

# **FOLK FASHION: AMATEUR RE-KNITTING AS A STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABILITY**

**Amy Twigger Holroyd**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Birmingham City University  
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

September 2013

Birmingham Institute of Art & Design, Birmingham City University

This research considers amateur fashion making – ‘folk fashion’ – as a strategy for sustainability. Homemade clothes are often seen as sustainable, in comparison with the environmental and social problems associated with mass-produced ‘fast fashion’. However, this view is partly based on a simplistic and romantic view of the homemade, which has received little critical examination.

The study specifically investigates the reworking of existing garments through the use of knit-based skills, techniques and knowledge. This approach challenges the linear production-consumption model of the mainstream fashion industry. Because re-knitting techniques must be adapted to suit the particularities of each individual garment, re-knitting provides an opportunity for amateur knitters to engage with creative design.

The research employs a workshop methodology, which combines design research with creative methods. A group of seven female amateur knitters were interviewed individually before taking part in a series of workshop sessions. The project culminated in six of the participants re-knitting items from their own wardrobes. The detailed data gathered from this group is supported by comments from a wider community of knitters, primarily gathered via an informal participatory knitting activity.

The research finds that re-knitting can be seen as an effective strategy for sustainability. It not only provides a means of extending product life, but more holistically offers an alternative means of participating in fashion, and a way of addressing the relationship between fashion and consumption.

Beyond this central finding, four key insights emerge from the research. These are the metaphor of fashion as common land; the nuanced understanding of the experience of wearing homemade clothes in contemporary British culture; evidence of the ability of amateurs to design for themselves and ways in which this can be supported; and the understanding of the factors that should be considered when trying to develop a culture of reworking.

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## Acknowledgements

I would like to thank:

Professor Colin Gale, my Director of Studies, for his invaluable guidance and thought-provoking conversations;

Dr Anne Boulton, for her expert supervision, meticulous feedback and steadfast support;

Dr Kate Fletcher, for developing such inspiring ideas about fashion and sustainability, and providing much-valued external supervision for this research;

Professor David Gauntlett, for many illuminating discussions about making;

my parents, for contributing all manner of (sometimes unexpected) specialist skills and knowledge;

my husband Simon, for maintaining genuine interest every step of the way, and for always making the tea;

and, of course, Alex, Anne, Catherine, Helen, Julia, Kiki and Margaret: the seven knitters who gave their time to the project with such enthusiasm and generosity, and without whom this research would not have been possible.

As I wrote this thesis, I knitted a cardigan: a duplicate of a much-loved item from my wardrobe. Writing, like knitting, is a slow process; this practical activity helped me to track my progress. The project provides an example of the *copy* treatment included on the spectrum of re-knitting treatments (Figure 5.9).

Images of the work in progress – starting with the original garment and test samples and ending with the finished piece, which I sewed up as I wrote my conclusions – have been included between the chapters to reflect the reader's journey through the thesis.



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# CONTEXT

### Summary

This research concerns amateur knitting as a potential strategy for sustainable fashion in the UK, and is located in my practice as an independent designer-maker of knitwear.

British fashion culture is dominated by 'fast fashion', a business model dependent on selling ever-increasing volumes of cheap, mass-produced garments. This system is inherently unsustainable, creating significant environmental and social problems in terms of resource use, pollution and workers' rights (Allwood et al., 2006; Forum for the Future, 2007; DEFRA, 2008). While various industrial initiatives have attempted to tackle these issues, few have taken a holistic view and questioned broader issues, such as the fundamental relationship between fashion, consumption and well-being (Fletcher, 2008). I have adopted such a view and have chosen to embrace individual well-being as an integral element of sustainability, alongside environmental and social considerations. From this perspective, fast fashion culture can be criticised for creating anxiety, and curtailing the agency of individuals by restricting choice and alienating wearers from the making of their clothes (Fletcher and Grose, 2008; von Busch, 2009).

Amateur fashion making, which I term 'folk fashion', has the potential to offer a more diverse, satisfying and sustainable experience of fashion, and to disrupt the current paradigm of industrial production and over-consumption. However, it would be simplistic to assume that amateur making is straightforwardly positive. In my experience, knitters encounter many frustrations when making garments to wear, such as written patterns restricting opportunities for creativity. Wearing homemade garments can exacerbate, rather than alleviate, the anxieties of contemporary fashion. Furthermore, the vast majority of knitters focus on making new items, mirroring – rather than challenging – the linear production-consumption model of the mainstream fashion industry.

I undertook this research as a designer, knitter and activist, identifying barriers to the growth of folk fashion as a sustainable fashion strategy and seeking ways to address these problems. I used the theme of openness, which draws together amateur activity and sustainability, to guide my research. Openness is manifested on a number of levels: opening knitted garments, opening my practice as a designer-maker, and opening the wider fashion system. During this project, I investigated the possibility of transferring amateur knitting practice from the making of new items to the re-knitting of existing garments, and explored whether engaging with creative design affected the participants' experiences of making and wearing homemade knitted items.

The main activity of this research was a qualitative design research project involving a group of seven female amateur knitters, aged between 43 and 66. At a series of workshop sessions, we tested methods of re-knitting existing knitted garments and explored design skills. The project culminated in six of the participants using re-knitting techniques to alter an item from their own wardrobes. Before the workshops, I conducted individual interviews to elicit the initial attitudes of each person towards fashion and knitting; at the end of the project I gathered their reflections. This quasi-experimental approach (Hakim, 2000) helped me to explore the changes that occurred during the project, both in my practice and in the attitudes and activities of the knitters. The detailed data gathered from this small group is supported in the thesis by comments from a wider community of knitters that I have collected via an informal participatory knitting activity and from online sources.

The aims of this research are:

- to investigate the relationship between amateur fashion making and well-being, with special reference to hand knitting
- to explore the ways in which a designer-maker can support amateur re-knitting and design activity
- to explore the ways in which amateur re-knitting and design activity affects the practices and perceptions of amateur makers.

### **My background**

For over a decade, I have been interested in the relationship between fashion and sustainability. This interest was initiated during my BA in Fashion Design with Technology, which included a year's placement in a high street knitwear design studio. During this time, I became concerned about the ever-increasing volumes of clothing consumed in the UK, and the environmental impacts of the industry. At MA level I discovered the principles of design for sustainability – later summarised in texts including Walker (2006) and Thorpe (2007) – and started to develop my own sustainable design philosophy, based around longevity and versatility. In 2004 I launched my knitwear label, Keep & Share, working as a solo designer-maker from my workshop in rural Herefordshire. I saw the label as a way of putting my research ideas into practice and testing them in the real world. Despite running a micro-scale business, I have sought to create a model which challenges the prevalent fashion system. I have built up a strong profile within the area of sustainable fashion, gaining recognition in research projects, the popular fashion press, and the sustainable fashion design community.

Craft is integral to the philosophy of Keep & Share, because I believe that a knowledge of the making process, and the maker, can engender emotional connections which contribute to longevity. The logical extension of this philosophy is to encourage wearers to become makers themselves, and in the past five years I have become increasingly involved in facilitating the

making of others. I run hand and machine knitting workshops and projects, design hand knitting kits and patterns, and create conceptual pieces which explore the experience of making. Over the years, I have met many people who make their own clothes and find this to be an empowering, positive experience. However, other conversations I have had – at weekend workshops, drop-in community knitting projects and craft fairs – have shown me that amateur fashion making is riddled with ambivalences, idiosyncrasies and disappointments. These fascinating conversations led me to embark on this research.

I focused my research in the UK, because this is the area within which I operate as a designer-maker. Although fashion is a globalised industry and many companies trade internationally, the fashion business operates quite differently in different countries. For example, the British fashion retail system is particularly concentrated in comparison with other European countries, 'with only a few players as the big earners' (Sorensen, 2009: 26). Hence, while it is possible that the rest of the world looks to UK fashion as 'a barometer for best policy and practice' (Centre for Sustainable Fashion, 2008: 4), it should be noted that my research is grounded in the UK and may not transpose directly to other fashion cultures.

### **Structure of the thesis**

This introductory chapter frames the research by exploring the interconnected themes of sustainability, well-being and openness. I then discuss the area of fashion and sustainability, and my own approach, in detail. Chapter 2 explains the research methodology.

The next two chapters focus on the status quo, in terms of the relationships between fashion, well-being and openness (Chapter 3) and making, well-being and openness (Chapter 4).

Chapters 5 and 6 describe the design research project in detail. Chapter 5 focuses on the design task that I undertook: developing methods of re-knitting, and creating materials to support amateurs in using these methods. Chapter 6 adopts the viewpoint of the participants, and describes the process that they went through in designing and executing their own individual re-knitting projects.

In Chapter 7, I analyse the project and discuss the issues which emerged. I examine the potential for greater participation in re-knitting, and consider the extent to which re-knitting can be considered a strategy for sustainability. I also reflect on the way in which my role as a designer has changed during the project. My conclusions, including a summary of the findings of the research and identification of the contribution to knowledge, can be found in Chapter 8.

Figure 1.1 illustrates the four sections of the thesis, the chapters within each section, and the contribution of each chapter to the research aims.

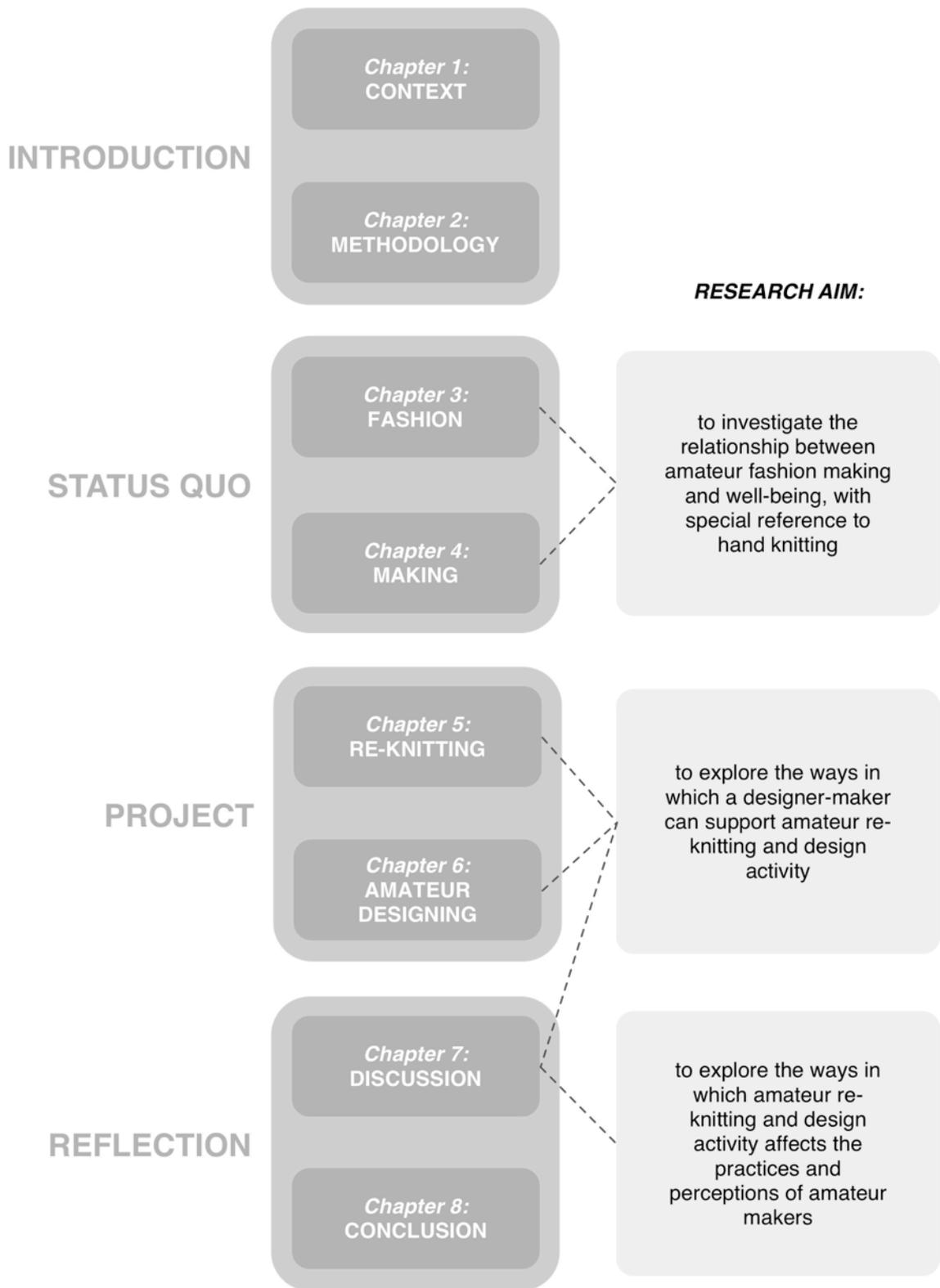


Figure 1.1. Thesis sections, chapters, research aims

## 1.2 Sustainability, well-being and openness

This research is motivated by the epic theme of sustainability; as I will explain, sustainability is linked to both well-being and openness. Before looking at the specific context of fashion, I will explore these themes in detail in order to establish some firm foundations.

### **The concept of sustainability**

The great challenges facing the earth and its inhabitants need little introduction. The effects of climate change, population growth, poverty, inequality, biodiversity loss and the depletion of natural resources are apparent at local, national and global scales. While demands for energy, water and other resources increase, finite resources such as oil are becoming depleted (Stibbe and Luna, 2010). Even renewable resources are under great pressure; the Living Planet Report (WWF International, 2012) projects that by 2030, global demand will exceed the equivalent of two planet Earths.

The concept of sustainability was developed in response to these global problems. As Dresner (2008) describes, the modern notion of sustainability dates back to the 1970s. It was proposed as a way of bringing together social concerns about global poverty and deprivation with 'green' concerns about the environment. Murray (2011: 150-1) usefully defines sustainability as 'the aspiration to create a sustainable future' and sustainable development as 'the means for achieving this'. Although sustainability is a somewhat abstract concept with multiple definitions and interpretations, Chambers et al. (2000) identify three common and interrelated principles which are broadly recognised. Firstly, that human quality of life, now and in the future, depends on a healthy environment; secondly, that the needs of the global poor must be met; and finally, that the rights of future generations should not be harmed. These elements are reflected in the most often cited definition of sustainable development: 'development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (Brundtland, 1987: 41). It must be noted that the challenges of sustainability are quite different for developing and developed countries. While the poorest countries need to focus on lifting their inhabitants out of abject poverty, rich countries such as the UK must address the rate at which they consume resources. Current levels are many times those of less developed countries, and far beyond natural limits (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011; New Economics Foundation, 2012; Thorpe, 2012).

Much discussion about sustainable development revolves around the integration of environment, society and economy. The 2005 United Nations World Summit identified 'economic development, social development and environmental protection... as interdependent and mutually reinforcing pillars' (United Nations, 2005: 12). The need to include culture as a

component of sustainability has emerged in many discussions (Hawkes, 2001; Duxbury and Gillette, 2007; United Cities and Local Governments, 2010). Culture, understood in its broadest sense, 'shapes what we mean by development and determines how people act in the world' (Nurse, 2006: 37). Cultural sustainability requires us to value cultural diversity and identity. It also reminds us that the cultural values of different communities will affect the way in which any transition towards sustainability is understood, and the degree to which it is embraced (Sustainable Development Research Institute, 1998).

### **Flourishing and systems thinking**

The current conception of sustainable development has been criticised for its dependence on conventional economic thinking – which arguably created many of the problems that we now face (Jackson, 2009). Ehrenfeld (2004: 8) describes sustainable development as 'simply an extrapolation of the past', which can only lessen the effects of unsustainable behaviour without changing inherently unsustainable systems. Sterling (2001: 15) defines such an approach as 'first order' change which 'takes place within accepted boundaries... [and] leaves basic values unexamined and unchanged'. As an alternative, Ehrenfeld (2008: 49) offers a positive, aspirational definition of sustainability, which I favour: 'the possibility that humans and other life will flourish on the Earth forever'.

Flourishing invites us to think at a systems level, questioning the mindset and goals of our current system rather than making minor adjustments. Sterling (2001: 15) would identify this as 'second order' change and learning, in which we reflect on the assumptions influencing our thinking, or even 'third order' learning, which involves a shift in consciousness and full appreciation of alternative systems. On a similar note, Fletcher (2008: xiii) describes a radical approach to sustainability as involving 'fundamental personal, social and institutional change'. I agree that this transformative thinking is required in order to move towards sustainability. A third order view of sustainability could allow us to adopt a totally different way of looking at the world. Sterling (2001) describes two competing perspectives: mechanistic and ecological. The growth-based, rational, mechanistic paradigm has been prevalent for many centuries. The alternative ecological paradigm does not just require us to give greater consideration to the environment; it involves an alternative set of values. These values are informed by understandings of ecosystems, and an appreciation of the characteristics – such as diversity – which allow such systems to be balanced and resilient in the long term (Ehrenfeld, 2008).

By adopting an ecological perspective, we can question hegemonic concepts such as the emphasis within conventional economics on continuous growth. This is a challenge; growth is firmly lodged in our individual and global understandings of success and development. However, our current economic system is dependent on ever-expanding resource use and pays no heed to natural limits.

As economist Herman Daly once commented, he would accept the possibility of infinite growth in the economy on the day that one of his economist colleagues could demonstrate that Earth itself could grow at a commensurate rate.

(Simms and Johnson, 2010: 3)

With this in mind, a growing movement is developing 'post-growth' economic models, which aim to decouple economic prosperity from natural resource use (United Nations Environment Programme, 2011) or even challenge the link between economic growth and true prosperity (Jackson, 2009). Reisch (2001: 369) describes one alternative model of prosperity developed by the German Wuppertal Institute for Climate, Environment and Energy, which suggests that 'wealth in goods' should be balanced with 'wealth in time'.

### **Well-being**

A focus on flourishing and prosperity links directly to ideas of happiness and well-being. Well-being has become an increasingly hot topic in recent years, in recognition of research which indicates that increased wealth – beyond a certain level – does not automatically deliver happiness (Worcester, 1998). For example, the proportion of Americans describing themselves as happy peaked in the 1950s, despite consumption having doubled since that time (United Nations Development Programme, 1998). However, the questions of what well-being is, and how it is achieved, are not easy to answer. Some (e.g. Bok, 2010) use 'happiness', 'well-being' and 'satisfaction with life' interchangeably. Others, such as the New Economics Foundation (2009a), argue that well-being encompasses more than happiness and life satisfaction. This difference relates to the existence of two distinct perspectives on well-being, which have long intellectual traditions: hedonism and eudaimonianism. As Ryan and Deci (2001) describe, from the hedonic perspective well-being consists of pleasure or happiness. From the eudaimonic perspective, which has more merit for my purposes, well-being consists of more than just happiness, involving the actualisation of human potentials and a 'quest for contentment' (Searle, 2008: 4).

Dolan et al. (2006) argue that different theoretical approaches to well-being adopt fundamentally different perspectives. However, common threads can be found. For example, the New Economics Foundation (2009a) details qualities which are essential for well-being. According to their research, people need a sense of individual vitality; to undertake activities which are meaningful, engaging, and which make them feel competent and autonomous; a stock of inner resources to cope and be resilient; and a sense of relatedness to other people through supportive relationships and a sense of connection with others. Focusing on flourishing in terms of psychological well-being, Ryff and Keyes (1995) have developed a list of six aspects of human potential: autonomy, personal growth, self-acceptance, life purpose, mastery and positive relatedness. Despite coming from very different theoretical backgrounds, there is much

in common between these accounts. Furthermore, we can see many shared characteristics between descriptions of well-being and the ecological paradigm previously discussed, such as participation, agency and interconnectedness.

### **Needs and satisfiers**

In his work on human scale development, Max-Neef (1992) offers a list of basic needs which he believes constitute well-being: subsistence, protection, affection, understanding, participation, leisure, creation, identity and freedom. He defines needs as 'essential attributes related to human evolution' (Max-Neef, 1992: 204), which are interrelated, interactive, and non-hierarchical. Any need not satisfied reveals a poverty; poverties generate pathologies, such as fear, violence and unemployment. However, Max-Neef argues that we should not see needs only as requirements felt when they are lacking; needs can also positively 'engage, motivate and mobilize people' (Max-Neef, 1992: 201). This recognition coincides with the arguments of other writers on well-being; for example, Searle (2008: 100) says that 'positive subjective well-being... should not simply be inferred from conclusions born as a by-product of studies of negative emotional states'.

Max-Neef's work is particularly useful for the dynamic way in which it relates satisfiers to needs. He explains that the means of satisfying needs vary widely across cultures and historical periods. Different satisfiers may be more or less successful, fulfilling needs to different levels of intensity. The best satisfiers are synergic, satisfying a given need in such a way that they indirectly contribute to the satisfaction of other needs. Alternatively, satisfiers may have negative effects, inhibiting the satisfaction of other needs or stimulating a false sensation of satisfaction. At the extreme are violators: 'applied under the pretext of satisfying a given need, they ... annihilate the possibility of its satisfaction' (Max-Neef, 1992: 208). For example, the arms race purports to satisfy, yet fundamentally impairs, the need for protection.

### **Double dividend**

It has been suggested that the economic system which has created so many environmental and social problems is also violating our individual well-being.

That environmental damage should turn out to be the environmental price we have to pay for achieving human well-being would be unfortunate. That environmental damage is an external cost of a misguided and unsuccessful attempt to achieve human well-being is tragic.

(Jackson, 2005: 25)

If we invert this negative relationship, we discover the opportunity for a 'double dividend', in which there is a reciprocity between personal and environmental benefits (Jackson, 2005). This

idea, which recognises that a low-impact lifestyle may better suit our human needs (Stibbe and Luna, 2010) is starting to become more widespread in sustainability circles (Reid and Hunter, 2011; P. Stevens, 2011) and amongst some groups of consumers; Soper (2009) refers to this trend as 'alternative hedonism'. As Escobar-Tello and Bhamra (2009: 152) observe, 'the characteristics of sustainability overlap with the triggers of happiness'. From this perspective, well-being and sustainability can be seen as two interconnected elements of human flourishing. Furthermore, well-being can be used as a way of approaching and exploring sustainability. For example, Paul Stevens (2011: 1) suggests that 'if we focus on being well, we will find that sustainability emerges from that state'.

### **Openness**

Openness is a significant cultural movement which links to the broad themes of sustainability and well-being.

The application of openness ... to a growing number of central ubiquitous practices that drive the human enterprise, has turned into a megatrend that can be labelled the *Rise of Open-X*.

(Avital, 2011: 51, original emphasis)

The trend of openness has reached many fields of life, creating movements such as open source software, open science, open technology, open manufacturing, open gaming and open data (van Abel et al., 2011). In each area, if we compare the conventional culture with its open equivalent, we see the breaking down of hierarchical relationships and centralised authority, and the erosion of the division between professional experts and amateur users. In many cases, the role of the user is fundamentally shifted from passive observer to active contributor.

Many link the growth of open culture to the rise of the Internet, and in particular, web 2.0 technologies. As Gauntlett (2011: 5) describes, web 2.0 'is not simply a particular kind of technology, or a business model, [but] describes a particular kind of ethos and approach'. This ethos revolves around collaborative, networked activity. Rather than experts creating static online content for audiences to read, web 2.0 involves people coming together to work collaboratively. This is a significant shift in media culture; as Katz (2011) describes, since the invention of the printing press our media has been produced and distributed on the basis of 'one-to-many'. He argues that this model forced us into passive consumption, and marginalised the creativity of ordinary people. Web 2.0 turns the model on its head, creating 'many-to-many' distribution and the opportunity for ordinary people to create, collaborate and share. Gauntlett (2011) describes this as a shift from a 'sit back and be told' culture (typified by broadcast television) towards more of a 'making and doing' culture (typified by YouTube and Wikipedia).

### **Openness, well-being and sustainability**

Openness shares many characteristics with the ecological paradigm, and the positive descriptions of well-being, described earlier in this chapter. For example, openness is characterised by sharing, collaboration, equity and freedom (Avital, 2011). Sharing and collaboration involve participation, which in turn is regarded as a key characteristic of an ecological paradigm (Sterling, 2001) and an important component of well-being (New Economics Foundation, 2009b). Furthermore, openness offers positive ideas about alternatives to the growth-based economic model of capitalism. Leadbeater (2009: xxviii) argues that the collaborative, commons-based production made possible by web 2.0 will 'establish non-market and non-hierarchical organisations ... not opening a new stage of capitalism and the market but laying the seeds for alternatives to both'.

Schwarz and Elffers (2011) have drawn these elements together in describing a new cultural era – related to the sustainability movement – that they describe as 'sustainism'. The culture of sustainism is based on 'networks, sharing, borrowing, and open exchange' (Schwarz and Elffers, 2011). The characteristics that they identify are in keeping with an ecological world view and the open movement: 'diverse rather than uniform; effectiveness instead of efficiency; networked instead of hierarchical'. Thackara (2011) also sees openness as representing a fundamentally different alternative to the conventional, rational, 'closed' systems that created the massive environmental and social problems that we face.

Systemic challenges such as climate change, or resource depletion – these 'problems of moral bankruptcy' – cannot be solved using the same techniques that caused them in the first place. Open research, open governance and open design are preconditions for the continuous, collaborative, social mode of enquiry and action that are needed.

(Thackara, 2011: 44)

Openness is particularly interesting for those pursuing an activist agenda, because it is a movement of change. Jenkins (2006: 18) argues that consumers are already 'fighting for the right to participate more fully in their culture', and that the desire for participation will spread, raising expectations and transforming institutions across society.

It is the fact that people have made a *choice* – to make something themselves rather than just consume what's given by the big suppliers – that is significant. Amplified slightly, it leads to a whole new way of looking at things, and potentially to a real political shift in how we deal with the world.

(Gauntlett, 2011: 19, original emphasis)

In this section, we have seen how sustainability, well-being and openness are interconnected. Sustainability is the underpinning motivation behind this research; well-being and openness have been identified as related themes. I see both as useful ways in which to approach sustainability, and will use them as two connected lenses through which to explore the topics which arise throughout the thesis.

### 1.3 Fashion and sustainability

Having established the foundations for this research, I will now examine the relationship between fashion and sustainability in more detail. Sustainability is a complex and multi-faceted concept, which can be approached in many different ways. I will outline a range of approaches that have been taken in terms of fashion; as we will see, there is a great degree of overlap between industrial activity, academic research and small-scale practice.

#### **Reducing negative impacts**

The fashion and sustainability 'movement' has a relatively short history. We could start with the trend for 'eco-fashion' in the late 1980s and early 1990s, linked to a growing interest in green consumerism. While the interest may have been genuine, the majority of the so-called 'eco' items produced at this time merely represented a stylistic idea of environmental responsibility, based on inaccurate presumptions about the environmental virtues of natural fibres. The launch of the Esprit Ecollection in 1992 is cited within sustainable fashion circles as a pivotal moment. Designer Lynda Grose developed the Ecollection, which she describes as the 'first ecologically responsible clothing line developed by a major corporation' (California College of the Arts, 2013). The range was based on in-depth research into the environmental impacts of fabrics and components (McLaren, 2008). Subsequent research within industrial, governmental and academic spheres has deepened our factual knowledge about the impacts of textile materials and processes throughout the lifecycle. A parallel strand of research has focused on the social impacts of the global industry, in terms of workers' rights; activism in this area can be traced back to the Industrial Revolution.

To briefly outline these findings, negative impacts occur in all phases of a garment's lifecycle (Allwood et al., 2006; Forum for the Future, 2007; DEFRA, 2008). Fibre and clothing production, transportation, and in particular domestic washing and drying of clothing all consume huge amounts of energy. Problems arise from the use of toxic chemicals in manufacturing, and from the vast amounts of water used in cotton production. Textile and clothing workers are subject to abysmal working conditions; Maher (2010: 3) describes 'systematic exploitation, violence and repression, long and stressful working hours, casual employment relationships, and exclusion

from ... social rights, protection and benefits'. While it can be argued that clothing production brings valuable work to developing countries, low wages and lack of training mean that workers are often still trapped in poverty (Allwood et al., 2006). These problems are significant because of the sheer scale of the industry. In 2000, clothing sales totalled over US\$1 trillion worldwide; the industry employed 26.5 million people (Allwood et al., 2006). The vast majority of clothing consumed in the UK is imported, with imports of 90% in 2004-2006 according to the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA, 2008). Most of the negative impacts of clothing production are therefore hidden from the UK consumer.

In recent years, we have seen a massive increase in the volume of garments sold. Between 2001 and 2005, sales by volume of women's clothing increased by 37% (Allwood et al., 2006). This trend has continued; between 2005 and 2009, average prices of women's outerwear fell by 22%, while sales by value continued to rise (Key Note, 2010). According to Euromonitor (2013), over 1.85 billion clothing items were sold in the UK in 2012. This dramatic growth has been linked to fast fashion, described by Fletcher (2010) as the equivalent of fast food: mass-produced and low cost, with short lead times allowing a constant flow of new styles to the shops. Consumers in the UK are estimated to produce over 1.13 million tonnes of clothing waste each year, of which 48% is re-used, 14% is recycled and 38% goes to landfill or incineration (Gracey and Moon, 2012). Although donating clothes to charities may relieve the conscience of the UK consumer, this too can create problems. Farrer (2011) argues that used fashion clothing 'dumped' on developing countries erodes local textile industries and creates a vicious circle of ever-increasing consumption.

An increasing awareness of the impacts of the clothing industry amongst consumers, retailers and government has led to many sustainability-related initiatives in recent years, such as reducing pollution from chemicals and improving working conditions in factories (DEFRA, 2008). I argue that the majority of these initiatives, while beneficial, reflect a first order, incremental approach to sustainability. This focus mirrors industrial ecology in general, which has tended to improve the efficiency of production rather than addressing the whole lifecycle (Jackson, 2005). A key factor in this approach is the fragmentation of the textile and clothing supply chain (Fletcher, 2011). Stakeholders make improvements in the areas they can control, and in which they will benefit from efficiency savings. Hence, initiatives tend to be piecemeal and short-term.

### **The role of the designer**

Although the fashion industry is fragmented, the designer has been widely identified as having a crucial role in influencing the environmental impacts of consumer products. The Textiles Environment Design (TED) research project, based at Chelsea College of Art and Design and led by Rebecca Earley, was set up in 1996. Their research is 'based on the estimation that decisions made in design are responsible for eighty to ninety percent of a product's

environmental and economic costs' (Textiles Environment Design, c.2013, referring to Graedel et al., 1995). Hence, much of the valuable academic research into fashion and sustainability that has taken place in the last decade has involved an exploration of diverse design strategies. Such strategies have been developed and engagingly described by writers such as Kate Fletcher and Lynda Grose (Fletcher, 2008; Fletcher and Grose, 2011). The TED project has developed a 'toolbox' of ten design strategies for fashion and textiles. As Earley (2007: 3) explains, 'some are material and process based, and some consider more conceptual approaches'. This work in fashion and textiles has been informed by, and contributed to, research in the broader field of design for sustainability (Chapman, 2005; Walker, 2006; Chapman and Gant, 2007; Manzini, 2007; Thorpe, 2007).

Sustainable design researchers have developed their knowledge by undertaking small-scale design research projects exploring ideas identified as 'sustainable' in theoretical terms – such as upcycling or local production – through design (Walker, 2006; Earley, 2011). Such research progresses sustainable design knowledge, highlighting issues and opportunities which could not otherwise be anticipated. A key problem for sustainability is that the current system is so dominant; it is difficult for us to imagine anything other than variations on the status quo. Fletcher (2010) describes this problem as 'lock in', where prevailing systems are so dominant that their logic affects our ability to contemplate alternatives. Within these design projects, researchers are able to visualise and materialise innovative products, systems and services, allowing exploration of practical issues and feedback from users on the emotional aspects of their ideas. Meanwhile, practising designers have also been exploring sustainable ideas in their own small-scale companies and sharing the knowledge that they have gained in the process. For example, fashion label From Somewhere investigates methods of upcycling pre-consumer textile waste, while designer Lizzie Harrison explores ultra-local sourcing and production via her label, Antiform.

Although the statistic which has informed the research of the TED project relates to the designer's influence over individual products, design is increasingly being discussed as an approach to sustainability at a third order level. For example, Ehrenfeld (2004) sees design as the path to his vision of sustainability as flourishing. This belief draws on an understanding of design as a creative problem-solving process, which can be applied to global systems and intangible services, as well as physical products. Designers are being encouraged to fundamentally rethink how they operate, 'taking back the power of design and reorienting it' (Fry, 2009: 10). Within the context of fashion, a third order view involves an appreciation of fashion as a complex global system incorporating many interconnected layers, rhythms, communities and cultures. It requires us to move beyond the popular conception of fashion and sustainability as opposing forces, and to consider well-being as an element of sustainability. From a well-being perspective, contemporary fashion culture can be criticised for creating

anxiety, and curtailing the agency of individuals by restricting choice and alienating wearers from the making of their clothes; these issues are discussed in detail in Chapter 3. Adopting a third order view, Fletcher and Grose (2008: 1) call for 'fashion that helps us flourish'. They describe how the rich culture of fashion helps us to meet our human needs for identity and participation, and argue that celebrating this positive role of fashion could improve individual well-being and allow new opportunities for sustainability to emerge.

### **Addressing consumption**

The positive approach proposed by Fletcher and Grose prompts reflection on the issue of consumption. The approach to sustainability prevalent in the fashion industry at present does not countenance any change to ever-increasing volumes of production. This is understandable; the industry is based on the conventional economics of continuous economic growth, tied to increasing sales by volume (Fletcher, 2010; Grose, 2011). However, the benefits of making products greener will be lost if the scale of material throughput remains so far beyond the carrying capacity of the earth (Jackson, 2005); as Thorpe (2012: 1) argues, 'we need to move away from consumerism and growth as a central organizing principle in society'. Therefore, we must contemplate a significant reduction in the volume of clothing consumed in the UK.

Despite this need, I am reluctant to view consumption as inherently negative and all desires as artificially produced. This perspective, critically outlined by Jackson (2005: 21), sees consumers as 'locked into a kind of "social pathology" – driven to consume by a mixture of greed, social norms, and the persuasive power of unscrupulous producers'. Consumers are constructed as dupes (Slater, 1997) and addicts (Maiteny, 2010). As Chambers et al. (2000: 3-4) point out, much human activity depends on consumption: 'those goods and services which sustain us, and make our lives easier or more pleasant, all require inputs of materials and usage of natural sinks for waste products'. Jackson (2009: 50) observes that we 'imbue material things with social and psychological meanings', and that material goods have been used symbolically in all known societies, throughout history. These objects play an essential and unique role in culture; as McCracken (1990: 74) argues, they 'contribute... to the construction of the culturally constituted world precisely because they are a vital, visible record of cultural meaning that is otherwise intangible'. Many environmental arguments about consumerism conflate consumer society with material culture. This is unhelpful; as Miller (2009: 5) points out, 'whatever our environmental fears or concerns over materialism, we will not be helped by ... an attitude to stuff, that simply tries to oppose ourselves to it; as though the more we think of ourselves as alien, we keep ourselves sacrosanct and pure'.

