermination.

Foucault also explains that the preservation of the existence and the investment in life through and through are not exclusive of the right of death;⁷³ the right to kill others in the era of bio-power can be legitimated. For that reason, bio-politics can also be used as technologies

⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, “The means of Correct Training,” in *The Foucault Reader*, eds. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 194.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 199.

⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Ibid., 139.

⁷¹ Foucault uses technique and technology of power as synonymous, see Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” Ibid., 249.

⁷² Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*” *Lectures at the College de France, 1975- 176*, trans. David Macey (London: Penguin Books, 2003), 242.

⁷³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Ibid., 136- 138.

of power that deteriorate the lives of others in the name of protecting stability. “The ancient right to take life or let live was replaced by a power to foster life or disallow it to the point of death”.⁷⁴ To kill in this sense does not necessarily mean direct extermination, it is also an “indirect murder: the fact of exposing someone to death for some people, or, quite simply, political death, expulsion, rejection, and so on.”⁷⁵

In the revision that Giorgio Agamben makes of Foucaultian theory, he suggests that in our century modern bio-politics have a tendency “to redefine the threshold in the life that distinguishes.”⁷⁶ He explains that “every society sets this limit; every society- even the most modern- decides who its sacred men will be.”⁷⁷ Modern bio-politics defines the sacred life that should be protected from death, and the life that instead can be justifiably killed without any punishment.⁷⁸

I argue that the garment commodity chain is exactly a representation of how modern bio-politics works. The citizen/consumer represents the sacred life that should be protected at the expense of the producer/worker, who in this case can excusably be exploited and exposed to the brink of death. This relation can also be understood as accumulation by dispossession,⁷⁹ which implies that the citizen/consumer can have access to commodities only by keeping the producer/worker in a condition of poverty. Moreover, those producing the garments would never approach the living conditions of those for whom they are produced precisely because their work, and therefore their state of need, is indispensable for maintaining the life-style of the consumers.

⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, Ibid., 138.

⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” Ibid., 256.

⁷⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life* (Stanford University, 1998), 131.

⁷⁷ Ibid., 139.

⁷⁸ Ibid.,

⁷⁹ David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 137.

Foucault explains that bio-politics deals with the administration of social relations among humans to the extent that they are human species and that they are classified into racial subgroups.⁸⁰ He uses the example of State racism which, following his argumentation, is an essential mechanism of power that characterizes modern States in such a way that it becomes difficult to understand the role of this institution “without becoming involved with racism.”⁸¹

According to Foucault, racism “is primarily a way of introducing a break into the domain of life that is under power’s control: the break between what must live and what must die.”⁸² For Foucault racism is more than an ideology; its specificity “is not bound up with mentalities, ideologies, or the lies of power. It is bound up with a technique of power.”⁸³ It is then a technology of power that justifies and normalizes the indirect extermination of a ‘subgroup’ of the human species,⁸⁴ “appealing to the principle that the death of others makes one biologically stronger in so far as one is a member of a race or a population, in so far as one is an element in a unitary living plurality.”⁸⁵ For explaining how racism can justify murder, he makes reference to colonialism:

Racism first develops with colonization, or in other words, with colonizing genocide.

If you are functioning in the bio-power mode, how can you justify the need to kill people, to kill populations, and to kill civilizations? By using the themes of evolutionism, by appealing to racism.⁸⁶

⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, “*Society Must Be Defended*,” Ibid, 245, 256.

⁸¹ Ibid., 254

⁸² Ibid., 254.

⁸³ Ibid., 268.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 264, 268.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 258.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 257.

Evolutionism provided a foundation for justifying the subjugation of the colonized, arguing that the strongest species always dominate and exterminate the weaker by natural selection.⁸⁷ The same colonialist logic that justified the inferiority of the colonized is present in neo-racism in its own attempt to justify the inferiority and exploitation of Third World populations by arguing that they are backwards.

The problem with Foucault at this level is that he envisions racism in the frame of the state and neglects to see that it can also function in the context of economic relations.⁸⁸ As my study illustrates, Foucault's position is incomplete since neo-racism takes place in the context of market relations. Furthermore, Foucault argues that racism arises only in the context of killing; he states, "when it is simply a matter of eliminating the adversary in economic terms or of taking away his privileges, there is no need for racism."⁸⁹ This argument has been challenged by Sharad Chari whose work shows that racial and spatial controls are very important components in the capitalist production of space. Chari centralizes the capitalist production of space as the powerful influence that capitalism has on shaping, shifting and destroying space.⁹⁰ He explains that "bio-political government provides a new toolbox for racial control through the differential vitalities of populations in relation to the machinery of production."⁹¹ The function of race in the capitalist production of space is evident in the case of the garment industry that, returning to the work of Enloe, follows patterns of segregation that are grounded in colonialism.⁹²

⁸⁷ Michel Foucault, "*Society Must Be Defended*, Ibid.,

⁸⁸ Ibid., 256, 257.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 262.

⁹⁰ Sharad Chari, "Critical Geographies of Racial and Spatial Control," *Geography Compass* Vol. 2, No. 6 (2008), 1909.

⁹¹ Ibid., 1910.

⁹² Cynthia H., Enloe, *Bananas, beaches and*, Ibid., 154.

1.1.2 Neo-racism in the era of Empire

Chari suggests that Michel Hardt and Antonio Negri have settled the agenda for understanding the triadic function of racial control, bio-politics, and production of capitalist space. Hardt and Negri claim that after the collapse of the Soviet Union occurred an “irreversible globalization of economic and cultural exchanges.”⁹³ This transformation completely altered the global order making '*Empire*' the political subject that regulates this new era.⁹⁴ '*Empire*' is a new form of sovereignty that fuses “national and supranational organisms under a single logic of rule.”⁹⁵ The diagram for understanding the sovereignty of *Empire* is the world market;⁹⁶ it is a decentralized and de-territorialized order that integrates every single part of the global realm.⁹⁷

Since the objective of *Empire* is to control populations and territories and, more precisely, what social life means in its totality, Hardt and Negri considered that *Empire* is the supranational representation of bio-power.⁹⁸ In fact, these authors view bio-power and the subsumption of society under capital as synonymous.⁹⁹ In this context bio-politics proves crucial.¹⁰⁰ “The complex apparatus that selects investments and directs financial and monetary maneuvers determines the new geography of the world market, or really the new bio-political

⁹³ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire* (United States of America: Harvard University Press, 2000),

xi.

⁹⁴ Ibid., xi.

⁹⁵ Ibid., xii.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 190.

⁹⁷ Ibid., xxi.

⁹⁸ Ibid., xv.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 365.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 22.

structuring of the world.”¹⁰¹ The financial international agencies and the transnational corporations have been the ones structuring global territories bio-politically; they produce social relations and subjectivities with special needs.¹⁰²

A special characteristic of *Empire* is its capacity to maintain a “close proximity of extremely unequal populations, which creates a situation of permanent social danger and requires the powerful apparatuses of the society of control to ensure separation.”¹⁰³ This particular characteristic can be read through the relation that exists in the garment commodity chain between the citizen/consumer and the worker/producer. Although their relationship is antagonistic, they live side by side, connected by market relations.

Racism in the era of *Empire* has progressed “in extent and in intensity”,¹⁰⁴ however, this racism is no longer grounded in biological essentialism; the hierarchical relation among populations is grounded in cultural differentiation.¹⁰⁵ This neo-racism or “imperial racism”, as Hardt and Negri call it, is never settled “as a difference of nature but always as a difference of degree, never as a necessary but always as accidental.”¹⁰⁶ The racism of *Empire* operates as differential inclusion, but not of exclusion.¹⁰⁷

The hierarchy of the different races is determined only a posteriori, as an effect of their cultures- that is, on the basis of their performance. According to imperial theory, then,

¹⁰¹ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Ibid., 32.

¹⁰² Ibid., 31, 365.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 337.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 191

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 191.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., 194.

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.,

racial supremacy and subordination are not a theoretical question, but arise through free competition, a kind of market meritocracy of culture.¹⁰⁸

Hardt and Negri's argument about imperial racism is somewhat influenced by Balibar's theory. Balibar explains that neo-racism splits the world population into two cultures; the first one is considered to be "universalistic and progressive," while the second one is "irremediably particularistic and primitive."¹⁰⁹ This cultural differentiation can be easily identified in the thesis of the controversial article "The Clash of Civilizations" by Samuel P. Huntington.

Huntington states that the divisions between the First, Second, and Third World, settled during Cold War, is no longer meaningful in the study of World Politics¹¹⁰. Following his argument, the classification of countries by their economic or political condition would not be as significant as to group them by their culture or their type of civilization.¹¹¹ He identifies the term civilization as a cultural entity; it is "the highest cultural grouping of people and the broadest level of cultural identity people have short of that which distinguishes humans from other species".¹¹²

Huntington stresses the idea that the dominant axis of world politics in the current era is the connection between "Western Civilization" and "the Rest of Civilization". Without even a whisper of the word 'racism', he splits the world population by human species; these two types of human species can either belong to Western Civilization, whom he associates with modernity, or to the Non-Western civilizations that, according to him, try to imitate the

¹⁰⁸ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Ibid, 193.

¹⁰⁹ Etienne Balibar, "Is there a Neo- Racism?," Ibid., 25.

¹¹⁰ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," in *The Geopolitics Reader*, ed. By Gearóid Ó Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge (USA and Canada: Routledge, 2006), 138.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 137.

¹¹² Ibid., 137.

western civilization.¹¹³ This cultural differentiation has been also identified through the analysis of development policy.

James Ferguson claims that 'development' is "the name not only for a value, but also for a dominant problematic or interpretative grid through which the impoverished regions of the world are known;"¹¹⁴ by definition, these poor countries are conceived as less developed.¹¹⁵ In a similar way Sarah C. White adds that 'development' as an economic project is never politically neutral; it constructs the developing world as "a residual category, apparently geographical, but in practice a catch-all term, comprising societies which are highly spatially and culturally diverse, whose unity lies in being not the West."¹¹⁶

In postcolonial studies 'the West' is considered a category of analysis associated with the culture of European and North American societies. It infers that these two geopolitical locations have used their projects of modernization, humanism, and enlightenment to justify their civilizing mission under colonial dominance.¹¹⁷ The West is seen as a symbol of progress and modernity. This project has also cultural implications, because places the western values as the most civilized, the values that all humans must follow for an appropriate way of life.¹¹⁸ According to Uma Kothari, the development initiatives that have been promoted by the international financial agencies situate the West and their population at the top of modernity,

¹¹³ Samuel P. Huntington, "The Clash of Civilizations," *Ibid.*, 144.

¹¹⁴ James Ferguson, *The Anti-politics Machine* (Cambridge; New York: Cambridge University of Minnesota, 1994), xiii.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, xiii.

¹¹⁶ Sarah C. White, "The gender lens: a racial blinder," *Progress in Development Studies* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2006), 412, 56.

¹¹⁷ Meyda Yegnoglou, "Sartorial Fabrications: The Enlightenment and Western feminism," in *Colonial Fantasies towards a Feminist Reading of Orientalism*, ed. Meyda Yegnoglou (England, Cambridge University Press, 1998), 95.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

successful economic progress, and political competency. While on the other hand the Third World and its people are represented as economically backwards: the subjects of political dysfunction that should make an effort to approach the same level of development of the West “and with the assistance of the West”.¹¹⁹

Kothari argues that development is a racialized project since it determines “who and what is ‘progressive’ / ‘backward’.”¹²⁰ Her argument parallels the way racism is understood by Balibar and Hardt and Negri. She explains that “while biological characteristics and distinctions provided early explanations for social inequalities between people, these later gave way to those in which differences in ‘culture’ were substituted as the main reason why some people had more power and were more ‘developed’ than others.”¹²¹ The progress of development varies according “the identity of the subject – the recipient and beneficiary of interventions- and the societies in which they live.”¹²² She claims that both the colonized and the Third World are thought to progress through their contact with the West.¹²³

If, in the past, the colonized were thought to be inferior, in development discourse the Third World population is conceptualized as poor and backward. With a similar argument as that used by colonial powers to justify their civilizing mission, development justifies the intervention of the West in the Third World countries by showing them how to behave in order to become progressive. ‘Development’ obscures the colonial legacies that have

¹¹⁹ Uma Kothari, “An agenda for thinking about race in development,” *Progress in Development Studies* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2006), 11.

¹²⁰ Ibid., 13.

¹²¹ Ibid., 14.

¹²² Ibid., 13.

¹²³ Ibid., 12.

produced and reinforced the ‘poorness’ condition of the Third World. For this reason Marcus Power states that “where colonialism left off, development took over.”¹²⁴

Connecting the idea that development is a new form for justifying racism with Hardt and Negri’s formulation of imperial racism, I want to argue that neo-racism is taking part in the economic sphere on a supranational level beyond the borders of the state. Using Foucaultian theory, I propose thinking of neo-racism in terms of bio-politics as a technique of power rather than an ideology that is being used for reestablishing colonial relations between the West and the Third World population.

Neo-racism is the bio-politics of the world population; it establishes the Western population and the Third World population as two antagonistic cultures and vertically administers their survival. Its paradigm is no longer grounded in racial differentiation as it was during colonialism; neo-racism is grounded in the culture differentiation of the Third World and the West. It unifies all Third World populations into one single culture –the culture of backwardness- and disapproves of the lifestyle that they represent. As a representation of modern bio-politics, neo-racism delineates ‘sacred life’, the life that will be protected, from the life that can be exposed to death.