Reisch (2001) distinguishes between material satisfaction, which relates to the acquisition of objects or materials, and non-material satisfaction, which relates to use. The idea of non-material satisfaction suggests that rather than attempting to eliminate objects from our lives, we

need to learn to use them in a different, less materially intensive, way. This is not a rejection of 'stuff', but a change in our relationship with it; from ownership to use, and from 'having' to 'being'. This idea is reflected in the writing of Fletcher and Grose:

It is a distinction between a culture defined by its material consumption and one that is catalysed by using material and non-material satisfiers to help us engage, connect and better understand about each other, our world and ourselves.

(Fletcher and Grose, 2008: 5)

This third order view of fashion requires us to consider the role of fashion independently from the current economic fashion system. This is far from easy; as Breward and Evans (2005: 2) explain, 'fashion is a process in two senses: it is a market-driven cycle of consumer desire and demand; and it is a modern mechanism for the fabrication of the self'. These economic and cultural processes are intertwined, 'mutually constitutive to the extent of being analytically inseparable', according to Briggs (2005: 81). I argue that the challenge of sustainability requires us to separate the seemingly inseparable, and the work of Fletcher and Grose provides encouragement that this may be possible.

### **The role of the user**

An expanded view of fashion invites recognition of the role of wearers in relation to sustainability. A number of recent research projects have sought to investigate user attitudes and behaviour in relation to the acquisition, maintenance and disposal of clothing (Birtwistle and Moore, 2007; Klepp, 2007; Fisher et al., 2008). Saving resources associated with laundering, for example, has been identified as a way in which wearers could contribute to a reduction in environmental impacts (Gracey and Moon, 2012). If wearers were to extend the active lifetime of their clothing, this could contribute to a reduction in consumption levels; as Laitala and Klepp (2011: 3) point out, a 'short lifetime increases the need for products to be replaced faster, thus increasing the environmental load from production and disposal phases'. Because users are influenced by design, extending the use period has been identified as a strategy for sustainable design in general (notably by the now-defunct design organisation, Eternally Yours), and for the fashion sector more specifically (Fletcher, 2008; Cooper et al., 2010). An attempt has recently been made to quantify the benefit of extending product life; this suggests that extending the active lifetime of a garment by a third, to almost three years, would reduce carbon, water and waste footprints by 20-30% each (Gracey and Moon, 2012). I agree with this finding in principle, although I am wary of relying too heavily on these figures, given that many of the calculations are based upon a sequence of generic assumptions about user behaviour.

A particularly interesting user-focused project is Local Wisdom, led by Kate Fletcher, which investigates 'the craft of use': the practices associated with using clothes. The Local Wisdom

approach is notable in that it embraces the emotional and intangible aspects of wearing and caring for clothes:

The practices of garment use are the 'nexus of doings and sayings' associated with wearing, tending and caring for clothes that enable the practical – and social – carrying out of life. They are a dynamic combination of objects, tools, apparatus and the implicit and explicit practical and inspirational knowledge stored in them along with the regular skilful 'performance' of our bodies, our ideas about the world, our emotions, motivations and stories.

(Fletcher, 2013a)

For the project, Fletcher carries out community photo shoots; members of the public drop in and share stories about their clothes, before being photographed wearing them. The practices described are then used as inspiration for design projects, which 'aim to amplify these practices and explore their integration into larger programmes or original business models' (Fletcher, 2013b). 'Craft of use' practices are particularly relevant for sustainable and post-growth fashion, because 'rarely, if at all, do [they] need much in the way of extra material consumption or money to make them possible. Rather they are contingent on individuals finding creative opportunity in habits, stories, techniques, ways of thinking and with existing clothes' (Fletcher, 2013c).

### **Amateur making and repair**

Many of the examples identified by Local Wisdom involve the alteration of existing garments by wearers; some involve garments made at home. Amateur making is often seen as a sustainable approach to fashion, although I feel that this view is partly based on a simplistic and romantic view of the homemade which has received little critical examination. There are some reasonably clear benefits; for example, while home making still consumes materials, it is slow and hyper-local, meaning that many of the negative environmental and social impacts associated with overseas clothing manufacture are avoided. Homemade clothes contribute to a diverse fashion culture, important because diversity is recognised as a key element of the ecological paradigm. Furthermore, as we will see in Chapter 4, the activity of making contributes to well-being in many ways. Rosie Martin, who supports amateur fashion making through her company, DIYcouture, believes that making can also change perceptions of the fashion system and consumption behaviour. She argues that through making, we gain an understanding of the work that goes into finished items, and develop an alternative sense of value (Martin, 2010). Similarly, Crawford (2009: 18) argues that those who are able 'to think materially about material goods, hence critically, [have] some independence from the manipulations of marketing'.

Homemade clothes are often seen as being more emotionally significant than shop-bought items, and therefore more likely to be worn over an extended period:

[I hope] in a small way to slow down the process of consumption, helping people to produce long-lasting garments that are precious, rather than disposable.

(Martin, 2010: 3)

There is evidence for this; Mugge et al. (2005) identify active personalisation as a route to product attachment, and Franke and Schreier (2010) describe how self-designed or customised products are perceived as being more valuable by their creators. Home making could be seen as an amplified version of personalisation and customisation, which strengthens attachment and a sense of value. I am sure that this is true in many cases; the idea has been the basis of my own approach to fashion and sustainability for several years. However, I am aware that many homemade projects do not turn out well, and are therefore never worn; as we will see in Chapter 4, these items are sometimes felt to be inferior to mass-produced garments.

Making is not only about creating new items, of course. Through repair and alteration, garments can be kept in use for longer; increased repair activity has been identified by DEFRA as a 'behaviour goal' for users to improve the sustainability impacts of clothing (Fisher et al., 2008). Although domestic repair practice has declined in recent decades, restyling and mending are enjoying a resurgence; this activity will be discussed further in Chapter 5. Burnham (2009) describes various communities involved in 'hacking' physical objects, such as the Ikea Hacker initiative ([ikeahackers.net](http://ikeahackers.net)). He argues that this emergent culture 'is evidence of a public will to re-purpose the objects they own and of a desire for a new relationship with the objects and systems they buy and use' (Burnham, 2009: 16). From a holistic viewpoint, developing a culture of repair, alteration and maintenance is essential for sustainability; as Daly (1992: 44) comments, we need 'a subtle and complex economics of maintenance, qualitative improvement, sharing, frugality and adaptation to natural limits'. Repair does not only extend product life; the intrinsic rewards associated with this activity can also contribute to a sense of well-being:

In a green economy characterized by less passive consumerism and more active production, making, adapting, mending, sharing and all the 're-s' such as: re-use, recycle, re-love, re-purpose... etc, there is far more potential for novelty and pleasure.

(Simms and Potts, 2012: 9-10)

### **Open design**

We have seen that amateur making and remaking can offer benefits in terms of well-being and sustainability. A further strand of research and practice investigates how this activity can be supported by designers, and falls within the emergent movement of 'open design'. The concept of open design has been interpreted in different ways in different areas, leading to overlapping terms, such as co-design, co-creation and participatory design. One interpretation of open

design is the involvement of the user in the designing of industrially produced goods or major building projects (Fuad-Luke, 2009). Another approach is for designers to create products that can be customised, adapted or completed by the end user (Hill, 2004), or even manufactured at home (Avital, 2011). However, I am concerned that in this situation the designer becomes a gatekeeper; only the items that they 'support' can be altered by users.

The 'enabling solutions' model outlined by Manzini (2007) represents a more extreme interpretation of open design, which is more relevant to the support of amateur making. Manzini suggests that, rather than inviting users to influence a design process, designers could direct their energies towards helping individuals to build their own capacities, and gain confidence to act independently. Within this type of practice, designers use their skills to support and facilitate the individual or collective action of others. This approach resonates with the concept of 'convivial tools' proposed by Illich (1973). He believed that people needed freedom to shape the things around them, and argued that 'a convivial society should be designed to allow all its members the most autonomous action by means of tools least controlled by others' (Illich, 1973: 33). Illich's definition of tools was broad, from small objects and devices to institutions and systems. Drawing on the work of Illich, Sanders (2006) proposes the concept of 'scaffolds' to support creative behaviour amongst amateurs.

Two fashion research projects relate to this type of open design: Ballie (2012) used an action research approach to investigate the co-design of digital textiles using web 2.0 technologies. Meanwhile, for his doctoral research, von Busch (2009) undertook various projects investigating participatory forms of fashion. He describes a new role for the fashion designer, who becomes an 'orchestrator and facilitator ... designing material artefacts as well as social protocols' (von Busch, 2009: 63).

## 1.4 Focus

### **My approach**

For this research, I chose to explore amateur making – specifically, knitting – as a strategy for sustainable fashion. As I have described, amateur fashion making could offer a more diverse, satisfying and sustainable experience of fashion, and provide a way of addressing current levels of consumption. However, I am wary of promoting amateur making as a straightforward route to a sustainable fashion system; this would be overly simplistic. From my own experience, and the conversations I have had with scores of amateur knitters, I know the making of clothes at home to be a complex and sometimes frustrating process. Furthermore, I believe that wearing homemade garments can exacerbate, rather than alleviate, the anxieties of contemporary

fashion. Doubleday et al. (2004: 389) propose that discussions of sustainability require 'considerations of the dynamics of complex cultural arrangements in particular places, rather than assumptions of either peoples or their ecological contexts'. I agree; rather than assuming the making and wearing of homemade clothes to be a positive, enriching and less materially intensive means of participating in fashion, we need to investigate the reality and understand the complex cultural arrangements which structure individuals' experiences of this practice.

I have chosen to refer to the making and wearing of homemade clothes as 'folk fashion'; in doing so, I am linking the issues around homemade clothes with those relating to folk music. While some would define folk as either the music of the past or a commercialised style of popular music, I am using the approach of folklorists such as Alan Lomax, who see it as the music created by amateurs for their own entertainment and self-expression (Szwed, 2010). In the mid-twentieth century, Lomax was concerned that localised folk music cultures were 'threatened to be engulfed by the roar of our powerful society with its loudspeakers all turned in one direction' (quoted in Szwed, 2010: 274); I share similar concerns about folk fashion today.

Just as Alan Lomax was committed to championing homemade music, I am interested in exploring the ways in which I, as a practising designer, can facilitate and support folk fashion. From my contact with knitters, I am aware that many are frustrated by written patterns restricting their opportunities for creativity; this issue is discussed in detail in Chapter 4. I wondered whether the ability to make more creative decisions might amplify the well-being benefits of making and wearing; therefore, I wanted to investigate what would happen when a group of amateur knitters engaged with design.

While I believe that amateur making has the potential to provide a less materially intensive alternative to mass-produced clothing, I am aware that the majority of knitters focus on making new items, mirroring – rather than challenging – the linear production-consumption model of the mainstream fashion industry. Gill and Lopes (2011: 312) argue that too many sustainable design initiatives involve the production of new things; they suggest that 'the challenge for the material practices of design might be recast in terms of a negotiation with those things already in existence'. Similarly, Burnham (2009: 16) identifies an opportunity for 'new design processes which are not about the use of new resources, but about the ingenuity to expand the potential of existing ones'.

I am excited by these ideas, and see a direct link with amateur knitting. The reworking of existing garments could be a more radical type of folk fashion, which keeps garments in active use for a significantly longer period. Activity in this area is patchy; while there are many examples of wearers repairing and reworking garments using dressmaking techniques,

examples using knitting are limited. Although it was common to rework knitted garments in the past, such practices have fallen out of favour.

I had three areas of specific interest for this research: establishing knowledge about the experience of wearing homemade clothes; the issue of creativity in amateur knitting; and the exploration of amateur knitting as a maintenance, rather than production, activity. In order to address these areas, I chose to initiate re-knitting as a new 'craft of use', and study how it develops. A focus on re-knitting allowed me to challenge the link between knitting and making new, virgin items. Re-knitting also provided an excellent opportunity to explore ways of opening up my practice as a designer-maker; it would be impossible to produce conventional, 'closed' patterns for re-knitting. Because any re-knitting instructions I created would be 'open', the project furthermore offered the opportunity for amateurs to design, and for me to explore ways of supporting them.

### **Key concepts**

In discussing this research, three key concepts arise repeatedly; I will explain them briefly here. The first is the idea of *practice*; I have already discussed my practice as a designer-maker. My primary understanding of the term is derived from my experience in this context, meaning the activities in which I engage as a professional craft practitioner. However, I have also referred to the practices associated with wearing and caring for clothes, and – indirectly – the practice of amateur knitting. For a more inclusive definition, it is useful to draw on the meaning of the term as used in sociology, as a coordinated and ongoing activity:

A 'practice' ... is a routinised type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge.

(Reckwitz, 2002: 249)

The second idea is *tacit knowledge*. Tacit knowledge was first discussed by Polanyi ([1966] 2009: 4), who recognised that 'we can know more than we can tell'. It is sometimes described as 'personal know-how', and contrasted with formal or explicit knowledge, which can be expressed and transmitted via language. A common example of tacit knowledge is knowing how to ride a bicycle; all of the practices I have just described involve their own tacit knowledge. For example, the practice of hand knitting involves knowing how to manipulate yarn and needles to create stitches, and a broader knowledge of yarns, patterns, techniques and so on. In my practice I use a tacit knowledge of how to design and construct knitwear, and have developed a tacit understanding of the habits and preferences of amateur knitters.

The third concept is *creativity*. As Gauntlett (2011) explains, many definitions of creativity – such as that described by Csikszentmihalyi (1996) – discuss world-changing inventions and focus on outcomes, rather than the creative process. While these definitions may be entirely valid for certain contexts, they do little to help us to understand and support the creative urges of amateur knitters. Gauntlett's approach to creativity, which embraces process and emotion, is particularly useful in the context of amateur making; he argues that 'creativity is something that is *felt*, not something that needs external expert verification' (Gauntlett, 2011: 79, original emphasis). From my own experience, I recognise his description of 'everyday creativity' as involving an element of joy, and agree that acts need not change the world in order to be deemed creative.

Finally, I would like to add a note on the issue of gender. My research questions do not specify an interest in any particular group, and I did not set out to investigate the experiences of women in particular; in principle, I am interested in gathering a range of perspectives on folk fashion. However, the participants who came forward to take part in the research project were all women; more detail on sampling is included in Section 2.2. As we will see in Chapters 3 and 4, both knitting and fashion are culturally gendered activities. I recognise that women are stereotypically expected to be more interested in, and aware of, clothes than men; the majority of hand knitters are female. Hence, the participants' comments, and my analysis, reflect the gendered nature of their experiences as both makers and wearers.

### **My activism**

I will conclude this opening chapter by explaining that I see my work as a type of design activism. Fuad-Luke (2009: 27) describes design activism as 'design thinking, imagination and practice applied knowingly or unknowingly to create a counter-narrative aimed at generating and balancing positive social, institutional, environmental and/or economic change'. Despite this open definition, I feel that much of the current thinking on design activism is targeted at industrial designers and architects; the fashion context and small-scale practices are largely overlooked. For me, a designer-maker practice offers a particularly fruitful position from which to operate as an activist. While industrial designers work for clients within a large system of production, as a designer-maker I am free to define my own practice, and can be dynamic in the way I work. Because my business is micro in scale, I have a much more complete view of the system I am operating within, and am able to address sustainability in a holistic way. Von Busch (2009) describes his work as 'hacktivism': activism which 'hacks' the fashion system. The small-scale projects that he carries out – such as the creation of open source 'cookbooks' which support the DIY upcycling of clothing – offer inspiring examples of how fashion design activism can be addressed within an independent practice, such as my own.

My activism aims to disrupt the current paradigm of industrial production and over-consumption in fashion. It is allied with grassroots collaborative activity in other spheres, such as community gardening, DIY bike repair workshops and alternative food systems; such projects are starting to lay the seeds for alternatives to capitalist systems (Carlsson, 2008). Many of these projects connect with the idea of the commons, a topic that I will discuss further in Chapter 3. I am motivated by deep concerns about sustainability, and a personal conviction that the activity of knitting has more to give. My approach is consciously political; I want to counter the way in which capitalist culture quietly shapes our ideas of what action is possible, or desirable, in relation to our clothes. The ubiquity of mass-produced, 'closed' garments engenders a feeling that our homemade items are not good enough, and that once items are made, they should not be repaired or altered. I take inspiration from communities who have used the home production of cloth as a political tactic, from colonial America (MacDonald, 1990) to the swadeshi movement in India (Bayly, 1986).

My activism may seem at once over-ambitious and naïve, aiming to change a huge and successful industry through the re-orienting of folk fashion practices. I do not see this as a contradiction; I aim to propose and explore an alternative type of fashion which, while tiny in scale, could have big implications in terms of identifying a more sustainable – and personally beneficial – fashion future.



## 2.1 Building a methodology

### Paradigm and aims

To start this chapter, it is important to establish the paradigm of inquiry within which I am working. A paradigm is 'a basic set of beliefs that guides action' (Guba, 1990: 17).

The choice of methodology should be a consequence of ontology and epistemology – that is, methodology is evolved in awareness of what the researcher considers 'knowable' ... and in an awareness of the nature of knowledge and the relationship between the researcher and the 'knowable'.

(Gray and Malins, 2004: 19)

Bearing in mind the context and intended audience for my research, I chose to work within a constructivist paradigm. Gray and Malins (2004: 19) describe this paradigm as having a relativist ontology, in which 'multiple realities exist as personal and social constructions'. It is linked to an epistemology in which the researcher 'attempts to lessen the distance between himself or herself and that being researched' (Creswell, 2007: 17). A constructivist paradigm was relevant, as I wanted to gain a deep understanding of the culture of folk fashion and the experiences of amateur knitters, from their perspective. In view of this paradigm, I adopted a qualitative approach; 'qualitative research is a naturalistic, interpretative approach concerned with understanding the meanings which people attach to phenomena ... within their social worlds' (Snape and Spencer, 2003: 3). Qualitative researchers take an 'emic', or insider perspective. This interpretive, emic approach is a good fit for my interest in well-being and openness, described in Chapter 1. It is also consistent with a feminist perspective, in that it allows women to communicate their experiences and raise issues which are important to them (Letherby, 2003). Given that fashion and knitting have been culturally gendered as feminine, and that women's everyday experiences of both have been largely overlooked by academic research, I feel that this perspective is important.

Snape and Spencer (2003) describe naturalistic enquiry – rather than experimental settings – as being appropriate for qualitative, interpretive research. I used a naturalistic approach and acted as a practitioner-researcher, described by Robson (1993: 446) as 'someone who holds down a job in some particular area and at the same time carries out ... inquiry which is of relevance to the job'. Working in this way offers the benefits of insider knowledge and prior experience. Some would argue that this prior experience clouds the mind; however, a constructivist paradigm recognises that all research is affected by the complex subjectivities of the researcher. Letherby et al. (2013: 80) suggest that, rather than seeing this as a disadvantage, we should adopt a position of 'theorised subjectivity'; this position 'requires the constant, critical

interrogation of our personhood – both intellectual and personal – within the knowledge production process’. For me, this means consciously acknowledging and interrogating my previous personal and professional experience. I believe that it is important for practising designers to carry out research; as White and Griffiths (2000: 3) argue, ‘the practitioner’s perspective ... has been largely ignored in the academic development of the field of fashion’. With this in mind, I have located myself within this text and written in the first person. As Letherby (2003: 7) says, ‘writing in which the author refers to her/himself as the “author” or “we” excludes any references to the writer’s self and implies that they have no involvement with and no responsibility for what they write’.

Having identified the paradigm within which I am working, and having established a qualitative, practice-based approach, I now need to clarify my research methodology. Research in art and design is relatively young, and does not have established methodologies (Gray and Malins, 2004). Methodologies can be ‘borrowed’ from other disciplines; alternatively, the art and design researcher can invent a new methodology, and this is the approach that I have adopted. Denzin and Lincoln (1994: 2) describe how the qualitative researcher ‘produces a bricolage, that is, a pieced-together, close-knit set of practices that provide solutions to a problem in a concrete situation’.

At this stage, I will re-state my research aims:

- to investigate the relationship between amateur fashion making and well-being, with special reference to hand knitting
- to explore the ways in which a designer-maker can support amateur re-knitting and design activity
- to explore the ways in which amateur re-knitting and design activity affects the practices and perceptions of amateur makers.

In looking for methods which might address these aims, it is logical to consider previous research into amateur making activity; methods commonly used include participant observation (Cerny, 1992; Stalp, 2008) and interviews (Johnson and Wilson, 2005; Jackson, 2010). I could have adopted a similar approach; however, a study of existing practice would not help my activist agenda. Instead, I chose an active, design-based approach, which keeps the research grounded in the materiality of the practices being investigated. I initiated re-knitting as a new strand of creative amateur making activity, and working with a group of knitters to study its development.

As I explained in Section 1.1, the ideas behind this research stem from the conversations I have had with knitters at my workshops. I have found that knitting as a group encourages open, constructive conversation. Others have made similar observations; Stitchlinks (2008: 3)

suggests that 'being occupied at a certain level appears to prevent the brain from applying its normal prejudices and limitations, which helps to lower barriers making it easier to talk more intimately'. Given that I have found this environment to be conducive to conversation about making, I was keen to use workshops in my research. In order to develop the validity and rigour of my work, I have also drawn on the experiences of other researchers. My 'bricolage' methodology was informed by two emerging methodologies: in developing and testing re-knitting techniques, I undertook *design research*; by asking a group of knitters to use the techniques creatively, I used *creative research methods*. Before describing my own approach in more detail, I will outline the thinking behind these two methodologies.

### **Design research**

Although design research is a growing area of academic enquiry, its definitions and methodologies are still in development. Writers vary in their definitions of design research; I prefer the categorisation, proposed by Frayling (1993), of 'research for design', 'research through design' and 'research into design'. Research for design can be described as research which informs the design process; research into design examines the process and profession of design (Frankel and Racine, 2010). I am interested in the third category: research through design. There are differing interpretations of the meaning of research through design, and alternative terms for similar activities. Although Sevaldson calls this activity 'research by design', his definition is useful:

A special research mode where the explorative, generative and innovative aspects of design are engaged and aligned in a systematic research inquiry ... These practices need to be complemented with a special dimension of reflection to qualify as research.

(Sevaldson, 2010: 11)

The objectives of the design research project are unconventional: 'in this approach, the emphasis is on the research objective of creating design knowledge, not the project solution' (Frankel and Racine, 2010: 6). The importance of reflection as part of design practice was identified by Schön (1991). It is an essential element of design research, as it helps the researcher to extract transferable knowledge from the specifics of their own design project.

Durling and Niedderer (2007: 1) use the term 'investigative designing' to refer to 'an act of systematic designing set within a research study, intended to generate reliable new knowledge, and where methods and outcomes are open to scrutiny'. They identify five approaches to investigative designing; the most relevant to my research is 'designing as creative exploration'. They describe this method as 'the working through of a research problem through designing ... [it] is useful where it is necessary to gain insight into the complexity of a situation, phenomenon

or process' (Durling and Niedderer, 2007: 14). I see the sustainable design research projects mentioned in Section 1.3 – which explored ideas identified as 'sustainable' in theoretical terms through design – as sitting within this category. For example, the Worn Again: Rethinking Recycled Textiles project, led by Rebecca Earley, explored textile recycling in an 'iterative process whereby design-led explorations tested existing sustainable design theory ... this in turn led to the creation of new artefacts which embodied the thinking, and further reflection and redesign methods led to the proposal of new sustainable design theory' (Earley, 2011: 1).

I took a similar approach, exploring openness within my practice. Of course, openness is a rather abstract notion; on a practical level, I explored ways of opening, and altering, existing garments, and opening my practice as a designer-maker, seeking ways in which to share design skills with amateurs. Walker (2006: 56) argues for the need for sustainable design research to be carried out 'in a manner that is freed from the usual constraints of industry and where ideas can be pursued for their own sake'. I agree; by situating my academic research in my established design practice, I was free from commercial considerations, yet able to discuss and develop my ideas with the customers and amateur makers with whom I have contact. Much design research involves the designer-researcher working independently, without the input of users. However, some sustainable fashion research projects have taken a collaborative, 'open' approach (von Busch, 2009; Ballie, 2012). This was particularly appropriate in my case, as I was designing methods of re-knitting, to be carried out and adapted by amateur knitters. Therefore, my design research depended on testing and co-development by users.

### **Creative research**

Gauntlett (2007) developed the concept of 'creative research methods', building on previous work in artistic practice, visual sociology and visual methods. He describes them as 'methods in which people express themselves in non-traditional (non-verbal) ways, through making ... a physical thing' (Gauntlett, 2007: 25). While interviews often require people to generate on-the-spot opinions, creative methods allow participants to 'spend time applying their playful or creative attention to the act of making something symbolic or metaphorical, and then reflecting on it' (Gauntlett, 2007: 3), thus offering a potentially deeper and more meaningful insight into their lived experiences. Within art and design, in order to distinguish such projects from the researcher who investigates their own creative practice, it is useful to think of them as *participatory* creative research methods. Gauntlett's first experience of creative methods was a project that explored how children interpreted media coverage of environmental issues, by inviting them to create their own videos on the same subject. He observes that a productive process exposes implicit knowledge; Barndt (2008: 354) agrees that art-based methods of research access 'sense-based, intuitive, and relational ways of knowing'. It should be noted that participatory creative research methods adopt an interpretative approach; it is not the objects

produced that are analysed, but the participants' explanations of them, gathered during the creative process and on reflection.

Participatory creative research methods have been slowly growing in use by social science researchers; a parallel thread of activity can be found in art and design. An analysis of these projects exposes many variables, such as the duration, scale and materiality of the activity. Another variable is the metaphorical nature of the creative task. Gauntlett's more recent research has explored identity, asking participants to use Lego to build metaphorical models. He describes another project, which took a different approach. Young men were asked to put together a fictional men's magazine as a way of exploring their feelings about print media and masculinity. According to Horsley (1996: 199-200, quoted in Gauntlett, 2007: 117), 'this process of writing, drawing, cutting, and pasting ... in some way mirrored the procedures involved in piecing together one's own representation of the self'. I asked a group of knitters to design and execute an alteration to a garment from their own wardrobes; this is neither a metaphorical representation of identity, nor a mirror for identity construction, but a staged version of a naturally occurring process, which we will encounter in Chapter 3: the construction of identity through dress.

Another variable is the relationship between researcher and participants. Gauntlett (2007: 96) describes creative methods as a sort of 'activity-based ethnography'; the participants are engaged in a task, and the researcher adopts a participant observer position. In my case, I developed techniques and passed them on to the group; I also sought to share my design skills. Therefore, I primarily occupied a role as a teacher and facilitator, rather than a participant. Yet another variable is whether the researcher works with individuals or a group. Gauntlett carried out his video-making project with a group; he notes that this may suppress individual views. However, he argues that 'the group nature of the task is defensible as a simulation of how social knowledge is constructed, and as an activity which deliberately provokes relevant discursive interactions which the researcher can observe and learn from' (Gauntlett, 2007: 100). Group discussions have been identified as appropriate for feminist research, because they recognise the importance of social context to women's experiences (Wilkinson, 1998). As Bryman (2004: 358) describes, through group methods 'there is greater opportunity to derive understandings that chime with the 'lived experience' of women'. I asked the participants in my research to undertake individual projects within a group context; I believe that this offers an ideal blend of perspectives.

### **My methodology**

Having discussed these two influential approaches, I will now describe my methodology in more detail. The project involved the development and testing of re-knitting techniques, and a series of workshops with a group of amateur knitters. The project had a quasi-experimental approach

(Hakim, 2000); I captured the existing attitudes and experiences of the knitters at the start of the research, and then guided them through a staged sequence of experiences and explored the changes that occurred, both in my practice and in the attitudes and activities of the participants.

From a design research point of view, the activity involved the development of re-knitting techniques, drawing on knowledge from the past and thinking laterally to create new variations. Part of the research was an investigation into ways of supporting amateur knitters in undertaking knit-based alterations, testing them out and producing written and visual resources. It would be impossible to produce conventional, 'closed' patterns for re-knitting; therefore, part of this support involved developing strategies to assist amateur knitters in making design decisions. While I hoped to create resources that would be of use to knitters in the future, it should be noted that the purpose of the design research was to contribute knowledge to the research aims: directly, in terms of how a designer-maker can support amateur activity; and indirectly, by providing a forum for discussion on the other topics of interest.

The use of participatory creative research methods enables me to understand the experiences and attitudes of the knitters. We knitted together, as a way of supporting open conversation; we undertook short technical and design activities, which allowed me to test the re-knitting resources I had developed, and prompt discussion and reflection; finally, the participants undertook a larger project, altering items of knitwear from their own wardrobes. I aimed to capture the knowledge that emerged from this process, such as the deliberation over design decisions and the embodied experience of re-knitting. I hoped that the activity would prompt reflection by the participants on their actions and the wider fashion system. This approach relates to the 'critical making' process developed by Ratto (2011). He uses group making activities to explore the values associated with various technical innovations. As he explains, 'the ultimate goal of critical making experiences is not the evocative or pedagogical object intended to be experienced by others, but rather the creation of novel understandings by the makers themselves' (Ratto, 2011: 205).

I worked with one small group over an extended period. The strength of qualitative research is in providing rich, detailed data about a small number of cases (Snape and Spencer, 2003); by working in this way, I maximised this detail. Testing and developing the re-knitting resources, building up skills and planning and executing an individual project took a significant amount of time. Describing a research project in which participants created individual quilt blocks, Ball (2008: 366) observes that the time spent 'creates this space, journey, opportunity, opening'. Gauntlett (2007) suggests that during an extended project, the researcher gains access to tacit, unspoken, and backstage knowledge.

I have identified two PhD research projects which use a similar format. Kaya (2010) investigated situated knowledge transfer from a designer to textile makers without prior formal design training, with the goal of creating new products for sale. Shaw (1998) investigated sculpture as a significant activity and means of conveying identity for patients with life-threatening illness. In both cases, the designer/artist researcher introduced a new activity to a group of participants over an extended period in a studio environment. Like me, they aimed to see how the activity changed the participants' behaviour, and gave prominence to the participants' own interpretations of their experiences.

I chose to carry out individual interviews at the start of the project. While I hoped that the workshops would provide me with rich data, gaining an in-depth profile of each participant was useful for the quasi-experimental approach as it gave me a strong 'baseline' to refer back to. In developing my plan for these individual interviews, I drew on previous research into women's relationships with their clothes (Banim and Guy, 2001; Clarke and Miller, 2002; Candy and Goodacre, 2007; Woodward, 2007; Cluver, 2008). Several of these researchers have conducted 'wardrobe interviews', talking through the whole wardrobe with the interviewee, and even full wardrobe inventories. I was concerned that this would be too intrusive and time-consuming for a method which was not the main research activity; I chose instead to ask the participants to select four items from their wardrobe for discussion.

## 2.2 Research design

Having established the methodology for this research, I will now describe how it was planned and conducted.

### **Independent design research**

The first phase of activity involved independent design research, developing the re-knitting methods through iterative cycles of planning, sampling and reflection. Gedenryd (1998: 69-70) describes how 'in the conventional view, the design problem is considered as given ... [but] in reality, producing the problem is work that the designer must do'. This was certainly the case for this design research project; although I had identified re-knitting as my area of activity, at the beginning I could barely see what shape this work might take. During the iterative design cycles, I was able to work through my ideas about re-knitting, gradually identifying the problem and potential solutions, and starting to build techniques and methods that could be shared in the workshops. This process is described in detail in Chapter 5.

## **Planning**

After several months of development, I felt ready to prepare for the group sessions. I planned out the programme schedule, with activity structured over four months: the initial individual interviews, two evening 'Knitting Circles', four full-day workshops and a final evening reflective session. I also planned to conduct a short follow-up interview with each participant a few months after the project. This arrangement was judged to provide sufficient time for activity and discussion, without demanding an unreasonable commitment from the participants.

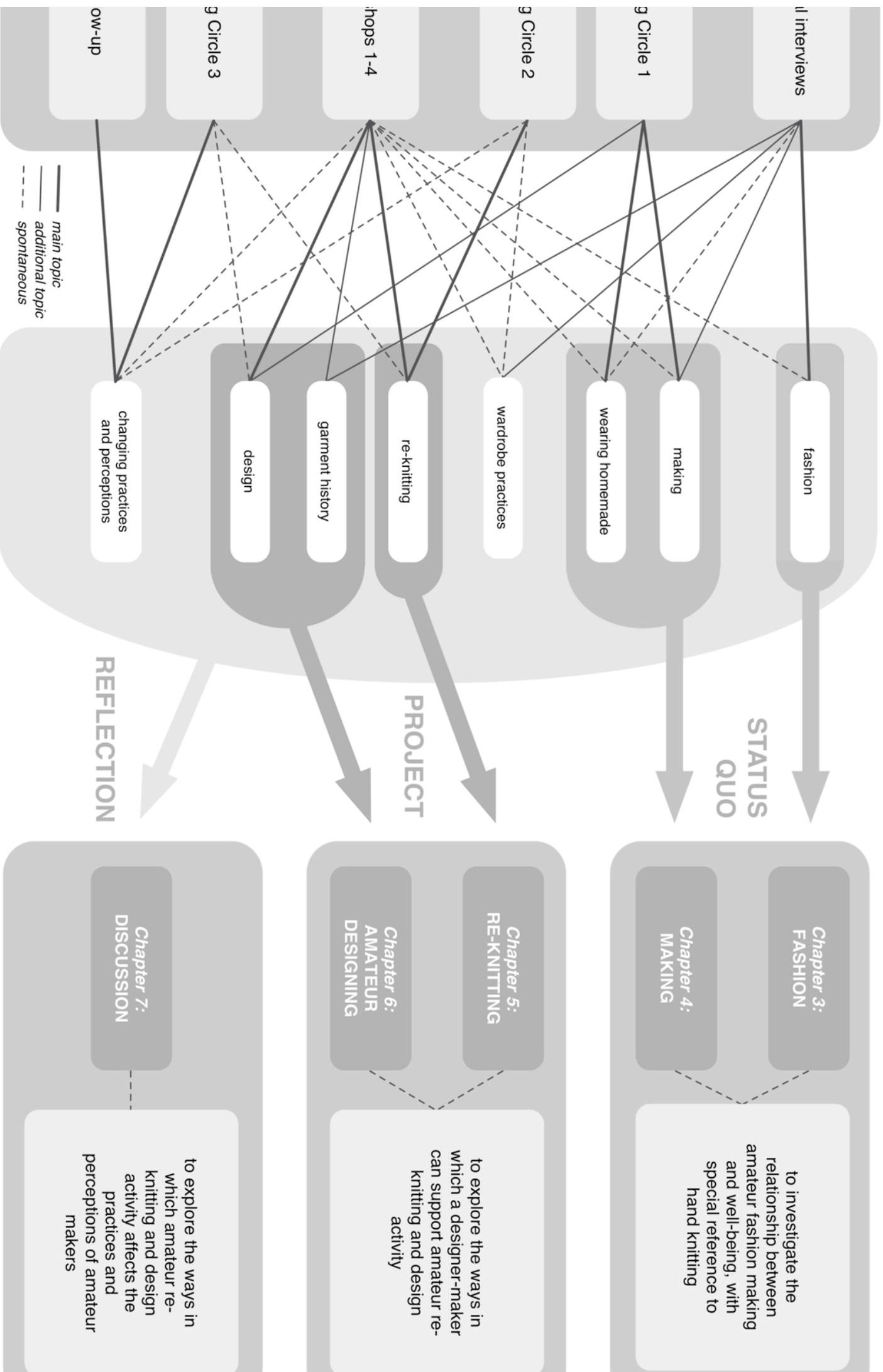
The schedule was planned carefully to target the topics that I had identified as being relevant to my research aims. Figure 2.1 indicates the relationships between the planned sessions, specific topics for discussion or activity, the thesis chapters to which they contribute, and the research aims. As indicated on the diagram, during the sessions I found that conversations arose spontaneously – often through anecdotes about past experience – which related to topics other than those targeted within the session.