I consider that the analysis of the garment commodity chain can illustrate better how this break between what must live and what must die operates into neo-racism. Third World workers represent the un-sacred life that can be exploited and subject to harm for the advantage of the sacred life which, in this case, is represented by the consumers; this is the market meritocracy of culture that Hardt and Negri identify.¹²⁵

¹²⁴ Marcus Power, “Anti- racism, deconstruction and ‘overdevelopment’,” *Progress in Development Studies* Vol. 6, No. 1 (2006), 29.

¹²⁵ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Ibid, 193.

Based on this idea, in the next chapters I argue that neo-racism determines the conditions under which Third World women are integrated into the garment industry; it targets them as a suitable labor force that can excusably be exploited. Since their incorporation into these jobs has been promoted as an efficient way of integrating them into the development project, I argue that 'development achievement' provides the justification for the exploitation of Third World women workers in the garment industry.

In a similar way to how evolutionism provided the justification for racism during colonialism, development represents the justification of the death function in the bio-political toolbox of neo-racism. Although, it is important to stress the fact that the death function, as Foucault suggests, does not necessarily imply murder, but rather the condition of exposing someone to death; an equivalent can be the inhuman conditions of labor in the garment industry.

1.2 *Neo-racism as a bio-political technique of control.*

Conclusion

In order to address the reality of those workers that are employed in the garment industry, we must first understand how crucial for the globalization of capitalism becomes the incorporation of the Third World women into the processes of production; but it does more than this, it illustrates how the underdeveloped world is constructed. I have explained the importance of adopting the category of Third World women workers proposed by Mohanty for understanding how colonial dominance is being reconfigured through race and gender. Based on the work of Salzinger, I have also suggested that 'productive femininity' is the discourse that produces the conception of Third World women workers as suitable/cheap labor. In order to explore further how this productive femininity works in the context of garment industry, I

have proposed the use of two concepts: bio-politics and neo-racism. Foucault, as well as Hardt and Negri suggest that bio-politics is the sophistication of control over life that characterizes our contemporary world. Bio-political control divides and targets populations always in antagonistic ways.

Neo-racism operates from the logic of bio-political administration; rather than an ideology it is a technology of power that is used for exposing Third World women workers to conditions of exploitation. As technique of power it organizes hierarchical relations among the Third World women workers and the women citizen/consumers, it disciplines them and normalizes their unequal relation. From this approach, in the next chapters I demonstrate that neo-racism via development policy organizes where to produce and where to consume. It determines who is locked in the position of producing the commodities and who is allowed to buy them.

Nevertheless, is important to highlight that we face a dilemma using Foucault on the one hand and on the other using Hardt and Negri. For Foucault, racism is thought inside of the borders of the modern States and it is based on biological differentiation while for Hardt and Negri, contemporary racism is based on cultural difference and can be expressed, not only inside, but outside of the borders of the State. In the era of *Empire*, neo- racism organizes the distribution of inequality and hegemony on the global scale.

CHAPTER 2- THE FLOURISHING OF GARMENT INDUSTRY

Based on Hardt and Negri, in the previous chapter I explained that in the era of *Empire*, a world regime organized by market relations, capitalism penetrates every space of social life and profit is the norm by which social relations are organized. However, profit is not just about who gets more money; it means a privileged position in relations of power. A main characteristic of this new world paradigm is the close proximity of extremely unequal populations.¹²⁶ At this level, neo-racism, which I elaborate on the previous chapter, becomes crucial for such organization.

As a bio-political technique of power, neo-racism addresses populations, keeps them under surveillance and administers their survival. As a disciplinary technique, it also organizes populations in a hierarchical way according to their specific needs and capabilities and it trains them, uses them, and can even reward or punish them.¹²⁷ The background that constitutes the garment commodity chain -its distribution in different parts of the world and the policies and processes that constitute it- demonstrate how territories and populations are differentially addressed and incorporated in the global political economy.

The aim of this chapter is to show how neo-racism operates in the global political economy through the garment commodity chain; I will explain that this type of production becomes a symptom, as well as a cause of the backwardness that composes the 'underdeveloped world.' I begin with a description of the garment production chain, identifying the sources of this commodity's production as well as the general characteristics of

¹²⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Ibid., 91

¹²⁷ I elaborate this definition based on the description that Michel Foucault does of bio-politics in "*Society Must Be Defended*," Ibid., 242.

its supply. Garment retailing has become one of the most important and flourishing businesses in the world; I contextualize the expansion of this business in the framework of the Washington Consensus (WC) that restructured the world with the end of the Soviet Union.

In the second section I describe how this consensus prepared the terrain for enlarging the garment industry in the Third World. The norms that emerge from the WC operated on the neo-racist model, they constructed the category of development and differentially addressed the ‘developed world’ and the ‘underdeveloped world.’ The underdeveloped world was constructed as backward and in need of market discipline, and the garment industry became apparently a solution for overcoming its stagnation. In the third section I explain how the massive incorporation of women from the Third World was also systemically arranged by the development policies that were suggested to overcome the ‘backward’ condition of the Third World.

2.1 *The garments commodity chain*

The term ‘garment industry’ refers to the different processes that constitute the production of clothing commodities. This industry as we know it presently is not the same as in previous decades. After the 1960’s, new big retailing enterprises started to evolve and with them came new production techniques that facilitated an expansion of this market.¹²⁸ A dramatic transformation of this sector followed; the first and more relevant shift is the spatial dispersion of production that takes part in different regions of the world.¹²⁹ Along with the

¹²⁸ Louise Crewe and Eileen Davenport, “Changing Buyer- Supplier Relationships within Clothing Retailing,” *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers, New Series*, Vol. 17, No. 2 (1992), 184.

¹²⁹ Richard P. Appelbaum and Gary Gereffi, “Power and Profits in the apparel commodity chain,” in *Global production: The apparel industry in the Pacific Rim*, eds. Edna Bonacich et al., (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 42.

sophistication of transportation and communication systems that characterize globalization, the modern apparel firms have divided their production between a “wide range of exporting countries,” especially from the Third World.¹³⁰

Today an apparel company can subcontract manufactures from more that twenty countries at the same time and provide the finished commodities to more than fifty different destinations. Although these are still primarily distributed in the “developed”¹³¹ world, in recent decades the apparel industry has quickly expanded in the “developing” countries where the majority of these commodities have been concentrated.¹³² This shift is illustrated in table 2.1. See also table 2.2 for identifying the leading world exporters of apparels.

In contrast to other products that have declined, between 2004 and 2008 the exports of apparel articles (made of textile fabrics) rose on average by 10.2 percent each year.¹³³ Today this production represents the 0.8% of total world exports.¹³⁴ Apparel products for women counted for the 0.8% of World commodities in 2008, while the same commodities for men represented the 0.5%.¹³⁵

While the manufacturing of garments is likely to continue being concentrated in the developing countries, the consumption varies tremendously between regions, though the countries with the highest rates of expenditure make up the more important markets for this

¹³⁰ Richard P. Appelbaum and Gary Gereffi, “Power and Profits, Ibid., 44.

¹³¹ The reason I use quotation marks when I refer to “developed” countries and “developing” countries is because I question that categorization. As I argue in the chapter, the levels of “development” that a country can acquired are arbitrarily imposed. Besides that, the developing countries are produced by certain policies and a result of the inequality in international relations.

¹³² Richard M. Jones, *The apparel industry* (India: Blacwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), 67.

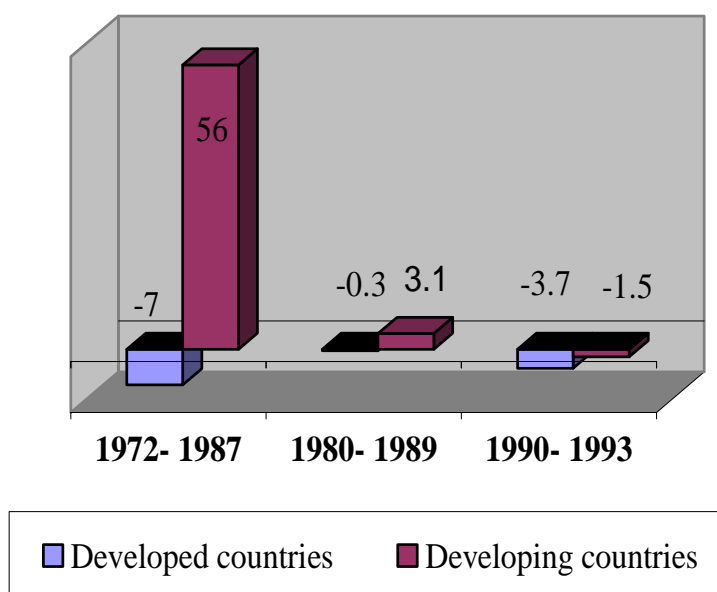
¹³³ United Nations, International Merchandise Trade Statistics Year Book 2008, United Nations Statistics Division, <http://comtrade.un.org/pb/CommodityPagesNew.aspx?y=2008> (accessed June 11, 2010)

¹³⁴ Ibid.,

¹³⁵ Ibid,

sector.¹³⁶ According to Oxfam International “the world’s consumers spent around US\$1 trillion buying clothes in 2000, with around one third of sales in Western Europe, one third in North America, and one quarter in Asia”.¹³⁷ The average of consumption per person in Europe, for example, is of 20 kg per year, more than the international average of about 8 kg.¹³⁸

2. 1 Annual growths in apparel production, 1972- 1994

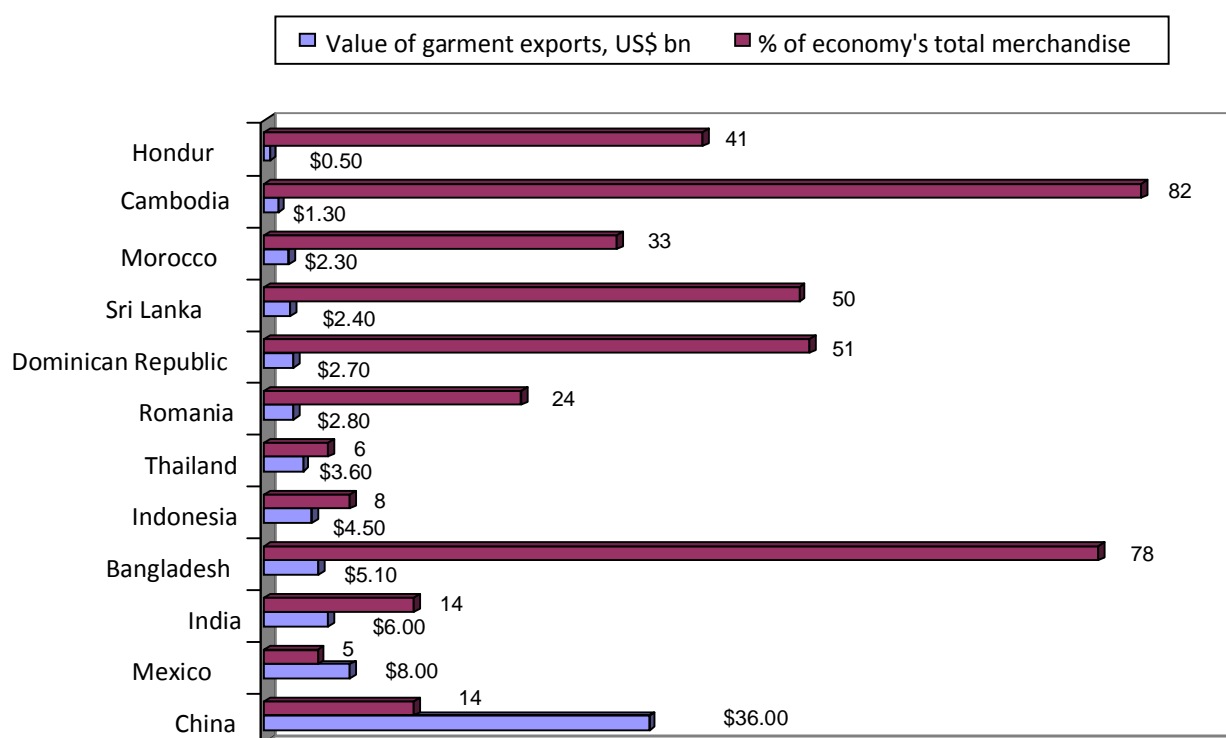


Sources from Richard M. Jones, *The apparel industry* (India: Blacwell Publishing Ltd, 2006), 77.

¹³⁶ Richard M., Jones, *The apparel industry*, Ibid., 76.

¹³⁷ Oxfam International, *Trading away our rights Women working in global supply chain*, (GB: Oxfam International, 2004), 49.

¹³⁸ Setem, “Som alló que vestim guia per al consum responsable de moda,” *Guies d’e educaci3n ambiental*, Nom. 34 (December 2008): 14.

Table 2.2 Leading apparel exporters 2001

Sources from Oxfam International, *Trading away our rights Women working in global supply chain*, (GB: Oxfam International, 2006), 68.

In order to understand the tremendous growth and complexity of the “new spatial arrangements of production,” scholars have used the concept of the 'commodity chain' which describes where, by whom, and for whom the garments are produced.¹³⁹ The commodity chain is the “network of labor and production processes whose end result is a finished commodity.”¹⁴⁰ It is integrated by different nodes that at the same time are networks each of them, it “is sliced into specialized activities and each activity is located where it can

¹³⁹ Jane Lou Collins, *Threads: gender, labor, and power in the global apparel industry* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press: 2003), 49.

¹⁴⁰ Leslie Deborah, “Gender, Retail Employment and the Clothing, Ibid., 62.

contribute the most to the value of the end product.”¹⁴¹ According to Richard P. Appelbaum and Gary Gereffi there are three aspects of global commodity chains; they can be summarized as follows

an input-output structure comprising a set of products and services linked in a sequence of value-added economic activities; a territoriality that identifies the geographical dispersion or concentration of raw material, production, export, and marketing networks; and a governance structure of power and authority relationships that determine financial, material, and human resources as well as economic surplus.¹⁴²

By commodity chain of garments we mean the dispersed geographical organization of design, production, and sale of the garments.¹⁴³ The different processes and participants that integrate this chain can be found in table no. 2.3. Each of the segments and the participants that formed the chain has different geographical location, as well as diverse labor skills and technology devices.¹⁴⁴ They are hierarchically interrelated, in that those who participate in the manufacturing process are subordinated to the demands of the retailers.¹⁴⁵

¹⁴¹ Kyvik Nordas, Hildelgunn. “The global Textile and Clothing Industry post the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing.” World Trade Organization.

http://www.wto.org/english/res_e/booksp_e/discussion_papers5_e.pdf (accessed June 11, 2010), 3.

¹⁴² Richard P. Appelbaum and Gary Gereffi, “Power and Profits in the apparel commodity, Ibid., 49.

¹⁴³ Edna Bonacich, et al., “Introduction,” in *Global production: The apparel industry in the Pacific Rim*, eds. Edna Bonacich, et al. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1994), 6.

¹⁴⁴ Richard P. Appelbaum and Gary Gereffi, “Power and Profits in the apparel commodity, Ibid., 45.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., 43.

Table no. 2.3 Composition of the apparel commodity chain



Sources from Angela Hale and Jane Wills, *Threads of labour: garment industry supply chains from the workers' perspective India* (India: Blackwell Publishing, 2005), 19.

The Nation States are the main entities by which this chain is organized;¹⁴⁶ they provide safe geographical location for subcontracting labor and implement policies that protect retailers and facilitate their profit. Countries constantly compete to “improve their position in the chain,”¹⁴⁷ some of them seek to benefit the most from the expansion of their national retailing brands and others, instead, seek to specialize in the production of garments.

There are different factors that determine the breaking down of the garments production and its concentration in the Third World: one of the most important is the search for cheap labor.¹⁴⁸ As I will argue in the next sections of this chapter, the availability of cheap labor is predetermined by the inequalities that govern the global political-economy. The garment retailers do not see the world population as homogenous, within the neo-racist logic they recognized that there are differences among them and take advantage of them for profit.

As a rule, the retailers move their production processes where they can find needy people who are in the position to accept low compensation, and where they also can have government facilities that reduce their taxes and economic risks; an aspect that I will revisit in the course of this chapter.¹⁴⁹ They also search for the places that are close to their most important centers of consumption so they can reduce the costs on the transportation of the commodities.¹⁵⁰

Another significant shift of the apparel chain is the speed and flexibility by which retailers supply their stores. If in the past they used to offer four fashion seasons, now the average is six to eight.¹⁵¹ Today this market is controlled by a small group of retailers from

¹⁴⁶ Richard P. Appelbaum and Gary Gereffi, “Power and Profits in the apparel commodity, *Ibid.*, 42-43.

¹⁴⁷ Edna Bonacich et al., *Global production: The apparel industry in the*, *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁴⁸ Oxfam International, *Trading away our rights Women*, *Ibid.*, 48.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*,

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*,

the developed world – particularly from Europe and North America.¹⁵² They have the power to “dictate the prices to manufacturers, imposing increasingly stringent quality, design and delivery demands.”¹⁵³

The reduction of the prices of commodities is a frequent strategy that retailers use for competing in the market, this measure results in a reduction in the amount of money manufacturers can expect to receive from these retailers resulting in reduced wages for production workers and subcontractors.¹⁵⁴ In some ways this explains why today consumers can spend less on garments but buy more products at the same time.¹⁵⁵ Only a small portion of the total cost of garments production goes to the manufacturing labor -around 12%- while 54% is invested in marketing strategies.¹⁵⁶ For this reason, this industry has become even more exploitative, since the workers that are subcontracted in manufacturing have to work more for fewer wages.

2.2 Producing the Third World through the garment industry

The main characteristic of neo-racism is that it epistemologically produces the Third World as the symbol of backwardness and, through disciplinary power, pressures them to commit themselves to certain rules that supposedly would help them to overcome their marginal condition. According to Arturo Escobar, the notion of ‘Third World’ and ‘underdevelopment’ are produced discursively and by a specific policy; before 1945 they did

¹⁵² Edna Bonacich et al., *Global production: The apparel industry in the*, Ibid., 5.

¹⁵³ Louise Crewe and Eileen Davenport, Ibid., 184.

¹⁵⁴ Richard P. Appelbaum and Gary Gereffi, “Power and,” Ibid., 48.

¹⁵⁵ Kyvik Nordas, Hildelgunn. “The global Textile and Clothing,” Ibid., 3.

¹⁵⁶ Andrew Ross, *No sweat: fashion, free trade, and the rights of garment workers* (USA: Verso, 1997),

not exist at all.¹⁵⁷ “The three worlds -the free industrialized nations, the Communist industrialized nations, and the poor, non industrialized nations, constituting the First, the Second and the Third World respectively,” arose within the process by which the West and the East redefined themselves and the rest of the world.¹⁵⁸

The term Third World was a creation of the First World in the attempt to target the poor countries and use that pretext for intervention in their internal administration.¹⁵⁹ In my argumentation I used the term Third World in opposition to ‘underdevelopment’ because even though they are categorical impositions, the idea of underdevelopment is intentionally neo-racist, it infers that a specific part of the world population is less progressive since lacks of agency and civilized behavior.

On the other hand, the term Third World, like Mohanty suggests, allows us to see the colonial legacies that still determining the geopolitical location of the poor countries.¹⁶⁰ The Third World retains “a political and explanatory value in a world that appropriates and assimilates multiculturalism and ‘difference’ through commodification and consumption.”¹⁶¹

Escobar argues that ‘Development’ was a new way of approaching, managing and making the Third World as the symbol of the poor or of other abnormalities, such as the illiterate, the unskilled and the less progressive.¹⁶² The institutionalization of this process can be found in the Washington Consensus (WC) -the set of rules that governs the global political

¹⁵⁷ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The making and unmaking of development* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1995), 31.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid.,

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., 21- 26.

¹⁶⁰ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Under Western Eyes Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles,” *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* vol. 28, no. 2 (2002), 506.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., 505.

¹⁶² Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The making and unmaking*, Ibid., 41.

economy since the collapse of the Soviet Union.¹⁶³ This set of agreements has been strongly influenced by the government of the United States who represented the triumphant ideology at the end of the cold war.¹⁶⁴

The harmony of this consensus was based on the idea that the more you open your economy, the more benefits you get from the global market. It can be easily identified in the mission of the Breton Woods's institutions, such as The World Bank (WB) and the International Monetary Found (IMF).¹⁶⁵ The rules that emerged with the consensus were gradually imposed as the route that all the countries must follow in order to achieve development.¹⁶⁶ These rules fit properly with the reality of those countries that were already rich, but hardly responded to the specific needs of the Third World countries.¹⁶⁷ In fact, some scholars associate them with a market fundamentalism, since underestimating any strategy on the reduction of global inequality; they concentrate merely in the liberalization of economy.¹⁶⁸

The WC had very important repercussions in the way we understand the world and how resources are distributed among geopolitical regions. In the margins of bio-political control the WC subjected the world population to a systematic, detailed and comprehensive intervention.¹⁶⁹ In the previous chapter I explained that, for Hardt and Negri, neo-racism -or

¹⁶³ John Williamson, "A short History of the Washington Consensus" in *The Washington Consensus Reconsidered*, ed. Narcis Serra and Joseph E. Stiglitz (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 14.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid., 14.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., 21.

¹⁶⁶ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Ibid., 194.

¹⁶⁷ José Antonio Campo, "A broad View of Macroeconomic Stability" in *The Washington Consensus Reconsidered*, Ibid., 75.

¹⁶⁸ Narcís Serra, Shari Spiegel and Joseph E. Stiglitz, "Introduction: Consensus Towards a New Global Governance" in *The Washington Consensus Reconsidered*, Ibid., 3, 6.

¹⁶⁹ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The making*, Ibid., 6.

the imperial racism- functions “as a strategy of differential inclusion.”¹⁷⁰ This aspect can be found on the logic and the institutions of the WC, it split the world into two different parts: on one side lay the rich countries that were targeted as the more “developed” and on the other, the “underdeveloped” or “developing” countries that were understood as the poor. Under this scheme all countries were targeted in order to participate in the same global concert, although stressing differences on the level of their own integration.

Using analysis discourse, Escobar argues that ‘development’ is a space in which only certain things are allowed to be said and thought.¹⁷¹ What was previously called ‘the Third World’, now known as the ‘underdeveloped’ by the Breton Woods institutions and other institutions that control the global political economy such as the World Trade Organization, was pushed to look at those industrialized nations of North America and Europe as the successful representation of development.¹⁷² The way to approach development was by industrialization and urbanization and “the rich countries were believed to have the financial and technological capacity to secure progress the world over.”¹⁷³

In order to subvert their unprivileged condition and approach the same progress of those super developed countries, the Third World countries relied on the assistance of the Breton Woods’s institutions -the WB and the IMF. With the complicity of the most developed countries, these financial institutions pushed the poor countries to adopt specific changes for rapidly liberalizing their economies;¹⁷⁴ however, most of the poor countries were not ready

¹⁷⁰ Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Ibid., 194.

¹⁷¹ Arturo Escobar, *Encountering Development: The making*, Ibid., 39.

¹⁷² Ibid., vii.

¹⁷³ Ibid., 39.

¹⁷⁴ Martin Khor, “The World Trading System and Development Consensus”, in *The Washington Consensus Reconsidered*, Ibid., 221.

enough for completing a successful liberalization.¹⁷⁵ This has a disciplinary effect -a particular feature of neo-racism- since it makes the Third World accept its backward condition and follow the rule of the WC.

Some of these development strategies prepared a fertile space for allocating the garment industry to the Third World countries. One such transformation was the pressure on poor countries to orientate their production towards the exports.¹⁷⁶ The garment industry became a fashionable solution, but overall, it became a bio-political mechanism identifying and affirming who and where the populations in need of development discipline were and preparing the necessary interventions to reform them.

In the words of Theodore H. Moran, an expert from the World Bank, foreign capital is the solution for enlarging the manufacturing industry and to “put low skilled labor to work.”¹⁷⁷ This discourse illustrates more about how neo-racism institutionalizes the conception of the Third World as the ‘underdeveloped,’ using the argument that this type of jobs is the only solution that the ‘powerless’/ ‘unskilled’ population has for filling their supposed “lack of progress.”

Completely changing their production dynamic, many of these countries abandoned the production of basic goods, in which they used to be specialized producers, for manufacturing specific goods that respond to a foreign demand.¹⁷⁸ In the case of Morocco for example (where the garment industry has substituted agriculture production) despite the fact

¹⁷⁵ Martin Khor, “The World Trading System and Development, Ibid., 216.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.,

¹⁷⁷ Theodore H. Moran, *Beyond sweatshops: foreign direct investment and globalization in developing* (Harrisonburg, Virginia: Donnelley and Sons, 2002), 108.

¹⁷⁸ Martin Khor, “The World Trading System and Development Consensus”, Ibid., 226.

that there is a low purchasing power, products of basic consumption such as rice and potatoes are more expensive in here than in Spain; where there is a higher purchasing power.¹⁷⁹

With the promise that this policy would bring development, but also under very strict loan conditions of the WB and IMF, many Third World countries concentrated on the enlargement of the manufacturing industry.¹⁸⁰ This explains why today this sector “accounts for the 70 percent of the total exports of developing countries overall (rising from 20 percent in the 1970s and early 1980s)”.¹⁸¹ The problem with these rates is that apparently they can be interpreted as successes, although this production is far from being dynamic and competitive in the global market.¹⁸²

Since most Third World countries concentrate their production in the same products – mainly raw materials and manufacturing proceeding from unskilled labor- there is stiff competition between them. For these reason they have to minimize their prices of production resulting in minimal gains.¹⁸³ This situation also makes them “offer the cheapest workers and the most flexible (unregulated) conditions”¹⁸⁴ for attracting foreign capital. Nonetheless, in the development discourse the cheap cost of labor in the Third World is not seen as a result of these market inconsistencies, but rather they are understood as an effect of the ‘underdevelopment’ of the Third World.

¹⁷⁹ Campaña Ropa Limpia Setem, *La moda un tejido de injusticias ¿Dónde queda el respeto a los derechos laborales?*, (Barcelona: Intermon Oxfam, 2003), 19.

¹⁸⁰ Martin Khor, “The World Trading System and Development Consensus”, *Ibid.*, 216.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 226.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*,

¹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 225.

¹⁸⁴ Julie Delahanty, “A common Thread: Issues for Women Workers in Garment Sector,” The North-South Institute, <http://www.nsi-ins.ca/english/pdf/thread.pdf> (accessed June 11, 2010), 4.