## **Sampling**

I chose to create a group for the project, rather than approaching an existing craft group. Pre-existing groups can be said to provide a more natural discussion; on the other hand, 'people who know each other well are likely to operate with taken-for-granted assumptions that they feel do not need to be brought to the fore' (Bryman, 2004: 354). I decided to recreate the experience of my 'normal' workshops and create a group of six to eight like-minded strangers. I chose not to restrict participation on the grounds of age or gender; I have found that differences can provoke illuminating discussion and did not want to eliminate potential participants. Instead, I simply specified that participants needed to hand knit, crochet or machine knit on a regular basis, have reasonable hand knitting skills, and have knitted at least one item of clothing in the past. This allowed me to access knitters with a range of experiences, yet with sufficient practical knowledge to participate in the planned activities; I was interested to see how knitters with different abilities and levels of confidence would respond to the re-knitting techniques.

I chose to use a volunteer sampling method. This approach would not be appropriate for many research projects; as O'Leary (2005: 94) points out, 'the characteristics of those who volunteer are likely to be quite distinct from those who don't'. However, as Hakim (2000: 130) explains, 'volunteer samples may actually be more appropriate for a study seeking to assess the impact of a programme with voluntary participation'. This project was primarily about extending the existing practices of knitters, and investigating the potential for a new type of making, which would be voluntarily adopted; therefore, volunteer sampling was appropriate.

I felt that participants would be more inclined to volunteer if they had some personal contact with me, and so I targeted people who had attended my knitting workshops, and members of a local



Multiple Interviews

Circle 1

Circle 2

Circle 3

Groups 1-4

Follow-up

fashion

making

wearing homemade

wardrobe practices

re-knitting

garment history

design

changing practices and perceptions

STATUS QUO

PROJECT

REFLECTION

Chapter 3: FASHION

Chapter 4: MAKING

Chapter 5: RE-KNITTING

Chapter 6: AMATEUR DESIGNING

Chapter 7: DISCUSSION

to investigate the relationship between amateur fashion making and well-being, with special reference to hand knitting

to explore the ways in which a designer-maker can support amateur re-knitting and design activity

to explore the ways in which amateur re-knitting and design activity affects the practices and perceptions of amateur makers

knitting group. I used my business database to identify 145 people who had attended my hand or machine knitting workshops at any time since I started running them in 2008. I then eliminated those who lived more than sixty minutes drive from the studio; were machine, rather than hand knitters; had a professional role involving knitting; had attended more than one workshop, or workshops involving re-knitting or design-related skills. Through this process of elimination, I narrowed down the list to 25 local amateur hand knitters, who were interested in developing their skills through attending workshops but had not had extended contact with my ideas about re-knitting or design. It is a reflection of the gender imbalance in hand knitting generally, and at my previous workshops, that the shortlisted group did not include any men.

In order to brief potential participants on the project, which I named 'Re-Knitting and Free Knitting', I prepared a short leaflet and a longer information sheet (Appendices A1 and A2); I displayed the same information on my website. Approximately eight weeks before the first scheduled group session, I sent the leaflet and information sheet to the shortlist of workshop attendees. Around the same time, I visited the Hereford Stitch & Bitch knitting group.

I received expressions of interest from twelve people in total. Seven subsequently committed to the project, and formed the participant group. Five of these participants were previous workshop attendees, one was from the knitting group, and one had independently seen the information displayed on the website. Unfortunately, one participant (Helen) dropped out from the project after Workshop 1, for personal reasons. The data from the sessions she attended has been included in the analysis. The other six participants remained fully engaged with the project.

### **Participant profiles**

All of the participants are women who live in Herefordshire. They range in age from 43 to 66; of the six participants who completed the project, four are in their sixties, and the average (mean) age is 58. The following profiles provide a brief introduction to each participant.

Alex, 63, grew up in Glasgow and the Outer Hebrides, before moving to London at eighteen to find employment. She is married, with one son and two grandchildren. After a career as a chartered accountant, Alex retired to Herefordshire three years ago. She is always busy, involved with two local walking groups and the local theatre. She enjoys gardening and knits a great deal, describing herself as 'obsessive about it'.

Anne, 64, works full-time as a social worker and has lived in Hereford for twelve years. She is divorced, with grown-up children and young grandchildren. She spends a lot of her spare time visiting friends and family in different parts of the country. In the past, Anne enjoyed dancing as a hobby, but had to give up after operations on her knee. She recently returned to knitting, and joined Hereford Stitch & Bitch 'just for starting to get out and about a bit more again'.

Catherine, 43, lives with her husband and two children. For the last thirteen years she has been a carer to her disabled son; they spend a lot of time in hospital. Catherine has a degree in art and before having children was first an artist specialising in stained glass, working with York Glazier's Trust, and then an academic researcher. She knitted a lot while at university, making samples for a local yarn shop. She now has very little time to herself but has recently made an effort to start making again.

Helen, 53, had a career in academic research and teaching before downsizing eight years ago to live in Herefordshire. She lives with her teenage son as part of a cooperative farming community, and also has two grown-up daughters. Helen has just started a one-year course at the local art college. She describes herself as 'not a very good hand knitter' (although she has knitted garments in the past) and is more confident in crochet, weaving, dyeing and spinning.

Julia, 66, is retired and lives with her husband. She has two children and three grandchildren, along with stepchildren and step-grandchildren. She moved to Hereford thirty years ago. Julia enjoys handicrafts, gardening, reading, and music; she and her husband are building their own house, which has been a long-term project. She attends a weekly craft group, where she has learned new skills, and nearly always has more than one project 'on the go'.

Kiki, 62, grew up in Geneva but moved to the UK at the age of sixteen. After having children, she trained as a child psychotherapist. Kiki lives with her husband and is now 'basically retired', but works two days a week in a shop. She has lived in Hereford for over thirty years and enjoys gardening, walking, reading, playing the guitar, cooking, socialising and holidays in her camper van. Although she has completed successful projects, Kiki describes her knitting career as 'a bit discouraging'.

Margaret, 50, describes the environment and nature as 'central to her life'. After studying zoology at university, she met her partner. They worked and travelled together before getting a croft in the north of Scotland, where they kept animals. They moved to Herefordshire ten years ago and now own a wood, grow vegetables and keep sheep. Margaret works part-time, doing accounts for small businesses. She describes knitting as a 'lifelong interest and passion'.

### **Individual interviews**

The first stage of data collection involved the individual interviews, which took place at the participants' homes and were documented using an audio recorder. I opted to carry out what Kvale and Brinkmann (2009: 27) describe as a 'semi-structured life world interview [which] attempts to understand themes of the lived everyday world from the subjects' own perspectives'. This approach was selected to help me understand how the participants experience fashion and making, and the meanings of these activities in their lives. I prepared an interview guide

(Appendix B1) which translated the topics for discussion into more manageable questions and everyday language. The guide contained a series of questions, each with a number of prompts. The questions were designed to be open, allowing the interviewee 'to bring forth the dimensions he or she finds important in the theme of inquiry' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 31).

At the start of each interview, the interviewee re-read the information sheet and signed the consent form (Appendix A3). Before the interview, I had asked each participant to select four items of knitwear from their wardrobes: two items that they regularly wear, and two items that they rarely or never wear. We talked about these garments in the early stages of the interview. I photographed each garment and noted factual information, such as price, fibre, place of manufacture and care advice. The conversation moved naturally from the specifics of the individual garments to the wardrobe as a whole, and broader questions about fashion, shopping, mending and discarding clothes. In the first interview, I adhered to the sequence of questions in the interview guide; as I became more familiar with the process, I was able to respond to the interviewee's responses and ask questions as the topics arose naturally in the conversation. Each interview was rounded off by a final question about the interviewee's knitting practice.

### **Knitting Circles 1 and 2**

A week after the majority of the interviews took place, the group sessions started at my studio (Figure 2.2). I have occupied the studio for the past eight years; it comprises three conjoined rooms on the ground floor of a large multi-use Georgian building in a small village just outside Hereford, in the rural county of Herefordshire. The studio played an important role in setting the tone for the workshops. Participants worked within a recognised 'creative' space, surrounded by knitting-related materials, equipment and information.

Each group session was documented using video and audio recording. The audio recorder captured all conversation and discussion, and therefore provided the most important data; at times, I used more than one recorder. The video was required to aid transcription and analysis of the sessions, indicating who was in the room and what activity was taking place. For this purpose, low-resolution recording was sufficient; webcams could be used, which avoided the issue of obtrusive cameras and the need to change memory cards. I had the use of two webcams, although due to technical problems, both were not used for every session.

At Knitting Circle 1, I aimed to capture the group's experiences of knitting, their feelings about wearing homemade clothes, and their opinions on design and knitwear designers. I had asked the group to bring an item they had made to show the group, as a way of introducing themselves. By sharing their projects, the group got to know each other as fellow knitters with similar interests, experiences and concerns. Knitting supplies were provided and the

participants were invited to knit whatever they liked. As with the individual interviews, I had prepared an interview guide to structure the conversation (Appendix B2). I chose to ask a few, very general questions. By doing so, the participants were able to focus on issues that they saw as important or particularly interesting (Bryman, 2004).

At the end of the discussion, I offered to show four items of knitwear from my own wardrobe to the group, as they had each done for me. While there is an imbalance of power in any researcher-participant relationship, I felt conscious that the participants had shared a lot of personal information with me in their interviews and thought that a reciprocal gesture was appropriate. The group responded positively, and so I showed my items and shared a brief autobiography.



*Figure 2.2.* The studio set up for Knitting Circle 1

At Knitting Circle 2 I aimed to discover the participants' feelings about 'opening' items of knitwear. We talked generally about the topic, before working in small groups to deconstruct several garments. This session was similar to the later workshops in that the conversation emerged from the activities, rather than an interview schedule. While the activity was primarily intended to elicit conversation about 'opening' existing items, I also introduced some basic techniques that would be used in the later workshops. After the deconstruction activity, I gave the group a ranking exercise. As Bloor et al. (2001: 43) explain, in this activity 'the group is offered a list of statements and asked to agree among themselves a ranking of the statements in order of importance'. I gave the group brief descriptions of seven fictional items of knitwear

(Appendix B3), and asked them to sort them according to how happy or reluctant they would be to open and change such a garment. The group did not agree on a final ranking; this was ideal, as it provoked discussion and illustrated the different considerations which might be taken into account when choosing whether to alter a garment.

## Workshops

I made a plan for each workshop, with several activities incorporated into each day. At the end of each session, I gave the participants a homework task. The workshop activities can be divided into several categories:



*Discussion:* I initiated discussions on various topics at different stages of the workshops. Sometimes, unplanned discussions arose, around topics relevant to the project.



*Presentation:* On several occasions, I showed the group materials that I had developed and we discussed them as a group. Other times, I asked the participants to present the materials that they had produced as their homework task.



*Practical activity:* We tested four of the re-knitting treatments that I had developed. We also tried out specific techniques and skills relevant to re-knitting or design. The participants worked in response to written and oral instruction, and each made their own individual sample.



*Design development:* At Workshops 3 and 4, the participants worked together to develop their ideas for their own re-knitting projects.



*Unstructured:* When the participants were arriving and packing up, over lunch, and during some activities there were opportunities for more unstructured conversation to take place.

Figure 2.3 shows the activities which took place at each workshop. The practical activities and discussions are described in more detail in Chapters 5 and 6.

I started the first workshop by talking to the group about my plan for the sessions. I told them that we would be testing several of the re-knitting treatments that I had developed, and building up to the final task of re-knitting a garment from their own wardrobes. I explained that alongside these tasks, I was interested in discussing their feelings and experiences. I was concerned that the participants might feel they ought to say they liked the treatments I had developed, and so I stressed that the success of the research depended on honest reflections.

arriving

aims of project spectrum plan for project design process

replace edge section

yarn count

calculating yarn count

replace edge section

lunch

replace edge section

homework

packing up

arriving

inspiration gathered

using inspiration

colour matching

colour

replace edge section design process sample garment integral embellish yarn/needle resource

lunch

integral embellish

stitch-hacking

stitch-hacking

grafting

homework

packing up

arriving

homework samples

sample garment website afterthought pockets cut open and trim

cut open and trim

lunch

design development

unstructured chat

design development

garment interviews

packing up

arriving

design development

unstructured chat

lunch

design development

unstructured chat

packing up

All of the workshops had an informal atmosphere; however, at the early workshops the time was quite structured, with the whole group working together on the same activity under my supervision. During the afternoon of Workshop 3 and throughout Workshop 4, a different mode of working was adopted. By this stage, we had finished testing the treatments and the participants were developing ideas for reworking their own garments. These sessions were much more fluid and unstructured. At first, the participants worked in twos and threes, but as they moved around the space to use the workshop resources, they discussed their projects with the others, creating constantly shifting discussion groups. During this period, I behaved in a similar way to the participants, dropping in and out of discussions.

The mood at the workshops was positive. We did encounter some problems; for example, my instructions were sometimes unclear and caused confusion. Some of the samples involved very fine work, which made two of the participants feel ill! Because we were dealing with so much new information, all of us were exhausted by the end of each workshop. Although I tried to design the homework tasks to not require a lot of time, the open-ended way in which I wrote them inadvertently caused some anxiety amongst the participants, with several declaring that they had 'failed' – despite having done exactly what was asked. However, the participants were consistently patient and understanding; they maintained their initial interest and enthusiasm throughout the entire project. They supported each other during the workshops, and were appreciative of my efforts in preparing the materials and organising the activities.

Each workshop required a great deal of planning, and the preparation of materials. I set up a resource of hand knitting yarn, needles and other equipment required for the re-knitting techniques; this included a box of 'scrap' jumpers that I had acquired from charity shops, on which we could practise. The participants also referred to my extensive collection of knitting books and used the yarn stored in the studio as a colour resource. I used the walls of the studio to display information and images relevant to the tasks being undertaken (as shown in Figure 2.4), with the display developing from session to session.

At Workshop 1, the participants asked whether the instructions on the wall were available on my website. I liked the idea of sharing the information in this way, and started to build an online resource for the project. This allowed the participants to access the material in between sessions, and to see it developing from a single page to a large, organised resource. The resource is described in detail in Section 5.3.

The participants produced samples at each session; I asked them to keep these for later documentation, even if they felt them to be unsuccessful. I gave each participant a notebook to work in, and advised that they should use it in whatever way they wished. I wrote my own reflections before and after the workshops, and took a limited number of photographs during

Workshops 2 and 3. During Workshop 4, I photographed each participant's garment in its original, pre-alteration, state.

Workshop 4 was entirely devoted to the participants' individual projects, and they carried out the intervention as their final homework task. I offered to help the participants with their projects, if they had problems. Two participants visited the studio for assistance, while another asked questions via email. My original plan was for the garments to be completed by Knitting Circle 3. However, the final schedule, and the complexity of several of the re-knitting projects, made this an unrealistic deadline.



Figure 2.4. Information displayed on walls during Workshop 2

### Knitting Circle 3

Like Knitting Circle 1, this session involved an open knitting activity and loosely structured discussion, reflecting on the project and discussing the participants' future intentions. In planning the interview guide for this session (Appendix B4), I referred back to the participants' expressed motivations for taking part, and comments they had made during the first group sessions. I sent the questions to the group in advance of the session, in order to give them an opportunity to reflect personally before sharing their thoughts.

At Knitting Circle 3 it emerged that the participants were keen to continue meeting on a regular basis. I felt the same; we had created a close-knit, friendly group. I thought that further sessions would provide an ideal opportunity to see the projects through to completion, and to observe

what the participants chose to work on next. We arranged to meet one evening a month for a 'Knit Club'. With the re-knitting research project complete, we broadened the scope of the club to cover any knitting or re-knitting project. I continued to act as facilitator, orchestrating the activity; however, in essence the sessions are valuable because they enable the participants to share projects and get feedback on their ideas from each other. I continued to record the sessions, and the participants signed an additional consent form to cover this data collection.

When the projects were complete, the participants handed them in to me, along with their notebooks and samples, to be photographed. I asked them to write a statement to describe their re-knitting project, and uploaded the description and photographs to the website gallery. The participants reported that they were pleased and proud to see the finished results online. I did consider asking the participants to style the photographs of their finished garments. However, this was not practical within the project schedule; I was also concerned that it would confuse the creative task. Instead, I photographed all of the garments in a consistent style so that the focus would fall on the participants' individual work.

### **Ethical issues**

As Abbott and Sapsford (2006) describe, the importance of research ethics has become more recognised in recent years; the first principle of ethics is that participants in research should not be harmed. Here, I will discuss various ethical aspects of the research.

Informed consent is essential for research of this type. In order to ensure that the workshop participants were able to give informed consent, I prepared an information sheet, as described earlier in this section (Appendix A2). I was conscious of the extended nature of this project; while I hoped that each member would participate in the whole project, it would be unethical to deny participants the option to withdraw if they wished. I made this clear, emphasising that each participant should commit to attend all of the sessions at the time of enrolment, but were free to withdraw at any time, without explanation. The sheet clarified that if a participant did withdraw from the project, I could use the data I have already collected, unless they stated otherwise. Before signing the consent form (Appendix A3), the participants were given the opportunity to ask questions about any of the issues raised.

The data produced for this project was stored securely in compliance with data protection legislation. In the project information sheet, I gave detailed information of how each type of data would be used and shared, and have maintained these commitments. Secure storage will be maintained after the conclusion of the project, in order that the data may be used for subsequent research. If secure storage becomes impossible, it will be destroyed.

In many research projects involving participants, it is appropriate to anonymise contributions and to avoid attributing comments to identified individuals (Lewis, 2003). Given that this research involves so few participants, each one is being treated like a case study. I felt that it was appropriate to attribute all quotes, in order to build up a detailed picture of each individual. Given that each person had undertaken a project that they felt proud of, I wanted to give them the opportunity to be recognised for their efforts. I described to the participants in detail the way in which I had transcribed, analysed and written up the data from the interviews and group sessions. I asked them to read and approve their participant profile (included earlier in this section) and individual project description (Section 6.3); they were also given the opportunity to read every reference to themselves in the thesis text. From this informed position, the participants chose whether to be identified by their first name or a pseudonym in research outputs. They were aware that whichever option they chose, they would recognise each other in the text, as they had worked so closely together; they were comfortable with this. I ensured that no participants were identifiable in the photographs I took of the workshops in progress.

The individual interviews, which were carried out at the participants' homes, raised two ethical issues. The first was my safety when entering a private space. In order to manage this risk, I spoke on the phone to each participant to verify their genuine interest, and informed my family of the time and location of each interview. Secondly, a wardrobe interview carries the risk of intruding into the private space of the participant. To minimise this risk, the participants brought the garments to the living room of their house, where the interviews were conducted.

I was concerned that the adaptation of the participants' own garments could create problems, for example if an item holding particular personal meaning was inadvertently harmed in the process of re-knitting. By trying out techniques on sample fabrics before working on their own garments, the participants were aware of the risks. The possibility of projects not 'turning out' was discussed during the design process; hence, each participant was able to plan their project in full awareness of potential outcomes.

The project involved the design of new resources: processes and tools to assist amateur makers in undertaking knit-based alterations. At the start of the project I was unsure about how much the participants would contribute to the development of these resources, and this raised the issue of intellectual property. As part of the consent process, I asked each participant to assign the copyright they held in any materials related to the project to me. In return, I guaranteed that if I distributed any material we had created together, I would credit the participants for their contributions and use a Creative Commons license which would allow others, including them, to copy, modify and distribute the work on a non-commercial basis. As the project progressed, it became evident that intellectual property would not be an issue, as the participants did not contribute to the development of the tools in the way that I had envisaged.

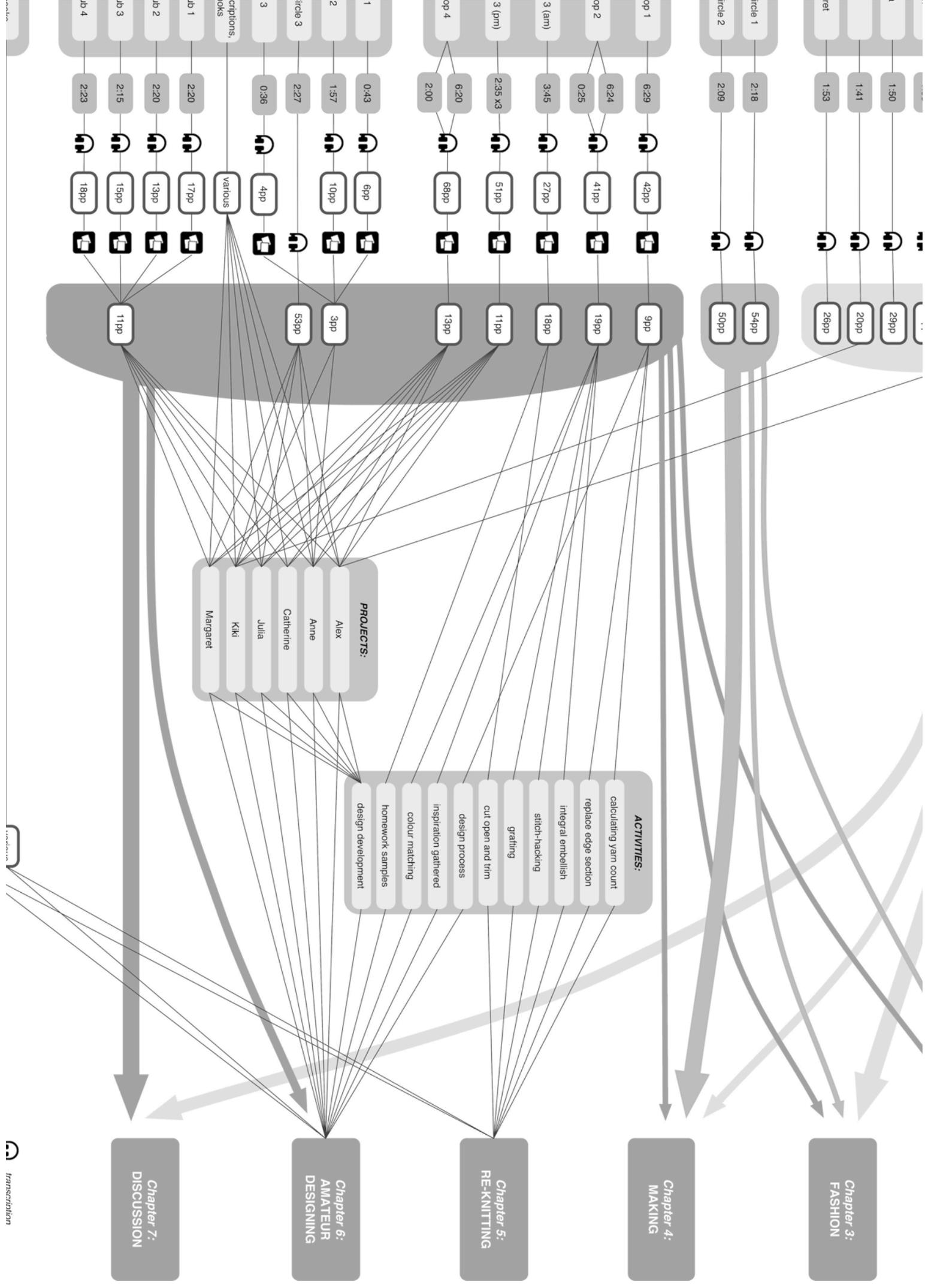
## 2.3 Approach to analysis

In this section, I will describe the approach that I took to analysing the data; the analysis itself can be found in Chapters 3 to 7. Figure 2.5 provides a visual representation of the data, the process of transcription and analysis, and the contribution of the analysis to each chapter; I will refer to this diagram in my description.

Before discussing the analysis, I should note that this research required efficient management, due to the large quantity of data produced (over 64 hours of audio, and 580 pages of transcripts). Before commencing the sessions, I calculated the file sizes that would be produced for full-day recordings, and ensured that I had sufficient memory in each of the recording devices. Because the audio recording of the group sessions was providing the most important data, I used a separate high quality audio recorder and synced the audio with the webcam video using the iMovie application before transcription. Two copies of each digital file were created, with one copy securely stored off-site.

I used thematic coding analysis as my overall approach; this technique allows meanings and themes to emerge from the data, but is not associated with any particular theoretical framework (Robson, 2011). This openness enabled me to take the same adaptive, 'bricolage' approach to analysis (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009) as I have to the methodology overall. The main body of data is the audio and video recordings from the interviews and group sessions; further textual data can be found in the notes and emails written during the project. The physical samples and garments, and images of work in progress, provide illustration and context for the comments. The boxes on the left of the diagram show each separate data source, with the duration of each recording (e.g. Alex: 1 hour 40 minutes). I used NVivo as a tool to aid in the process of transcription and analysis; the application is valuable as it facilitates the ordering and synthesis of information without losing the complexity of the original data (Spencer et al., 2003).

The audio recordings of the individual interviews were transcribed in full; the diagram shows the length of each transcript, as originally formatted (e.g. Alex: 23 pages). A sample interview transcript can be found in Appendix C1. I read the transcripts, making notes about the themes and topics which arose. From these notes, I made a tentative list of thematic codes to set up within NVivo. At the first stage of coding I coded each paragraph to one or more codes, defining what the data was about. I used a constant comparative method (Robson, 2011): as I discovered new topics in the data, I added more codes to the list, and went back through the material to add further data. After each transcript was fully coded, I went through the codes one by one, reviewing the data contained. I found this reviewing to be a useful process; I could see when codes were overlapping or too general, and combined or split them accordingly.



For Knitting Circle 1, once again I created a full transcript; general 'housekeeping' chat was summarised. When I came to the Knitting Circle 2 recording, I found it difficult to transcribe in the same way. While parts involved a structured group discussion, a significant proportion of the session was activity-based. During this period, there were often several concurrent conversations and a lot of task-related conversation. These factors made transcription difficult; I also realised that a full transcript would not be particularly useful. Therefore, I chose to summarise the conversations and activity which took place, noting any comments which seemed particularly interesting. This approach could be described as 'meaning condensation': 'an abridgement of the meanings expressed ... into shorter formulations' (Kvale and Brinkmann, 2009: 205). I coded these two Knitting Circle transcripts in the same way as the interviews, adding new codes where necessary.

The flexible approach to transcription that I had developed during Knitting Circle 2 was useful in establishing a method that I could apply to the workshop, visit and Knit Club recordings. Once again, much of the conversation was activity-based, and there were often multiple strands of talk; furthermore, the extended length of the workshop recordings ruled out full transcription. I used my judgement to vary the level of detail; some topics and activities could be summarised briefly, while particularly insightful conversations were recorded line by line. In addition to the conversation, I noted non-verbal elements such as movement around the room and the general mood. The diagram shows the length of each transcript (e.g. Workshop 1: 42 pages).

I decided that the transcripts would benefit from a second stage of condensation, before coding. The conversation at the workshops was often dispersed, overlapping and meandering; threads of talk intertwined and separated. I needed to bring together these threads to make the data more concise and manageable, without losing complexity. Overall, during this process I aimed to allow the 'big picture' of what happened at each workshop to emerge, and to identify the most important detailed sections of the data.

I made handwritten notes to summarise each page of the workshop transcript; an example is available in Appendix C2. I typed up my notes, annotating each 'unit' of information with the transcript page number; each unit could then be traced back to the original data. As I typed the workshop summary, I sorted it into sections. While a range of identifiable activities had taken place at Workshops 1, 2 and 3 (as shown in Figure 2.3), during each activity there was a mix of on- and off-topic comments and conversation. The off-topic comments were valuable, but complicated my view of the activity; by sorting, I was able to isolate the conversation directly relevant to each activity, and code the more disparate comments into common themes. Working session by session, I sorted the data into sections relating to each chapter of the thesis. Within the sections for Chapters 5 and 6, I made further categories for the activities relating to either re-knitting or design, and added the relevant data from my notebooks and the

resources I had developed; these categories can be seen in the 'activities' box on the diagram. Within each section, I grouped the data which was not related to a specific activity by topic. The diagram shows the length of each summary, as originally formatted (e.g. Workshop 1: 9 pages); the summary of Workshop 2 is available in Appendix C3 as an example. I sorted the transcripts of the later sessions (from the afternoon of Workshop 3 onwards) in a different way: this was when the participants worked on their individual projects. Instead of grouping the on-topic comments by activity, I sorted them by project. This data, combined with the relevant written sources (emails from the participants, the descriptions they wrote for their projects, and the notes they made in their notebooks), created a comprehensive description for each participant (as shown in the 'projects' box on the diagram).

I fully transcribed Knitting Circle 3, as I had for Knitting Circle 1. I then returned to NVivo and thematically coded the Knitting Circle 3 transcript and the entire summary from each workshop, visit and Knit Club using a constant comparative method, as described previously. By undertaking this process, topics emerged from the workshop data which I had not previously identified. During coding, I sorted the codes into a hierarchical structure and gradually identified a number of themes and sub-themes. When coding was complete, I was able to reflect on and finalise the themes, and move on to writing. I used the information grouped under each code to produce descriptive and more explanatory accounts (Spencer et al., 2003). The arrows on the diagram indicate the contribution of each type of data to the final thesis chapters. By analysing and presenting the data, I have been able to create 'an image that we can grasp as the "essence", where we otherwise would have been flooded with detail and left with hardly a perception of the phenomenon at all' (Tesch, 1990: 304). As suggested by Creswell (2007), and in line with a constructivist, interpretive approach, I have included many direct quotes from the data in my writing, and used terms that would be recognisable to the participants.

## 2.4 Supporting methods

### **Festival knitting activity**

I supplemented my main workshop method with a complementary research strategy: gathering comments about knitting and homemade clothes from a large group of knitters. Since 2009, I have run a knitting tent (Figure 2.6) at music festivals (Latitude, Green Man, End of the Road, Port Eliot, Cornbury and Summer Sundae) as part of my practice. I sell my knitwear and knitting supplies, and run a free communal knitting activity. I aim for this to be an engaging and accessible activity that will provide an enjoyable experience of knitting, embracing knitters of all abilities. The projects have taken different forms, but in each case the completed pieces of knitting are left on display, growing in number as the festival progresses. The activity runs all

day; individuals, families and groups of friends drop in and knit. I take a small team of volunteers to the festival, who give free knitting lessons to beginners.



*Figure 2.6. Communal knitting activity at music festival, summer 2012*

The activity is popular, and creates a constantly shifting temporary knitting community. As I described earlier in the chapter, knitting brings people together and engenders conversation. As we will see in Section 4.2, knitting also evokes memories. With this in mind, in 2009 I asked people to ‘share a knitting memory’ on small cardboard tags, after their time spent knitting. The tags were attached to the knitting and become part of the public display. In 2010 and 2011 the prompt was more open, simply inviting the knitters to tag their knitting with a message. I started gathering these comments as a way of making the knitting activity more engaging; however, I realised that they could be of value to my research. In 2012, the knitting tent visited three festivals (Latitude, Port Eliot and End of the Road), and I asked participants to share their feelings about wearing homemade clothes. This strategy was effective; it prompted conversation about homemade clothes, and comments which recorded memories and opinions.

In 2012, 245 separate comments were written; combined with the tags from the previous years, I have gathered over a thousand responses. I photographed the tags, numbered the images and imported them into NVivo for analysis. I transcribed each tag and coded the data using a similar approach as for the workshops: thematic coding analysis, and a constant comparative method. Sorting of the codes established several themes and sub-themes, many of which relate to the themes identified in the workshop data.

The comments make fascinating reading, offering brief yet diverse thoughts on knitting from a broad range of people. They provide a materialised version of the snippets of stories, anecdotes and comments that I hear during my practice. Such comments inform my tacit knowledge of amateur knitting, yet are difficult to record. The tags provide an interesting insight into the thoughts that are provoked by the activity of knitting, rather than more distant reflections, as would be gathered by a conventional questionnaire or survey. It should be noted that, while this method elicits many interesting responses, the data is not generalisable. The festival audience is a particular, non-representative demographic. Furthermore, it is likely that those with positive feelings about knitting are more likely to write a comment than those who are indifferent, or negative.

The tags themselves are open, allowing the commenter to use the space as they wish. Some comments are very short; others squash a lot of writing into the small space. Some include drawings, symbols and underlining for emphasis. While many tags directly respond to the prompt that I have supplied, the majority discuss knitting more generally. Often they relate to the experience that the commenter has just had, learning or remembering how to knit; a significant proportion is dedications, usually to mothers or grandmothers. Analysis of the 2012 knitting tent tags showed that 24% were 'on topic', and discussed homemade clothes; the remainder were more general, with very few inappropriate comments.

The festival knitting tags raise issues around informed consent. At the events in 2012, I indicated on the project signage that the tags would be used for research; however, many of the participants would not have seen this information in the visual clutter of a busy festival. Therefore, a proportion of those commenting would not have been aware that their contributions would be used in this way. In previous years, when the comments were not gathered specifically for research, this would also be the case. However, every person writing a tag was aware that their comments would be on public display and contributed to a discussion about knitting. Furthermore, they were aware that the knitting project and tags formed part of my practice as a designer-maker, because every project is situated in close proximity to my Keep & Share knitting tent. As Abbott and Sapsford (2006: 293) explain, 'making ethical decisions nearly always involves making judgements in the light of dilemmas'. On balance, I believe that it is ethical to use these comments within my practice-based research as evidence of attitudes towards knitting and homemade clothes. In my view, all of the participants at the knitting tent have shared their thoughts with me as a designer-maker and have willingly put their comments into the public domain. Many of the comments are anonymous; those that include names are usually just first names, and I have removed last names from any tags that I share publicly.

I have included a selection of the tags in the discussion of making in Chapter 4. I have used the original photographs, as I find that the handwritten versions tell a richer story than transcribed

text. These photographs should be thought of as visual quotes, rather than captioned figures, and read as part of the narrative.

### **Online comments**

In the course of gathering literature for this research, I came across an online Guardian newspaper article about homemade clothes by Sarah Ditum (2012). As I explain in Chapter 4, literature in this area is scarce; I was pleased to find a comments thread below the article, with 85 contributions. Because these comments relate to my specific area of interest, they provide a valuable additional source of data, supporting my findings from the main research project and the knitting tent tags. The use of this data represents a similar dilemma to the knitting tent comments. Having reviewed recent advice on ethics and Internet research (Markham and Buchanan, 2012), I have concluded that it is ethical to quote from these comments. Although the contributors have not given consent for me to use their words, they have knowingly placed their views in the public domain. I have used the quotes anonymously in my writing; even if the original comments were accessed, the identity of each contributor is typically almost impossible to determine.



3



**FASHION**

## 3.1 Understanding fashion

In order to address my research aims, I need to understand the complex cultural arrangements which structure individuals' experiences of wearing homemade clothes. When we wear homemade clothes, we do so within the context of fashion more broadly. This chapter will establish an underpinning understanding of contemporary fashion, as experienced by 'everyday' people; this provides an important foundation for a more specific examination of wearing homemade clothes in Section 4.4.