The Breton Wood's bankers have been pushing the Third World countries to do everything possible to attract foreign capital, even exposing their own population to conditions of exploitation. Following this prescription, many Third World countries created Export Processing Zones inside of their territories. These industrial areas are havens for multinationals that seek to reduce their costs of production; among the incentives that they provide are "the customs-free import raw materials, components and equipment, tax holidays of up to 20 years and government subsidization of operating costs."¹⁸⁵ These privileges also absolve foreign investors of all responsibility for the safety of the workers who are employed in the zones. Practices to curb trade unions, strikes and freedom of movement are also included in the offer.¹⁸⁶

These zones have been growing rapidly since the 1970s. In 2002 there were around three-thousand of them all over the world,¹⁸⁷ the majority of the hired labor being women. Women made up 90% of the labor in the EPZs of Belize, Barbados and Jamaica, 66% in Mexico and Morocco, around 77% in Korea and Philippines, and 90% in India.¹⁸⁸ In some countries like El Salvador, Bangladesh, Madagascar and Mauritius the production of garments

¹⁸⁵ Annette Fuentes and Barbara Ehrenreich, *Women in the Global Factory* (Boston: South end Press, 1983), 10.

¹⁸⁶ Caroline Danloy, Shahra Razavi and Ruth Pearson. *Globalization, Export- Oriented*, Ibid., 3.

¹⁸⁷ Sarah, Perman et. al., Working conditions and labor rights in export processing zones," International Confederation of Free Trade Unions, <http://zunia.org/post/working-conditions-and-labor-rights-in-export-processing-zones/> (accessed june 11, 2010), p. 4.

¹⁸⁸ Berch Berberoglu, *Labor and capital in the age of globalization: the labor process and the changing nature of work in the global economy* (England: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 148, 12.

is a dominant industry in the EPZs.¹⁸⁹ In the case of Bangladesh for example, the production of garments counts for one fifth of total export of the country.¹⁹⁰

Even if they are being promoted as providers of economic prosperity, the reputation of the EPZs does not match with the improvement in the life conditions of the workers. Around the world “many EPZ workers complain that they no longer have any time to live.”¹⁹¹ A working day in these zones can be 15 hours and generally the wages provided are below the statutory minimum; they ignore the provision of health protection to the workers and refuse to pay extra hours of work and any type of sickness benefit.¹⁹²

Taking advantage of the poverty from the Third World, the multinationals secure their profit. They choose to produce in these countries because they find “a ratio of output to money costs of employment, superior to that which prevails at existing centers of capital accumulation in the developed countries.”¹⁹³ However, if wages in the Third World factories are 50% much higher than in the developed countries, it is because there is a policy behind them that legalizes the exploitation of the workers and, indeed, makes it everlasting. But on the other hand the low wages are also determined by the circumstances under which Third World has been integrated in the development process, as the backward/ unskilled that need to be reformed.

¹⁸⁹ See Ethel Brooks (2007) and Sarah, Perman et. al. (2004)

¹⁹⁰ Berch Berberoglu, *Labor and capital in the age of globalization*, Ibid., 18.

¹⁹¹ Sarah, Perman et. al., *Working conditions and labor rights*, Ibid., 39

¹⁹² Ibid., 12.

¹⁹³ Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, “Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers’,” Ibid., 90.

2.3 *Producing the labor force of garment factories*

Neo-racism targets subjects that are ‘underdeveloped’ and, through bio-political control, regulates their incorporation into specific parts of the production apparatus. If the promotion of manufacturing for export (in combination with the attraction of foreign capital) prepared the favorable space for enlarging the garment industry in the Third World, the Structural Adjustment Packages (SAPs), provided the masses of poor people that the foreign capital required for securing their ratio of surpluses.

Under the loan conditions of the IMF and the WB, Third World countries were pushed in the 1980s to implement the SAPs in order to control the inflation. Such measures basically consisted in cutbacks of the state expenditure on social assistance, the privatization of State enterprises, as well as the elimination of barriers that could obstruct the foreign investment.¹⁹⁴ Since this policy emerging from the WC has the specific purpose of making the Third World countries consign themselves to the norms that supposedly are better for correcting their stagnation, this intervention takes place in the frame of neo-racism. The reason behind this intervention is that they are incapable of governing themselves and solving their own economic problems.

The SAPs implementation had terrible effects; the unemployment rose “and price controls, which many governments had used to keep down the cost of basic goods and services, were phased out.”¹⁹⁵ This made access to basic goods such as food and health assistance very difficult thus reinforcing the conditions of poverty in the Third World. After

¹⁹⁴ Jane. S. Jaquette and Kathleen Staudt, “Women, Gender, and Development,” in *Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice. Institutions, Resources, and Mobilization*, ed. Jane. S. Jaquette and Gale Summerfield (Duke University Press, 2007), 27.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 27.

two decades, “these reforms had not produced any growth, but the opposite, the gap between the rich and poor world wide grew larger.”¹⁹⁶

This situation had very negative repercussions on women, who in order to ensure their family's survival had to increase their labor under very precarious conditions.¹⁹⁷ In this context of economic backlash there was a growth of female employment in some specific sectors, particularly in the garment industry.¹⁹⁸ Laetitia Cairoli argues that, indeed, since the implementation of SAPs in Morocco the garment industry was one of the main sources of employment where women were incorporated. She stresses that their massive incorporation not only transformed the Moroccan economy, it had social and cultural repercussions;¹⁹⁹ challenging the gender relations, it “contrasted vividly with local ideas of appropriate female behavior.”²⁰⁰

Since the manufacturing industry facilitated the entrance of women into paid labor in many parts of the world, the development agencies have argued that employment is a very important tool for women’s empowerment. It is also conceived of as a good method for “integrating women into the development process.”²⁰¹ This argument is grounded in the United Nations Conference of International Women’s Year, which took place in 1975 under the tutelage of various international development agencies.”²⁰² In this meeting the liberal idea

¹⁹⁶ Jane. S. Jaquette and Kathleen Staudt, “Women, Gender, and Development,” *Ibid.*, 27.

¹⁹⁷ Lourdes, Benería and Shelley Feldman, *Unequal Burden Economic Crises, Persistent Poverty, and Women’s Work* (United States of America: West view Press, 1992), 4.

¹⁹⁸ Caroline Danloy, Shahra Razavi and Ruth Pearson. *Globalization, Export, Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁹⁹ Laetitia Cairoli, “Garment Factory Workers in the City of Fez,” *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 53, No. 1 (1999), 29.28

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 29.

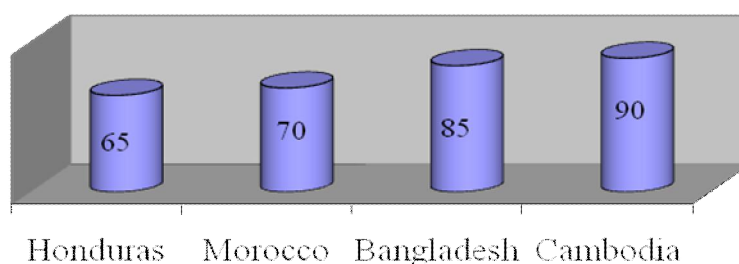
²⁰¹ Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, “Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers,” *Ibid.*, 87.

²⁰² *Ibid.*,

“that women's subordinate position stems from a lack of job opportunities, and can be ended by the provision of sufficient job opportunities” prevailed.²⁰³

Nevertheless, the conditions of exploitation of women being integrated in the development process -concretely through the garment industry- constitute an obstacle for the real improvement, not only of the women who are employed, but for the prosperity of the Third World countries. At present time, “women account for two-thirds of the global garment workforce,”²⁰⁴ one of the most precarious in the world. See in table 2.4 how the women’s percentage of total labor in some of the leading exporter countries of garments is distributed in the garment industry.

Table 2.4 Women's participation in garments manufacturing
% of total labour, 2004



Sources from Oxfam International, *Trading away our rights Women working in global supply chain*, (GB: Oxfam International, 2006), 17.

As Lourdes Benería explains, “precarious jobs and economic insecurity translate into precarious lives and poor living conditions that appear to be a permanent feature of a large proportion of the population in developing countries.”²⁰⁵ Jobs in the garment industry are very

²⁰³ Diane Elson and Ruth Pearson, “Nimble Fingers Make Cheap Workers,” Ibid.,

²⁰⁴ Julie Delahanty, “A common Thread: Issues for Women, Ibid., 4.

²⁰⁵ Lourdes Benería, *Gender, Development, and Globalization economics as if all people mattered* (New

far away from being the decent jobs that can challenge the factors that allow poor people to be hired under exploitable circumstances in the long term. The monthly average of working hours in a garment factory is between 80 and 250, and the wages paid to the workers are below minimum wages. In Morocco “workers are typically paid 8.5 dirhams (US 93 cents) per hour.”²⁰⁶

The exploitation that is bound to garment production can never be subverted because any attempt to challenge it can end with the workers losing their jobs. Better job quality translates into higher costs of production that foreign investors are not willing to take. Whenever they have faced this threat, multinational corporations immediately moved their process of production from one country to another, where they could continue with their mode of production at the lowest cost. Therefore, as long as it remains exploitative, the garment industry is not only a way of understanding who the underdeveloped are and where they are located, but a way of blocking their socio-economic progress.

2. 4 The Making of the Third World through the Garment Industry.

Conclusion

The garments commodity chain is a feature of bio-political control, it organizes the survival and the basic needs of targeted populations by converting resources and labor from the Third World into commodities for the “developed” world. This could not be possible without the surveillance of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank who, in accordance with the development policy that emerged from the WC, have prepared the optimal conditions for facilitating the expansion of garment business. This expansion was possible with the regulation that facilitated the enlargement of the garment industry in the

York and London: Routledge, 2003), 115.

²⁰⁶ Oxfam International, *Trading away our rights*, Ibid., 59.

Third World where transnational companies found the optimal conditions for their output ratio and where there were economic regulations that forced the incorporation of masses of poor women into this sector.

The garment industry is a mechanism by which neo-racism classifies and inserts the Third World in the production apparatus, relying on the argument that the sources of employment in garment industry are the only opportunity that Third World countries have for integrating their masses of poor and unskilled people; pretending that the lack of employment is the only source of the poverty in the Third World and isolating it from other factors, such as unequal access to resources and the policies behind it, prevents people from escaping poverty.

If the abundance of unskilled labor is seen as a reason why Third World countries should enlarge the manufacturing industry for providing employment, then these jobs constitute a vicious circle from which it is very hard to escape. They do not offer the possibility for a transition from an abundance of unskilled labor to an abundance of skilled labor. For this reason, the concentration of garment industry in the Third World is not only a symptom of 'underdevelopment' but is at the same time a source of poverty that blocks the opportunity for better living conditions.

CHAPTER 3 - INDITEX: REVOLUTIONIZING THE WORLD OF FASHION

The effectiveness of an apparel commodity chain depends on its dynamic ability to unify each of its integral parts and make each of them contribute to the value of the end commodities. A perfect representation of this efficiency is the Spanish INDITEX Corporation (Industry of Textile Design). Shocking its competition, just last year this corporation obtained around 11,084 million euros in sales.²⁰⁷ Not even the American-based Gap or the Italian-based Benetton represent a threat for this company whose age does not even reach forty years.²⁰⁸ This chapter describes the profile of the corporation and the elements that make it what it is: one of the most important retailers in the fashion world.

In the first section I describe the social context in which it emerged and the economic processes that facilitated its expansion. In the next part I provide an analysis of its financial situation, keeping an eye on its market distribution. This corporation has completely revolutionized the apparel sector with its model of fast and cheap fashion.

Since its creation, ZARA has been the most important brand of INDITEX, not just in terms of profiting, but in terms of popularity and its penchant for expansion. In the last section I discuss who ZARA's main customers are and the social significance of buying ZARA products. ZARA's commodities are made for specific subjects who are in a specific position in a world system.

²⁰⁷ INDITEX, Presentación de resultados 2009, INDITEX group,

http://www.INDITEX.com/en/press/other_news/extend/00000781 (acceded March 23, 2010)

²⁰⁸ J. Rodriguez, "El líder del primer grupo mundial de moda," *El país*, November, 03, 2001, Economía section.

3. 1 *Emerging from modernity*

The origins of this commercial giant dates back to 1975 when the first store of the ZARA chain was opened in A Coruña, the capital of the Galicia autonomous region in Spain.²⁰⁹ This date coincides with the death of Franco, a dramatic period for Spain marked by the political transition and the redefinition of Spanish society.²¹⁰ According to Javier Gimeno Martínez, after Franco's death the successor government started a process of modernization in which the advertising of fashion played a fundamental role. The trend of that transition was to overcome all traditional values from the Francoist era in order to prepare for the economic and political European challenges.²¹¹

Fashion became a useful tool for designing the new Spanish identity,²¹² an identity that looked towards modernity as the means of self definition. Foucault suggests, modernity is an attitude, “a mode of relating to contemporary reality; a voluntary choice made by certain people; in the end, a way of thinking and feeling; a way, too, of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task,”²¹³ he also mentions that modernity “is the will to heroize the present.”²¹⁴

In that context modernity was understood as the achievement of cultural progress through the industrialization and activation of consumption, particularly through access to an

²⁰⁹ Xabier. R. Blanco and Jesús Salgado, *Amancio Ortega de cero a ZARA* (Madrid: La esfera de libros, 2009), 57.

²¹⁰ Javier Gimeno Martínez, “Narratives of Fashion and Nation: An Analysis of Two TV-ads from the 1987 Moda de España Campaign,” *Image and Narrative* Vol.VII, issue 3 , 16 (2007),

http://www.imageandnarrative.be/house_text_museum/gimeno.htm

²¹¹ Ibid., n/p.

²¹² Ibid., n/p

²¹³ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?,” In *The Foucault Reader*, Ibid., 39

²¹⁴ Ibid., 40.

elitist market of appearances such as fashion. Under the banner of modernization, the new government endorsed policies for enlarging both the consumption and production of garments.²¹⁵ The objective was clear and, finally, successful; it sought to increase expenditure and update the industry with new technology. The government carried out a set of “Textile and Clothing Industry Plans” with the aim of creating a Spanish identity for the textile products. A fundamental part of the policy was the promotion of the slogan "Fashion from Spain" on TV and press promotional campaigns.²¹⁶

Distinction, in the theory of Pierre Bourdieu, is a mechanism of differentiation between the social classes that works through the acquisition of 'good taste'.²¹⁷ The more that one acquires goods that are considered in good taste, the more can a person position himself or herself as dominant class. Aesthetics as value of good taste and appearance became important for making clear the distinction of the Spanish society from others, but also as symbol of progress, of being “somehow similar to France or Italy,”²¹⁸ fashion paradises *par excellence*. For this reason Gimeno considers that these measures had very important aesthetic implications.²¹⁹

This is the context in which the corporation began expanding inside of Spain, offering similar designs to those expensive brands from Paris or Milan but at very accessible prices.²²⁰ Since its creation, the low prices have being a market strategy that the corporation used for attracting customers. Indeed, this is one of the reasons why Amancio Ortega Gaona, the

²¹⁵ Javier Gimeno Martínez, “Narratives of Fashion and Nation: An Analysis, Ibid., n/p.

²¹⁶ Ibid., n/p.

²¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *La Distinción Criterios y bases sociales del gusto*, trans. María del Carmen Ruiz de Elvira (España: Taurus, 1998), 104, 152.

²¹⁸ Javier Gimeno Martínez, “Narratives of Fashion and Nation, Ibid., n/p.

²¹⁹ Ibid., n/p.

²²⁰ Xabier. R. Blanco and Jesús Salgado, *Amancio Ortega de cero a ZARA*, Ibid., 61, 63.

owner of INDITEX, is better known in Spain as the man who democratized the elitist world fashion.²²¹

3.2 In the conquest of the world

After its entrance into the stock market in 2001, putting on the stock the 26, 09 % of its total capital,²²² there was not obstacle that would stop its progress. Never before in the history of fashion was a garment retailer as successful as INDITEX.²²³ Such is its strength that even the crisis of 2009 could not hold the corporation back; in contrast to what happened to the rest of the business world, INDITEX's profits increased by 14% at the end of 2009.²²⁴

INDITEX has founded an entire Empire that crosses both borders and continents; it has 4,601 stores spread all over the world and still focuses on expansion as its central project and business model.²²⁵ Its goal is to open more stores every year. Although has a presence in five continents, most of INDITEX's production goes to Western Europe where 77.7% of its total production is sold; Spain itself represents only about 31.8% of total sales.²²⁶ See graphics 3.1 and 3.2 for sales distribution by region.

²²¹ Cecilia Monllor, *Zarapolis La historia secreta de un imperio de la moda* (Barcelona: Editorial Planeta, 2001), 53.

²²² *Ibi.*, 120.

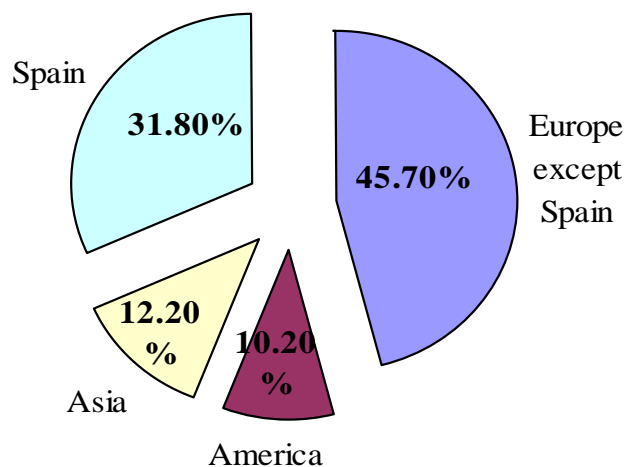
²²³ Kasra, Ferdows and Michael A, Lewis and Jose A.D. Machuca, "ZARA's Secret for Fast Fashion." Harvard Bussines School, <http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/4652.html>

²²⁴ INDITEX Group, INDITEX's 2009 net sales rose to 11, 084 million euros, INDITEX Group, <http://www.INDITEX.com/>

²²⁵ INDITEX Group, "INDITEX Annual Report 2009", INDITEX Group, <http://www.INDITEX.com/en> , p.23

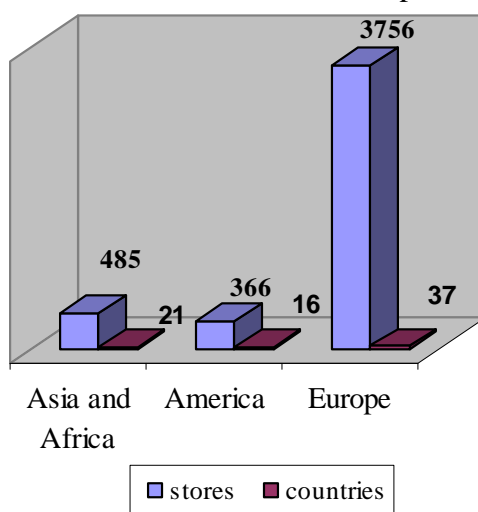
²²⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

Table 3.1 Distribution of INDITEX sales by region



Sources from INDITEX annual report 2009

Table 3.2 Number of stores and countries where INDITEX has presence



Sources from INDITEX annual report 2009

As of today the corporation holds seven brands: Pull and Bear, Massimo Dutti, Bershka, Oysho, ZARA Home, Uterque and ZARA. Since the beginning ZARA has been the spoiled daughter of INDITEX, it is the most important brand of the corporation in terms of

gains and geographic diversity. More than the half of the sales of the corporation, the 63.8 % proceed from this brand which has a presence in 74 countries.²²⁷

Recently, the “ZARA phenomenon” has become a favorite topic for investors all over the world. Many marketing experts consider that its strategic innovation (playing with new and totally different rules on the market) accounts for the company’s success.²²⁸ What make her unique is that while most other brands offer four fashion seasons, ZARA in contrast offers as many as production and demand will allow. The constant and speedy renovation of her sideboards is the root of her triumph.²²⁹

Its chain of production is split into different parts, the design and the cut-out are made in the headquarters in A Coruña and for the assemblage the corporation subcontracts external suppliers. Officially, it has 1,189 supplier factories worldwide with whom -according to the corporation- it has “stable relations under the prism of ethics and responsibility.”²³⁰

While there is no exact data on the names of all the countries where production takes place, the INDITEX financial report of 2009 mentions twenty-six countries.²³¹ In the world economy most of these countries are considered to be underdeveloped with the highest scores of unequal distribution of income. The following supplier areas are ordered by the number of production sites therein: European Union 519, Asia 417, Non EU Europe 91, America 61, and Africa 101.²³²

²²⁷ INDITEX Group, “INDITEX Annual Report 2009”, Ibid., 21.

²²⁸ Kasra, Ferdows and Michael A, Lewis and Jose A.D. Machuca, “ZARA’s Secret for Fast Fashion,” Ibid., n/p.

²²⁹ Ibid., n/p

²³⁰ INDITEX Group, “INDITEX Annual Report 2009,” Ibid., 74.

²³¹ Appendix I identifies these countries

²³² INDITEX Group, “INDITEX Annual Report 2009,” Ibid., 74.

Regardless of how far these continents are from each other, the pressure on their sweatshop workers, or how much environmental damage is caused by the over-production of commodities, INDITEX is the world leader in fast production.²³³ It takes one month to change the sideboards and two weeks to resupply the ZARA stores once again the world over.²³⁴ The sophistication of its production mode makes it possible to transfer new merchandise from its nine distribution centers in Spain to all of its European stores in twenty-four hours²³⁵ and only forty eight hours to the stores that are located outside of Europe.²³⁶ The fast fashion mode of the company pushes customers to buy as much as is possible, it trains them to buy whatever they find attractive when they first see it, since it is certain that they won't find it again on their next visit to the store.²³⁷

The clothes are not expensive as they would be in a Benetton, but they are nice-looking, though after ten uses they are sure to end up in the rubbish due to their bad quality. In any case, the quality does not matter; in fact, poor quality is a bonus for the company and the clients because what the company wants is to sell as much as possible and what the clients want is to change their clothes as much as their pocketbooks allow. In order to offer the customers what they want and profit the most from them, the brand has designed a unique plan. The managers of each store are required to take note of all their customers' preferences; constantly they have to report what the most sold clothes are and all the suggestions or customers' requirements. If one dress sells well in the first days then it is certain that in the

²³³ Xabier. R. Blanco and Jesús Salgado, *Amancio Ortega de cero a ZARA*, Ibid., 91.

²³⁴ Ibid., 95, 68.

²³⁵ In Artexio A Coruña, Varón A Coruña, Zaragoza, Meco in Madrid, Tordera Pallafolls and Sallent de Llobregat in Barcelona, León and Elche in Alicante.

²³⁶ INDITEX Group, "INDITEX Annual Report 2009," Ibid., 17.

²³⁷ Herreros de las Cuevas, Carlos, "ZARA: Un reto al pensamiento maduro," HFC CONSULTORES, S.L., http://www.gestiondelconocimiento.com/documentos2/carlos_herreros/caso_ZARA.htm

next few days the brand is going to produce more of these dresses; ZARA produces just what her clients will buy.²³⁸

3.3 Producing consumer's femininity

Commodities, as V. Spike Peterson explains, “do not have value in and of themselves but as a function of the social codes/context within which they have significance.”²³⁹ Although ZARA sells garments for both men and women, the most important market segment for the company is represented by urban women, the majority of them being professionals in their 30s with a high level of expenditure.²⁴⁰ Although it is not my mission to formulate a scrupulous analysis of the factors motivating women to buy clothes from ZARA, I considered it important to mention two fundamental points.

First of all, the ZARA commodity chain is a feminized industry in terms of consumption and production.²⁴¹ In fact, women represent the 81.4% of the total hired labor in the design, marketing and sale of INDITEX.²⁴² Both aspects -consumption and production- are affected by different notions of femininity which, in fact, vary between the places where garments are bought and manufactured.

²³⁸ Xabier. R. Blanco and Jesús Salgado, *Amancio Ortega de cero a ZARA*, Ibid., 91.

²³⁹ Peterson, Spike V, *A critical Rewriting of Global Political Economy* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 140.

²⁴⁰ Xabier. R. Blanco and Jesús Salgado, *Amancio Ortega de cero a ZARA*, Ibid., 140.

²⁴¹ Sue Thornham, *Identity Shopping: Women and Consumer Culture in Feminist Theory and Cultural Studies*, Arnold, 2000, 147

²⁴² INDITEX Group, “INDITEX Annual Report 2009,” p. 131.

Femininity it is neither monolithic nor unique; it varies across cultures. Although it is difficult to describe, in western society a common understanding of it prevails.²⁴³ It is an artifact through which gender is put into practice; a corporeal project that determines the 'correct' way of acting, constructing desires and all expressions inscribed on women's bodies.²⁴⁴

For Sandra Lee Bartky, femininity is a set of ideals that are expected from women and that discipline women's corporeal practices.²⁴⁵ These values can be divided into three categories: in the first, there are those norms that standardize the size of women's bodies. Subsequently, there are those norms that train women to adopt certain gestures, positions, and movements. Finally, there are the norms that train women to adorn their bodies.²⁴⁶ This set of norms shapes the feminine prototype, a hyper thin and attractively decorated woman who, in fact, is universalized as the civilized modern woman through marketing and the media.²⁴⁷

As Dorothy Smith writes, "pictures of fashionable clothes and fashionable beauties circulate early and provide visual paradigms for women's production of appearances reflecting the image and appealing to it as interpreter and criterion".²⁴⁸ These feminine images in the media instrumentalize the relationship that women have with themselves; they

²⁴³ Samantha Holland, *Alternative Femininities* (New York: BERG, 2004), n/p.

²⁴⁴ Susan, Bordo, "The Body and the Reproduction of Femininity: A Feminist Appropriation of Foucault," in *Gender Body Knowledge Feminist Reconstructions of Being and Knowing Discourse on the Body*, ed. Susan Bordo and Alison M. Jaggar (United States of America: Rutgers University Press, 1992), 18, 22, 19.

²⁴⁵ Sandra Lee Bartky, "Foucault, Femininity, and Patriarchal Power", in *Writing on the Body Female embodiment and Feminist Theory*, Katie Conboy, Nadia Medina and Sarah Stanbury (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 132.

²⁴⁶ Ibid., 132.

²⁴⁷ Dorothy Smith, *Texts, Facts, and Femininity* (USA: Routledge, 1995), 167.

²⁴⁸ Ibid., 170.

construct themselves as objects whose deficiencies can be rectified and solved by the consumption of garments and other beauty products that can help them become “feminine”.²⁴⁹

One must only access the company’s web page to find ZARA’s consumer prototype: white, middle class women who want to look modern, young, seductive, skinny and dynamic.²⁵⁰ The reason I propose to refer to ZARA as her is precisely because she represents a specific femininity that is consumed.²⁵¹ In this sense she “articulates a moral order vested in appearances”²⁵² that produces certain type of subjects, but at the same time she also has an impact on the other femininities that do not consume her.

Image 3.3 ZARA’s catalog spring summer 2010



Sources from ZARA web page <http://www.zara.com/>

The second point I want to mention is that, through market relations, both femininities, that represented by consumers and that by producers, interact and affect each other. In neo-

²⁴⁹ Dorothy Smith, *Texts, Facts, and Femininity*, Ibid., 167.