In Chapter 1, I discussed the need to take a holistic, third order view of the fashion system, and to embrace well-being as an integral element of sustainability. Sustainable fashion texts often refer to the relationship between fashion and well-being. For example, Hethorn and Ulasewicz (2008: xix) tell us that 'fashion is so deep and goes directly to who we are and how we connect to one another'. These texts often mention identity, self, and the importance of connecting to others, without further explanation of the terms or the processes they describe. Fletcher and Grose (2008) write in more detail, suggesting that fashion provides well-being benefits by meeting our human needs for identity and participation.

In this chapter, I will consider the relationship between fashion and well-being, and explore the degree to which the prevalence of mass production – which I describe as an 'enclosing' influence – affects this relationship. I will do so by drawing on the literature in this area, as well as my own data. In the individual interviews I conducted at the start of the design research project, we discussed fashion and clothes. I have included vignettes from these interviews and from Knitting Circle 1 in this chapter, in order to link the participants' experiences of the fashion 'status quo' with the existing theory.

### **Fashion literature**

The interdisciplinary nature of fashion scholarship presents an initially overwhelming diversity of viewpoints and underpinning frameworks. Fashion theory includes contributions by design historians, psychologists, sociologists, anthropologists and cultural theorists, each with its own methodological and conceptual particularities. As Sawchuk (1988: 62) points out, even 'the question of what constitutes the field of fashion is ... ambiguous'. The literature often focuses on high fashion and the role of the designer (Leopold, 1992; Breward, 2003). There is a notable split between production and consumption literature, which is problematic when taking a holistic view of the subject (Entwistle, 2000). Furthermore, much fashion writing takes the vantage point of the viewer, rather than exploring the embodied experience of the wearer. This emphasis means that fashion is discussed in terms of images, rather than practices. Candy (2005: 4) notes that 'there is an all pervading sense... in much writing about fashion that both the garment

and the person wearing it can only be discussed from a distance'. This leads to gaps in our knowledge; for example, Candy observes that clothing does not just communicate outwards to the viewer, but through its materiality affects the experiences, feelings and demeanour of the wearer. Discussion of fashion as image misses the rich knowledge related to this materiality.

I want to concentrate on 'everyday' people, and to understand fashion as they experience it. However, the wearer is often sidelined; Tseëlon (1995) argues that individuals' reasoning behind dress decisions is absent in much fashion theory. Hence, while purely theoretical texts are useful to some extent, I have sought out research which uses ethnographic and phenomenological methodologies to gather and reflect on wearers' accounts of their experiences (Tseëlon, 1995; Banim and Guy, 2001; Clarke and Miller, 2002; Woodward, 2007).

### **Identity construction**

Clothes have a fundamental relationship with identity and self. In order to understand this relationship, we need to first appreciate the meanings of the terms involved. As Leary and Tangney (2003) describe, 'self' has a multiplicity of meanings in different contexts. They offer a useful universal definition: 'the psychological apparatus that allows organisms to think consciously about themselves' (Leary and Tangney, 2003: 8). Similarly, the term 'identity' is defined and used differently by different disciplines, with a particular difference in focus between psychology and sociology. For my purposes, the sociological approach is more useful, as it emphasises the link between self and society (Stets and Burke, 2003). As Rogers and Smith-Lovin (2011: 121) explain, 'sociologists use the term "identity" to refer to the many meanings attached to a person, both by the self and others'. We gain these meanings from our roles in society, the groups to which we belong, and our personal characteristics (Burke and Stets, 2009).

In traditional cultures, identities are stable; for example, 'in nineteenth-century industrializing societies, social class affiliation was one of the most salient aspects of a person's identity' (Crane, 2000: 4). We now live in a post-traditional world, and identities are less stable (Entwistle, 2000); in this context, we have multiple identities (Burke and Stets, 2009) and the self becomes an evolving, reflexive project.

The reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes places in the context of multiple choice as filtered through abstract systems.

(Giddens, 1991: 5)

One way in which we construct our identity is through our possessions (Belk, 1988). Because leisure and lifestyle, as opposed to work, religion and class, have become more important in

constructing identity, 'the consumption of cultural goods, such as fashionable clothing, performs an increasingly important role' (Crane, 2000: 11). Many writers argue that our clothes are a particularly significant type of possession, because of the intimate relationship they have with our bodies. Dant (1999) identifies clothes as the objects which play the most intimate and constant role in our individual and social lives. According to Calefato (1997), this unique relationship can be identified across a wide range of geographical, historical and social contexts. Clothes link the internal world of the self with the social realm of identity (Attfield, 2000).

Woodward (2007) describes the act of choosing what to wear as a practice of identity construction, and dressing as an act of 'surfacing' particular aspects of the self. The emphasis on construction, rather than reflection, of identity is important. Some ontologies consider the body to be a transient and undermining entity, separate from the true self deep within (Bordo, 2003). Miller (2009) criticises this view, in which clothing is seen as a shallow, surface representation of the individual, arguing instead – like Woodward (2007) and Kaiser (2001) – that clothing actively constructs a person's evolving identity.

There is no 'essence' or 'true self' waiting to be discovered under the disguise of an appearance. Rather, minding appearance facilitates making the best possible approximation of who one is, and is in the process of becoming, in a given cultural moment.

(Kaiser, 2001: 90).

This is an ongoing process; as Woodward (2007: 157) states, 'it is apparent that clothing does not simply reflect the self or identity. Instead ... clothing gives women a sense that they have a self and indeed that they can change it'. It should be noted that this process of identity construction does not just take place at the point of purchase (a focus for much consumption literature) and what Banim et al. (2001) describe as 'wardrobe moments', but throughout ownership, and disposal, of clothing (Gregson et al., 2007). The construction of identity through these everyday 'wardrobe practices' will be discussed in detail in Section 7.3.

The process of identity construction relies on the meanings associated with our clothes. These meanings might relate to the style of the garment, as manifested through silhouette, detail or material, or to the designer or manufacturer, as communicated via (more or less visible) branding. It should be noted that such meanings are not universal or fixed (McCracken, 1990). As Miller (1987: 106) describes, the symbolic meanings of objects are highly variable, 'dependent upon the social positioning of the interpreter and the context of interpretation'. This is particularly true within a postmodern fashion system. A single garment may be read in different ways by different viewers and in different contexts (Tseëlon, 1995). Because of this

ambiguity, clothes are a potent way of constructing our multiple, postmodern selves. Tensions such as 'youth versus age, masculinity versus femininity ... inclusiveness versus exclusiveness ... domesticity versus worldliness, revelation versus concealment ... and conformity versus rebellion' (Davis, 1992: 18) can be expressed and resolved through dress. Clothing is 'good to think with', and can bring 'complex contradictions to the surface' (Kaiser, 2001: 84). As well as the meanings that we share with others, it should be noted that we also attach personal meanings to our clothes, often based on memorable experiences associated with the items. Such meanings may be deeply significant to the wearer, yet invisible to others.

### **A brief history of fashion**

In contemporary British culture, dress – 'an assemblage of modifications of the body and/or supplements to the body' (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1995: 7) – is inextricably linked to fashion. Fashion, in turn, supplies an ever-changing supply of material with which we can construct our identities. Let us now explore the history and current construction of fashion, in order to better understand these linkages.

'Fashions' can be recognised in many areas – from tangible things such as cars and houses to immaterial forms such as music and philosophy. In its broad sense, the term refers to cultural forms which are invented, accepted, and discarded (Roach-Higgins and Eicher, 1995). Entwistle (2000: 45) identifies a consensus around the definition of fashion – in clothing terms – as 'a system of dress characterized by an internal logic of regular and systematic change'. Fashions are adopted by members of a community, and subsequently discarded. Niessen (2003) describes this change as the creation of oppositions through time, with each new fashion revolting against the old.

Whether fashion occurs, and how, depends on the wider society. Looking back through history, 'if a society remained more or less stable, fashion was less likely to change' (Braudel, 1981: 312). During the Middle Ages in Europe, the Ottoman Empire, and in the ages of Imperial China, dress did not change a great deal. The first examples of fashion are found in the courts of fourteenth century Europe, although the spread of fashion increased significantly from 1700 (Braudel, 1981). Polhemus and Procter (1978) describe how the development of trade and commerce, and the growth of cities, created the conditions for merchants to compete with the aristocracy. They argue that as the feudal system gave way to capitalism, fashion expressed the emergent – yet limited – phenomenon of social mobility. For several centuries, fashion was only available to the elite; during the nineteenth century, an industrial system was developed which helped to spread fashion to a much broader section of society.

'Class' fashion prevailed in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, with clothing styles expressing the social position of their wearers (Crane, 2000). Within this system, there were

strict rules governing the use of certain items and stylistic norms were dictated by designers in Paris. These rules were well-defined and widely adopted. However, as the production of clothing shifted to mass production, the nature of fashion changed. In recent decades the traditional form of fashion authority has diminished, as fashion consumption has grown. While social norms still structure 'appropriate' choices, individuals have gained a degree of dress freedom, in what Clarke and Miller (2002) describe as a democratisation of the relationship between individuals and fashion. As Crane (2000) observes, there is now a diversity of styles on offer at any one time. Contemporary fashions are not universal, nor instantly recognisable. Davis (1992: 107) describes this as 'fashion pluralism'. We receive multiple and contradictory information on what is 'in fashion' (Woodward, 2007). This pluralisation can be seen as paralleling, or even epitomising, postmodern culture more broadly (Gibson, 2000).

We have seen that fashion operates quite differently in particular historical, geographical and societal situations. This allows us to put our contemporary fashion culture in perspective, and to understand that the current state of affairs is by no means permanent.

### **An inclusive definition**

Some argue that not all clothing in the contemporary context should be called fashion. According to Loschek (2009: 136), 'any garment other than what has been agreed upon as fashion is simply clothing'. Like others (such as Kawamura, 2005), she argues that clothing becomes fashion only when it is adopted and identified as such by a large proportion of a community. From this viewpoint, much clothing worn today exists outside the dynamics of fashion. Wilson (1987: 3) disagrees, arguing that 'in modern western societies no clothes are outside fashion; fashion sets the terms of all sartorial behaviour'. Calefato (1997: 70) describes fashion as a 'sociocultural syntax' which articulates dress in contemporary culture. Roach-Higgins (1995) considers fashion in relation to the life span, suggesting that if people are aware of changes in form of dress during their lifetimes, fashion exists. I argue that this is almost universally the case in contemporary British culture.

I find an inclusive approach to fashion more useful than a strategy that seeks to distinguish fashion from clothing. I am particularly interested in what Craik (1994: ix) describes as everyday fashion, or 'clothing behaviour in general... the lexicon of dress and techniques of selection, combination and embellishment'. Therefore, I have chosen to adopt Hollander's definition of fashion:

There are different ways of defining fashion, but what is meant here is the whole spectrum of desirable ways of looking at any given time. The scope of what everyone wants to be seen wearing in a given society is what is in fashion; and this includes the haute couture, all forms of anti-fashion and nonfashion, and the

garments and accessories of people who claim no interest in fashion – a periodically fashionable attitude in the history of dress.

(Hollander, 1993: 350)

### **Engaging with fashion**

As Hollander's definition of fashion makes clear, all clothing decisions are framed by the fashion system and hence, we are all engaged with fashion. Unlike other cultural forms, fashion participation is automatic and therefore compulsory. 'By the simple act of getting dressed in the morning, [people] participate in the processes of fashion' (Gibson, 2000: 353). Individuals differ in their attitudes to fashion; some keenly follow trends and others actively rebel against them, while many people have no interest in fashion. Some people enjoy choosing clothes, and find following fashion to be a powerful source of self-esteem (Eicher et al., 2008). Responding to the question of why people bother keeping up with fashion, journalist Hadley Freeman (2011a) explains that 'people follow fashion ... because it's fun to feel part of a club and to talk in shared codes with other club members ... the changeability is part of the thrill'. At the other end of the spectrum are those who do not enjoy the process of choosing clothes and 'experience fashion as a form of bondage' (Wilson, 1987: 228). Such people – defined by Davis (1992) as 'fashion indifferents' – attempt to dress themselves with minimal effort and only to avoid social embarrassment. It is important to note that as fashion has grown in reach and popularity, it has become associated with femininity (Craik, 1994). Today, women are stereotypically expected to be interested in fashion. Men experience less social pressure to actively participate in fashion and are consequently more likely to be indifferents.

However, disinterest is not always what it seems. Woodward (2007) describes a woman who views herself as having no interest in clothing, but who actively constructs this identity through careful selection of her clothing, and awareness of the unfashionability and 'unflattering' appearance of her selections. Hence, this 'anti-fashion' stance represents just a different type of engagement with fashion's conventions. According to Entwistle (2000: 48), the 'structuring influence [of fashion] is so strong that ... even dress which is labelled 'old-fashioned' and dress which is consciously oppositional is meaningful only because of its relationship to the dominant aesthetic propagated by fashion'. This phenomenon can occur on a larger scale, with subcultural and marginal groups adopting anti-fashion modes of dress (Polhemus and Procter, 1978; Davis, 1992). However, anti-fashion styles are regularly absorbed by mainstream fashion and, as Schiermer (2010) argues, an insistence that countercultural styles exist outside commercial fashion dynamics only hides their own conformity.

Woodward's (2007) ethnography of women getting dressed found that most have a negotiated participation in fashion; while they do not wish to appear unfashionable, nor do they slavishly

follow every trend. This was the case with several of my research participants, such as Margaret:

*I enjoy fashion ... every so often I might get a magazine and just be seeing what's the latest, what's happening ... I wouldn't ever follow a trend because, you know, yellow's in fashion, so wear yellow.*

Anne, Julia and Alex described how they would combine an interest in fashion trends with their own sense of style:

*I think I keep up with trends, but I don't consciously look for something that's the latest this or, you know, wedges are in this year, or something like that ... I still have what I hope suits me. [Anne]*

*I think you can have a style that you like, that's neither in fashion nor out of fashion. And I suppose you could add a couple of items that are more fashionable to it like, I don't know, a pair of shoes, or something like that. So you're... keeping it slightly up to date, but you're keeping what you like and what you feel comfortable with. [Julia]*

*I'm looking to understand what's fashionable, what the colours are, what the cuts are, what the details are. I wouldn't go right out and try to emulate that. But I will check out the shops, and the fashion departments, and keep my eye on things, so that I'm aware of the trends, and what's going on. And from that, I'll pick something suitable for me, or I'll pick a trend... I'll try and have nods to fashion. [Alex]*

Catherine identified herself as being less aware of fashion, and felt that her own personal style would come before a concern about something being in or out of fashion:

*I think I probably am not aware of what's going on. But say it was 1940s or 50s, I like that shape, so I would wear it, despite whether it was going on.*

Kiki thought herself to be unaware of fashion trends:

*No, I'm not very fashion conscious, in the sense that I'm not even sure I know what's in fashion. And that conversation comes out with my daughter... She's saying, no, I can't wear that, it's not... and I say oh, really, I'm sorry (laughs).*

As Hollander (1993) points out, it is quite possible to follow general fashions without conscious effort, being guided by the goods on offer in shops and by the appearance of those around us. Helen described herself as not particularly interested in fashion, but acknowledged that she was probably influenced by contemporary culture:

*I would say I'm not a terribly fashionable person, but I don't know how fashionable I am. Because I think... you are more exposed to ideas of what is fashionable now than you might like to think, even if you're not an avid follower of fashion. So there are certain things, I'm sure... that I'd be more drawn to, because somehow it's more contemporary or fashionable... I'm an unconscious follower of fashion rather than a conscious one.*

### **Connecting with others**

As Dant (1999: 107) explains, 'wearing clothes is social in that what people wear is treated by those around them as being some sort of indicator of who they are'. Thus, clothes – and therefore, fashion – connect the individual with others in society. An important dynamic which shapes this connection can be found in the processes of identification and differentiation. First identified by Simmel (1904), identification, or conformity, describes a need to belong and carries a sense of solidarity; differentiation, or individualism, describes a need to feel unique. Kaiser (1997: 471) argues that 'identification and differentiation are cultural principles or ideologies that are embedded deeply in a culture's collective consciousness'. Because of their ubiquity and visibility, clothes play an important part in this dynamic.

Kaiser explains that within a free society, most people conform to the style of a particular group, while expressing a degree of individuality through their selection of clothes. People vary in their level of desired uniqueness according to various psychological and social factors; the need to conform is not constant, but varies throughout our lives (Storm, 1987). Uniqueness is a self-correcting process, so when individuals start to feel too similar to others they will find ways to reassert their individuality (Snyder and Fromkin, 1980). Over a century ago, Simmel (1904) identified a tension between individuality and conformity as the basis of fashion change; Woodward (2007) reports that her ethnography showed a similar tension within women's relationships with clothing.

Tseëlon (1995) states that clothes are vital to the presentation of the self, helping individuals to communicate their identities to others. Communication is a two-way process; as Woodward (2007: 82) notes, 'clothing as a medium that relates surface to depth is as much the fibres that conduct the judgements of others to the inside as the intentions of the self to the outside'. For example, Kaiser (1997) explains that self-image is largely informed by external appraisals. She describes three stages in this process: our imagination of our appearances to others; how we

imagine others to appraise our appearance; and a consequent inner feeling, such as pride or humiliation. Having reflected on the interviews I conducted, I agree with Kaiser that the imagined gaze of others is ever-present in clothing decisions. While this issue tends to run beneath the surface of much conversation, particular topics brought it into the light. For example, several of my research participants distinguished between clothes that they would wear at home, and the way they would dress when in the public gaze:

*I don't think I'd wear it because it looked stylish... I wouldn't feel really good in it to go out. It would just be a sort of cosy wrap, slop around at home type one. [Anne]*

Another example emerged from conversations about uncomfortable items of clothing; physical discomfort was bound up with a concern about *not looking right*:

*I feel a bit uncomfortable and I'm always squiggling around and adjusting it and pulling it up in case it's looking wrong. [Anne]*

*I'm always worrying about what I look like in it... as if it's not right around the middle somehow. [Alex]*

A number of the group talked about being influenced by seeing the clothing of those around them, whether friends and family or people on the street. Alex described how she uses others like a mirror, appraising their appearances and relating this knowledge to her own appearance:

*I'm a great people watcher, I have been all my life, and I look at people of my age group, or doing things that I would do. I think to myself, that woman looks nice, or that woman doesn't... And I'll think, gosh, have I got something like that, perhaps that's how I look.*

## 3.2 Fashion and well-being

Having established an understanding of fashion, I will now consider how fashion relates to well-being. Before examining the topic in detail, I will look at the many considerations which we are balancing when we decide what to wear.

### **Balancing considerations**

Woodward's (2007) ethnographic research shows that being fashionable is just one of the concerns which affect clothing decisions. Entwistle (2000) explains that we experience social

pressure which restricts what we wear. This pressure is structured by wider issues such as gender, class, race, beauty, morality and sexuality (Sawchuk, 1988). Tseëlon (1995: 55) identifies three factors affecting clothing choices: 'the situation, the people present and the state of mind'. Campbell (1996) discusses 'instrumental' considerations, including how well a garment fits and how comfortable it is to wear, and issues such as ease of cleaning. He argues that such considerations tend to be discounted in much sociological writing about clothing, yet play an important part in the decisions made by wearers. I found that a range of factors was reported by my research participants as affecting their clothing choices. Rather than divide them, as Campbell does, into instrumental and symbolic factors, I see them as interrelated factors which incorporate contextual, personal and practical considerations in complex ways.

The context or situation is certainly an important factor in choosing what to wear. For example, two participants described dressing for work:

*I was in London, in the city. You look like a crow, you wear tailored black and court shoes. And everybody looks the same, nobody deviates. You just have to go with that. And you have to buy good clothes, because you're mixing with people who expect you to dress well. [Alex]*

*I used to wear, [in the] 80s and 90s, more tailored things... from Country Casuals and places like that. But now I feel a bit like one of the magistrates all dolled up in my Country Casuals thing or whatever. It all feels a bit too much for working in social work, which is fairly relaxed. [Anne]*

Similarly, social occasions require thought about the appropriate mode of dress. The participants generally said that they did not have many occasions which required them to dress up a great deal. Events such as eating out or visiting friends required them to make an effort, to some extent:

*Even if I'm going out somewhere and want to look a bit better than at home, I'm still wearing a round [neck] underneath, and then a cardigan, but a smarter one. [Julia]*

Certain occasions suggest a level of 'smartness', though the rules of acceptability are unclear and may shift over time:

*If we go to the carol service at Hereford Cathedral, I would wear a coat, and I would wear these leather boots... And in fact the last time we went to the carol service, I was quite shocked at how casually people dressed. I thought, gosh, times have changed. [Alex]*

*I did actually phone someone who I knew had already been to Presteigne Festival (laughs), to find out whether it was acceptable to wear a pair of jeans, with a nice top or a cardigan or something, which it was, luckily. [Catherine]*

Weddings represent the highest level of social pressure, with an expectation of new clothing, bought especially for the occasion. However, this expectation is not always conformed to:

*My son got married in May, and I wore a dress that I'd bought maybe six years ago, for somebody else's wedding. And I thought, I don't care if someone says she wore that at the last wedding, I'm not buying another bloody dress. [Kiki]*

Research has shown that age is a prime consideration when choosing the appropriate clothes to wear (Corrigan, 1994; Klepp and Storm-Mathisen, 2005). The majority of the participants spoke about the need to dress in a way that is appropriate for their age, neither looking too young nor too old:

*If it's something different other than the normal trousers and jumpers, then I tend to think, is it a bit young for me, you know? But then again, I don't like old lady type clothes. [Julia]*

*I am a granny, but I don't want to look like one. I don't mind looking my age, but I don't want to look like my mother. [Alex]*

Several participants talked about the ways in which the options available to you change as you get older:

*You put an 18 to 25 year old in a tea dress, she looks sweet. You put me in a tea dress and I look like I've forgotten which decade I'm living in. That is the thing about fashion and getting older. You cannot go into fashion blindly. And especially if you wore it the first time round. You've got to try and look up to date without thinking that you will look as good as a young person in it will. It's just a fact of life. [Alex]*

*It's funny... in the past people of a certain age looked a certain way, whereas now everything goes, doesn't it? Within reason, I think... I wouldn't wear a mini, I know my limits! (laughs) [Margaret]*

Another influential consideration in deciding what to wear is the notion of fit. Campbell (1996) considers this to be a practical factor, though I agree with Fisher et al. (2008) that fit is

subjective; it is influenced by fashion (Wright, 1992) and how we feel about our bodies (Banim et al., 2001). Body image affects the clothes that we select; whether something is considered to be flattering depends on both the garment itself and how it sits on your body.

*I don't wear skirts very much, and I'm always saying, I'd love to wear skirts. I've got a few, but then I put one on, and, no... that doesn't look right, I'm a bit fat today (laughs). Go back to the trousers. [Julia]*

*I think it's quite a flattering shape on me, because it goes in at the waist, and it has a little bit of a peplum effect which goes over my fat bottom. [Anne]*

*I wouldn't want it short, because I wouldn't show my bum, but with something about that long [indicates tunic length], I think it might actually suit me, because, you know, my legs are quite slim. [Kiki]*

*Because I've had breast cancer and I've had a lot of surgery, that influences what I wear. Particularly with my necklines... And also the form of it, nothing too figure-hugging. [Helen]*

All of the research participants talked about the importance of being comfortable. Again, comfort is not a discrete concept, but draws together personal, practical and contextual factors. For example, when speaking about one of her garments, Anne linked comfort with confidence:

*[How do you feel when you wear it?] Sort of smart, but cosy and comfortable... it's the sort of thing that fits in most places, so it just makes you feel confident and relaxed.*

Many of the participants associated comfort with warmth; I was struck by how frequently the desire to be warm and cosy came up in the interviews. Warmth relates to the most basic function of clothing – protection – and is entirely absent from the vast majority of writing on clothes and fashion. Participants spoke about the temperature of places where they spend time affecting their clothing choices, and of ubiquitous central heating eliminating the need for very warm clothing. They also talked about favouring particular garments because they could easily be taken on and off, or layered with other pieces, to regulate personal temperature. Woodward's (2007) research revealed that the internal logic of a wardrobe is another constraint, with wearers often experiencing a strong sense of 'what goes' and what does not. The participants in my research similarly talked about garments 'going' in terms of colour, shape and style. Banim et al. (2001) also raise the point that clothes, through their materiality, exert agency over our clothing choices. Garments which need to be clean, presentable, and fit our bodies are often discovered

to be crumpled, stained, or no longer such a good fit; having selected an outfit, 'we then have to check that the chosen clothes are as we remember them and are "behaving themselves" that day' (Banim et al., 2001: 4).

As we have seen, while fashion 'provides the "raw material" of daily dress' (Entwistle, 2000: 1), many other social and material factors affect what we choose to wear. If we extend our view to the occasion of acquiring new clothes, we are also considering our preferences in terms of colour, fibre, and style; the amount of money we want to spend; ethical concerns; and ease of cleaning. While on many occasions we might dress habitually, without conscious decision-making (Campbell, 1996), if we contemplate all the factors influencing our choices, it is clear that there are many elements to be considered.

Support is available to help us in balancing these multiple and often conflicting considerations. Clarke and Miller (2002) identify a number of support structures that help wearers in their decisions, such as advice in magazines, websites and television programmes, and services like Colour Me Beautiful which offer a 'rational' calculation of individual style. Perhaps the most frequently used source of support is the advice and feedback of family and friends. Dant (1999: 102) describes how such discussions 'moderate the influence of culture-wide forms of mediation'. The participants in my research varied in their attitudes to advice from family and friends. Anne, for example, didn't feel the need for such validation:

*No, I really know what I like, and... yeah, I don't often ask anyone's opinion really. I might do, when I've seen something I like I'll put it on and I'll say do you think that looks ok, and they'll say yes or no. But if I really like it I'd still buy it.*

Julia and Kiki both appreciated support, for different reasons:

*It's nice to have somebody else's viewpoint, because I tend to... buy the same type of things, really. But then that's because it's what I feel comfortable in. [Julia]*

*I don't like spending money on myself too much. When I do buy things, it's often when I'm shopping with [my husband], actually. And he says, go for it. And then I have permission to spend the money, it's ridiculous (laughs). [Kiki]*

Meanwhile, Margaret liked the idea of support, but had not found a reliable source of personalised advice:

*I would absolutely adore somebody just to guide me, and say, this would suit you... yeah, I think that's a fantasy. I think if somebody just came and said, I know what you'd look good in, I'd be like, yeah, please.*

Helen described her experience of asking advice from a shop assistant. The advice given was unwelcome, because it did not balance the occasion – a wedding – with her own relaxed style and sense of identity:

*I came out of the cubicle and then I said, I'm going to be mother of the bride. She said well no, personally I'd have a different dress (laughs). She implied that it was not good enough for mother of the bride. But I was annoyed that I got affected by that comment. Because... she didn't know me at all. Those little things... if you're lacking in a bit of dress confidence, those sorts of things can absolutely floor you.*

### **Meeting needs**

I have chosen to use Max-Neef's (1992) concept of fundamental human needs, described in Section 1.2, as a way of exploring well-being. While clothing clearly meets the physical need for protection, Fletcher and Grose (2008) argue that we use fashion to meet our psychological and emotional needs, and in particular our needs for identity and participation. Having gained an understanding of how we use our dress, in the context of fashion, to construct our identities and connect with others, I agree. Looking back at Max-Neef's list of human needs, I suggest that fashion could, at least in theory, also meet our needs for creation and leisure.

Fashion certainly has the potential to boost one's health. As a medium for endowing us with an identity and a method of interaction it has a positive effect on our spiritual and social state.

(Winkler, 2012: 59)

There are some further ways in which clothing creates a positive sense of well-being, which do not map directly onto Max-Neef's list of needs, but are worth noting. For example, clothing provides tactile and embodied pleasures. Grose (2011: 5) discusses 'simply feeling good in a well-fitting garment; and ... the joy of touching something superbly well-crafted'. These material joys are familiar to us all, yet are barely discussed in much writing about fashion. Such pleasure was certainly evident in my research interviews; each of the participants spoke about beautiful items of clothing in their wardrobes, and inadvertently demonstrated the tactile nature of knitwear by handling, stroking and folding each item as they talked about it. It has also been suggested that humans have a 'neophilia', or need for novelty, which is met by fashion (König, 1973). Gronow (1997) links a search for novelty to the transitory, hedonic approach to well-being. Davis (1992) disagrees with the notion of a need for novelty, questioning why – if this

need is so fundamental – fashion only arises in certain societies. I am unconvinced of a genuine need for novelty; however, I believe that we have become culturally habituated to fashion change, and come to expect newness in our dress.

We have found, then, that fashion offers the means by which we can meet needs including identity and participation, and provides a source of tactility and novelty. I believe that this is the positive role of fashion, closely related to our individual well-being, which is alluded to in sustainable fashion texts. The role of fashion often goes unnoticed, because it is thought of as frivolous; according to Wilson (2004), it is precisely the perceived triviality of fashion that allows it to play such a significant role in our lives.

### **Anxiety**

However, the ethnographic accounts I have examined (Tseëlon, 1995; Clarke and Miller, 2002; Woodward, 2007) indicate 'the centrality of anxiety and embarrassment in women's relationship to their clothing' (Clarke and Miller, 2002: 193). I asked the participants in my research about feelings of confidence or anxiety relating to their clothing choices. Most stated that they were not anxious about everyday wear, partly because they have a habitual way of dressing:

*For everyday wear, I don't usually stress too much (laughs). It's just stick something on! [Anne]*

*It's easy, because I know what there is and I wear the same things all the time, the same style of things all the time. [Alex]*

On the other hand, all of the participants described anxiety when dressing for certain contexts:

*For a particular occasion, then I start getting neurotic, what shall I wear, what shall I wear, if we're going out with friends. [Kiki]*

*If we were going to somebody's... for dinner, say, I'd have in my mind what I was going to put on. Then I put it on and think no, I don't like that... That only happens sometimes. I think it depends on your mood, and how you're feeling, really. [Julia]*

What could be the cause of this anxiety? It would seem to relate to the uncertain nature of contemporary fashion, lacking in clear and definite rules. Reflecting on her observation of women getting dressed in the morning, Woodward (2007) describes how women often experience fashion as a burden of expectation, with the uncertainty of trends causing panic; the lack of clearly prescribed fashions confuses, rather than solves, the problem of what to wear. If we take into account the many contextual, personal and practical considerations detailed in the

previous section, in addition to the uncertainty of trends, assembling an outfit can be seen as a complex and difficult task (Banim et al., 2001).

Although fashions are multiple and uncertain, our choice of what to wear is not entirely open, as Lipovetsky (1994) has claimed; appropriate choices are framed by social norms. Clarke and Miller (2002: 209) identify 'an intensive concern to know what the normative fashion choice should be'; yet, because social norms are highly complex and always in flux, fashion choices are too. Hence, we have a strong sense that there are 'right' and 'wrong' fashion choices, but we are never certain we have made the right choice for a given context. Margaret spoke about the lack of normative choices for women, and how this contributes to her indecision:

*I never know what to wear. It seems so easy for men... [My partner] is so obviously working, and then going out .. He just has to chuck a jacket on and he looks great, it seems simple. Whereas [my] clothing is a mush of... well, you could wear them to work, you could wear them for going out.*

Another potential source of anxiety is the consideration of the opinions of others. Although the way in which we imagine we appear to others is important, it is difficult to confirm whether what we have imagined is correct. Research has shown that there is often a distinct difference between the message intended by the wearer and that received by the viewer (McCracken, 1990; Tseëlon, 1995).

It would seem that anxiety is an inherent element of the reflexive process of identity construction through fashion. However, anxiety is not absolute, but can be experienced at different levels. Alex's interview suggested that it is possible to benefit from some indecision over clothing options:

*I always get into a tizz and try on about four or five different things when we're going to friends for lunch. Sometimes I like for my own benefit to feel I've made the effort to be a little bit better (laughs). It's part of the girlie thing of getting ready, isn't it? It's part of the prelim to the occasion is that you've made this effort. So even though they don't know I've made the effort, I know I've made the effort, and I feel better about myself because I've done it. It's a confidence thing... it shows a respect for being invited out.*

This account implies that there is a zone of positive engagement between boredom and anxiety in fashion decisions. In a similar way, wearing habitual clothing does not guarantee a lack of anxiety; Clarke and Miller (2002) have noted that this can lead to a sense of disappointment in one's own lack of ambition. This conflict could be identified in Julia's interview:

*Where you're trying to look and think of... putting something different together, that doesn't always work... you try and vary them a bit, but I tend to go back to old favourites, really. That you know work. Sounds rather boring, doesn't it? (laughs)*

In summary, we can say that fashion can be both positive and negative in terms of well-being. Having gained an understanding of fashion theory, this is no surprise; dualities seem to be everywhere (Sellerberg, 1994). The instability of fashion, which makes it so able to express our changing identities, is the cause of uncertainty and stress. According to Clarke and Miller (2002), this contradiction lies at the heart of postmodernity. While the decline of traditional societal structures has created the conditions for pluralised fashion, 'you cannot have democratic liberty and equality without a concomitant sense of anxiety that is the precise result of that experience of freedom' (Clarke and Miller, 2002: 211). In well-being terms, we have to take the rough with the smooth; we cannot eliminate the tensions associated with identity construction and connection with others, if we are to gain the benefits of these processes. However, it may be beneficial for us to aim for that magic zone, where we are positively engaged with our clothing choices.

### 3.3 Fashion and openness

#### **Fashion = land**

Having gained an understanding of the role of fashion in meeting human needs, I will now explore the theme of openness in relation to fashion. In order to do this, I have constructed a metaphor of fashion as land. According to Kaiser (2008: 140), 'metaphors suggest analogies that enable us to visualize and understand concepts that might otherwise be difficult to grasp'. She explains that most metaphors for fashion are associated with industrial capitalism, and reinforce the division between designer and wearer. For example, one metaphor proposes fashion as a pipeline; this sets up production and consumption as fundamentally separate activities, and encourages the idea that materials can continually flow through the system, without limits. A sustainable fashion system requires circular and weblike metaphors, because existing models 'contribute to binary thinking [and] ultimately limit our ability to envision new possibilities' (Kaiser, 2008: 143).

Before I describe the metaphor of fashion as land, I should explain that I find it to be productive, because it positions fashion as a resource; furthermore, it places the focus squarely on wearers, rather than 'experts' such as designers, manufacturers, stylists or celebrities. The metaphor links to my interest in openness; land can be managed as a commons, with its use shared between many people, or privately owned and inaccessible. Importantly, I find that comparing a

transitory culture such as fashion with the tangible reality of land brings some hidden issues into focus and enables an activist attitude.

To illustrate the metaphor, I imagine a huge meadow, with the whole world of fashion superimposed upon it. Distributed around this space, I see all of the garments – new, old, fashionable, unfashionable – in existence. The size of this resource is staggering; it is estimated that in the UK, almost six billion items are hanging in our wardrobes (Gracey and Moon, 2012). On a more conceptual level, I see every desirable way of appearing through dress, throughout history: the huge diversity of archetypal garment styles, shapes and details from different geographical areas and historical periods; fabric types and their associated construction methods; and the enormous variety of ways of wearing clothes, and their associated meanings, that make up the world's fashion and clothing cultures.

Fashion depends on this broad, varied, vibrant resource; new fashions involve existing styles revisited, recombined or recontextualised. A direct parallel can be drawn with folk music: new forms emerge as cultural materials are reshaped and filtered through localised aesthetics (Szwed, 2010). I see wearers – all of us – moving around the fashion meadow. Because fashion reflects preferences at a particular time, areas of the meadow are accessed at different times and by different people. The way in which individuals move around the commons depends upon the degree to which they wish to stand out or conform. Activity is not evenly spread; some areas may have enduring appeal while others become popular only for a short time, until the 'erosion' of overexposure drives people away. Dant (1999: 93) describes how fashion 'acts as a living museum' and 'plays promiscuously with the past'. Gibson (2000: 356) similarly describes fashion as 'a storehouse of identity-kits, or surface parts'. Thus, particularly fertile areas may return to favour time after time, renewed and layered with new meanings.

### **Fashion as a commons**

I see 'fashion land' as a commons, because I believe the resource needs to be open – that is, with all areas accessible – in order to meet the needs of wearers. Before discussing the idea of fashion as a commons in more detail, we should begin with a basic understanding of commons themselves. Hyde (2010: 27) defines a commons as 'a kind of property in which more than one person has rights'. Kenrick (2009) describes a commons as a life-sustaining or life-enhancing resource, which is shared among members of a group. While the concept of a commons is traditionally linked to land (Condorelli, 2009), the principle has been extended to other physical resources, such as water and air, and intangible cultural resources – sometimes called the commons of the mind – such as open-source software and languages (Federici, 2011). Physical commons are rivalrous; one person's use subtracts from that available for others (Dolšak and Ostrom, 2003). Because of this, every physical commons has a carrying capacity – that is, a limit on its use beyond which it suffers (Hyde, 2010). Hardin (1968) famously claimed that

overuse is inevitable, calling this 'the tragedy of the commons'. However, there are many examples of successful commons, where users make agreements and manage the resource to prevent over-use (Ostrom, 2002). Commons of the mind are different, because ideas are non-rivalrous and cannot become depleted.

The discussion of fashion as a commons is currently limited to researchers specialising in intellectual property law (Bollier and Racine, 2005; Cox and Jenkins, 2005). They argue that fashion is a commons because it has minimal legal protections for its creative design. Effectively, 'designers are free to borrow, imitate, recombine, transform and share design elements' (Cox and Jenkins, 2005: 18). While these writers use a legal basis for their definition of fashion as a commons, I am conscious that my choice of this metaphor relates to my activist approach to sustainability. Commons thinking is linked with struggle, progressive ideas and community participation. It directly challenges the neo-liberal agenda of expanding the logic of the market to all fields of life, which is linked with the damaging conventional economic view discussed in Section 1.2 (Federici, 2011). New forms of commons are constantly emerging, particularly in areas such as the Internet, and communities are increasingly adopting this method of self-organisation. Hence, while some consider the concept of the commons to be archaic, it 'is also *post*archaic' (McCay, 2003: xv, original emphasis).

### **Enclosure**

Although I believe it is important to have an open fashion commons, I find that our access to this resource is restricted by various factors. By extending the metaphor of fashion as land, we can frame this restriction as 'enclosure'. Enclosure is the transfer of commons to private ownership, which limits access to a previously open resource.

The Enclosure Acts of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries enclosed the vast majority of commons land in England (Neeson, 1993); land enclosure is still an issue in many developing countries (Powelson, 1988). Meanwhile, various commons of the mind are subject to what Boyle (2003) has called the 'second enclosure'. As he explains, many things that were previously thought to be uncommodifiable are now being privatised, such as the human genome, business methods and digital content. The main reason given for the second enclosure is somewhat similar to land enclosure: that it will benefit overall 'production'. However, Boyle argues that this privatisation is having the opposite effect, diminishing rather than enriching the flow of new ideas and content. He points out that information products are made of fragments of other information, and the increase of protection reduces the supply of these fragments. The idea that enclosure actively harms innovation has been described as 'the tragedy of the anticommons' (Heller and Eisenberg, 1998).

I would like to explore whether the fashion commons has become enclosed. The existing work by Bollier and Racine (2005) and Cox and Jenkins (2005) equates a lack of intellectual property protection with a vibrant commons. However, I wonder whether there are restrictions on this commons which are not exposed by a legal perspective. In a theoretically open fashion commons, we would have access to the full diversity of styles and ways of wearing them; enclosure would mean an external restriction on these choices.

It could be said that fashion has always been enclosed in one way or another. In Section 3.1 we saw that fashion only emerges in societies with a degree of social mobility, and for centuries rules about appropriate dress have guided the options available to individuals. Although this form of fashion authority has dramatically diminished in recent decades, restrictions persist. The social norms that shape our dress choices today are one, arguably unavoidable, type of restriction; the processes of identification and differentiation are another. We could see these restrictions as being intrinsic to the process of fashion. I am interested in externally imposed restrictions, and have identified two groups of fashion 'gatekeepers' with particular influence: those who produce fashion discourse, and those who produce fashion products.

First, I will briefly consider the producers of fashion discourse: fashion journalists, stylists and magazine editors. The growth of fashion magazines, and fashion content within other media, mirrors the expansion of fashion during the twentieth century (Breward, 2003). During the reign of 'class fashion', such magazines communicated the appropriate styles of dress to their readers (Steele, 2000). Despite today's fashion pluralism, contemporary magazines communicate trends in a similarly absolute manner. As Freeman (2011b) points out, 'fashion journalism has painted itself into a corner, desperately claiming from week to week that there are new 'essential' trends'. Kawamura (2005) describes how fashion journalists judge, from the vast array of clothing available at any time, what is desirable. This process can be seen as supporting wearers, helping them to navigate ever-changing fashions and establishing normative choices. However, the obsession within such magazines with 'right' versus 'wrong' dress inevitably restricts the range of clothing that wearers feel is appropriate for them.

### **Production**

As a maker, I am particularly interested in the role of manufacture as a mechanism of enclosure. Clothing production has become increasingly industrialised and professionalised in recent decades. Consequentially, the roles of producer and consumer have become entirely separated. Today, the vast majority of our clothing production happens overseas and most wearers in the UK have little experience or knowledge of how their clothes are made. There is no authoritative history of making clothes at home which can fully quantify this changing landscape (Burman, 1999). However, today's situation is clearly very different to the 1930s, when few could afford new clothes and women instead made copies of desirable styles at home

(Breward, 1995), and the 1940s, when rationing forced women to ingeniously remake worn and tired clothing (Turner, 2011). Clothing production has not only become professionalised; it has become concentrated in the hands of a small number of powerful companies, in what has been described as 'a monopoly of the market by a few' (Kean, 1997: 173). This is particularly the case in the UK, where 'the top five UK retailers account for almost 45% of sales' (Sorensen, 2009: 26). While the fashion media can control which styles are 'approved', those who produce fashion products control which clothing is physically available to be selected.

The received wisdom in much of the literature is that in today's culture we enjoy a truly diverse fashion offer. Conventional economic thinking argues that capitalism creates choice, and allows the consumer to choose from a wide range of products. It is certainly true that fashion is now pluralised; as Briggs (2005) points out, we no longer have definite seasonal colour trends or the dominance of a particular skirt length. Kean (1997: 172) argues that while customers perceive choice, what the fashion industry actually offers is a 'homogenous assortment of like items at varying price points'. Woodward describes the experience of a participant in her ethnographic research: 'each shop she goes into seems to present so many choices, yet these apparent choices mask a startling sameness in what she can buy' (Woodward, 2007: 122). None of the participants in my research stated the situation in such stark terms. However, two participants felt there to be a wide choice of clothes available, yet described unfruitful searches for specific styles:

*If you want to be a beatnik, you want to be a hippy, you know, you can just buy it. Every single item of clothing's made... [Yet, after getting ideas from fashion magazines] Thinking oh, that looks really good, but when you go out and look for it, it's not there. [Margaret]*

*There is so much choice and I could spend an absolute fortune and I could find lots and lots of things I like... [But] I suppose I do feel constrained sometimes. What happens is, I think I'd like a so-and-so, and I have an image in my head, and it's just not available. So you search from shop to shop to shop to shop thinking I've got this image in my head, and you never can find quite what you want. [Anne]*

Helen hinted that she might also be unable to find exactly what she wants, but solves the problem by compromising:

*[Do you tend to find the thing that you want?] Mmm, generally, yeah. Well, I'm not terribly picky, I think. I don't have high expectations of it (laughs) and so I won't spend a huge amount of effort.*

Participants also criticised the quality of the fabrics used in high street clothing. Wearers unwilling to purchase clothing that they consider to be low quality find their choice further restricted:

*I think, now, clothing is so cheap. I can't believe the thinness of the fabrics. When I was with mum last, I took her to Marks & Spencer's as a treat, and both of us couldn't believe it. It's just so shoddy, so thin, so... stuff that won't last anything. I mean, I wouldn't even bother to go into a lot of shops, because I think it's just cheap tat that's not really interesting. [Margaret]*

Abbott and Sapsford (2001) describe how choice is restricted for individuals whose bodies do not conform to the standardised size ranges of high street shops. Anne and Alex talked in detail about how size and fit restrict the choice of clothing available to them:

*I find knitwear is easier to buy in the mainstream shops for my size, but if I want something like dresses or blouses or things, there's a lot of shops I couldn't go in, I wouldn't be able to get into them. I can't just go in any shop, you know, and get something. I find the last two or three years there've been quite a lot of fashions around which have a nod to the 1950s, 60s fashions, which I quite like. But they're in shops like New Look and places like that, which just don't really go big enough. They do have a bigger department, but that's not the same styles. I do like things that are a bit shaped, curved at the waist. In the bigger shops, it's just all very straight up and down, which I don't really like. [Anne]*

*There's a lot of disappointment. Mainly to do with fit. And I don't know whether that's because of my age, or my shape. I think women's shape does change throughout their lives. I mean, I've noticed from my own personal experience, my shape has changed. What is fashionable isn't cut to suit my figure. It's mainly in the waist and the hips. Tops are ok, but trousers are very difficult. And it's... do they want to sell clothes to my age group? I think, is it my fault for trying to wear something which is unsuitable for me, or is it their fault for only cutting for one shape? I'm slimish, but I'm too curvy for straightforward fashion. And I'm not fat enough for Evans. I'm in that gap. [Alex]*

In summary, my interviews showed that the participants generally perceived there to be wide clothing choice, but reported that they were unable to find what they wanted, without compromise. The choice of clothing is further restricted by limited size ranges and the fit of garments manufactured.

Fine and Leopold (1993) discuss 'systems of provision': the unique economic and social processes which affect the production and consumption of different types of goods. They argue that the means by which clothing is produced affects not only the characteristics of the garments themselves, but also the workings of the entire fashion system. Scheffer (2009) explains that the industrialisation of clothing depends on the standardisation of products and manufacturing methods. Hence, it would seem that the homogeneity of clothing is an inevitable result of mass production and economies of scale. Stability suits those controlling production; as Andersen (2012) argues, the fashion industry is so vast that it requires predictability. Briggs (2005: 81) confirms that despite the speed of fast fashion, 'the design specification of a manufacturer's range still has to be relatively stable in order to be financially viable'.

I argue that the designers, manufacturers and retailers who produce our clothing effectively prescribe which areas of the fashion commons are available to wearers. For me, this represents a striking example of enclosure; individuals' access to the fashion commons is restricted. Many would refute these claims, arguing that any fashion depends on the approval of consumers to succeed (Breward, 2003). In order for retailers to sell their wares, they must anticipate what people will want to wear and provide it at a price point appropriate to their customers; hence, it could be said that consumers are ultimately in control of fashion. While I disagree, I do not want to fall into the trap offered by the opposite view: that consumers are gullible and passive individuals who are entirely controlled by a manipulative industry. As Wilson (1987: 49) reminds us, 'this kind of explanation assumes that changes in fashion are foisted upon us, especially on women, in a conspiracy to persuade us to consume far more than we "need" to'. On balance, I agree with Blaszczyk (2008) that fashion is a collective activity, involving complex flows of information and influence between businesses, groups and individuals. Those who produce our clothes restrict our use of the fashion commons because they make many choices about what is available and, as dependent wearers without an independent means of production, we can only choose from the options provided.

Media and retail companies have inflated to such bloated proportions that simple decisions about what items to stock in a store ... have enormous consequences: those who make these choices have the power to reengineer the cultural landscape.

(Klein, 2000: 165)

### **Enclosure and well-being**

It is important to acknowledge that the enclosure I have identified has had some positive effects on well-being. It has made clothing affordable for those on low incomes and has removed the 'drudgery' of making clothes from the long list of women's domestic tasks. It could be argued that fashion enclosure serves the collective cultural interests of the population, by enabling more

people to freely and inexpensively participate in what has widely been called ‘democratic’ fashion. Furthermore, the restriction of choice that I have identified could be seen as beneficial, given that overwhelming choice can result in ‘paralysis rather than liberation, with consequential misery rather than satisfaction’ (Searle, 2008: 29).

However, I believe that enclosure has simultaneously created many negative impacts for well-being. While I acknowledge that some anxiety is inherent in postmodern fashion, I argue that enclosure compromises our ability to access the positives of fashion and leaves us with its anxieties. In order to express and resolve our identities, we need a diversity of options from which to draw (Campbell, 2004). We need space to move around the commons, to identify with and differentiate ourselves from others, and to make gaps and juxtapositions between styles. The restriction of access to the full fashion commons therefore compromises our ability to positively meet our human needs, and has an impact on our well-being. While too much choice can be overwhelming, Searle (2008: 29) points out that a ‘fallacy of choice’ – being told you have open choice, when in fact your choices are restricted – can undermine well-being. A restricted commons could also restrict potential future fashion innovation; like the commons of the mind, new fashion creation depends on fragments of previous styles. The impact of homogenised fast fashion on the material element of the fashion commons can already be seen, in the racks of identikit jerseywear in British charity shops. In terms of folk music, Alan Lomax saw ‘musical diversity as akin to biodiversity; every song style that disappeared was potentially as serious a tragedy as the loss of a species’ (Szwed, 2010: 390). This viewpoint resonates with the idea of cultural sustainability, discussed in Section 1.2; I propose the same argument in terms of fashion.

Von Busch (2011: 33) suggests that the current fast fashion regime ‘encourages a surrogate or receiving attitude for the ... consumer’. Fletcher and Grose (2008: 5) agree that today’s fashion consumers are passive and disenfranchised, because they are supplied with ‘closed, ready-made products with little opportunity for self-expression’. Hence, it would seem that the current system of provision is not engendering a beneficial sense of agency for wearers, or encouraging self-reliance. Fletcher and Grose (2008) argue that homogenous products mystify the practice of making clothes and keep consumers dependent; as Finkelstein (1991: 145) says, ‘if we are relying upon the properties of procured goods for our sense of identity, then we are compelled to procure again and again’.

In conclusion, production-related enclosure of the fashion commons presents an undeniable paradox: the industrialisation of clothing production has led to the decline of class fashion, promoted ‘democratic’ fashion for all and created a rich fashion commons, yet I argue that the same process has alienated wearers from making, restricted access to fashion and ultimately harmed well-being.

### **Overcoming enclosure**

While enclosure presents a threat to any commons, there are many examples of communities reclaiming access to previously shared resources, such as the Diggers of the seventeenth century. Instead of obediently abiding by the laws governing access to land, this group occupied and cultivated an area as a way of symbolically demonstrating their view that everyone should have a free allowance to dig, and grow food (Hazeldine, 2011). A contemporary version of this attitude can be found in the guerrilla gardening movement. Prominent guerrilla gardener Richard Reynolds (2008: 16) defines guerrilla gardening as ‘the illicit cultivation of someone else’s land’, whether a handful of flowers tended on a roadside verge or the conversion of derelict urban plots to unofficial community gardens. Like the Diggers, guerrilla gardeners are motivated to claim the shared use of land, and demand the right to be actors, not simply consumers, within public space. If we continue with the metaphor of the fashion commons, we can take inspiration from such groups, and explore ways of reclaiming access to the full diversity of the fashion commons. One way in which we might do this is through amateur fashion making, or folk fashion; it is to this area that we will turn in Chapter 4.



4

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**MAKING**

## 4.1 Knitting activity and culture

Having examined the cultural arrangements of ‘conventional’ fashion, I will now look at making. While I am interested in developing re-knitting as a new strand of activity, at this stage I will explore the knitting ‘status quo’: the activity as practised by the majority of amateur knitters. I will look at the history and contemporary culture of amateur fashion making and examine how the process of making relates to my chosen themes of well-being and openness. Finally, I will investigate the experience of wearing homemade clothes and consider whether this could be a means of overcoming the ‘enclosure’ discussed in Chapter 3.

### **Making literature**

In order to examine the experience of amateur making, I have searched for literature which relates to this area of activity. This is not a straightforward task; design history has largely neglected amateur making (Pacey, 1992; Kirkham, 1995) and I have noticed a similar issue within craft literature. Melchionne (1999) argues that cultural studies, a subject which is explicitly interested in ‘everyday’ activity, has focused on the appropriation of mass-produced artefacts and cultural forms, sidelining activities such as craft.

Similarly, very few studies in fashion and textiles have investigated the experience of home sewing and fashion making (Burman, 1999; Johnson and Wilson, 2005). Strawn (2009: 245) notes that knitting has been particularly neglected; as she says, ‘perhaps the process and products of knitting simply fade too easily into the background of everyday life’. Literature relevant to amateur making is, therefore, ‘fragmented and decentred’ (Jackson, 2010: 7); material specific to the making of clothes at home is even more limited. In light of these limitations, but encouraged by research carried out by Johnson and Wilson (2005) which found that there are common motivations across categories of amateur craft production, I have reviewed literature relating to a range of making contexts. David Gauntlett’s book *Making is Connecting* (2011) is an important recent contribution in this field, exploring amateur making in terms of both online and offline activity.

Once again, I have included vignettes from the interviews and group discussions that I conducted with the amateur knitters who participated in my research. Where relevant, I have supported the findings from the interviews with additional comments from knitters, gathered at the knitting tent and online (see Section 2.4 for details).

### **Historical knitting culture**

In order to understand the experience of domestic fashion making today, I will briefly examine the history of this practice. I am specifically interested in the hand knitting of clothing items for

domestic use in Britain, but will also look at the related areas of machine knitting and dressmaking.

According to Rutt (1987), the earliest datable pieces of knitting are from the thirteenth century. By the second half of the sixteenth century, hand knitting of socks had become a widespread activity and an important source of income as a cottage industry in England. The first knitting machine was invented by William Lee in 1589; though development of the industry was slow, it eventually eroded the commercial market for hand-knitted items. According to Harvey (1985: 47), by the end of the eighteenth century, hand knitting was 'heading for extinction'. However, the craft survived and developed in two quite different spheres (Rutt, 1987). In isolated rural and coastal areas, 'traditional' knitting continued. Socks and ganseys (jumpers) provided a source of income, and were also made for the family's own use. Meanwhile, hand knitting became a respectable hobby for middle-class women in the 1830s. An explosion of books on the subject provided patterns for items such as caps, shawls, baby clothes, doyleys, mittens, stockings and blankets. During the Victorian era, the hobby spread to working class women. The 1920s saw a 'jumper craze', and the two spheres of knitting met, with the jumper being adopted as leisure wear for all classes for the first time (McGregor, 1981).

Interestingly, hobby knitting has always waxed and waned in popularity. Johnson and Wilson (2005), writing about knitting in the USA, describe several revivals during the twentieth century. Knitting activity tends to increase at times of war, as socks and jumpers are produced for troops (Strawn, 2009). The popularity of knitting as a craft is undoubtedly related to the fashionability of knitwear; as Lewis (2011) describes, when people see more knitwear in the shops they often gain an interest in making for themselves. Hence, knitting enjoyed a boom in the 1980s, as unstructured jumper dresses were in fashion, but many laid down their needles in the minimalist 1990s, when sportswear, performance fabrics and fleece – impossible to produce at home – became popular. In a group discussion, Anne described why her daughters, now aged 38 and 40, did not learn to knit when they were younger:

*When they were teenage... it was more sweatshirts and things with lycra in... and hand knitting's just not been the thing.*

Knitting machines intended for domestic use were produced in the USA and UK from the mid-nineteenth century, although they failed to become popular in the home and were more usually used for small-scale commercial production (Candee, 1998). A new era of domestic machines, produced from the 1950s onwards, were much more successful (Kinder, 1979). Machine knitting enjoyed a surge in popularity in the 1980s, alongside hand knitting, but started to decline in the 1990s. Today, only one company is still manufacturing domestic knitting machines, and the previously buoyant market for books and magazines has contracted to just one monthly title.

According to Burman (1999), little is known about the sewing of clothes at home before the mid-nineteenth century. The sewing machine was invented in 1846, and gradually became more common in domestic spheres in the following decades (Breward, 2003). Home sewing was supported by the development of the paper pattern industry during the same period (Fine and Leopold, 1993). Burman (1999) reports that it is difficult to pin down the relationship between homemade and ready-made clothes between 1850 and 2000. She explains that sales figures, which may indicate the level of activity, are incomplete and potentially misleading.

Overall, we can see a gradual move from people making clothes at home to the purchasing of ready-to-wear items. Home making has, therefore, shifted from an activity that supports the family economy to an amateur leisure activity (Stalp, 2008). Knitting has also become 'firmly gendered in the popular psyche' (Turney, 2009: 8); as Rutt (1987) explains, in the twentieth century it became unusual for men to knit in Britain. The association of textiles – and, in particular, embroidery – with femininity and domesticity has a long and complex history (Parker, [1984] 2010). It links to a hierarchy between art and craft, mind and body, sight and touch, and men and women that has been traced back as far as the sixteenth century (Alfoldy, 2007; Parker, [1984] 2010). The divide between professional and amateur activity creates a further hierarchy in crafts (Hackney, 2006).

Home crafts, especially needlecrafts, have a particular place in British popular culture. Frequently the butt of jokes (Granny's hand-knitted jumpers), home needlecrafts are deemed ... old-fashioned, requiring little skill or design flair.

(Turney, 2004: 267)

### **Contemporary knitting activity**

Despite the old-fashioned image of knitting, the craft has enjoyed a surge in popularity in the last decade; in 2002, it was declared by the Guardian newspaper to be 'the next big thing' (Lewis, 2011). I started to specialise in knitwear in 2002, and have observed a growth in participation in hand knitting since that time. It would be helpful to have statistics to quantify knitting activity; however, reliable surveys are hard to come by. On their website, the UK Hand Knitting Association (2009) suggests there are between four and seven million knitters in the UK; unfortunately, no sources are given for these figures. We have to go back fifteen years to find information from National Statistics on knitting. Their survey of home-based leisure activities found that 36% of women had participated in dressmaking, needlework and/or knitting in the four weeks before the survey, compared to just 3% of men (Office for National Statistics, 1997). More generally, a survey of voluntary arts participation found that over nine million people participate regularly in arts and crafts (Devlin, 2010). Lewis (2011) uses statistics such as knit-related Google searches and yarn sales to indicate the rise in knitting activity; Allen (2010) provides evidence of a significant rise in craft book sales. Although we must be aware that such

statistics may not give us an accurate picture of overall activity, they are, at least, specific and recent. Lewis reports that knit-related web searches have increased steadily since 2004, to over a million a month in 2011; searches for 'knitting for beginners' increased by 250% in the year to 2011. Similar statistics demonstrate a rise in dressmaking and sewing activity (Qureshi, 2009).

I agree with Lewis (2011) that the growth in knitting activity relates to a number of interrelated factors: the current fashionability of knitwear, the changing culture of knitting, the ethos and practical support of web 2.0, the economic situation, and the relaxation and satisfaction offered by the craft. We will look at economic motivations and the benefits of knitting in the next section; for now, let us take a look at contemporary knitting culture and the role of the Internet.

### **DIY knitting culture**

In the last fifteen years [knitting] has gone through a tremendous revival and perhaps as no other craft at the present time is in the state of transition. The meaning of knitting as a traditional homespun craft is being redefined by the new generation of knitters.

(Myzelev, 2009: 150)

Knitting is, indeed, in transition. The craft 'that once was associated with kindly grandmothers, in the public imagination, anyway, has been embraced by hobbyists young and old, contemporary artists and even political activists' (Adamson, 2010: 10). An 'alternative' knitting culture has emerged, linked to 'the 1980s punk movement, zine activity, and the early 1990s Riot Grrrl movement' (D. Stevens, 2011: 50). The DIY spirit has manifested itself in several related areas of activity, including indie craft, craftivism, and public knitting interventions.

Indie craft is perhaps the most conventional of these spheres; indie crafters make clothes, accessories and items for the home (Howes, 2009), through a lens of subcultural style, irony and kitsch (D. Stevens, 2011). Indie craft has an anti-consumerist stance (Adamson, 2010) which places it within the broad umbrella of 'craftivism'. Betsy Greer, who coined the term, defines craftivism simply as 'craft + activism' (Greer, 2003). The crafts involved are often textile-based, such as knitting, embroidering and quilting. Craftivist practices may be primarily utilitarian, such as the 'Afghans for Afghans' project which supplies woollen clothing to Afghan children, or symbolic, such as the pro-peace 'Stitch for Senate' initiative organised by artist Cat Mazza (Greer, 2008). Craftivist actions draw upon the multiple historical and contemporary cultural associations of textile crafts, and link to the third-wave feminist reclamation of culturally gendered activities (Chansky, 2010).

Another strand of new knitting activity is the creation of knitting interventions within public space. Perhaps the most frequently seen type of intervention is knitted graffiti, or 'yarnbombing'. Magda Sayeg started yarnbombing in Houston, Texas in 2005, and the idea has spread (Karlin, 2011); Lewis (2011) reports activity all around the UK. Although many public knitting projects are carried out by groups of passionate amateurs, some are the work of professional artists. Knitting has recently grown as a means of artistic expression; as McFadden (2007: 8) explains, 'in the space of ten years, knitting has emerged from the "loving hands at home" hobbyist's den in to museums and galleries worldwide'.

### **'Conventional' knitting culture**

Alongside these new groups of knitters are those who are knitting in what could be described as a conventional or traditional manner. My small group of research participants, along with the majority of the amateur knitters with whom I have come into contact during my practice as a designer-maker, would fall into this broad category. They knit for themselves, for their partners and adult family members, and for their children and grandchildren, using patterns published by yarn manufacturers or independent designers. These patterns provide instructions, usually in the form of written code; visual instructions are sometimes provided in addition to, or instead of, the written format. As well as knitting for their families, knitters get involved in knitting for charitable projects; as Johnson and Wilson (2005) point out, the knitting of items to be distributed, or sold, to help those in need has a long history.

Despite many commonalities and overlaps between the activities of the 'traditional' knitting group and those in the DIY knitting sphere, there are cultural differences. In my experience these knitters would not identify their charity or personal knitting as craftivism, or align themselves with the subcultural stylings of the indie craft movement. However, I have found that the diversity, creativity and individuality demonstrated in the activist and artistic strands of knitting are affecting the expectations of more conventional knitters. For example, Margaret described how seeing examples of the creative knitting projects of others has inspired a desire to be more adventurous in her own knitting:

*Knitting's kind of exploded. I get the Rowan books, and the interesting bit in the middle, where people have done all sorts of amazing... I think that's fantastic. They're so individual, and they're absolutely, in their own right, really interesting. So I think there's definitely a desire to make things that are individual, and just to experiment more.*

Another aspect of the knitting revival, which has directly affected all knitters, is a greater choice of yarns and patterns. Describing the reasons for her return to knitting ten years ago, Alex explained:

*I found things had moved on. It was no longer just the basic standard things. There were many more patterns out there... the wools and yarns all became more varied.*

Writers agree that the Internet has played a significant role in the development of the new knitting culture (Howes, 2009; Adamson, 2010; Lewis, 2011; D. Stevens, 2011). Blogs, forums, communities and social media have created a platform for knitters to connect as never before. Niche areas of knitting are blossoming as enthusiasts are able to share their projects, patterns, problems and tips online (Kuznetsov and Paulos, 2010). The knitting social network, Ravelry, houses a particularly vibrant community, with over three million members (Ravelry, 2013). The Internet is not only being used by the DIY knitting community; older knitters have recently started using the Internet to look at blogs, buy specialist yarn and find patterns (Lewis, 2011). This is certainly the case with the participants in my research; all spoke about using the Internet in this way.

### **Knitting and time**

One factor that shapes every hand knitter's practice is time. Knitting – building up a fabric, stitch by stitch, row by row – is an inherently slow process. Knitters structure their activities using projects; while small, simple projects may be completed in a few hours, larger projects often take several months or even years. Some knitters, such as Alex, describe themselves as knitting obsessively and continuously, and will complete whole garments in a matter of weeks. Others, like Kiki, describe knitting in phases, or even binges. The many conversations that I have had with knitters indicate that this sporadic approach is typical. Knitters also tend to have more than one project in progress at once; some projects may be suspended for a while, or even abandoned. Progress in knitting is not always linear. The participants in my research gave accounts of unravelling and re-knitting as part of the making process. Kiki's description of one project is a perfect example:

*I bought piles of the stuff, and started knitting it and then left it, and then picked it up again and left it, probably over a period of many years. I think I even unpicked it once, all the way and started again.*

When I asked the participants about their 'knitting career', I found that to be sporadic too, with most of the participants identifying long gaps in their knitting activity. For example, Alex gave up knitting while she was working long hours in her middle age. The short written comments that I have gathered via the drop-in knitting activity tell a similar story, of people knitting in phases throughout their life. Various events can prompt a return to knitting, such as the birth of children or grandchildren, or knitting becoming more popular, as was the case with Anne:

*I didn't knit for many, many years until the fashion came back in recently.*

The accounts I have gathered show that learning is also sporadic and spread over the course of the knitting career. Many people learn to knit during childhood, most often from mothers or grandmothers. When a pattern requires the learning (or re-learning) of a new skill, knitters use a range of sources including other knitters, books and the Internet.

## 4.2 Making and well-being

Having gained an understanding of contemporary knitting culture, I will now examine the benefits of amateur knitting, and consider how the activity might contribute to well-being.

### Outcome and process

As Jackson (2010: 21) explains, 'conventional explanations of home craft ... define the activity as either being motivated by utilitarian and economic factors or being driven by the representational and symbolic function of the outcomes'. Jackson's research, along with studies of textile makers (Turney, 2004; Johnson and Wilson, 2005; Stalp, 2008), generates a deeper understanding of the intrinsic rewards associated with the process of making. Before examining these intrinsic rewards in detail, I will briefly consider economic motivations. Before the price of clothing fell in recent decades, much amateur fashion making was primarily motivated by necessity, as indicated by this quote from Alex and the brief stories on two knitting tent tags (Figures 4.1 and 4.2).

*When I was young, if you wanted new clothes, you made them, that was it. So I've knitted all my life, and regarded it as a way of having something I wanted, and a cheaper way of getting things, especially in the early years when I didn't have enough money.*



Figure 4.1. Knitting tent tag, Port Eliot festival, July 2012



Figure 4.2. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012

The possibility of gaining cheap, quality clothing has been identified as a motivation for making in the current economic downturn; Qureshi (2009) describes making as a means of saving money. However, in today's era of fast fashion, knitwear items can be bought more cheaply than the raw materials. Despite this, it would be unwise to dismiss outcome-based motivations. In some circumstances, economic motivations may still be valid: for example, when repairing or remaking clothing, or by purchasing yarn particularly cheaply. Alex still takes pride in knitting herself a bargain:

*I'm really happy... I knitted myself a Fair Isle jumper for £8. Navy and white. From the Internet, 89 pence a ball.*

However, even when economics was the main reason for people making clothes at home, 'aesthetics and creativity were important motivations' (McLean, 2009: 72). People feel a mix of motivations that relate to both process and product, ranging from absolute necessity to abstract personal fulfilment; these motivations may change over time depending on social, economic and cultural factors (Atkinson, 2006). Gordon (2004) and Schofield-Tomschin (1999) give interesting accounts of how those motivations changed during the twentieth century, with reference to home sewing; I am interested in the motivations felt by knitters today.

### Process

Anecdotal evidence shows that the process of knitting can have significant benefits. For example, the comments that I have gathered from people taking part in the drop-in knitting activity frequently include words such as *relaxing, meditative, therapeutic, peaceful, contented* and *soothing*. Figures 4.3 and 4.4 are two such examples.



Figure 4.3. Knitting tent tag, End of the Road festival, September 2012

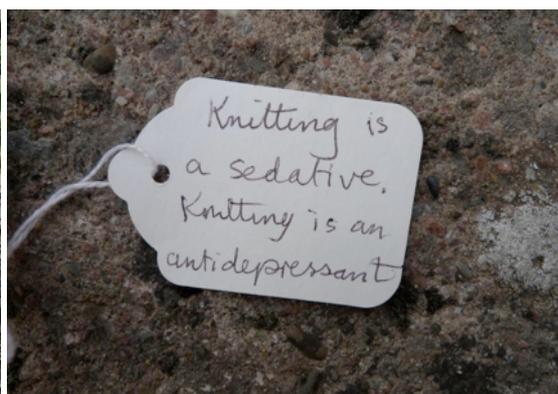


Figure 4.4. Knitting tent tag, Port Eliot festival, July 2012

An ongoing project, Stitchlinks, is seeking to provide evidence for these anecdotal claims; their research suggests that knitting and stitching have potential health benefits beyond the 'distraction' of occupational therapy (Stitchlinks, 2008). Several accounts describe how knitting

and stitching, in particular, are physically calming activities. Mech (2000: 6) says that a simple sewing task 'lowers your heart rate and blood pressure ... [and] sends a wave of relaxation throughout your whole body'. Repetitive movement enhances the release of serotonin, which has a calming effect (Stitchlinks, 2008). According to textile artist Abigail Doan:

We can lose ourselves in the patterns and textures created, and this for me is extremely therapeutic and restorative. It creates a one-to-one relationship that makes everything else simply fade away.

(Abigail Doan, quoted in DuFault, 2011)

Dormer (1988) agrees that craft activity banishes thought. This could be described as mindfulness, staying grounded in the present and not worrying about the past or future (Stitchlinks, 2008). The repetition and focus of knitting can create a meditative state (Parkins, 2004). Dissanayake (1995: 44) agrees that making 'engenders a kind of contemplative state with access to remote parts of our mind'. Alex described how knitting allows her to empty her mind, yet work through problems:

*It frees the mind to just wander, and think about things. Not necessarily deep thinking, but just things pass through your mind, and sometimes you can ponder on something that might be bothering you. You sort of take it out and have a little look at it now and again, without solving it, but you know, it helps.*

The slowness and repetition of knitting have also been described as having 'the capacity to free the knitter from the constraints of time in everyday life' (Parkins, 2004: 435). Parkins suggests that knitting can be used as a flexible means of creating or marking time for the self; comments from the drop-in knitting activity, such as those shown in Figures 4.5 and 4.6, indicate that this is, indeed, a motivation for some knitters.