²⁵⁰ Xabier. R. Blanco and Jesús Salgado, *Amancio Ortega de cero a ZARA*, Ibid., 139-140.

²⁵¹ See images 3.3 and 3.4.

²⁵² Dorothy Smith, *Texts, Facts, and Femininity*, Ibid., 163- 167.

racism, the femininity that represents consumption has a privileged position over the femininity that represents the side of production. The femininity of consumption is the representation of the wealthiest economic status and cultural modernity, this femininity is not an object of development intervention; while the femininity in the production side represents who Mohanty calls “the symbol of a marginalized woman worker who is neither empowered, nor progressive,” and thus an object of development intervention.²⁵³

Image 3.4 ZARA’s catalog fall winter 2009



Sources from ZARA web page <http://www.zara.com/>

3.4 The quintessential liberal combination.

Conclusion

The history of INDITEX has been associated with an ideal of modernity. On the one hand, it emerged from an economic and political context that is characterized by the search for progress via industrialization and high consumption, two elements that were very important for defining the status of the developed countries during the economic global restructuring of

²⁵³ Chandra Talpade Mohanty, “Women Workers and Capitalist Scripts,” Ibid., 6.

the 1980's. On the other hand, the corporation shows itself to the world as the model for progressive market relations. It has revolutionized the world of fashion in many senses; it has innovated with a new mode of production which is more diversified, faster, and apparently more accessible to consumers.

The corporation represents the quintessential liberal combination; it succeeds in the market by promoting democratic values while offering a more inclusive market than other expensive and more elitist brands. However, the beneficiaries of this progress are tied to a specific geopolitical location; more than the half of the corporation's sales come from European countries. This progress has also a feminine connotation; it has in a significant way been reached thanks to ZARA, the most important brand for the corporation in terms of imputes and popularity, which is especially oriented to the sale of products for women. These suggest what I had previously mentioned on the first and the second chapter, that consumption of garments is influenced by gender, and that it is bound to specific location in the unequal global system; I will go back to this point in the next chapter for showing that the consumption of garments signifies privilege and power in the global economics.²⁵⁴

²⁵⁴ María Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, Ibid., 10.

CHAPTER 4 - WHEN INDITEX BECOMES PART OF A NEO-RACIST APPARATUS

Since the opening of his first store in 1975, Amancio Ortega Gaona, the proprietor and president of INDITEX empire, has claimed that the only objective of his corporation is to democratize fashion.²⁵⁵ Implicit in such a statement is the idea that fashion can be a tool for achieving more equal social relations; it is a way of fashioning democracy. But what exactly does this process involve? Who are the beneficiaries of that liberal project and who are not? Does this liberal project touch the socio-geographic centers where INDITEX products are manufactured as well? In this chapter, I describe the limits of that democratization; I argue that the garment commodity chain works in the frame of a bio-political apparatus that is intentionally facilitated by neo-racism. The complexity of the linkages between the INDITEX mode of business and neo-racism lies precisely in the fact that their affinity is systematically obscured. This is not an easy task, especially because neo-racism wears a disguise of altruism that saves it from being recognizable.

In the first part of this chapter, I air INDITEX's dirty linen. I explore the conditions of labor in the production chain and I explain how, through the production of garments, neo-racist conceptions about Third World woman are configured based on reports from Clean Clothes Campaign and OXFAM international. I then compare this effect to what the consumption of garments symbolizes for the women who buy them; in the logic of neo-racism, Third World women are less progressive than the women consumers.

I explain how the adoption of a Corporate Social Responsibility paradigm is being used as an efficient strategy for cleaning the image of INDITEX and how this measure re-

²⁵⁵ Xabier. R. Blanco and Jesús Salgado, *Amancio Ortega de cero a Zara*, Ibid., 62, 73.

adapts itself to the logic of neo-racism. In the next section I explore how, by means of the 'culture' concept, Third World women workers are constructed in the social imagination as inferior and less progressive as well as how, in the particular case of INDITEX production, this element is being used for justifying their exploitation in the garment industry.

4.1 *Airing Zara's dirty linen*

If we truly want to find the roots of Zara's success, we should take a look at the conditions in which her products are manufactured;²⁵⁶ then, unfortunately, we will find that the company is not as democratic as it claims to be. The corporation has being involved in many scandals, most of them related to the bad conditions under which its products are produced.²⁵⁷ One of these cases was aired in 2003 by Clean Clothes Campaign (CCC), an organization operating from the Netherlands since 1990²⁵⁸; currently it maintains a presence in 11 European countries and is backed by a number of trade unions, NGOs, and individuals in countries where garments are produced.²⁵⁹ Its main object is to exert pressure on both the supply and demand of the clothing chain with the purpose of halting labor exploitation in the sweatshops. The organization is very critical about the economic policies that push Third World countries to shoulder the burden of clothing production and questions whether these policies can really bring development.²⁶⁰ They endeavor develop a solidarity between the

²⁵⁶ Xabier. R. Blanco and Jesús Salgado, *Amancio Ortega de cero a Zara*, Ibid., 98.

²⁵⁷ In 2006 there were denounces of child labor exploitation in Portugal. The same year in Cataluña Spain the policed found a factory where illegal Chinese where producing for ZARA.

²⁵⁸ Chaime, Marcuello and Marcuello Carmen, "NGOs corporate social responsibility, and social accountability: Inditex vs. Clean Clothes," *Development in Practice*, Vol. 17, No.3 (2007), 397.

²⁵⁹ Ibid., 397.

²⁶⁰ Ibid., 398.

consumers and the garment workers by pointing out that consumers can bring pressure on the companies to improve working conditions in the sweatshops.²⁶¹

With the purpose of having influence on the corporation's mode of business, the representation of CCC in Spain bought actions from the corporation when INDITEX first entered on the stock market in 2001.²⁶² Once being part of the shareholder's group, the organization demanded that the corporation adopt a Code of Conduct for protecting the basic rights of the garment workers. Simultaneously and on its own accord, CCC started examining the production chain of the corporation.

This organization published an investigation that unveiled the conditions of labor in some of the sweatshops that are localized in the Tangiers Franc Zones in the northern part of Morocco. The study, entitled "Fashion a Weave of Injustices", denounces the poor and unfair conditions of work in the sweatshops. It does not provide exact numbers but, according to the report, women count for almost half of the total labor force. The most important problems that these women face are very poor wages, sexual harassment from the employers, extra hours of work without payment, no social security, and bad safety conditions on the work place. The employers, the study highlights, prefer to hire female labor because it is the cheapest and least unionized.²⁶³

The garment industry is one of the most important sectors of the Moroccan economy, contributing 34% of the country's total exports²⁶⁴ and 42% of the country's industrial workforce.²⁶⁵ A garment worker in Tangier would need to work at least a hundred thousand

²⁶¹ Chaime, Marcuello and Marcuello Carmen, "NGOs corporate social responsibility, *Ibid.*, 398

²⁶² *Ibid.*, 399.

²⁶³ Campaña Ropa Limpia Setem, *La moda un tejido de injusticias*, *Ibid.*, 69.

²⁶⁴ United States Department of Labor, "Morocco," Bureau of International Labor Affairs, <http://www.dol.gov/ilab/media/reports/iclp/sweat/morocco.htm> (accessed June 11, 2010).

²⁶⁵ International Labour Organization, "Decent Work Pilot Programme, Morocco Case Study- An example

years to gain what Ortega Gaona gains in one year; he is considered to be the top 10 among the richest persons in the world with a patrimony the worth of which exceeds 14.000 million Euros.²⁶⁶ According to Albert Sales, Representative of CCC in Cataluña, Spain, the garment workers receive an average of 100 and 200 Euros per month.²⁶⁷ Officially, the working week is 48 hours; however, Sales mentioned during the interview that I conducted with him that in 2009 that these women used to work more than 12 hours a day, sometimes without weekly rest.²⁶⁸ They do not even have time for maintaining basic social ties with their communities or their relatives; if they want to stay alive and contribute money to their homes, they had better keep the work, even if that work worsens their physical health and exposes them to a life of pain.

Many of the female workers who produce for Zara in Tangier sweatshops developed physical injuries due to the conditions of their work, specifically from making repetitive and fast movements on the production line.²⁶⁹ Usually these women suffer from headaches, coughs, vomiting, fever and physical exhaustion. At the end of a long period they end up developing chronic problems such as respiratory illnesses or renal diseases from not being allowed to use the bathroom during the work day.²⁷⁰ The value of their physical ache is

of sectoral approach,” International Labour Organization,

<http://www.ilo.org/public/english/bureau/dwpp/download/morocco/morcasestudy.pdf> (accessed June 11, 2010),1.

²⁶⁶ El país, “Amancio Ortega está de Nuevo entre los 10 más acaudalados,” El país, march 12, 2009, Economía.

²⁶⁷ Albert Sales (Representative of Clean Clothes Campaign Cataluña Spain), Personal Interview, marzo 6, 2010.

²⁶⁸ Ibid.,

²⁶⁹ Anna, Corydon, “MÁS POR MENOS El trabajo precario de las mujeres en las cadenas de producción globalizadas”. Oxfam, p. 3. <http://www.intermonoxfam.org/cms/HTML/espanol/1095/dc090204ddll.pdf>

²⁷⁰ Ibid., 27.

materialized on other women's bodies, whose privileged position in the world political economy is defined by the accumulation of labor exploitation in their wardrobes.

INDITEX garments by themselves represent the duality of contemporary bio-politics. They symbolize the make of live and the make of survive that shape bio-political control.²⁷¹ It exposes the Third World garment workers to death with the only objective being the production of commodities that sell well in the richest parts of the world. Neo-racism via the development policy justifies the death function: their exploitation.

I do not mean that INDITEX created the conditions that pushed Third World workers to work in the garment factories; this was arranged by the development policy that Third World countries had to implement. Rather, I mean that INDITEX plays on and uses neo-racism conceptions about Third World women for the sake of profit. In this way, it gets involved in the administration of neo-racism, producing commodities that reinforce the break between the two different types of life that represent the Third World women workers and the "developed women consumers." Although neo-racism makes these two types of life incompatible they are totally connected; one depends of the other to exist.

In the case of Spain for example, where most of the garments are consumed -mainly by women- the act of buying INDITEX garments is set into a frame of progress; it means to participate in a democratic project and, furthermore, it represents what life-style looks like in a developed country. This democratic act in the case of ZARA (the most important brand of INDITEX) is overly represented by a specific femininity that consumers buy. The consumption of that femininity has an effect on the productive femininity that works in sweatshops in the sense that it reinforces the conception of Third World women as vulnerable/backwards who have no other better option than to resign themselves to the work they have because, in the logic of neo-racism, there is no other good option for them.

²⁷¹ Sharad Chari, "Critical Geographies of Racial and Spatial Control," *Ibid.*, 1914.

Paradoxically, the commodities they produce mean welfare and progress for the consumers. I use the concept of welfare as a sign of economic prosperity that consumers can enjoy, but also in terms of a privilege position that they have in world geopolitics. The act of buying INDITEX defines an archetype of the “developed woman,” one that does not need to be assisted by development policies and does not need to be incorporated in the garment production; one that does consume fashion and is thus particularly well-positioned in the global capitalist system.

The clothing sector was one of the first open spaces for women workers in Morocco.²⁷² Since the establishment of the industry it has been oriented towards export production, especially production bought by European firms. The approximate number of workers who produced for INDITEX in Tangier are about 30,000 – which represents the 50% of the total number of workers in the clothing industry in this region.²⁷³ There is no precise information about the number of women who are employed, however, it is not difficult to formulate a general overview; it is well documented that, directly or indirectly, the Moroccan textile industry accounts for more than 60% of the female employment in the industrial sector,²⁷⁴ “the majority of these female workers are single and come from poor social classes.”²⁷⁵ Although their contribution to the formal economy through which these garments are sold is important, generally these women tend to be hired via the informal economy. CCC claims

²⁷² Haleh Ashfar, *Women, work and ideology in the Third World* (USA: Tavistock Publications Ltd, 1985), 186.

²⁷³ INDITEX Group, “INDITEX Annual Report 2008”, INDITEX Group, Ibid., 95.
<http://www.inditex.com/en>

²⁷⁴ Campaña Ropa Limpia Setem, *La moda un tejido de injusticias*, Ibid., 29.

²⁷⁵ Fenneke Reyssó “Reproductive rights Violations: A comparison of export oriented Industries in Mexico and Morocco,” in *The gender question in globalization*, eds. Tine Davids and Francien Th. M. van Driel, (USA: Ashgate, 2005), 129.

that this pattern persists especially due to the short periods of delivery of the corporation itself; in order to meet the corporation's requirements, suppliers subcontract labor in clandestine workshops or even house work.²⁷⁶

In the discourse of the World Bank, these type of jobs are better than having nothing. In fact, in an official document concerning Morocco, this financial institution argues that women are an asset that must be used in the export oriented industry for the benefit of the country;²⁷⁷ they see it as a resource that should be exploited and not wasted. The intractable impasse of this development path is that Moroccan garment workers could never have the possibility to complain about, nor hope for improvements in, their conditions of work. Such acts would automatically represent a higher cost for the corporations and their customers; it can be too risky that the jobs that they have can be lost. Foreign capital can escape at any time to any other region of the world where cheaper production costs can be found.