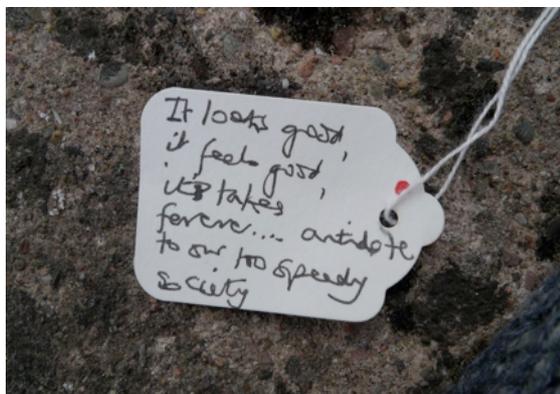


Figure 4.5. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012



Figure 4.6. Knitting tent tag, summer 2010

The participants in my research talked about the difference between *relaxing* and *concentrating* knitting. Relaxing knitting is that described above; a rhythmic, repetitive activity that can be carried out without a great deal of focused attention. In contrast, concentrating knitting is a more intense experience; tasks involving concentration might involve tricky procedures, such as picking up the stitches for a collar or fixing a mistake. While relaxing knitting can be picked up at any time, more complex tasks require particular conditions, such as a quiet space with plenty of light. Although these challenging tasks may not be immediately relaxing, they can still contribute to well-being by providing opportunities for ‘flow’ experiences. Flow is total absorption in an activity (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The makers studied by Jackson (2010) described losing a sense of time, place and self-consciousness whilst engaging in their flow activities. Jackson found that the intrinsic rewards of flow are an important motivation for making, which bring people back to the activity again and again.

The insights that I have gained from running drop-in knitting activities indicate that the physical process of knitting can provide a further benefit: of stimulating memory. Many comments show that knitting has evoked positive memories: of learning to knit, of knitted items, and of others knitting. Figures 4.7 and 4.8 show two examples of positive knitting memories.

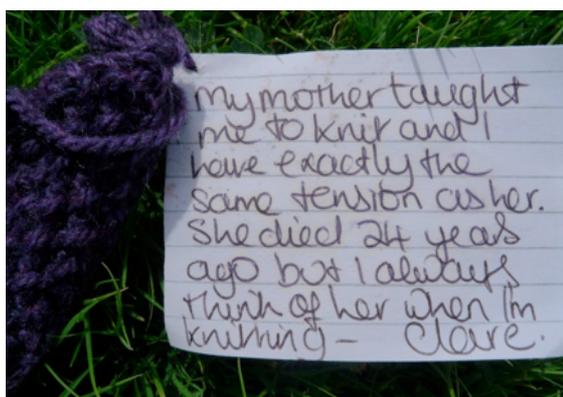


Figure 4.7. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2009

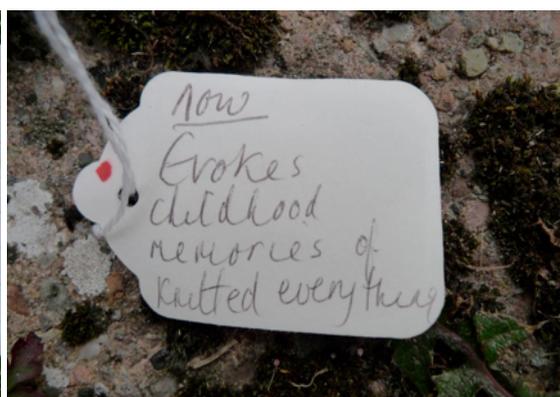


Figure 4.8. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012

Knitting offers a rare outlet for what Gardner (1999) calls bodily-kinesthetic intelligence. His theory of multiple intelligences revises the standard hierarchy of mind over body and thought over physical labour; bodily-kinesthetic intelligence is the ability to use one’s body in highly skilled ways. When you sew or knit, you need familiarity with stitches and the fine hand movements required to make them; bodily knowledge is as important as, or more important than, visual and cognitive knowledge (Goggin, 2009). Shercliff (2011: 17) argues that the exercising of this intelligence is particularly important in contemporary society; ‘If screen-based work can provoke a fractured, dislocated sense of self, by contrast handwork can encourage a focused awareness of the body as a whole being literally in touch with its environment’. The

stimulation offered by the process of knitting is important to the participants in my research, as this comment from Julia illustrates:

*I've nearly always got some knitting or crocheting on the go. And I'm a bit lost, if I haven't. I've got to be doing something with my fingers and my hands, generally.*

### **Material**

When making, the body works with materials to construct an object and this interaction offers further benefits. Shercliff (2009: 189) reports that 'playing with pattern, shape, colour and materials is pleasing perceptually, emotionally and cognitively'. Moseley (2001: 486) agrees that the women in her research found great pleasure in the 'design, construction, texture and colour' of homemade garments. This could partly be about creative expression (Stalp, 2008). It is surely also about the experience of engaging with the 'physical and sensual qualities' of materials (Jackson, 2010: 22). According to Metcalf (1997: 76), people who take to a craft experience 'a powerful intuitive response to the labour of manipulating a particular craft material'. For knitters, yarn is the material which engages them. When I asked my research group why they enjoyed knitting, several responded by simply raising the needles and yarn in their hands.

*I've always been passionate about fabric, and wool in particular. York had a wonderful Rowan shop, just stuffed full of fabulous wool. I used to go in there and just stare at this wonderful wool. [Catherine]*

In my experience, many knitters also enjoy the ingenuity of the knitted structure. Like musical notes, or letters of the alphabet, knitting allows the unlimited combination of simple elements; this offers the opportunity for open-ended exploration and learning.

Textile making processes are cumulative: knitting, like weaving, involves the building of a fabric, from the bottom up (Russell and Barnett, 1987). Seeing the work grow, 'seeing the patterns form under my hand' (FitzRandolph, 1954: 151) seems to be part of the therapeutic effect of making.

*It's creating something, isn't it? I think it is just having these balls of wool and the needles and then... eventually you end up with something, it's lovely. [Julia]*

Another important benefit lies in the ability to make an external representation of the inner self. Dissanayake (1995: 45) describes the sheer enjoyment of bringing something new into existence, and having 'an indisputable effect on the world'. According to Jackson (2007: 227), 'every act of exteriorisation is also an act of interiorisation ... objects are extensions of our minds'. Parker ([1984] 2010: xx) describes how the embroiderer 'holds in her hands a coherent

object which exists both outside in the world and inside her head' and explains that this has a great positive impact on the sense of self. Community architect Christopher Alexander involved local people in the design and construction of their own dwellings, and writes eloquently of the impact of this experience:

They have made themselves solid in the world, have shaped the world as they have shaped themselves ... They, they themselves, have created their own lives, not in that half-conscious, underground, interior way that we all do, but manifestly, out there on their own land: they are alive; they breathe the breath of their own houses...

(Alexander, 1985: 322)

Knitted items, once made, can provide a valuable lasting mark of effort. As Stalp (2008) points out, much of women's time is filled with domestic tasks, such as cooking, washing and tidying, which leave no permanent evidence. Various writers have observed that craft offers an important opportunity to leave one's mark (Elinor et al., 1987; Goggin and Tobin, 2009; Shercliff, 2009). The same sentiment was expressed by Kiki:

*Something to do with leaving something behind. You know, continuity. Something nice about leaving something behind that you have made.*

Making also provides an opportunity for self-actualisation, to do something well (Shercliff, 2009); this contributes to a sense of self-worth (Turney, 2009). In Section 1.2, I identified agency as an important aspect of well-being; Crawford (2009: 64) argues that agency 'arises only within concrete limits that are not of our making'. He discusses the satisfaction of working within objective standards, such as those provided by a spirit level. Similarly, Dormer (1988) suggests that crafts offer clear criteria for success or failure, and that these certainties provide comfort in an uncertain world. I see the inherent restrictions of the knitted structure as providing such external certainties. A knitted fabric is formed from rows of intermeshed loops, which can be configured in particular ways to create patterns and shape the panel. It is a 'rigorous' structure: stitches can either be formed correctly (with loops successfully formed, configured as intended) or not (loops not formed, or configured differently than intended). The slowness of knitting can be seen as another 'concrete limit'. Knitters gain satisfaction from coming up against, and successfully dealing with, these challenges.

### **Social and identity**

Making provides social benefits, enabling us to connect with others who enjoy the same activity. There is a long history of women getting together to make, with evidence of knitting groups as early as the eighteenth century (Rutt, 1987). In the past, when women had limited social

freedoms, making in groups offered a socially acceptable 'excuse' for them to spend time together (Parker, [1984] 2010). In recent years, we have seen a steady increase in knitting groups (UK Hand Knitting Association, c.2006). At these groups, women can share skills and ideas in a non-competitive environment, and chat about a wide range of subjects (Stalp, 2008; Shercliff, 2009). Meanwhile, the growth of the Internet has allowed online communities to develop, offering the same benefits of camaraderie and skill development across geographical boundaries and in increasingly niche areas (Johnson and Wilson, 2005).

Several of the participants in my research are members of craft groups. They described the benefits of attendance:

*It's a nice congenial atmosphere. It's a real good source of knowledge, and it's nice to see what other people are doing, and just have the general chit chat really.*

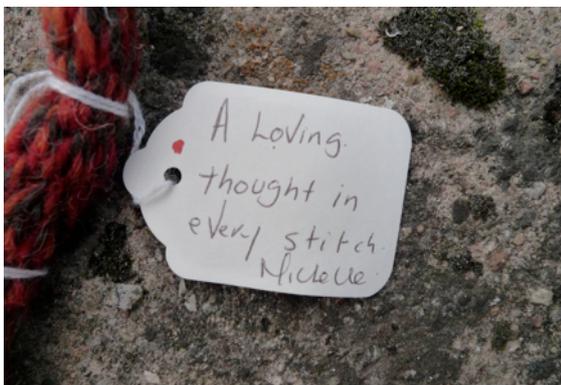
[Anne]

*The knitting group are lovely ladies and I love going. I like the company, and we do knit, and we talk about things, and I know what's going on in the area. And we go to the knitting show together and things like that.* [Alex]

Gauntlett (2011) is particularly interested in the way in which making practices – whether knitting, blogging or uploading videos to YouTube – connect people with each other. He draws on the work of Robert Putnam to describe how shared activities contribute to social capital. 'When people meet up to engage in their shared enthusiasm, this provides really valuable social glue, bringing people together and fostering relationships of trust and reciprocity' (Gauntlett, 2011: 138). He goes on to argue that this social capital can be created in online communities, such as the groups of knitters with niche interests who connect via the Internet. Crawford suggests that making is social because the objective standards, previously discussed, are shared with other enthusiasts; the maker's 'individuality ... is realized *through* his [sic] efforts to reach a goal that is common' (Crawford, 2009: 207, original emphasis). This is certainly the case with knitting; in my experience, knitters enjoy sharing tales of tackling particular techniques or practical issues.

Interestingly, knitters can also feel a sense of connection with makers from the past. Johnson and Wilson (2005) found that some women participated in textile crafts as a way of keeping a family tradition alive; it provided a way of connecting to previous generations. As Stalp (2008: 70) describes, 'quilting ... provides a mechanism for women to see themselves as part of a larger culture, a community of culture creators with a past and a future'. I suggest this is certainly the case with knitting; a significant number of the comments gathered at the knitting tent mention mothers, grandmothers and other relations.

Knitting provides a means of connecting with those closest to us, through teaching skills and making gifts (Turney, 2012). Johnson and Wilson (2005) found that makers consider homemade gifts to be particularly special, and more meaningful than purchased items. By making for someone, you define the closeness of your relationship and, whilst knitting, think about and care for the recipient. Comments gathered at the drop-in knitting activity, such as those shown in Figures 4.9 and 4.10, reflect this attitude:



*Figure 4.9.* Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012



*Figure 4.10.* Knitting tent tag, Port Eliot festival, July 2012

While making allows us to connect with others socially, it also provides a means of constructing and expressing identity. As we discovered in Section 3.1, identities are based on positions in social structures; in a postmodern world, these positions are increasingly based on our personal interests and chosen leisure pursuits (Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981). As Giddens (1991: 81) says, 'the more post-traditional the settings in which an individual moves, the more lifestyle concerns the very core of self-identity, its making and remaking'. Taking up knitting as a hobby allows recognition as 'a maker'. Johnson and Wilson (2005) say that the adoption of this identity connects knitters with wider networks, and creates a recognisable role within the circle of family and friends. According to Gauntlett (2011: 101), 'people spend time creating online content because they want to feel active and recognized within a community of interesting people, and because they wish to express or display aspects of themselves and their interests'. Knitters gain this recognition within offline groups, and through sharing their projects online.

It is important to note that recognition as 'a knitter' might have different meanings in different contexts. Within the knitting community, this identity is shared and therefore seen in a positive light. However, in the wider world, it may not be so positive. As I described earlier in the chapter, knitting has multiple, sometimes conflicting images: hip, anarchic and youthful on one hand, old-fashioned and uncreative on the other. I asked my research participants what they felt other people thought about knitting, and knitters. Their answers were mixed; some were positive,

mentioning the current fashionability of the activity. However, several felt that others see knitting as old-fashioned:

*They think it's boring. I think people think it's almost sad, you know?* [Anne]

Thus, an identity as a knitter is rather ambivalent. It can be a source of pride and status when amongst like-minded people, at the same time as a potential source of embarrassment, to be concealed from those outside the knitting community.

Finally, knitting can provide a means of connection to a specific place, which can be another marker of identity. Alex, for example, links her love of Fair Isle knitting (a style of multicolour knitting originating on Fair Isle, a remote Scottish island) to her childhood home on the Outer Hebrides, despite not having lived in Scotland since she was eighteen.

### **Making and well-being**

Much research which specifically examines craft and well-being (e.g. Reynolds, 2004) concerns people with long-term illness. However, studies looking at well-being more broadly have found that art and craft participation is directly linked to positive well-being amongst the general population: 'regular participation in creative activities has benefited people physically, mentally, emotionally and socially' (Devlin, 2010: 10). While the research by Stitchlinks (c.2013) into the well-being benefits of knitting and stitching is motivated by benefits for those with health problems, their findings indicate that the 'possible physiological, neurological, psychological, behavioural and social changes' brought about by such activities are applicable to everyone. If we review the many benefits associated with knitting described in this section and return to Max-Neef's (1992) list of human needs, discussed in Section 1.2, we can see that, like fashion, knitting contributes to our needs for identity, participation, leisure and creation. It also contributes to good physical and mental health, which Max-Neef describes as aspects of the human need for subsistence.

Gauntlett (2011) explores the relationship between making and happiness, and identifies many of the benefits outlined above; he highlights the value of sharing and collaboration. In addition, he describes the importance of 'something to strive towards' (Gauntlett, 2011: 125) and quotes Layard (2011: 73), who says: 'prod any happy person and you will find a project'. Turney (2009: 159) agrees that the project – an activity that can be performed and completed – 'contributes to a sense of self-worth, of achievement and desire to continue, which ... promotes self-esteem and confidence, which ultimately enhances quality of life'. Lyubomirsky et al. (2005) provide a psychological perspective on well-being and describe the value of activities which are structured around goals, such as craft projects. They also explain that the act of choosing to do an activity

increases its positive impact on well-being; this indicates why people get such satisfaction out of choosing to do activities which were non-optional, and even regarded as drudgery, in the past.

Reynolds (2004) describes textile craft as a particularly accessible form of creative activity. Although many people do not consider themselves to be 'artistic', this is not felt to be a barrier to taking up knitting or stitching as a hobby. Kits and written patterns offer a means of developing skills and building confidence; small-scale crafts, like knitting, can be easily fitted into everyday life. Thus, the well-being benefits of knitting can be accessed by many people. Similarly, Gauntlett (2011: 126) identifies creative projects as a useful strategy for well-being: 'the pleasure of working on projects does not fade over time ... as people can readily create new and stimulating projects for themselves'.

While making offers many benefits in terms of well-being, it is important to acknowledge the barriers that exist for some people. For example, one comment gathered at the knitting activity indicated that the participant used to make a lot of clothes, but cannot now due to 'various infirmities'. Other problems relate to the time required for making; when researching quilting, Stalp (2008) found that many women did not have much leisure time, and felt stigma about pursuing hobbies alongside paid work and caring for their families. Catherine, who is a full-time carer for her disabled son, is passionate about making but has little time available:

*I suppose I can't really explain what life's like with [my son]... It is all-consuming, and he has overnight drugs, so you have a very short period of time to sleep, but also very little time to yourself.*

### 4.3 Making and openness

Having established a strong link between the process of making and well-being, I will now turn to my other chosen theme: openness. In Section 1.2, we saw how openness relates to a 'making and doing' culture, and an atmosphere of sharing and collaboration. Amateur craft has offered an opportunity for ordinary people to actively create for centuries; the culture of craft is based on sharing, with activities such as knitting, quilting and embroidery drawing on a rich resource of traditional designs and an ethos of communal evolution (Freeman, 1987; Robertson, 2010). Much like the 'postproduction' culture of web 2.0, in which users sample and remix material created by others, it is typical for amateur makers to adapt and modify existing patterns and designs. This way of working, based on shared knowledge, has been described as 'distributive creativity' (Leach, 2004). Despite its links with emergent open culture, distributive creativity is often stigmatised as copying (Harriman, 2007). Communal activity clashes with the

established values of art, which venerate originality and the notion of the individual genius (Meuli, 1997). Leach (2004) describes this mode of working as ‘appropriative creativity’; cerebral, owned by the individual, and ego-centred.

Although they differ in status, the two modes of creativity do not operate exclusively. Meuli (1997) describes the extent to which fine artists – generally seen as ‘original’ – draw on the work of their peers, while Harriman’s (2007) study of hobby craft in Scotland found that amateur makers blended elements of distributive and appropriative creativity in their work. It is common for writing on amateur textile making to describe ‘individual twists’ on set patterns, which guarantee uniqueness (Turney, 2004; Johnson and Wilson, 2005). Studies of non-Western art, which have long been assumed to be entirely distributive and communal, have revealed innovation and change, and expert individual practitioners (Meuli, 1997). Individual expertise has similarly been overlooked in the area of amateur textile craft, which has had a culture of anonymity and modesty (Gordon and Horton, 2009). As Freeman (1987: 57) argues, quilting was done ‘by workers whose names are now forgotten. This does not mean, as sometimes seems to be supposed, that these women resolved their problems of design unconsciously.’

Open culture is still vibrant in the world of knitting; knitters have embraced the potential of the Internet for connecting and sharing their knowledge. Adaptation is common; users of the knitting social network website, Ravelry, frequently post reports of the alterations they have made to set patterns. However, there are also threats to openness. Like other published material, knitting patterns are subject to copyright restriction. Knitters may be free to adapt a pattern, but in general, they cannot republish their own version of a design, or legally share out-of-print patterns with online friends. Robertson (2010) identifies the emergence of a new atmosphere of vigilance about copyright in the areas of quilting and embroidery; I have experienced a similar situation in the knitting community. I perceive a tension between the shared culture of knitting and the need for individual designers to defend their means of making a living.

### **Creativity and patterns**

We have considered openness in a conceptual way; now, I will look in more detail at the openness of written knitting patterns, which guide and structure the vast majority of knitting projects. One aspect of making which is strongly linked to well-being is creativity; creation is one of the human needs which I have suggested making can satisfy. Devlin (2010: 11) observes that creativity ‘on its own merit’ is particularly important in the well-being benefits of amateur arts activity; Sanders (2006) describes a growing desire to be creative amongst ‘everyday’ people. I will examine creativity in relation to the use of written patterns, and explore how knitters feel about them. Opinions in the literature are divided: Dalton (1987) describes patterns as having a standardising effect on craft practice, which makes amateurs feel they need to consult an ‘expert’ for guidance on creative matters. In contrast, Hackney (2006: 23) argues that patterns

offer women 'opportunities for self-expression, agency and self-determination'; patterns and books help to develop makers' skills, and therefore their freedom.

Some would argue that the act of choosing a pattern from the wide range available is an opportunity for creativity; for example, Parker ([1984] 2010) describes how women choose embroidery patterns which have particular meaning for them as individuals. The participants in my research certainly enjoy browsing and selecting knitting patterns. There are plenty to choose from; details of over 380,000 patterns – including those in books and magazines as well as patterns independently published by individual designers – are currently listed on the database of the knitting website, Ravelry.com. From such a range of options, you might think that a knitter could always find a pattern to suit their requirements. However, my research has shown that knitters are often not content with what is on offer, and cannot always find styles that they want to knit and wear:

*I find it difficult to find patterns that I like... I find it really difficult to find anything I'd actually want to wear. [Anne]*

*Some ridiculous frill here or something there... stuff that you're never going to wear. [Margaret]*

Another problem can be identifying patterns which are suitable for one's own level of skill:

*I try and find a pattern that's not too difficult, which is difficult in itself (laughs). Especially when you ask the person in the shop and they say it's a relatively easy one, and then you get home and you haven't a clue. [Kiki]*

Since their introduction in the nineteenth century, dressmaking patterns 'were designed so that the sewer could choose various options and features, giving her a role to play in the design of the garment' (McLean, 2009: 78). Gordon (2004) describes women using patterns for guidance, branching out to create adaptations beyond those suggested. Research by Partington (1992) into home dressmaking during the 1950s examines the popular version of the 'New Look'. She argues that women independently adapted patterns to create a hybrid style – combined with the 'utility look' – which suited their lives. Szeless (2002) suggests the term 'unorthodox home dressmaking' to describe the way in which home makers exceed the boundaries for experimentation, as defined by the pattern designers, and make their own interpretations. Knitting patterns often include multiple sizes and sometimes a number of style variations. Knitters frequently venture beyond this sanctioned level of adaptation, using them in unorthodox ways. It is common practice to use a different yarn to that specified in the pattern, altering the needle size if necessary to achieve the same gauge of fabric. More experienced knitters might

even use a yarn of a different weight or a different stitch, requiring them to recalculate the number of stitches and rows to suit the new gauge, or vary the design, creating a different shape than that suggested.

*I look at things and think, I really like that, but I would make the neck lower, and I'll make the sleeves shorter, and I'll make the body longer... I'll take this idea, I'll take ninety percent of this pattern, and I'll just do the bits that I want, so that I know I'll wear it and be comfortable in it. [Alex]*

However, many knitters do not have the confidence to attempt such adaptations. The complex format of the written pattern contributes to this problem; Whiting (1988: 7) explains that 'faced with lengthy, row by row written instructions ... even many experienced knitters often [have] no idea how to adapt patterns to suit themselves'. Visual instructions, such as grids showing the layout of stitches or schematics showing the measurements of panels, can facilitate adaptation; however, many knitters do not feel confident in interpreting visual patterns and these are often not provided. In response to Alex describing an adaptation she had made, Anne commented:

*This is the beauty of doing things regularly, and doing them a lot. You get to know... I do things so infrequently, I'm a slave to the pattern!*

The tone of many knitting books, which set up the designer as an expert whose rules must be obeyed, also contributes to a dependence on patterns. As Cone describes, 'one area of fashion that for years has dangled its devotees on puppet strings is handknitting ... The puppet strings are labelled *always* and *never* ... Thinking in such absolute terms produces copycat knitters who blindly follow someone else's dictates' (Cone, 1989: 1, original emphasis). Writers such as Elizabeth Zimmermann, who provide instructions in a relaxed fashion and encourage the knitter to deviate and improvise (e.g. Zimmermann, 1971), are few and far between.

Even for those who manage adaptations, there is sometimes a sense that these changes are remedial, helping them achieve the intended design with a different yarn, for example, rather than delivering creative satisfaction. On a more practical level, conversations between my research participants showed that they find contemporary patterns to be of poor quality. They described patterns in magazines being printed with sections of the instructions missing; further problems can be found when knitting a size other than the original, sample size. Alex described a problem she had found with a jumper which would not fit over a child's head:

*I think the problem is, they design them, and they knit them up... and then for the bigger sizes, they just increase it. But nobody test-knits the blooming thing.*

Margaret particularly criticised the fit of many designs, describing them as ill-fitted, sloppy and shapeless. The group agreed that photographs of knitted-up garments can be deceptive:

*What I find with Rowan, particularly, a lot of the pictures in their books are moodily lit, and you're peering to see the detail on it or what the cut's like. [Anne]*

*I think they are quite deceptive in that you'll see a jumper, but I'm sure that at the back, they've tucked it in, and done various things. So you look and you see a pattern that looks like a fitted garment. [Margaret]*

Overall, my conversations with knitters have indicated frustrations with conventional written knitting patterns, and a desire for more freedom and creative input. In my practice, I run a regular workshop for amateur knitters on calculating patterns. At one workshop, a participant told me that she had come because she wanted to knit 'off-piste'; this comment sums up the attitude of many knitters. Of course, amateurs could work entirely without patterns; my calculating workshop is intended to contribute to the skills needed for this approach. However, as I will discuss in Section 6.1, the complex nature of the knitted structure makes designing garments 'from scratch' particularly difficult. Furthermore, in my experience many amateurs lack the confidence to make creative design decisions independently, without support.

## 4.4 Wearing homemade clothes

In the previous section, we looked in detail at the well-being benefits associated with the process of making. Dissanayake (1995: 40-1) describes 'the sheer enjoyment of making something exist that didn't exist before ... [which is] quite apart from anticipating the fact of its eventual beauty, uniqueness or usefulness'. Although craft produces physical outputs, Jackson (2010: 12) found that for many makers, 'the possession or use of the final artifact was the least important part of the activity'. Research by Stalp (2008) identified a similar attitude amongst amateur quilters. I agree that the process of making is both complex and important; however, in my experience, for knitters the anticipation of the use of the items they make is significant. The output is the goal of the making project, the finishing line which is slowly worked towards. A knitted garment is intended for use; wearing a homemade garment legitimates the activity of making it. This comment by Margaret epitomises the importance of the finished item as a goal:

*There's definitely a desire to make something for me... that's the impulse, the drive, is to make something. I would like the garment, that's the big motivation.*

I want to examine the experience of wearing homemade knitted garments, in today's context. In Section 3.2, we discovered a complex relationship between what we wear and well-being. In this chapter, we explored the well-being benefits of the making process. However, there is a gap in the literature when it comes to the wearing of homemade items. Making is absent from the vast majority of fashion theory literature, which assumes that the items being worn are shop-bought. Similarly, use is missing from craft theory literature, which is primarily concerned with process. The literature does contain some historical accounts of making and wearing homemade clothes, with several valuable pieces of research into the experiences of particular groups of women in Britain and America between 1890 and the 1960s (Partington, 1992; Buckley, 1998; Tulloch, 1999; Moseley, 2001; Gordon, 2004; McLean, 2009). Medvedev (2008) provides an important insight into the wearing of homemade clothes in communist Hungary, while Cerny (1992) examines the wearing of homemade quilted clothing in the 1980s in the USA. Although these pieces of research are valuable in building knowledge about the wearing of homemade clothes in past contexts, there is very little to help us understand the contemporary British context, beyond short journalistic accounts (Greer, 2009; Ditum, 2012). Myzelev (2009) discusses the display of homemade objects in the home environment – an area which is clearly related to the wearing of homemade garments – and agrees that this area is ripe for investigation:

What is the role of objects, handmade objects in creating a house, a home? How does making it change its relevance? These issues *via-à-vis* knitting and handicrafts in general are yet to be explored.

(Myzelev, 2009: 157)

A recent paper by Turney (2012) makes a contribution in this area, but concentrates mainly on items made as gifts for others, whereas I am more interested in items made and worn by the same person. In this section, I will make a contribution towards this gap in knowledge by using my research data to explore the experience of wearing homemade knitted clothes, today, in Britain. In Chapter 3, I explored issues related to fashion, including identity construction, the 'gaze of others', and the processes of identification and differentiation. At that stage, I assumed, as the fashion literature does, that the garments involved were shop-bought. In this section I will examine the same issues, focusing on homemade clothes.

### **Quality and 'turning out'**

Many people see making as a means of acquiring higher quality or better fitting clothing – potentially at a lower price – compared to buying. Such motivations have been reported in accounts of dressmaking throughout the twentieth century (Burman, 1994; Moseley, 2001; Szeless, 2002) and are still relevant today. Johnson and Wilson (2005: 123) found women who regarded their homemade items as far better quality than any shop-bought equivalents; as one

respondent said, 'when I make something for someone, I know they couldn't go into a store and buy it near as good as I can make it, and it will last forever.' The comments thread following an online Guardian newspaper article about making your own clothes (Ditum, 2012) provides further evidence of quality and fit being a current motivation:

*If you make your own clothes they can be nicer and better fitted.*

*There's something very gratifying in knowing you can essentially make a beautiful, well-fitted, individual, high quality garment from, well, string...*

Making can also provide you with the style of clothing that you want to wear. Margaret spoke about not finding the clothes she wanted in the shops, and concluded:

*I must start making... I think that's the conclusion I've come to, just start trying to make things up. I suppose what I'm wanting is just something that looks a little bit different, bit more individual.*

A similar attitude can be found in the online comments:

*I love knitting, partly because it lets me make things to my exact specifications.*

*You can wear what you want, in a style that suits you, in a colour you like, in a yarn of your choice.*

However, it is far from certain that any given project will achieve this high quality fit and finish, or even end up being worn. From my own experience, and many conversations with knitters, I know that folk fashion projects frequently do not 'turn out' as hoped. Two comments about homemade clothes (Figures 4.11 and 4.12) encapsulate the issues often encountered:

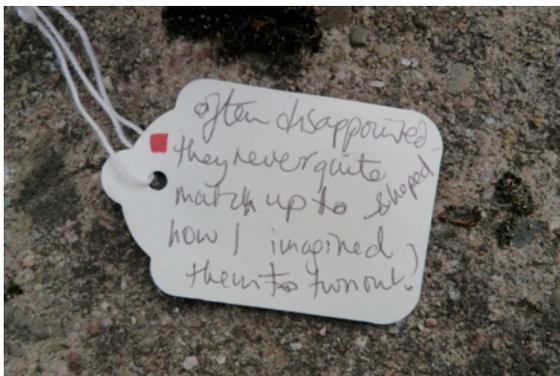


Figure 4.11. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012

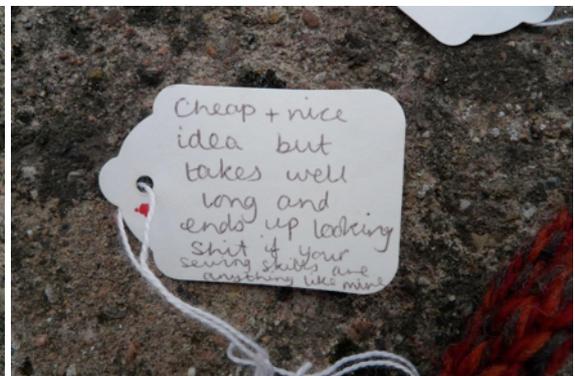


Figure 4.12. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012

Within the research group, Kiki described the majority of her attempts to knit garments for herself as ‘unwearable’. This comment, made in response to the Guardian article about homemade clothes, strikes a similar tone:

*It's when you get two uneven sleeves and you can't get the shoulders right for love nor money that you realise you've walked out of your high street relationship too soon... Knitting can be therapeutic so long as you don't expect what you produce to be wearable.*

One reason for these problems is the level of skill required to create a garment. Turney (2010: 48) suggests that ‘the notion that knitting is ‘easy’ [is] fundamental to its revival’; however, as she points out, the skills required to construct a knitted garment are considerable. I would identify the sporadic nature of much knitting activity, described earlier in the chapter, as another cause of problems. When a knitter leaves a project for months or years, they forget details of the pattern, and are likely to make mistakes. As I described in Section 4.2, knitting has a ‘rigorous’ structure; it is common to configure stitches incorrectly. Such mistakes can often be easily fixed, if noticed promptly; however, many errors are only spotted when a panel or garment is finished. Corrections at this stage either involve a large amount of unravelling and re-knitting, which can be deeply disappointing, or more complex procedures, of which few knitters are aware.

Deviations from a pattern are risky; each adaptation increases the chance of an item failing to turn out well. Variations in knitting tension or yarn type cause unexpected issues, which may be discovered during knitting, or even after the garment is completed.

*I'd done it in the round on a circular needle up to the armholes, and then gone onto straight needles, and the tension was different. So that had to come out. There was no way I would finish that and then wear it, because I... wouldn't feel happy in it.*

[Julia]

*I knitted a cardigan which I like very much, in green. And I knitted the pattern again, and I don't like it. It came out a slightly different size, and it's just not the same. It really bugs me, because it's the same thing, but it's not the same garment in a different colour, which I hoped it would be. [Alex]*

The finishing of the garment – sewing seams and adding trims, for example – is seen as key to the success of a homemade garment:

*You've got to be very careful with [the finishing] to make it look really neat. I definitely make an effort to do it as neatly as I can, because I think that's a really important part of the finished garment. [Margaret]*

*You can spoil a homemade beautifully knitted garment, if it's not made up properly, can't you? Sewing up can really ruin lovely bits of knitting. [Julia]*

There is another reason for items not turning out, beyond the issues of skill and adaptation: the fact that the item exists in the maker's head for so long before it is finished. As this comment from Anne indicates, it is only when the item is complete that the knitter discovers whether their efforts have been successful:

*I always have this thing about, you buy the wool you like, and you buy the pattern, and then when it's made up, it doesn't seem to sit right, or look right, or it's not the right shape for you or something. You spend all that time and money, and then it just looks a bit of a dog's dinner at the end of it! Then I get disappointed, so I don't do it any more.*

Another comment from the Guardian article identifies this issue as a significant disadvantage of making your own clothes:

*I know you don't get the same warm glow of satisfaction, but there's a lot to be said for trying something on that someone else has made, before you buy it.*

Walker (2006: 57) discusses the value of homemade items in general, and somewhat idealistically argues that 'such an object will be valued despite any lack of value evident in its creation, and whether or not it actually functions well or as intended. It is valued over and above function and appearance'. My research shows that this is not the case for homemade clothes; a different, less romantic, picture emerges from the data. Knitters are deeply disappointed if their items do not turn out as intended. While they may have enjoyed the process of making, they are unlikely to value – or wear – a finished item if it does not meet their standards.

However, it is interesting to note that negative feelings may wear off over time, as the maker becomes distanced from the item they have made:

*That's what I expect, really, when I make something, I often don't like it. And then I put it away and I come back and I look at it and I say, oh that's nice (laughs), as if it's someone else who made it. [Kiki]*

### The homemade look

I often wonder whether many of the issues around homemade clothes relate to the knitter's expectations, rather than the garment itself. Myzelev (2009: 158) describes a designer of hand knitting patterns, for whom 'the success of a garment is contingent on ... if it was ever confused with a store-bought item'. In my experience, this desire for a 'professional' look is common amongst hand knitters. It suggests that makers are assessing their homemade items in comparison with the mass-manufactured garments in their wardrobes, and finding them lacking. A comment from the Guardian article about homemade clothes (Ditum, 2012) reinforces this point:

*Hand-knitted clothes don't look as good as machine-knitted – not smooth, not professional.*

A conversation with the research group about the 'homemade look' revealed that they generally felt homemade clothes looked different to shop-bought, manufactured items; and that this look was not widely appreciated:

*I think homemade stuff, you can always tell it's been handmade, definitely... And I would think most people wouldn't really like handmade. They want to have something that's machine made. [Margaret]*

*I always feel mine look homemade. [And is that good or bad?] It should be good, but I don't always feel that it is. [Julia]*

If we look at folk music, we see the same phenomenon. Lomax (quoted in Szwed, 2010: 349) described how amateur folk singers were perceived in comparison with professional performers: 'their more relaxed way of performing, which is sometimes taken for lack of accomplishment, is often simply a matter of another style and other standards'.

It is interesting to reflect on this desire for a smooth, professional look in clothing, in comparison with other types of object. As Gauntlett points out, 'roughly made and non-professional things embody a kind of celebration of humanity's imperfections – the very fact that we are *not* machines' (Gauntlett, 2011: 218, original emphasis). While we value a rustic, imperfect look in many contexts, for many people this look is not desirable in dress. It is also interesting to consider to what degree our view of homemade clothes overlaps with that of handmade, shop-bought items. In a group discussion, the participants talked about the cachet of purchased handmade items:

*In Edinburgh, they sell hand-knitted Aran jumpers for a fortune, and you're paying the premium for the cachet of being hand-knitted. [Alex]*

*I think some people do really value handmade. For example, if you're buying fair trade knitted jumpers, and it does say handmade in it, you're paying more for that. I think it is valued. [Helen]*

While the group was unsure about how others saw homemade items, they agreed that handmade, shop-bought items are more widely perceived as valuable. What is the origin of this distinction? It is likely that items made for sale would have a consistent, 'professional' finish. However, my instinct is that, above and beyond the quality of the individual garment, the 'sanctioning' effect of consumerism provides reassurance. When a garment is given an economic value, we are able to make sense of it; homemade items confound the logic of economic value and therefore challenge usual ways of understanding the objects around us.

It doesn't matter how beautiful a homemade object is: for most of us, what we buy is an extension of who we are, and wearing something without a price tag comes off like a shifty refusal to state your business.

(Ditum, 2012)

### **Identity construction**

Although it is important to look at the problems associated with making clothes, it must be acknowledged that many people are successful in making garments for themselves to wear. While the activity of making establishes an identity as 'a maker', the items produced render that identity both tangible and visible; wearing them creates a resonance between making and use. In her research, Stalp (2008: 112) found that 'quilts establish through fabric the identity of women as quilters'. As Johnson and Wilson (2005) explain, homemade objects are manifestations of all the meaning which has gone into their making. They describe how handcrafted textiles, displayed in the homes of the women who took part in their research, 'confirmed Belk's (1988) assertion that items which convey creativity and the mastery of skills, and which mark time, are particularly effective in defining the self' (Johnson and Wilson, 2005: 124). Similarly, Turney (2004: 275) argues that the display of homemade objects in the home is 'highly significant in demonstrating the identity of the maker and the ideology of the household'.

In Section 3.1, I described the many meanings that could be associated with clothes, and distinguished between personal and shared meanings. It is likely that homemade items would carry deeper personal meanings than purchased garments, because of the time and effort involved in their creation. Johnson and Wilson (2005) describe how the extensive handling which occurs during craft making creates a strong attachment between wearer and garment; Stalp (2008) explains that a homemade item becomes a 'bookmark' of the period during which it was made. Writing about people who have built their own houses, Brown (2008: 368) argues that the activity 'brings meaning to everyday life by the simple fact that the presence of the

home prompts the re-telling of this, most compelling, creative experience'. Similarly, knitters enjoy telling others about the items they have made, as this quote from Kiki and knitting tent tag (Figure 4.13) indicate:

*I like wearing the gloves, I feel very pleased, I show everybody (laughs). You'd think I was twelve years old, look, I knitted these!*

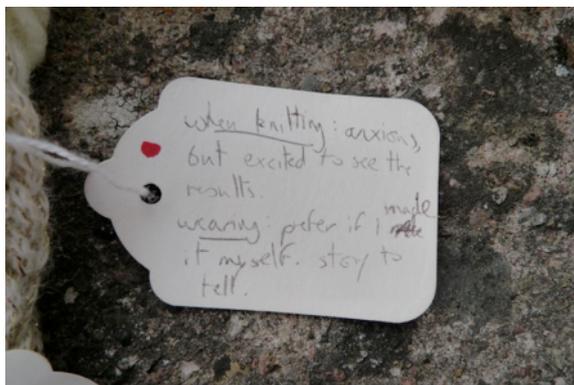


Figure 4.13. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012

However, it should be noted that the making experience can create negative personal meanings, as well as positive ones. At an exhibition, a knitter told me about her current project: a cardigan, which had come out disastrously wrong on the first attempt and which she was subsequently re-knitting. Looking ahead to the time when it would finally be finished, she said that she did not know whether she would wear it, as she may still harbour feelings of resentment towards the project.

### **Shared meanings**

Along with personal meanings, we also use the shared meanings associated with clothes to surface aspects of our identity. In Section 3.1, we saw how these meanings are multiple, movable and potentially ambiguous. I argue that this ambiguity is heightened in the case of homemade clothes.

When brands and prices are markers of identity and value, anything that's been made for the sake of love and craftsmanship is infuriatingly tricky to place – that, I think, is the logic behind the snotty jibes at 'nana sweaters'.

(Ditum, 2012)

Just as people choose ready-made clothes which have meaning for them, knitters can do the same when selecting a pattern to knit. Some styles of homemade knitwear can be clearly associated with particular cultural meanings. For example, the 'Starsky cardigan' – as seen in 1970s television show Starsky & Hutch – has become a fashion archetype, as has the

traditional Nordic jumper worn by the star of recent television crime drama *The Killing*. However, as Dittum argues, in the main homemade clothes do not have the markers, such as logos and brand names, which help us to quickly associate meanings with garments. The meanings associated with commerce are replaced by the meanings of homemade; and these are, indeed, difficult to place. I believe that the cultural meanings of homemade knitted clothing are related to the cultural meanings of the activity of knitting. As we have seen, knitting can be seen in a positive, vibrant sense, or denigrated as old-fashioned.

At the drop-in knitting tent activity in 2013, I asked participants to share their feelings about wearing homemade clothes. Within this context – where knitting was generally viewed as a desirable, creative activity – the majority of the responses revealed a romantic view of homemade clothes. The comments paint a picture of homemade garments as indiscriminately better than mass-produced alternatives, with words such as *made with love, quality, happy, comfortable, cosy, proud, original, flamboyant, satisfying*, and *last longer* occurring. The comment shown in Figure 4.14 summarises this positive view:

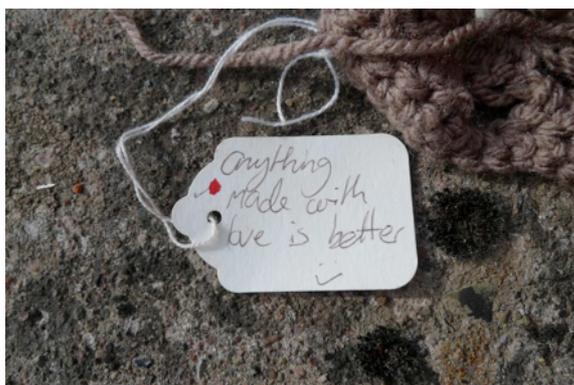


Figure 4.14. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012

Of course, the idea that homemade items are inherently ‘better’ conflicts with the issues around garments turning out badly, described earlier in this section. Knitters are not a homogenous group and will have a range of experiences; however, it is important to note that many of the knitting tent comments have an aspirational tone which suggests that the respondents may not have direct experience of trying to make wearable items for themselves. Whatever the personal experiences of the respondents, these comments indicate that homemade items are often seen in a romantic, positive way. This view connects with an emergent movement which values localism, thrift and self-sufficiency as elements of a desirable, sustainable lifestyle.

However, this romantic view is countered by a stigma that, for some, is associated with the homemade. On a collective level, there is an association between homemade garments and poverty that endures, despite the cheapness of today’s ready-made clothes. Homemade items are often the butt of jokes; negative comments about itchy, uncomfortable, ill-fitting jumpers are

overwhelmingly familiar. These collective attitudes reflect countless individual stories; many people have anecdotes about the embarrassment of wearing homemade items in childhood. A quote and two knitting tent tags (Figures 4.15 and 4.16) provide snippets of three such stories:

You might think that I would be grateful for this lovely handcrafted pair of gloves, uniquely made just for me. You would be wrong. I remember whingeing that they were the wrong colour, they didn't fit right and they were just not cool! Being eleven, I wanted to have something the same as all my school friends, namely machine-knit ones from Marks and Spencer; not embarrassing ones knit by my Mum and Nan.

(Murnane, 2008)



Figure 4.15. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012

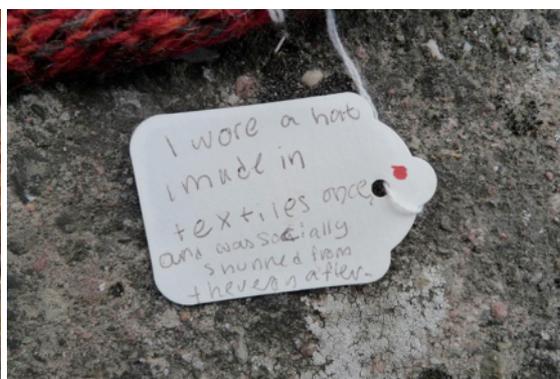


Figure 4.16. Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012

Further conflicts can be identified in the meanings of the homemade, such as cool versus authentic. 'Coolness' is highly valued in fashion, and is associated with actual or apparent effortlessness (Russell, 2011). The time and effort involved in producing a homemade item would seem to be the opposite of this effortless cool. However, authenticity is also highly valued; a homemade traditional garment, such as an Aran jumper, can be seen as particularly authentic and therefore particularly desirable.

It may be possible to wear homemade items in a way that highlights their positive, rather than negative, associations. Various fashion theory texts discuss this idea in relation to second-hand clothes, which have a similar mix of meanings: poverty and lack of sophistication versus post-consumerist, stylish thrift. For example, Gregson and Crewe (2003: 8) describe middle-class people wearing second-hand items in combination with new items, in order to present them in a positive sense: 'the certainties of one unlock the potentials of the other, safely, in a framed, controlled juxtaposition of meaning'. Homemade clothes could be worn in a similar way.

In Section 3.1, I described how, when choosing what to wear, we take into account the ‘gaze of others’. Parker ([1984] 2010) argues that the way in which homemade items are received in the outside world affects the maker’s view of themselves. However, even with shop-bought clothing, there is often a distinct difference between the message intended by the wearer and that received by the viewer; the multiple meanings of homemade clothing could exacerbate this situation. On the other hand, people may not recognise items as handmade. I discussed this issue with the research group; they felt that, while other knitters would recognise their garments as homemade, many others would not.

*If I’m somewhere out and about, there’s a lot of times people have come up and said, oh I like... have you made that. I think it takes one to know one. Because I would notice, if people have made stuff. [Margaret]*

*Other people don’t pay any attention, really. They wouldn’t notice, it’s not on their radar at all. [Alex]*

This raises an interesting question. Without further research, we simply do not know whether non-knitters recognise homemade clothes, or what their interpretations of them would be. However, as we saw in Section 3.1, our self-image is usually based on how we *imagine* others to appraise our appearance. Irrespective of the actual opinions of others, I suggest that wearers of homemade clothes internalise both the positive and negative potential associations of the homemade.

### **Uniqueness**

When I asked participants at the knitting tent to share their feelings about wearing homemade clothes, many of the positive responses mentioned uniqueness, originality and individualism. Alex made a similar comment:

*You feel pleased, because it’s yours. I mean, it really is yours because you’ve made it. And you’re unlikely to meet anybody else wearing it.*

Homemade items are indeed unique; even when using a written pattern or kit, each individual’s personal production methods, along with mistakes and intentional alterations, create a one-off item. Uniqueness is seen to establish personal meaning, and is valued by makers (Johnson and Wilson, 2005). As we saw in Section 3.1, we have a desire for uniqueness; however, this desire varies between individuals and is tempered by the need to belong. Although the uniqueness of the homemade is seen as desirable by many, it is also underlies many negative experiences. In the anecdote above, the pair of homemade gloves is rejected for being too different; the wearer

wants to look the same as her friends. If our homemade items are too different, they cease to connect us with others around us.

Originality is often thought to mean not being influenced in any way – not imitating others. But if originality becomes an ultimate goal, and one consistently pursues it, one loses the most valuable means of growing as a person – the possibility of imitation, the process that is so essential to the development of the self in the first place.

(Csikszentmihalyi and Rochberg-Halton, 1981: 190)

Homemade clothes are particularly unique in that they solely represent the intentions of the maker. Shop-bought items, in contrast, have been ‘sanctioned’ by a chain of professionals: trend forecasters, designers, buyers, merchandisers, retailers, stylists and journalists. If we consider the steps that lead to a garment being produced as a series of decisions, the decisions behind a ready-made item have been made by a community of experts; this provides reassurance that the item is desirable and appropriate, within social norms. Conversely, a one-off homemade item represents, and displays, the decisions of a single person. As such, homemade garments have the potential to be unwittingly transgressive of social norms. From this perspective, the uniqueness of the homemade is a risk, which complicates the already potentially fraught process of choosing what to wear.

### **Wearing homemade and well-being**

In Section 3.2, we looked at fashion and well-being; I will now consider the relationship between wearing homemade clothes and well-being. We use fashion to meet our human needs for identity and participation, and potentially also leisure and creation. Wearing homemade could provide an ideal way to meet these needs, because it joins the practice of making – which itself can meet these needs – with the practice of wearing. By wearing clothes that we have made, we materialise our identity as creative, and as makers. We are able to tell others about these items, and gain recognition from our peers. Furthermore, homemade items can carry deep personal meanings, which are significant for identity. There is evidence that for some people, wearing homemade clothes is a positive experience, which enhances well-being. I have met many people who are successful in making garments for themselves to wear, and do so with pride. In the participant group, Alex and Margaret both regularly wear items they have made, and enjoy ‘surfacing’ their knitting practice in this way.

However, we also saw that anxiety dominates many women’s relationships with clothing. This anxiety stems from the uncertain nature of contemporary fashion, lacking in clear and definite rules. Meanings of clothes are multiple, moveable and ambiguous, and ‘appropriate’ choices are framed by complex social norms. I argue that the ambiguity of meaning is heightened in the

case of homemade clothes; they do not have the validating mechanism of economic value. Homemade clothes are subject to multiple conflicting shared meanings; it is possible to see them in a positive, romantic light and simultaneously in a stigmatised, negative way. While we can try to wear our homemade items in an ironic and knowing manner, which consciously highlights the positive connotations, we cannot be sure of success. By making our own clothes independently, without the sanctioning influence of professional manufacture, we encounter the risk of unwittingly transgressing social norms or of making garments too unique to connect with those around us. The time involved in making raises the stakes; It is, after all, surely worse for one's self-esteem to labour for months over a fashion 'mistake' than to quickly acquire it from a fast fashion source.

Furthermore, making carries its own anxieties. When making their own clothes, knitters have to find a project that meets their preferences as a knitter – considering factors such as skill level and time available – and as a wearer. This is not necessarily straightforward:

*I haven't done this very fine lace... these little shawls and things. I keep thinking I'll have a go, and then I keep thinking, I'll never wear it, I'm sure I'd never really wear it. [Anne]*

Hence, when choosing what to make, even more factors must be balanced than when shopping for ready-made clothes. Knitters are acutely aware that their project may not turn out as desired, and often worry about this while they are making. A project that does not turn out causes disappointment; it is seen as a waste of money, time and effort. Knitters assess their garments in comparison with mass-produced clothing, and are unhappy with what they see as an 'unprofessional' finish. Furthermore, they encounter frustrations with conventional knitting patterns. 'Closed' patterns limit opportunities for creativity, and therefore the ability of making to meet the need for creation.

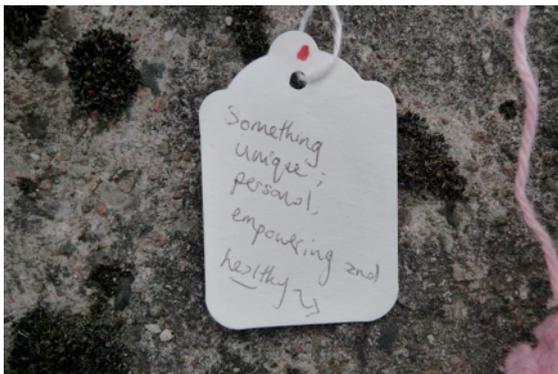
To summarise, wearing homemade clothes can make the fashion experience more positive in terms of well-being, and strengthen the way in which fashion meets our needs for identity, participation, creation and leisure. However, homemade clothes can exacerbate the anxieties associated with choosing what to wear, and making carries its own problems. Taking a holistic view, taking into account the many positives for well-being related to the process of making, we would have to say that the experience of making and wearing homemade clothes is, once again, ambivalent in terms of well-being.

### **Overcoming enclosure**

Finally, let us look at the issue of enclosure. In Section 3.3, I set up a metaphor of fashion as a commons, which has been subject to enclosure through the industrialisation of clothing

manufacture. Mass production has led to homogeneity; this lack of genuine choice affects the ability of wearers to access the styles that they wish to wear. Wearers have become alienated from making; as dependent wearers without an independent means of production, they can only choose from the options provided. Hence, I argued that enclosure compromises our ability to access the positives of fashion and leaves us with the anxieties. A lack of making knowledge places wearers in a passive and disenfranchised position. I suggested that making could be a way of reclaiming access to the fashion commons, and of wearers gaining agency in relation to their dress.

Having examined home fashion making in detail, is this the case? Yes, to some extent; the ability to make clothes brings power to the hands of the wearer. Making skills open up the fashion commons, as higher quality, better fitting garments of any style can (in theory) be made. Burman (1994) argues that home sewing can be seen as empowering women to provide for themselves, in comparison with a fashion system which confines them with a narrow set of options. One tag from the knitting tent, written in response to the request for 'feelings about wearing homemade clothes', clearly links homemade clothes with a sense of empowerment and well-being (Figures 4.17 and 4.18).



*Figure 4.17.* Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012 (front)



*Figure 4.18.* Knitting tent tag, Latitude festival, July 2012 (back)

While making brings agency to wearers, making them less dependent and passive, I am unsure whether making is delivering access to the full fashion commons. Because knitters are largely dependent on written patterns, they are restricted in their making by the patterns available; thus, designers can still be seen as gatekeepers. Furthermore, the research group participants agreed that the success of homemade clothes was dependent not only on finish, but on style. They suggested that in some cases, the 'homemadeness' of garments resonates with their cultural meanings, while in others, a homemade look is inherently negative.

*I think a homemade chunky jumper looks nice. The fact that it's homemade adds to it, makes it more special. But there are other things, that if they look homemade, isn't quite so good. [Helen]*

Alex described hand-knitted garments as occupying their own category, which sits apart from mass-produced clothing:

*I think hand-knitted garments... to my mind, have a category of their own. It's not trying to be what you can buy. That's why I do the colourwork, and the Arans, and look for the old pattern books.*

The items mentioned by Alex are traditional designs, which have always been associated with hand knitting. By knitting garments which draw on tradition, she avoids creating items which stray from this 'safe' territory:

*I don't want to seem like I'm trying to copy a Marks & Spencer's or a BHS cardigan. And it's a sort of cheap copy, if you like. [Alex]*

Other items which fall within the safe territory would include accessories which have been hand-knitted for centuries, such as scarves and hats. Similarly, hand-knitted baby clothes carry a sense of cultural 'rightness'. In contrast, some garment styles, such as uniforms and workwear, have been mass-produced since the nineteenth century (Fine and Leopold, 1993), using details such as rivets which cannot be replicated domestically. Perhaps this is one reason why homemade jeans – in my experience – are particularly unlikely to look 'right'.

By reflecting on this issue, we can see that folk fashion does not have the power to entirely overcome production-related enclosure of the fashion commons, because it is confined to pockets of approved activity. These approved areas relate to styles which we recognise as being traditionally made by hand, at home; the more amateur practice strays outside of these areas, the more it is susceptible to the negative associations of the homemade.

In the next chapters, we will shift from discussing conventional making – the creation of new items – to re-knitting. Despite my extended contact with amateur knitters, I have seldom heard of anyone using their knitting skills to rework existing knitting items. In a way, this is surprising; it was common to rework knitted garments in the past, particularly during the second world war. The knitted structure is inherently 'tinkerable', but the knowledge of how to re-knit has largely been lost. In the design research project, I developed re-knitting techniques and shared them with the group of knitters; we will explore the degree to which this new activity delivers well-being benefits, and whether the practice is more effective in opening up the fashion commons.



## 5.1 Principles of re-knitting

In this chapter, the focus shifts from discussing conventional knitting – the creation of new items – to re-knitting. By ‘re-knitting’, I am referring to a range of processes which utilise knitting skills, techniques and knowledge and can be carried out by individuals to repair and alter existing items of knitwear. I am concerned that a making practice that does not embrace maintenance is limited; it mirrors the linear production-consumption model of the mainstream fashion industry. I see re-knitting as a more radical type of amateur making, which extends the making relationship beyond creation and has the potential to keep garments in use for longer. It transfers a knitter’s practice from the creation of new items to the remaking of existing pieces; from another viewpoint, it allows knitters to maintain their preferred craft practice while engaging in remaking.

My design research project involved developing, testing and communicating methods of re-knitting existing garments, to be carried out by amateur knitters. There are two aspects to the project: developing technical methods of re-knitting, and developing a strategy for supporting amateur designing. In this chapter I will focus on the technical side of the project; in Chapter 6, I will discuss design. Despite the separation of the chapters, these strands are intertwined; when developing the technical methods, I anticipated their use, and creative suggestions by the group influenced their development.

In this chapter, I refer to various activities which took place at the four workshops; the organisation of these sessions is described in Section 2.2. For a summary of activities at each workshop, please refer to Figure 2.3.

### **Existing practice**

First, I will describe existing practices of remaking garments, and explain why this area is ripe for development. I use ‘remaking’ as an umbrella term, referring to a broad range of mending and alteration processes. These processes could vary in scale, from a few stitches to reinforce a seam to the complete reworking of a garment. They could return an item to its original state, or transform it into something new. Remaking activities may be prompted by a specific problem, such as a hole or a stain, or may be used to renew a garment in good physical condition. They may be unobtrusive, or – intentionally or otherwise – highly visible.

In my experience, remaking is most frequently associated with garments made from woven and jersey fabrics, such as dresses, tops and jeans. Fine and Leopold (1993) explain that it was common practice in the eighteenth century to restyle dresses time after time, in order to make the most of valuable fabric. It was also common for children’s clothes to be made from outdated adult garments during the same era (Styles, 2010). During the second world war, when

resources were scarce, remaking clothing once again became a necessity; Turner (2011) describes various ingenious methods employed by women at this time. Today, fashion labels such as Junky Styling offer ready-to-wear reworked garments and personalised restyling services. Although domestic repair practice has declined in recent decades (Fisher et al., 2008), restyling and mending are enjoying a current resurgence along with other types of making, with support available via books, magazines, workshops and blogs.

Sewing techniques can be used to rework knitted garments; blog posts and books (e.g. Ivarsson et al., 2005; Girard, 2008) provide tutorials for turning unwanted jumpers into quirky fashion and home accessories. These projects transform knitted garments by felting, cutting and sewing. In contrast, I am seeking to use knitting to rework knitted garments. I am focusing on techniques which use a knitter's existing skills and knowledge, and engage with the structure of the knitted fabric. In the next section I will discuss the processes that I developed; in general they involve adding or replacing sections of knitted fabric within a garment. The processes are flexible in terms of scale, transformation, motivation and visibility, restricted only by my chosen emphasis on knitting. Sewing processes are included if they engage directly with the knitted structure, such as grafting (the seamless joining of two knitted fabrics).

There is a piece of good advice for knitters that the Shetland Islanders mention over and over again.  
 'Never, ever sew when you can knit.'

(Pearson, 1980: 14)

The knitted fabric that I am concerned with is technically described as 'weft knitted'. There are two varieties of knitting: weft knitting and warp knitting. Warp knitting is solely an industrial process, used for specialist applications such as car upholstery (Spencer, 2001). Weft knitting is far more diverse, incorporating hand knitting, domestic machine

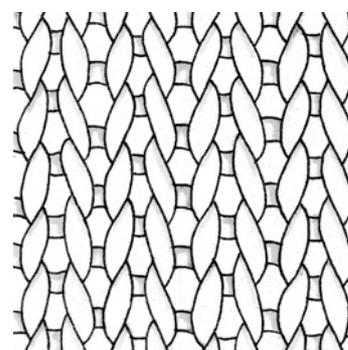


Figure 5.1. Weft knitted structure

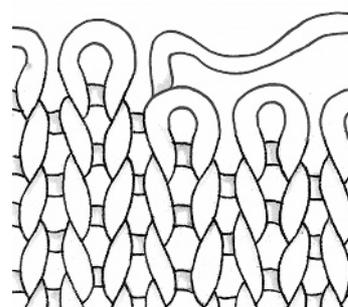


Figure 5.2. Unravelled row

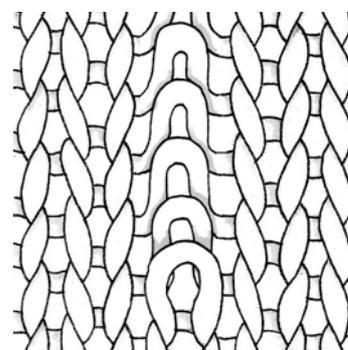


Figure 5.3. Laddered column

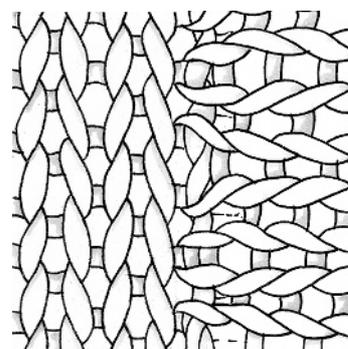


Figure 5.4. Stitches picked up

knitting and industrial production; the vast majority of knitwear in our wardrobes is weft knitted. In weft knitting, the fabric structure (Figure 5.1) is 'progressively built-up from row after row of intermeshed loops' (Spencer, 2001: 16). These loops can be retrospectively reconfigured, or – more colloquially – 'tinkered with'. Rows can be unravelled, to gradually deconstruct the fabric, and re-knitted (Figure 5.2). The vertical columns of loops can be unmeshed ('laddered') and reformed (Figure 5.3). New loops can be picked up within a fabric to create integrally joined pieces (Figure 5.4). The techniques that I have developed use the knitted structure's capability for reconfiguration, treating each loop as a unit, or a building block. In contrast, methods of reworking knitwear by cutting and sewing treat the fabric as a continuous sheet.

In principle, I include crochet, which can be worked into the loops of knitting, as an alternative means of constructing the new fabric. Crochet and knitted fabrics are structurally different, and some argue that they should not be mixed (e.g. Zimmermann, 1974). However, I want to cater for those who wish to crochet, either through personal preference or because a crochet fabric would offer a desired effect.

In the past, remaking would have been an integral part of the practice of knitting for many people. Pearson (1980: 13) describes how traditional gansey sleeves are knitted down from the shoulder, 'to enable one to repair any worn parts by simply pulling back past the hole and knitting back down again to the cuff'. Annemor Sundbø, who collects homemade Norwegian garments, has a collection of stockings (Figure 5.5) which 'illustrate the practice of knitting new heels and toes on old stocking legs ... stocking legs may be 100 years older than the feet' (Sundbø, 2000: 136-7).



*Figure 5.5. Norwegian re-knitted stockings (Source: Sundbø, 2000)*

Re-knitting has been particularly prevalent during periods of material scarcity, such as the American civil war (MacDonald, 1990) and the second world war. A series of knitting books

## SMART LONG-SLEEVED JERSEY

### FROM A WORN-OUT CARDIGAN

IT often happens that when a new garment is knitted one or more ounces of yarn are left over. This was the case with the 2-ply cardigan. The garment itself had had a great deal of wear and had worn very thin in places, while the edges were broken and had begun to unravel. Two ounces of the same wool had been put aside when the garment was made and the problem was to introduce this in such a way that any slight variation in colour or thickness would be as inconspicuous as possible. To do this the two-colour jersey on page 36 was adapted in the following way: The welt was knitted in



*The cardigan was worn thin in places and the edges were broken.*

new wool, so that it would be as strong and elastic as possible. The body of the jumper, as far as the end of the armhole shaping, was knitted in old wool, unravelled from the cardigan, but in k. 4, p. 2 rib instead of in garter stitch stripes. Here it was found necessary to make a slight alteration in the side shapings. Garter stitch has more rows to the inch than k. 4, p. 2 rib so that the original increasings were too far apart to fit into the 12½ ins. when working in rib. They were therefore worked on every 6th row instead of every 8th row. After the armhole shaping the new wool was introduced again for the yoke which was knitted in garter stitch. When the body of the garment was complete it was found that there would be sufficient wool for long sleeves. These were made as follows:—

Using new wool and No. 12 needles cast on 64 sts. and work in k. 2, p. 1 rib for 2½ ins. Change to old wool and No. 10 needles and work in k. 4, p. 2 rib, inc. 1 st. at both ends of the 7th and every following 6th row until there are 98 sts. Continue until work measures 18 ins. (or required length). Now dec. 1 st. at both ends of every alternate row until there are 70 sts., then at both ends of every row until there are 24 sts. left. Cast off.

New wool was also used for the collar. Had the new wool not been available, it would have been possible to make this same jersey, with short sleeves, from the unravelled cardigan, or, to make the whole jersey in new wool it would take 4 oz. for a short-sleeved garment or 5 oz. if you especially wish for long sleeves.



*It's difficult to believe that this smart jumper is made out of the wreckage of the cardigan opposite. Two ounces of new wool were added to the unravelled wool and made welt, yoke and part of sleeves.*

published in the 1940s (e.g. Koster and Murray, 1943) include entire sections devoted to 'the making of new garments from old'. They show numerous examples of re-knitting, with sorrowful 'before' and glamorous 'after' photographs, as shown in Figure 5.6.

A few of the research participants had memories of re-knitting activities taking place within their families. Several mentioned unravelling whole garments to reclaim the yarn; Alex also shared a story of her aunt re-knitting sections of her husband's jumpers.

*When it got really ratty, the polo neck would get all stretched and horrible. She would re-do the cuffs and she'd unpick the polo neck, and re-knit a new polo neck for him to keep him snug in the winter.*

Although some people still re-knit today – an Internet search identifies various instructions for unravelling jumpers to re-use the yarn – this practice seems to be marginal within the knitting community. Despite my extended contact with amateur knitters, I have seldom heard of anyone using their knitting skills to rework existing knitted items. The tacit knowledge of how to unravel, alter, replace and re-knit has largely been lost. In order to reintroduce re-knitting as a 'craft of use' (as discussed in Section 1.3) we need to rediscover this knowledge. We also need to develop it, creating a re-knitting practice appropriate for the contemporary context. For example, 1940s instructions focus solely on hand-knitted items; today, we have many more industrially produced, fine gauge knitted garments in our wardrobes. I am including these items in my scope, and learning to work with the tiny loops within fine gauge fabrics.

A project I had undertaken prior to this research gave me the idea that re-knitting might be extended beyond the processes documented in books. In 2009, I became interested in altering existing items of knitwear, and developed a technique which I named 'stitch-hacking'.



Figure 5.7. Stitch-hacking steps

Stitch-hacking involves the laddering and reconfiguration of stitches in an existing knitted fabric (Figure 5.7). It is based on a straightforward repair technique, used in a new context: to change a fabric to a new design, rather than repairing it back to its former structure. Although the repair technique is described in various books, I have not found any suggestion that it could be used to intentionally alter a fabric, other than one very specific application described by Elizabeth Zimmermann (1971). The creation of this ‘new’ technique (actually an old technique, used in a new way) gave me inspiration. As I experimented with the stitch-hacking technique to create pieces for exhibition (e.g. Figure 5.8), I realised that there could be opportunities to develop further methods of reworking existing knitted items, which would not previously have been documented.



Figure 5.8. Garment altered using stitch-hacking, swiss darning and grafting

### **Designing the unfinished**

The design task I set for myself was to develop, test and communicate methods of re-knitting existing garments, to be carried out by amateur knitters. I characterise this as a particular type of open design. It differs from the many examples of designers creating things that can be modified and re-used – from houses (Safdie and Alexander, 1974) to packaging (Fisher and Shipton, 2010). Whereas this activity could be described as *designing for re-use*, I am proposing to *design re-use itself*, by developing transformative processes that can be applied to any existing knitted garment.

When we create a garment from scratch, we are fully in control; however, when we alter an existing garment, we must negotiate with it. Every item of knitwear in our wardrobes has a different combination of characteristics in terms of gauge, structure, yarn, colour, shape and condition. My re-knitting processes must be conceptually open, or unfinished, in order to leave space for this variation. Other knitwear designers have adopted a similar approach in relation to the creation of new items, offering 'skeleton' patterns, without specifics such as yarn, needle and gauge (e.g. Zimmermann, 1974; Fee, 1983).

Knitters reworking their garments using these open, unfinished instructions will need to design in order to carry out their adaptations. This was one of the attractions of the re-knitting project; in Chapter 4, I described the desire of many knitters to be more creative. I am designing actions to be taken by others, which involve those others – amateur knitters – designing. This characteristic requires that the re-knitting processes be unfinished in a different way: they must be able to be adapted to suit the creative ideas of the knitter.

An unexpected but productive parallel for this task can be found in the field of music. In his essay *The Poetics of the Open Work*, Eco ([1962] 2006) discusses a number of contemporary musical compositions by Stockhausen, Pousseur and others, in which the performer has greater autonomy than in traditional compositions. He describes these pieces as 'works in movement'.

In primitive terms we can say that they are quite literally 'unfinished': the author seems to hand them on to the performer more or less like the components of a construction kit.

(Eco, [1962] 2006: 22)

With a work in movement, the performer 'must impose his judgment on the form of the piece, as when he decides how long to hold a note or in what order to group the sounds' (Eco, [1962] 2006: 20). Without the performer's decisions, there can be no performance; the composer actively creates the space for the performer to contribute, and to exercise choice. Thackara (2005: 211) describes this as 'a metaphor for a new approach to design'. If we substitute the medium-specific terms in Eco's essay – stitch for sound, designer for composer, knitter for performer – this metaphor reveals itself. I see my task as providing the knitter with components of a construction kit: 'unfinished' instructions which can be combined together in different ways to produce a myriad of re-knitting actions. Another way of thinking about the re-knitting resource is as a 'scaffold', as described by Sanders (2006). She argues that a scaffold is not simply an unfinished product; 'it is a special type of communicational space, one that supports and affords creative behaviour' (Sanders, 2006: 73). In order to communicate the re-knitting methods, I needed a means of codifying the tacit knowledge involved (Sennett, 2008); as I will explain, I combined conventional knitting code with my own, less conventional, strategies.

## 5.2 Development of re-knitting processes

During the first stage of this project, I mapped out methods of re-knitting ('treatments'), identified the processes involved in carrying them out ('steps'), and gathered existing knowledge. At this point, I focused on the technical possibilities for alteration afforded by the knitted structure; I sought to identify all possible options, without consideration for my own preferences or the capabilities and preferences of other knitters.

### **Generating ideas**

I felt it would be more liberating to start the development process from my own ideas, rather than existing instructions. I drew these ideas very roughly and then organised them according to the degree of intervention involved: from *copy* (a treatment which does not change the original garment) to *unravel* (a total deconstruction of the original garment). Some ideas were different versions of the same technical treatment. I identified ten possible treatments, and drew them in a more formal style to create a 'line-up' of ideas (much as I would when designing a collection of knitwear; see Appendix D1).