Albert Sales argues that since most of these women are not unionized they can be fired at any time without any remuneration. "In Tangiers region there is not even one registered labor union and in Morocco the women's presence in the union is scarce."²⁷⁸ Another report from Oxfam international conducted in some of the sweatshops located in Tangiers, where there are also points of production for Zara, found that women usually do not get paid overtime. In one of the factories, for example, where the female employees had to work more than 90 extra hours in the month of July, 2003, the workers received only 50% of the compensation that they were legitimately owed.²⁷⁹ Besides that, sometimes the supervisors demanded sexual favors from the workers in exchange for giving them a job or even simply

²⁷⁶ Campaña Ropa Limpia Setem, *La moda un tejido de injusticias*, Ibid.,40.

²⁷⁷ The World Bank, *Gender and Development in the Middle East and North Africa: Women in the Public Sphere* (Washington, D.C. : The World Bank, 2004), 80, 20.

²⁷⁸ Albert Sales, Personal Interview, Ibid,

²⁷⁹ Anna, Corydon,. "MÁS POR MENOS El trabajo precario de, Ibid., 29.

for not firing them.²⁸⁰ The only certainty that the garment workers have is that are as disposable as the garments that they produce. They can be unfairly removed anytime and be replaced by other women who are also in the same economic situation due to the informality of the textile sector.

In fact, Albert Sales explains that, even though it has been more than seven years since they conducted the research on Morocco and since CCC had strongly pushed INDITEX to adopt a more responsible behavior with the garment workers, the situation has not considerably improved. In a personal interview that I conducted with him, he explained that “INDITEX just gives attention to the problems when they are public, but they are not willing to change their mode of fast production, because if they abandon it they would lose their competitive advantage.”²⁸¹ Sales comments,

INDITEX is one of the corporations that have a strategy of entrepreneur social responsibility, they know how to advertise it well and they feel very proud of it. Nevertheless I do not believe that we could say INDITEX is a corporation that has no problems with labor exploitation in the production chain. It is a huge chain of production; it is very important machinery. They have very aggressive practices of buying with their suppliers, very short periods of delivery, and strong requirements for lowering the price of manufacture. This ends up by negatively affecting the garment workers. We criticize their social responsibility and the incoherence of what they say and they do in their practices of buying with the suppliers.²⁸²

This explanation describes the fallacy of doing capitalism with a human face, which is a constitutive characteristic of neo-racism. Following Sales’ argument, the fast production mode necessitates the labor exploitation of the garment workers, but this point is

²⁸⁰ Anna, Corydon., “MÁS POR MENOS El trabajo precario de, Ibid., 25.

²⁸¹ Albert Sales, Personal Interview, Ibid.,

²⁸² Ibid.,

overshadowed by the Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) that the corporation has recently adopted. The term of CSR infers that “citizens are consumers, and companies are vital part of the socio-economic fabric in any country, and of a social charter based on the rule of law.”²⁸³ It evaluates the social and environmental impact of doing business. Since it is a voluntary act that companies embrace, regularly it is considered to be an extra benefit or, more properly, an act of corporate charity.²⁸⁴

INDITEX knows very well how to advertise itself as a corporation with a very strong sense of social responsibility. According to its financial report of 2009, the CSR of INDITEX is based on four pillars starting with the internal codes of conduct, a set of norms that regulate the relations of the corporation with the shareholders, employees, customers, business partners, suppliers and society in general.²⁸⁵ The second foundation is the Codes of Conduct for External Manufacturers and Workshops that supposedly are endorsed for securing the basic rights of the workers in the manufacturing process. According to corporation, their CSR is based on the achievement of development that they define as

the expansion process of those liberties which should be enjoyed by all those persons who, directly or indirectly, have been influenced by the implantation of the INDITEX business model. A broad development which is the result of an increase in certain capacities in which the level of income does not exclusively constitute the key indicator and, on the contrary, other variables are relevant, such as the enjoyment of a long and decent life, deriving from the exercise of employment which is respectful of Fundamental Human and Employment Rights, and free, in a peaceful and safe community. A development in which freedom is the primordial axis enabling us to encourage the role of the working woman both in the factories which make up the

²⁸³ Chaime, Marcuello and Marcuello Carmen, “NGOs corporate social responsibility, Ibid., 399.

²⁸⁴ Ibid., 399.

²⁸⁵ INDITEX Group, “INDITEX Annual Report 2009,” Ibid., 72.

INDITEX production chain and in the communities in which their families live, as essential factors for social change.²⁸⁶

According to the official version, suppliers have to fulfill basic standards in the work places for being subcontracted by the corporation such as social security and the right to join labor unions. The third pillar is an ethical trading initiative that tests the products in order to prove that they are secure to wear. Finally, the last pillar is a program of social investment that goes to diverse programs in the Third World, such as social assistance, health, business promotion, educational projects, peace keeping, and emergencies such as Sumatra earthquake (Indonesia) and Haiti earthquake. Among the beneficiaries are Medicines sans Frontiers, Caritas International, Fe y Alegría and Carolina Foundation.²⁸⁷

The corporation also advertises its apparent social responsibility through its high scores in the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes which evaluate the social responsibility of the companies “in accordance mainly with their activities related to sustainable development and respect for Human Rights.”²⁸⁸ ²⁸⁹ INDITEX designates 0.1% of its total gains to Corporate Social investment, an amount totaling €10,403,761.²⁹⁰ But in the end, it still utilizes a mode of fast and cheap production that negatively impacts the life of the sweatshop workers. This inconsistency matches perfectly with the logic of neo-racism; it gives the illusion of helping the Third World while, behind its model of production, it reinforces the ‘underdevelopment’ of the Third World. Precarious jobs like those in the garment industry do not provide an exit from poverty, they just reinforce it and make it everlasting.

²⁸⁶ INDITEX Group, “INDITEX Annual Report 2009,” Ibid., 67.

²⁸⁷ Ibid., 122

²⁸⁸ Ibid., 88.

²⁸⁹ See appendix II

²⁹⁰ INDITEX Group, “INDITEX Annual Report 2009,” Ibid., 122, 123.

4.2 *Producing the Third World woman worker*

Suzanne Bergeron has analyzed the representation of Third World women workers in the World Bank vision. She found that this financial institution has a contradictory vision concerning the women's exploitation in the garment industry. On the one hand the institution recognizes that these women experience inequality in the labor force, but on the other hand it justifies the conception that the roots of their economic exploitation comes from their culture. If nothing else, however, the institution at least recognizes that these women are being exploited.²⁹¹ She analyzes an official document of the World Bank in which the institution affirms "it is traditional cultural arrangements that keep women in lower paying jobs."²⁹² Incorporating women into the labor market, according to the World Bank, "will itself eventually eliminate such inequalities, creating the conditions for women to move into the higher-paying men's jobs by challenging social resistance to women working."²⁹³

This vision has neo-racist implications. First of all, Third World women workers are perceived as one single culture; the meaning of *culture* in this case is very similar to the way the term *race* during the eighteenth century was used by colonial powers to justify hierarchies and segregation. However, since 'race' is no longer seen as scientifically legitimate it has been replaced by the term 'culture' because 'race' is a threat to the effectiveness of neo-racism which lies precisely in its ability to obscure what it really is, a mechanism of control for organizing inequality, and disguise itself as a humanist project.

The role of culture in the logic of neo-racism is to classify Third World women as subjects who are neither progressive nor civilized and who lack the proper agency to

²⁹¹ Suzanne Bergeron, "The post-Washington Consensus and Economic Representations of Women in Development at the World Bank," *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (2003), 407-409.

²⁹² *Ibid.*, 409.

²⁹³ *Ibid.*, 409.

overcome their backwardness and who, therefore, should be employed in sectors that fit their profile (precarious jobs) in order to gradually overcome their backwardness. On the other hand, the word 'culture' occludes the conditions of poverty that push these women to work under such precarious conditions. As I explained in the second chapter, these conditions of poverty are being reinforced by the policy that the Breton Woods Institutions have pushed into the Third World countries as a way of achieving development. Moreover, it distracts from the companies' role in reinforcing the conditions of poverty of garment workers and ignores the fact that these companies, and the population who own the commodities, are profiting from the exploitation of garment workers.

Culture not only justifies the inferiority of Third World women as a sort of sub-species, pretending that their oppression is naturally settled in their communities, its second function is to normalize their exploitation. In the second chapter I explained that, in development policy, garment factories are seen as a good alternative for providing sources of employment and putting poor and unskilled workers to work. They argue that Third World countries benefit a lot by supporting garment factories, if even only a little more than if they would not have these sources of employment. This neo-racism discourse infers that Third World women should accept their condition and be grateful with having at least a source of employment that matches their unskilled profile.²⁹⁴ In this sense, neo-racism is smuggled into an altruistic project. It appears to be a way of helping these women overcome their oppression when, in reality, it is justifying their entrance into a new paradigm of exploitation.

As disciplinary power, neo-racism produces a condition of resignation and conformity with the exploitative jobs in the garment factories; INDITEX further profits from neo-racism in that it normalizes the exploitation in its production chain. The corporations, as Sales mentioned “solve the cases just when they become public and it takes advantage of those

²⁹⁴ Suzanne Bergeron, “The post-Washington Consensus, Ibid., 410.

particular situations for promoting itself as a corporation with strong social responsibility”.²⁹⁵

A good example of this occurred in 2008 when the BBC news reported that there was physical and verbal abuse towards the workers in one of the sweatshops of Dhaka where ZARA garments were produced. One of the women workers stated, "If we make any kind of small mistake they beat us or they deduct our wages,"²⁹⁶ while another woman claimed, "If I leave without permission they will not give my outstanding salary from the previous months. So that's the problem. It's not just easy to leave the factory."²⁹⁷ Along with the fact that these women work long hours and receive low pay, the BBC also mentioned the unsafe conditions of the sweatshops.²⁹⁸

The dangerous conditions of these places was not something new; two years prior, in the same city, the Spectrum-Shahriyar that was also producing for ZARA collapsed killing 64 workers, injuring 74, and leaving hundreds jobless.²⁹⁹ The Maquila Solidarity Network, “a labour and women's rights organization that supports the efforts of workers in global supply chains to win improved wages and working conditions and a better quality of life,”³⁰⁰ reported that, before the sweatshop crashed down, some workers complained about the unsafe conditions of the building but they were completely ignored; they told them to shout their

²⁹⁵ Albert Sales, Personal Interview, Ibid.,

²⁹⁶ BBC news, “Zara forces Dhaka factory closure,” *BBC News*, June 23, 2008, Business.
<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7469446.stm> (accessed June 22, 2010)

²⁹⁷ Ibid.,

²⁹⁸ Ibid.,

²⁹⁹ Maquila Solidarity Network, Background on factory deaths in Bangladesh, Maquila Solidarity Network
<http://en.maquilasolidarity.org/currentcampaigns/Bangladesh/healthsafetybackground>

³⁰⁰ Maquila Solidarity Network, “official web page,” <http://en.maquilasolidarity.org/> (accessed June 22, 2010)

mouth.³⁰¹ After strong pressure from civil society and denouncements in the media, especially from CCC and the Maquila Solidarity, INDITEX agreed to award the affected employees their severance pay. The situation was enough to show the risky conditions in which the garments are usually produced and the fact that the corporation is not really aware of the conditions in which its products are manufactured.

After the BBC made public the bad conditions of the sweatshop in 2008, the head of Corporate Social Responsibility of INDITEX, Javier Chercoles, forced the factory closure.³⁰² According to the BBC, he immediately traveled to Bangladesh to investigate the situation and after appraising the bad conditions of the factory, “he told the owner of the company that if INDITEX was to remain a customer he had to, clean up the situation, close the factory and move the staff to another plant”.³⁰³ After two years the factory was closed and reopened in a new place.

Although the unsafe conditions were only one of the concerns that the BBC expressed when it first denounced the deplorable situation in this factory, the response of INDITEX was directed only to solve this specific problem while ignoring the other issues such as long hours of work and low wages. The utility of INDITEX's response is that, without paying attention to the real problem of the mode of fast and cheap production, it substitutes the exploitative reality that the workers face for a simple and solvable safety issue. In addressing this, the BBC reported,

The deafening whirr of hundreds of sewing machines, the faces covered with masks, the fixed concentration, all reflect a modern Bangladeshi garment factory. It is hard work, long hours and by Western standards, low pay. But it is one of the better ones.³⁰⁴

³⁰¹ Maquila Solidarity Network, Background on factory deaths in Bangladesh, Ibid.,

³⁰² BBC news, “Zara forces Dhaka factory closure,” Ibid.,

³⁰³ Ibid.,

³⁰⁴ Caroline Bayley, “Improving working conditions in Bangladesh garment factory,” *BBC News*, January,

The argument of development discourse that there are not better jobs for these women has become the norm for understanding the reality of the Third World women workers as well as a mechanism for disciplining them. This argument produces resignation and gratefulness with the jobs that they get, undermining the most important aspect, that though; there are not other jobs, that does not override the fact that these jobs are unusually exploitative. This is how neo-racism penetrates into the organization of global production and how, grounded in this logic, INDITEX have cleverly taken advantage of it to profit without necessarily being identified as exploitative, but rather as a corporation with a very strong sense of social responsibility.

On June 19, 2010, workers from 250 factories in Dhaka that supply Wal-Mart, H&M, Zara, and Carrefour, walked out of their factories and demonstrated for an increase in the minimum wage to \$72 a month.³⁰⁵ The protests were followed by a closure of the factories for five days. After negotiation, the response from the government was positive but it is still unclear what INDITEX's response will be. In Bangladesh, the garment industry represents 80% of total annual export earnings; for this reason it is considered to have a comparative advantage in this sector although this does not translate in to better living and working conditions for the laborers. As noted in the aforementioned BBC report, "Bangladeshi garment workers are among the lowest paid in the world."³⁰⁶

20 2010, Business. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/8469977.stm> (accessed May 22, 2010)

³⁰⁵ BBC News, "Bangladesh garment factories reopen after wage protests," *BBC News*, June 23, 2010, South Asia. <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/10386584> (accessed July 25, 2010)

³⁰⁶ Ibid.,

4.3 The enlightening of Neo-racism.

Conclusion

The history of INDITEX, the world leader in fashion, could not be written without neo-racism. Neo-racism as technique of power targets and hierarchically organizes the 'Third World population' and the 'Developed population'. It controls and disciplines them by punishing them or awarding them, by providing them the right to live or fabricating their death, but always in contradistinction to one another.

Neo-racism organizes the hegemony of the developed population over the worsening Third World population; INDITEX facilitates and at the same time administers this organization. Neo-racism produces a conception of Third World women as suitable labor based on the fact that they are poor, unskilled, and needy of any source of labor, but also by targeting them as members of one single culture: the culture of backwardness. Neo-racism makes of culture a culprit of poverty; as a solution to that condition, neo-racism inserts them into garment production by way of development policies, but always with the argument that, besides these jobs, there is not other solution for the progress of their communities but also for them in order to be empowered. Neo-racism never shows itself as what is, it asserts itself as an enlightenment project in the strict sense of superimposing reason on others for helping them to escape from a state of immaturity.³⁰⁷ Neo-racism acts in a very similar way to the civilizing mission of colonialism; it pretends to help the colonized escape from their immaturity and become more civilized, when in reality what it does is justify their inferiority and their exploitation for the benefit of the metropolis.

INDITEX takes advantage of these circumstances and puts these Third World women to work in its production chain, but always advertising itself as a good corporation that produces benefits to society in general and that helps Third World women approach

³⁰⁷ Michel Foucault, "What is Enlightenment?," in *The Foucault Reader*, Ibid., 35-37.

development. By subcontracting Third World women under conditions of exploitation it reinforces differences between the life that these workers represent and the life-style of “developed women” that, in this case, can be defined as the group of women who have access to the garments. Neo-racism produces the spaces and the subjects that produce and buy INDITEX garments, the subjects in both cases are over-represented by women and the spaces by two different types of femininities that interact and affect one another, though only the femininity of consumption enjoys a 'civilized' or ‘developed’ status.

WHY SHOULD WE CALL IT NEO-RACISM?

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Race was rejected in the middle of the 20th century for justifying hierarchical relations among humans. The word now is rarely used in official discourse as it recalls the sort of scientific racism that argued that one subhuman group was naturally condemned to congenital inferiority in relation to another.³⁰⁸ To use it would be a threat to enlightenment, to the progress of science. Nevertheless, its essential role, to establish hierarchies and justify exploitation among humans is still being manifested, though now it has being smuggled into development policy.

Economic development also functions in a similar way to race; it measures the level of capabilities and the progressiveness of human subgroups. According to this logic, the level of progressiveness varies between two cultures; one culture is considered to be more modern and economically progressive while the other is not only considered backward, but in need of market discipline in order to become economically progressive. The paradox is that economics, and not ethnobiology, has become the science by which the development agencies decide which culture is more progressive than another.

The peculiarity of this new way of structuring hierarchies among cultures is that it overlaps with the same division that differentiated the old colonial powers from their colonies. This is a reason why it should be identified as neo-racism, because although it is not longer based on race differentiation, development does capture the essence of what was scientific racism and by maintaining those key elements that once justified colonialism. Development gives the illusion of integrating everyone onto a single path to achieve progress, but at the

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Robert Miles, *Racism after 'race relations'* (London : Routledge, 1993), 81 .

same time it stresses differences in the strategies that each country should follow to achieve it. Today, the developed countries, like their colonialist ancestors, are considered to be more progressive than the underdeveloped countries, much as their colonized ancestors. Like the time of colonialism, the more developed countries are the paradigm of civilization that the countries considered to be less progressive should try to reach.

As I have been suggesting in the course of my argumentation, neo-racism can be unraveled by analyzing the incorporation of Third World women into the garment industry. Since in many Third World countries this sector has been the main entrance of women into paid labor, these types of jobs are seen as an efficient way of integrating them into the development process. Due to the exploitative dynamic of these jobs, this strategy can be mistakenly interpreted as real improvement in the living conditions of these women. However, there is a continuous attempt in the development discourse to justify the claim that these jobs provide benefits to Third World women. Infantilizing them and constructing them as culturally backward, development discourse sees their entrance into garment jobs as the only resource that Third World women have for overcoming the cultural obstacles that block their empowerment. This logic operates in the frame of neo-racism since it constructs them as less progressive on the base of their culture.

The neo-racist perception of Third World woman as powerless is constantly present in development policy; it is an important element for construing them as suitable labor. In the first chapter, I made reference to Salzinger; this author argues that Third World women are thought of as suitable labor -cheap and docile- in a discourse that organizes global production and that circulates among governments and transnational corporations. According to this author, Third World women are not inherently suitable labor, rather they are discursively constructed as such. She identifies this discourse as “productive femininity”.

Even if true is the fact that this productive femininity is dominant in transnational production, I argue that neo-racist conceptions of the Third World woman as an unskilled labor, poor and powerless, are also important components for constructing them as suitable labor for the garment industry. It is neo-racism that puts them to work in these exploitative jobs and also justifies their exploitation in the name of empowering them. By this I mean that development discourse also affects the way that Third World women are constructed as suitable labor in the sense that the best that could happen to these women, according to this discourse, is to be employed in the garment factories in order to overcome their cultural condition of underdevelopment, since it is argued that there is no other good option for them.

Part of the reason they are conceived of as infantile is that it is taken for granted that, by themselves, these women and their countries are not able to overcome their own economic problems without the instruction and assistance of the development institutions. This neo-racist construction of the “underdeveloped” countries and of the “underdeveloped” women has become a way of justifying the exploitative quality of their jobs in the garment industry.

Third world women are not just constructed as a suitable labor force in the discourse that circulates in global production, their perception as such is affected by the development policies that put them to work in these exploitative jobs. Their incorporation into these jobs is systematically prearranged, as I mentioned in chapter two; it occurred in an epoch of economic crisis that was overstressed by the implementation of the SAPs, programs which also took part in the frame of development achievement. For solving the daily struggle of surviving in a context of economic crises, women were pushed into these modes of employment.

The specificity of this neo-racism as it is smuggled into development is that it hides itself behind a veil of social justice; it sells the fallacy that social justice can be achieved through market relations because, by itself, the market can regulate everything in an efficient

way. This myth prevails despite the fact that governments can also influence and facilitate market relations, which is the case of the apparel market that today would not be a good business model for the developed world companies without the policies that have been implemented in the Third World states for the enlargement of their garment industry.

It is important to note that, in contrast to what was racism during last century, neo-racism operates beyond ideology; rather, it appears to be what Foucault describes as a “power technique”. It intervenes as an organizing force at the level of the social relations. In the context of the garment industry, neo-racism organizes and distributes resources among the developed population and the underdeveloped population; it organizes where to consume and where to produce the garments, it determines who are in the steady position to produce the commodities and who are positioned to buy them, and, above all, it normalizes hierarchical and exploitative relations between the developed women who consume the commodities and the Third World women workers who participate in the production of the commodities.

The peculiarity of this power technique is its effectiveness for normalizing and justifying, the death function of bio-political control, which not only involves annihilating, but exposing a part of the population to harm. The tool for justifying and normalizing the exploitation of Third World women in the case of INDITEX is that it advertises itself as a corporation with a strong sense of social responsibility when in reality it is perpetuating the poverty of the garment workers. The same neo-racist illusion of supporting prosperity from the development policy penetrates the corporation and determines the way it justifies the myth that garment jobs are really helping the Third World women to overcome poverty, deducing that these jobs are the only better option that these women have. This is one of the reasons I call this an enlightened neo-racism since, without necessarily abandoning the perpetration of violence, it evades the use of direct violence and attempts to go unnoticed as passive perpetrator of structural violence, hiding itself beneath the banner of altruism or social

advancement. Neo-racism is a civilizing project; as such it promotes itself as a liberator when in reality it is imposing certain values and enforcing certain behaviors.

In the case of ZARA's commodity chain, it becomes evident how the Third world women who produce the garments are subsidizing the life-style of other women for whom buying clothes represents an act of progress that goes along with the ideal modernity. By consuming ZARA's clothes, the productive femininity that participate in the production of the garments and the ZARA femininity that consumers buy interact and by this fetishized relationship new rules of exclusion and inclusion are established.³⁰⁹ ZARA sells garments that speak to a prominent status in global geopolitics.

This tension shows that, for the advancement of capitalist relations, it is really important to control and trivialize women's subjectivities and bodies, like Mohanty previously explained.³¹⁰ It also takes us back to a demand that was made during the First United Nations Conference of Women in México, 1975. The Third World Women feminists claimed that capitalist exploitation coming from the "North" industrialized countries, and "not patriarchy" as the feminists from the "North" argued, was the main cause of women's oppression.³¹¹ This suggested that gender inequity, class, and race, as systems of oppression, are totally linked and that one can not be eroded without the elimination of the other two.

This is 'food for thought' for those concerned with the limits as well as the possibilities for building a feminist solidarity outside of the neo-racism framework. This requires disengaging from colonialism in the name of altruism, a particularly disturbing problem for

³⁰⁹ I took this idea from Ulrich Beck (2002) on the analysis that he makes about the society of risks.

³¹⁰ Chandra Talpade Mohanty "Under Western Eyes Revisited: Feminist Solidarity through Anticapitalist Struggles," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, vol. 28, no. 2 (2002), 514.

³¹¹ Jane Jaquette and Kathleen Staudt, "Women, Gender , and Development," in *Women and Gender Equity in Development Theory and Practice. Institutions, Resources, and Mobilization*, eds. Jane Jaquette and Gale Summerfield (Durham: Duke University Press, 2007), 22.

feminism since so long ago. It evokes to a very similar situation, to the British women's participation in the anti-slavery campaign; the main reason for their involvement in this mission was to expand their middle class gender ideology to the slaves. They believed that women slaves should be free for securing their right to have a family as white women used to have.³¹² This altruist tradition based on helping by imposing what apparently is better for oneself it is expressed as well in the liberal feminism approach of the World Bank. This school of thought considers that Third World women can be only be empowered by means of wage labor; an statement that of course loses validity in the case of garment jobs.

Of course, for subverting neo-racism there must be a dramatic change in the global political economy, but it also demands action from the citizens consumers that facilitate it. Their compromise involves an escape from the neo-racist altruistic attitude that tends to naively assume what is better for Third World; it requires a self consciousness about the impact that the satisfaction of our pleasures through the market can have on the lives of others.

³¹² Cris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructuralism Theory* (Oxford/New York: Basil Blackwell, 1998), 38-39.

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APPENDIX I

LIST OF COUNTRIES WHERE INDITEX SUBCONTRACTS PRODUCTION

1. Argentina
2. Bangladesh
3. Brazil
4. Bulgaria
5. Cambodia
6. China
7. Egypt
8. Italy
9. India
10. Indonesia
11. Madagascar
12. México
13. Morocco
14. Pakistan
15. Paraguay
16. Philippines
17. Peru
18. Portugal
19. Romania
20. Spain
21. Serbia
22. Sri Lanka
23. Taiwan
24. Thailand
25. Turkey
26. Vietnam

APPENDIX II

INDITEX PERFORMANCE IN THE DOW JONES SUSTAINABILITY INDEXES

Commitment to securities markets

Inditex has remained on the sustainability indexes, FTSE4Good and Dow Jones Sustainability Index for the eighth and the seventh consecutive year, respectively.

FTSE4Good is a stock exchange sustainability index that includes the most committed multinational companies in the field of corporate responsibility. This index evaluates the social responsibility of its listed companies in accordance mainly with their activities related to sustainable development and respect for Human Rights. Twice yearly, the FTSE4Good Policy Committee reviews the behaviour of the member companies in relation to sustainability, based on a thorough questionnaire that the Ethical Investment Research Service draws up, as well as on the data that

the companies publish and other sources of information. Inditex has been a member of this index since 2002.

Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes are a family of stock exchange indexes reflecting the activities of participating companies in the field of sustainability and corporate responsibility. As a prerequisite for entry, and for subsequent listing on the above-mentioned indexes, the participants must undergo a rigorous analysis and selection process led by an independent external agency. This analysis evaluates the quality of management at companies in areas related to corporate governance, risk management and branding, employment practices and environmental actions, among others. Inditex has been a member of these indexes since 2003.

Result obtained by Inditex in the most recent Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes evaluation



| | 2009 | | 2008 | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| | Inditex score (%) | Average score (%) | Inditex score (%) | Average score (%) |
| Total | 72 | 47 | 67 | 46 |
| Dimensions studied | | | | |
| Economic | 60 | 53 | 54 | 54 |
| Environmental | 90 | 38 | 77 | 35 |
| Social | 74 | 45 | 74 | 46 |
| Social dimension | | | | |
| Criteria | | | | |
| Employment practices | 77 | 56 | 82 | 58 |
| Development of human capital | 52 | 29 | 46 | 23 |
| Gaining and retaining talent | 60 | 35 | 58 | 38 |
| Philanthropy | 74 | 35 | 74 | 36 |
| Corporate Report | 48 | 37 | 48 | 36 |
| Standards for suppliers | 99 | 62 | 92 | 60 |
| Commitment with interest groups | 87 | 50 | 95 | 55 |