I then considered how the treatments would be carried out. Each involved several steps, and some could be achieved in different ways; many steps were common to several treatments. This quick analysis indicated that there were strong technical links between treatments at quite different points on my initial line-up. In the next version (Appendix D2), the treatments were grouped according to the way in which the original garment was altered (without opening the fabric, cutting it vertically or diagonally, or opening it horizontally), and the steps were shown.

### **Gathering existing knowledge**

I then felt ready to research existing re-knitting knowledge, using the Knitting Reference Library at Winchester School of Art and my own collection of knitting books. During the project, I gathered information from over eighty books in total, relating to both re-knitting and design; these are listed in the Bibliography. Some of the information I gathered at this stage was not specifically intended for re-knitting, relating instead to the specific steps I had identified in the second line-up. I also found information on 'afterthought' techniques. These processes – such as inserting pockets or cutting a cardigan opening – are applied to newly-knitted garments as part of the making process, but could equally be applied to existing garments.

Many of the books did provide specific advice for reworking garments. In the earlier books (up to around 1950), these garments were assumed to be old hand-knits, which required repair or rejuvenation. In the more recent books, the advice was intended to assist with newly-knitted

items, fixing problems of fit. Either way, the books tended to organise their advice according to the problem to be resolved: sleeves too short, body too long, fabric stained, style out of date.

Although many of these instructions were clear and comprehensive, I wanted to use them to open up further re-knitting options. In order to do this, I deconstructed the instructions to create a 'scrapbook' resource for each step. I scanned the pages of each source, cropping and sorting the relevant sections. At times, I divided a single page into four or five pieces – sometimes sentence by sentence – as the different parts were of interest for different steps. Two sample scrapbook pages are included in Appendix E.

### **Refining the spectrum**

When I had created scrapbook pages for each of the steps I had identified, I used them to draft a flow chart (Appendix D3), showing the 'paths' between the steps for different treatments. This process was particularly useful: it visualised the ways in which the steps were interlinked, and helped me to expose further treatments that I had not previously considered. Where the instructions for reworking I had found had been discrete and linear, they were now reconstructed into a complex web of information. I formalised the draft chart to create the master re-knitting flow chart (Appendix D4); I picked out particular pathways to illustrate specific treatments, such as *stitch-hack* and *cut open and trim* (Appendices D5 and D6).

In order to share my ideas with the research group, I developed a final version of the chart (Figure 5.9), which I describe as the 'spectrum' of re-knitting treatments. The spectrum shows the full range of treatments I have identified (often renamed since earlier versions), along with the steps used for each one. The spectrum is open; it is quite possible that more re-knitting treatments could be identified, and placed as new pathways on the spectrum. As before, the treatments are arranged according to the way in which the knitted fabric is opened.

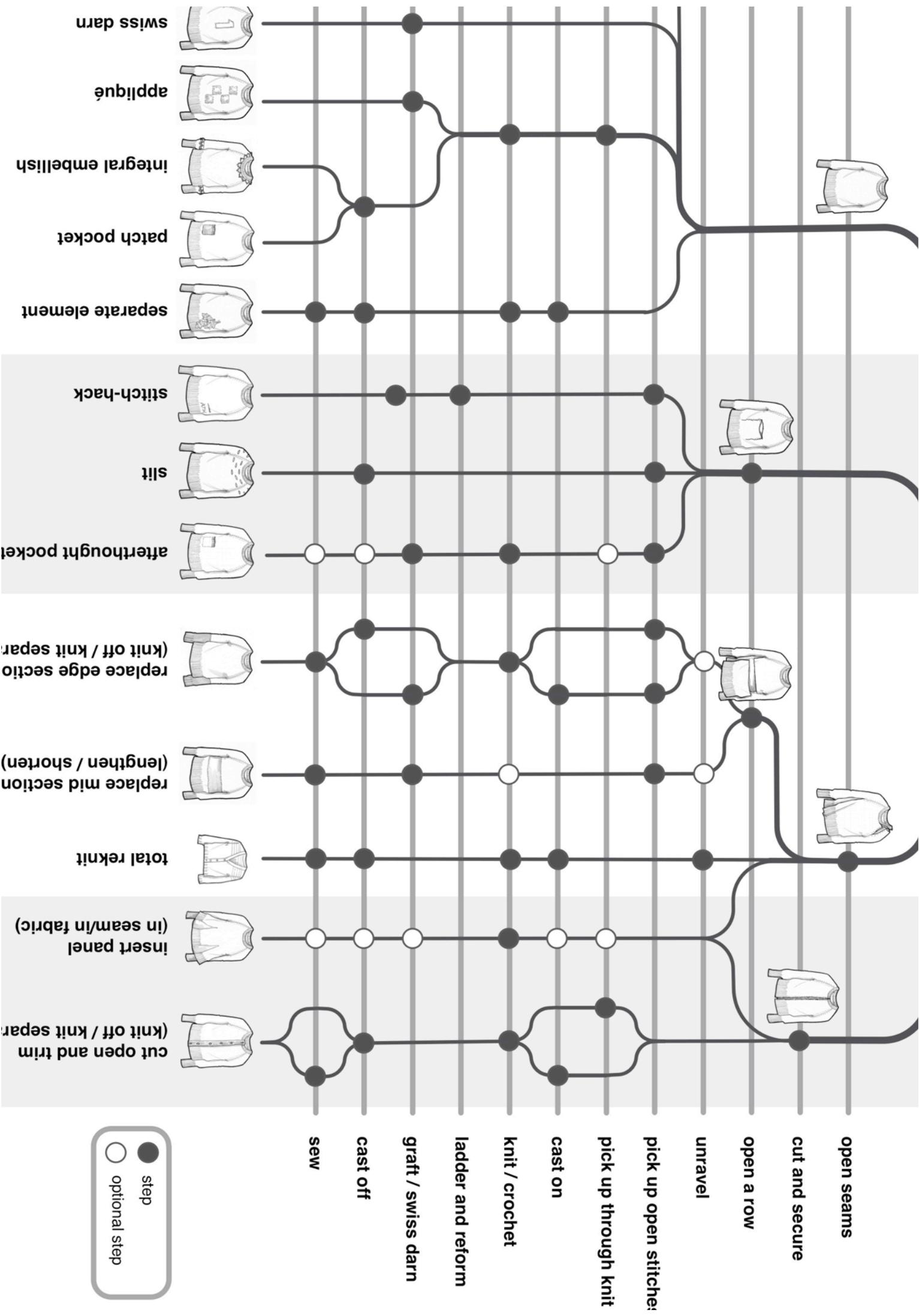
At Workshop 1, I showed the group the spectrum and described how it had been developed. I was pleased to find that they understood the diagram and the open choices that it represented.

*If you start off with your sweater, you can look down there, and think of all the options. You'd start to think of ideas, wouldn't you? [Julia]*

*It could be incremental. If you start doing one thing, then you might think: I'll do this as well, depending on how it progresses as you go along. [Alex]*

### **Sampling and testing**

In creating the re-knitting spectrum, I had constructed a network of interconnected information, showing the full range of technical possibilities I had identified for altering knitted garments



using knit-based techniques. My next task was to physically explore these possibilities, to identify problems and further options. At the same time, I wanted to develop guidance that would support knitters in planning and carrying out the treatments. While I had gathered an array of relevant information from my book research, I could see there was much still to be developed.

Throughout this process, one issue was paramount: the question of openness. Each treatment has countless variations, depending on the characteristics of the original garment and the design of the alteration. I wanted to offer knitters as many options as possible, but was acutely aware that too much choice can be stifling. I was also conscious of authorship. I wondered: if I eliminate options, am I denying amateur knitters the chance to make an open choice? On what should I base my decisions: aesthetics, technique, tradition? In retrospect, I can see that the meta-narrative of this design research project is a search for the right balance between choice and support. I developed a cycle of activity: trying something out, getting stuck, analysing my problem, reflecting and repositioning. This iterative approach allowed me to refine my attitude to openness as I progressed.

### **Step-by-step sampling**

As soon as I started to sample, I came up against my first issue: what would be the most effective way of communicating the innumerable possible variations? I chose to adopt a consistent and basic style for my samples, to create a range of generic options that would invite adaptation. I used panels knitted from cream woollen yarn, in plain stocking stitch with a rib at the hem, to represent the existing knitted fabrics, and red woollen yarn to represent my re-knitted alterations.

The first stage of physical exploration involved testing the treatments, step by step. Many of the treatments could be achieved in several different ways; I wanted to produce a sample for each one, with photographs showing each step. I worked on the *replace edge section* samples first; in doing so, I needed to make further decisions, such as what stitch to use for the new section. I chose to knit half in stocking stitch and half in double moss stitch, to show that the stitch could be altered from that of the original. The step-by-step photographs for *replace edge section* are shown in Figure 5.10.

I also had to choose the method of grafting I would use for my samples: on the needles, or flat. Although most modern books and websites give the needle-based instructions, I prefer the flat method and have found it to be universally preferred by knitters in my workshops. I had the dilemma of fitting in with other sources of advice, or recommending the method I prefer; I chose the latter. Reflecting on this decision, I realised I had used the idea of being *knitterly* as a guide. Although not in common use, the notion of being knitterly has been discussed by various

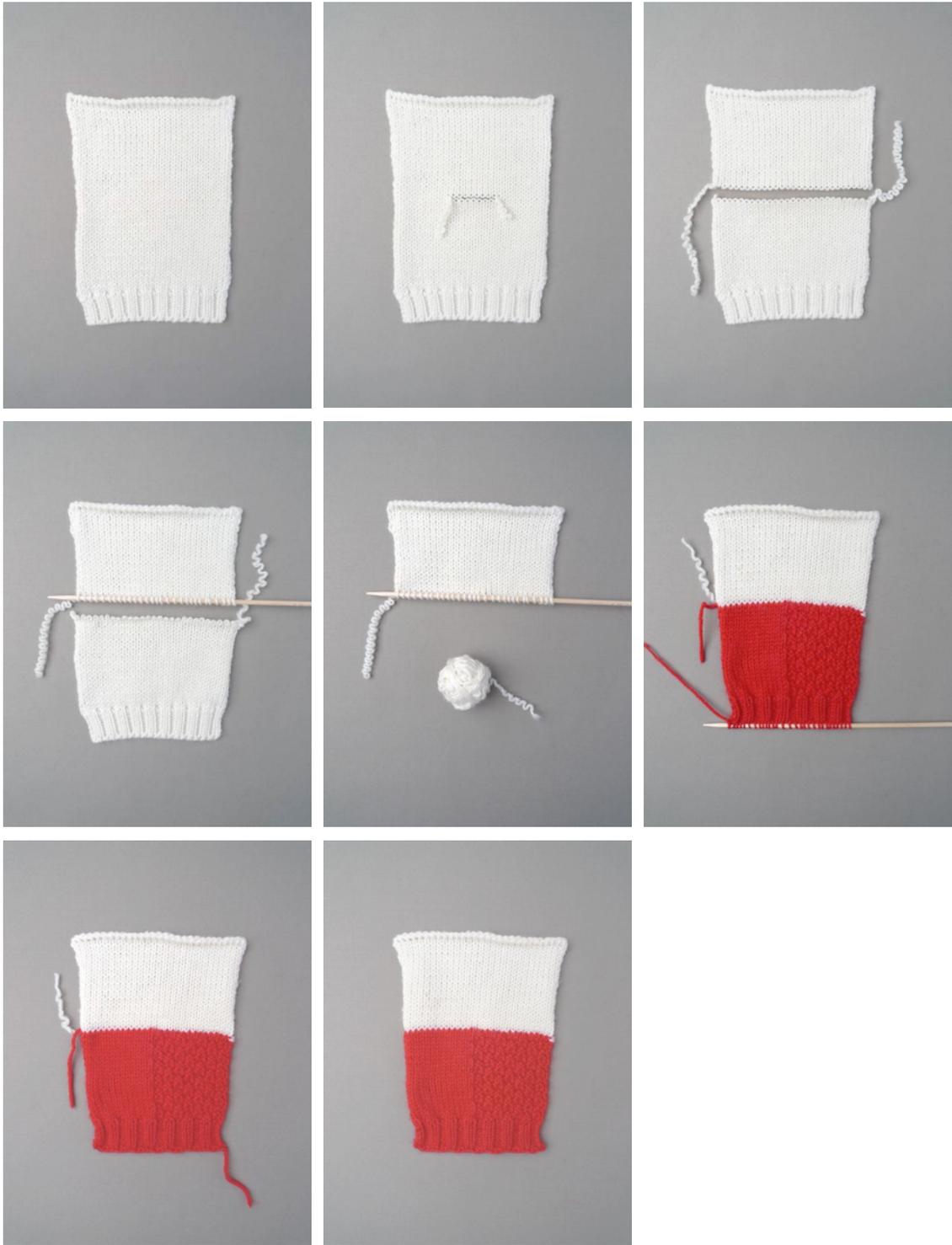


Figure 5.10. Step-by-step photographs of replace edge section (knit off method)

writers. The clearest summary I have found is by Radcliffe (2012: 5), who says that 'knitterly solutions are based on what knitting does naturally well'. These solutions are sometimes discussed in relation to the finished garment:

A good knitting design ... must speak the language of the knitting craft ... all aspects must be planned and solved keeping in mind the characteristics of knitted fabrics and the techniques for, say, shaping, strengthening and flattening, at the knitter's disposal.

(Stanley, 1982: 41)

However, Radcliffe argues that being knitterly is also about making the process of knitting more relaxed and enjoyable:

A knitterly solution is an approach to a project that makes it easier to knit, while producing better results than working it conventionally or as the instructions dictate. Knitterly solutions are straightforward and uncomplicated, making work on the project more comfortable, leaving the knitter more relaxed, and resulting in a more enjoyable experience and better results all round.

(Radcliffe, 2012: 5)

Whereas individual knitters might adapt a pattern to suit their own preferences, I was designing for others; I needed to work with the 'knitters in my head', as I thought of them, and be guided by their preferences. I have a tacit knowledge of these preferences, acquired from dozens of knitting workshops over the course of several years. I am able to identify the techniques that knitters tend to use, the methods that they generally find easier to understand, and the concerns that they share about a 'professional' finish. I used this knowledge as a basis for my decisions, considering both the ease of knitting and the appearance and performance of the result. In the grafting example, I considered the flat method to be more knitterly.

Another issue arose when I was trying to show where there were open options for variation in a treatment. When I developed the *afterthought pocket* treatment, I identified two versions: a double hanging pocket, and a single attached pocket. Each could be worked in two or three ways, and I sampled every option (two examples are shown in Figures 5.11 and 5.12). The instructions I had gathered from the books suggested that a trim could be added to the top of the pocket. In considering the multiple options for this trim, in combination with the options for the pocket itself, I became suddenly overwhelmed. I realised that the approach I was using, of producing a sample for each technical variation of a treatment, could not be practically executed.

Around the same time, I sampled the *slit* treatment. I was not particularly attracted to this treatment, and constructed in the cream and red yarns, the sample (Figure 5.13) was quite repellent to me. Once again, I questioned my approach of trying to sample each treatment equally. I was torn between the wish to offer my knitters every option, and feeling that some treatments were more useful than others.

On reflection, I realised that this dilemma was part of a bigger issue, which I had not yet recognised: the tension between my role as a designer, and my role as a researcher. Within the context of this re-knitting project, as a designer I wanted to make decisions and develop those treatments most likely to appeal to the knitters in my group. As a researcher, I felt that I should objectively assess the success of different treatments and not pre-judge the knitters' preferences. With further thought, I was able to resolve this tension. I realised that I was not researching the preferences of the knitters, but whether I – working as a designer – could encourage them to shift their practice towards re-knitting. Hence, I should develop the treatments in a way that I thought would appeal to them.

Having embraced the need to make decisions, I adopted a different approach to the development of the treatments. Rather than trying to develop every treatment in the same way, and to the same level, I developed some more than others. This idea emerged rather unexpectedly from a discussion about software development with my mother, who has extensive experience of teaching the subject. I learned that it is standard practice in some forms of programming to design a structure for a piece of software, and then to develop only some parts, leaving the undeveloped sections as 'stubs' to be developed at a later date (Twigger, 2013; Webopedia, 2013; Wikipedia, 2013a). This is a 'top-down' design approach, 'where a partially functional system with complete high-level structures is designed and coded, and this system is then progressively expanded to fulfill the requirements of the project'



Figure 5.11. Double hanging pocket



Figure 5.12. Single attached pocket



Figure 5.13. Slit

(Wikipedia, 2013b). The re-knitting spectrum is equivalent to the software structure; each treatment is a stub, to be developed in a flexible manner. This approach allows me to focus on the treatments I think will be particularly interesting and appealing, and to develop them in whatever way seems most appropriate, without closing down the opportunity for future development of the other treatments.

At this stage I decided to work interactively with the group of knitters during the development of the treatments. I had previously intended to develop the treatments to a certain stage, and then share them with the group; instead, I now saw the knitters as co-developers. While I trusted my tacit knowledge of knitters' preferences, this strategy allowed me to test my assumptions, and to develop the treatments in response to the knitters' requests.

I chose four treatments (*integral embellish*, *stitch-hack*, *replace edge section* and *cut open and trim*) to co-develop with the group. The selected treatments incorporated a range of different techniques, and offered a diversity of alteration methods. I have chosen to describe the development of *replace edge section* in detail, describing different situations in which I searched for openness. This treatment was the first that I shared with the group, and its development encapsulates many of the issues that I encountered.

### Changing gauge

The *replace edge section* treatment involves opening the knitted fabric horizontally to expose a row of open stitches. These stitches are picked up and knitted, adding rows to the existing fabric. It could be used to replace a hem or cuffs, as shown in Figure 5.14. In some cases, it would be possible to knit the new section at the same gauge as the original; that is, with stitches of exactly the same size (Figure 5.15). However, in many cases it would be difficult to match the gauge. Therefore, as part of the development

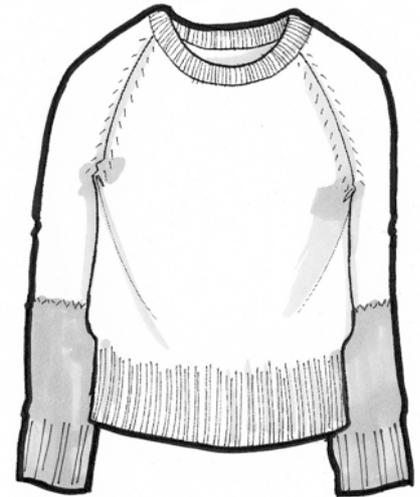


Figure 5.14. Replace edge section

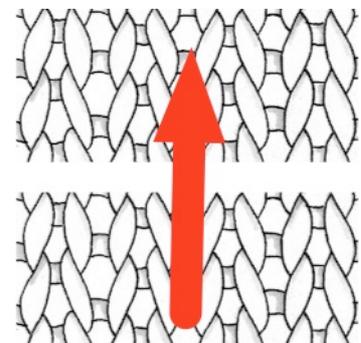


Figure 5.15. Matching gauge

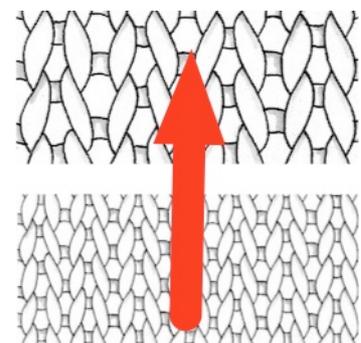


Figure 5.16. Fine to chunky transition

of this treatment, I needed to address the issue of changing gauge. This issue does not arise in conventional knitting and I have found very little advice on the technical challenge of changing gauge in the knitting literature. Because of the prevalence of fine gauge knitwear in our wardrobes today, I focused on transitions from fine original fabrics to chunkier additions. In such a transition, the knitter would move from an existing fabric, with a large number of small stitches, to a new fabric with fewer, bigger stitches, while maintaining the overall panel width (Figure 5.16).

The gauge of both existing and new knitted fabrics – measured in stitches per ten centimetres (st/10cm) – varies greatly. It was important that my strategy could deal with any transition, whatever the gauges of the new and old fabrics. Thus, for each transition I calculate a multiplier:

$$\text{new st/10cm} \div \text{old st/10cm} = \text{multiplier}$$

This figure is a decimal, always less than 1 for transitions from finer to chunkier fabrics. For example:

$$30 \text{ (new st/10cm)} \div 40 \text{ (old st/10cm)} = 0.75$$

This decimal figure does not instruct our knitting, as is; knowing that for every ‘old’ stitch, we need 0.75 new stitches, is unhelpful. However, if the figure is translated to a ratio, we are able to work with whole stitches. A multiplier of 0.75 is the same as a ratio of 4:3; for every four old stitches, we need three new ones. To transition from four stitches to three, we must decrease.

Decreasing is a common knitting process, normally used to shape panels or create decoration. To work a single decrease, two stitches are worked together, so that one new stitch emerges from the original two (Figure 5.17). Double decreases can be worked, knitting three stitches together into one (Figure 5.18). Although single and double

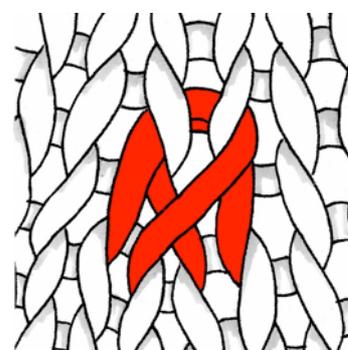


Figure 5.17. Single decrease (2tog)

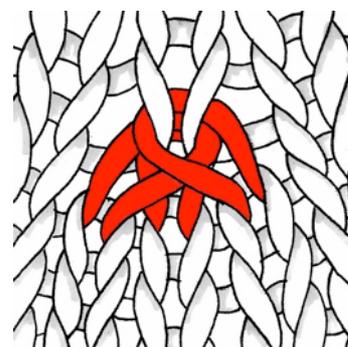


Figure 5.18. Double decrease (3tog)

decreases can be worked in various ways, for simplicity I use the abbreviations *2tog* (single decrease) and *3tog* (double decrease).

Having established a method of calculating the multiplier for any pair of old and new fabrics, I then worked out a list of ratios. I took 3:1 (multiplier: 0.33) as the minimum multiplier, as it would involve double decreases being worked across an entire row. I specified that no ratio would have a factor over 10, as I felt that the longer repeats involved would be difficult to remember when knitting; hence, 10:9 (multiplier: 0.9) was the maximum multiplier in my list. Having made a list of the 21 ratios in between these two extremes, I then looked at how they could be knitted. I used an adapted knitting notation which graphically represents single stitches (|), *2tog* decreases (N), and *3tog* decreases (Λ).

There were two options for many of the ratios, using *2tog* or *3tog* decreases. For example, a ratio of 4:3 could be knitted as N | | (2tog, 1 x 2) or Λ | | | | (3tog, 1 x 5; technically, a ratio of 8:6, which has the same effect as 4:3). From this working out, I realised that some of the options were irregular; for example, the *3tog* spacing for 7:5 is regular: Λ | | | | (3tog, 1 x 4) but the *2tog* spacing is irregular: N | N | | (2tog, 1, 2tog, 1, 1). I felt this irregular spacing would be difficult to remember when knitting and that the finished result would look messy. I produced a table (Figure 5.19) showing the ratios, their decimal equivalents, and the *2tog* and *3tog* spacing options, shading the irregular options in grey.

Multiplier	Ratio	Spacing options					
		2tog		3tog		3tog, 2tog	
0.33	3:1			Λ	3tog		
0.38	8:3					Λ Λ N	3tog, 3tog, 2tog
0.40	5:2					Λ N	3tog, 2tog
0.43	7:3			Λ Λ	3tog, 3tog, 1	Λ N N	3tog, 2tog, 2tog
0.44	9:4					Λ N N N	3tog, 2tog, 2tog, 2tog
0.50	2:1	N	2tog	Λ	3tog, 1		
0.56	9:5	N N N N	2tog x 4, 1				
0.57	7:4	N N N	2tog x 3, 1				
0.60	5:3	N N	2tog x 2, 1	Λ	3tog, 1 x 2		
0.63	8:5	N N   N	2tog, 2tog, 1, 2tog, 1				
0.67	3:2	N	2tog, 1	Λ	3tog, 1 x 3		
0.70	10:7	N   N   N	(2tog, 1) x 3, 1				
0.71	7:5	N   N	2tog, 1, 2tog, 1, 1	Λ	3tog, 1 x 4		
0.75	4:3	N	2tog, 1 x 2	Λ	3tog, 1 x 5		
0.78	9:7	N     N	2tog, 1, 1, 2tog, 1, 1, 1	Λ	3tog, 1 x 6		
0.80	5:4	N	2tog, 1 x 3	Λ	3tog, 1 x 7		
0.83	6:5	N	2tog, 1 x 4	Λ	3tog, 1 x 9		
0.86	7:6	N	2tog, 1 x 5	Λ	3tog, 1 x 11		
0.88	8:7	N	2tog, 1 x 6	Λ	3tog, 1 x 13		
0.89	9:8	N	2tog, 1 x 7	Λ	3tog, 1 x 15		
0.90	10:9	N	2tog, 1 x 8	Λ	3tog, 1 x 17		

	normal stitch
N	2tog
Λ	3tog

Figure 5.19. Draft decrease spacing table

I tested the ratios and spacing options by knitting various test panels, and developed a range of stitch patterns which could be used for the transition row (discussed later in this section). At Workshop 1 I asked the group to each knit a *replace edge section* sample, using the spacing table I had developed. The testing experience was enlightening; it highlighted two areas where the options needed to be restricted.

The participants measured their fabrics and calculated their multipliers. They then looked up the ratio with a multiplier closest to that desired, and finally selected a stitch pattern to knit. I guided them through the process, and realised that I was steering them away from the ratios with irregular *2tog* options, even if they ended up using a *3tog* spacing. The knitters were learning something new and felt quite overwhelmed; we all felt it was necessary for me to protect them from any factors which might further complicate the process.

The knitters who tried to knit samples with small multipliers (e.g. 3:1) found that the dramatic change in gauge was difficult to knit. I, too, had found this when I did my own samples. It was almost impossible to draw the thick yarn, appropriate to the new gauge, through the small stitches of the existing fabric. The difficulty of the task, and the unsatisfactory nature of the result, was clearly discouraging.

*I mean, technically, you've done it, but is it worth having? [Alex]*

I had been reluctant to restrict the options available to the knitters, seeing 'openness' as equivalent to many options. However, I realised that it was beneficial to make strong recommendations about 'knittable' ratios and spacings. As I wrote in my reflective notes at this time:

*Making recommendations is ok, I think – otherwise people try things that put them off the whole endeavour.*

I used this knowledge to produce a more refined version of the ratio and spacing table (Figure 5.20), eliminating all multipliers below 0.50 and deleting (rather than shading) the irregular spacing options. It produced a much simpler and less intimidating tool, and was welcomed by the group as being more usable.

During the sampling process, I realised that more dramatic changes in gauge could be achieved by working the decrease as two steps. Each step could be a different ratio, producing a rather intimidating 441 possible combinations. I went through a similar process to narrow these to 21 options (for more detail, see Appendices F1, F2 and F3). Once again, I saw that in order to encourage action by others, it was better to dramatically restrict the options to those which could be successfully worked.

Multiplier	Ratio	Spacing options			
		plain or slip transitions (2tog)		slip transitions (3tog) <i>not for fine fabrics</i>	
0.50	2:1	↯	2tog	△	3tog, 1
0.56	9:5	↯ ↯ ↯ ↯	2tog x 4, 1		
0.57	7:4	↯ ↯ ↯	2tog x 3, 1		
0.60	5:3	↯ ↯	2tog x 2, 1	△	3tog, 1 x 2
0.67	3:2	↯	2tog, 1	△	3tog, 1 x 3
0.71	7:5			△	3tog, 1 x 4
0.75	4:3	↯	2tog, 1 x 2	△	3tog, 1 x 5
0.78	9:7			△	3tog, 1 x 6
0.80	5:4	↯	2tog, 1 x 3	△	3tog, 1 x 7
0.83	6:5	↯	2tog, 1 x 4	△	3tog, 1 x 9
0.86	7:6	↯	2tog, 1 x 5	△	3tog, 1 x 11
0.88	8:7	↯	2tog, 1 x 6	△	3tog, 1 x 13
0.89	9:8	↯	2tog, 1 x 7	△	3tog, 1 x 15
0.90	10:9	↯	2tog, 1 x 8	△	3tog, 1 x 17

	<i>normal stitch</i>
↯	<i>2tog</i>
△	<i>3tog</i>

Figure 5.20. Final decrease spacing table

### Transition options

Early in the development process, as I started to knit my first *replace edge section* samples, I realised that there were many ways of working the transition from existing to new fabric. As a designer, I felt that the plainest transition – continuing in stocking stitch – felt rather apologetic (Figure 5.21). I wanted to develop alternatives which celebrated the change in gauge more positively. One idea, which I felt to be successful, was using slip stitches to break up the join (Figure 5.22). This idea builds on an existing knitting technique, adapting it to include decreases.



Figure 5.21. Stocking stitch transition



Figure 5.22. Slip stitch transition

Knitting samples is a relatively slow process; as I knitted each one, I had time to think about alternative stitch patterns and I had soon identified several variables which could be combined together to create 72 variations.

At first, I was excited to identify alternatives, but as the combinations multiplied I soon became worried: would I need to sample every version? Happily, the answer emerged naturally. As I knitted, I realised that many of the variations simply looked like messy versions of the original stocking stitch transition. Before Workshop 1, I narrowed the options to 21 ‘approved’

transitions. When I observed the participants selecting from these options, I realised how similar many of them were, and saw that the apparent duplication was causing confusion. Once again, I concluded that it would be more supportive to provide fewer options, and undertook a further round of elimination to leave seven final transitions. A chart illustrating the variations and the approved options is included in Appendix F6.

At the workshop, we also decided that the slip transitions were unsuitable for finer fabrics; the decorative effect of the slipped stitches was lost on the fine gauge, and it was agreed that the result was not worth the effort. With this in mind, I developed advice for the *replace edge section* treatment, based on the gauge of the existing fabric. This chart (Figure 5.23) provides a far more definite ‘path’ through the challenge of changing gauge than the original array of options. It includes *increase* transition options, which move from a chunky to a finer fabric; I developed these in response to interest from the group. The spacing table for increase transitions can be found in Appendix F4.

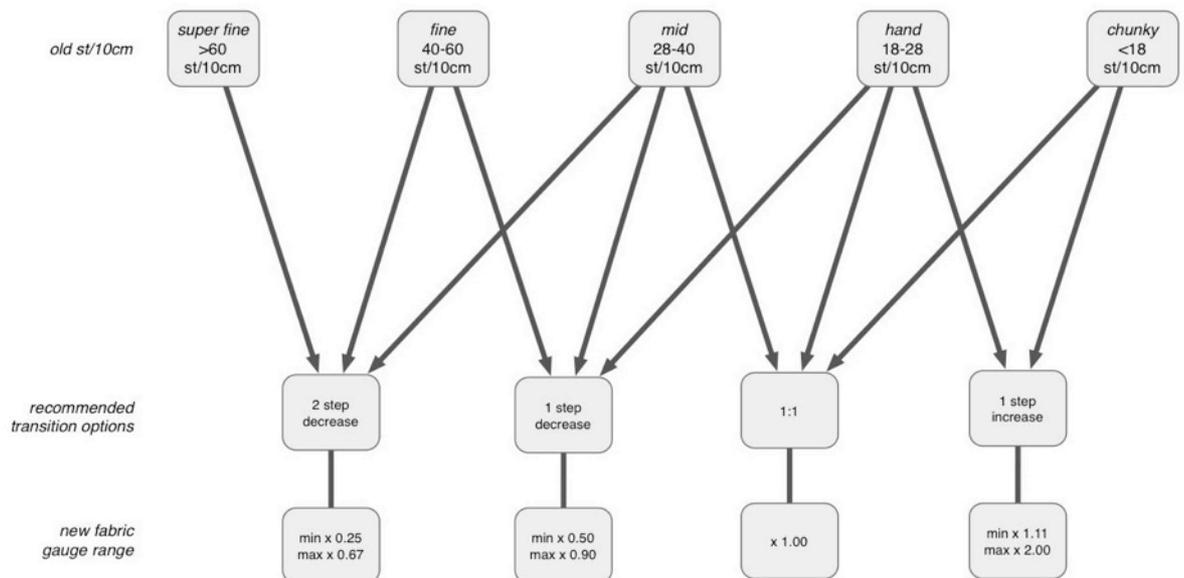


Figure 5.23. Replace edge section advice

### Transition patterns

Another issue arose when I was deciding how to communicate the transition variations I had designed. At first, I was reluctant to write row-by-row instructions, as would be found in a conventional knitting stitch dictionary, partly because the instructions for each option would vary according to the gauge change ratio selected. Furthermore, I wanted to encourage knitters to see my designs as a starting point which could be adapted, and felt that conventional instructions would be restrictive. When I developed the variations, I had not needed to write row-by-row instructions for myself, as I was sufficiently familiar with the structures to be able to ‘read’ the knitting itself.

However, when we sampled the *replace edge section* treatment, I saw that the knitters were not familiar enough to be able to ‘read’ the knitting. Instead I had to generate, on the spot, row-by-row instructions appropriate to their chosen option and ratio. Having realised that such instructions were necessary, I subsequently produced written patterns, giving versions for two different ratios to demonstrate how each should be adapted. Figure 5.24 shows one example, for a pattern I named ‘TV Set’. Further transition patterns, along with the glossary of the standard knitting code used, can be found in Appendices G7 and G8.



Figure 5.24. Sample transition pattern: TV Set

My appreciation of row-by-row instructions grew during the development of the *integral embellish* treatment. I had used row-by-row edging patterns from a book, knitting them first according to the instructions and then varying them to change the proportions and make them suitable for the embellish treatment (three patterns are included in Appendix G9). On reflection, I realised how open and accessible the ‘set’ pattern was. While a less confident knitter could use the instructions as given, I was able to use them as a basis for variation, as I wrote in my notes:

*Giving the row instructions actually lets you understand how to knit it. You can knit a sample – then (if reasonably confident) have your own ideas about how to change it.*

### **Knitterly preferences**

As I explained earlier in the chapter, I initially developed the treatments using my tacit knowledge of knitters’ preferences. Working with the group allowed me to test my assumptions, and to develop the treatments in response to the knitters’ requests. Looking back, I generally

made appropriate decisions, accurately anticipating their preferences. For example, Margaret shared my instinct that it is preferable – more knitterly – to pick up stitches through a fabric, to create integrally joined pieces, rather than knitting elements separately and sewing them on.

There were some differences of opinion over particular transitions or treatments, but the knitters were open-minded and positive about the samples, and able to see their potential. Occasionally, they surprised me by challenging my assumptions. At Workshop 1, when we discussed the *slit* treatment, I expressed doubt about whether anyone would choose to carry it out. Several of the group responded positively to the idea, saying that they had seen similar effects on fashionable garments in shops and knitting magazines. We will find out more about the knitters' responses to the re-knitting treatments, and the idea of re-knitting in general, in Chapters 6 and 7.

### **Finding openness**

I have described several different situations in the development of my re-knitting treatments, in which I identified an overwhelming number of options. De Mul (2011: 36) argues that the seemingly infinite combinations engendered by open design systems create 'a new role for the designer ... he [sic] should become a metadesigner'. The metadesigner helps the amateur to move through these combinations, mediating and enabling their experience. As he explains, 'the designer's task is to limit the virtually unlimited combinational space in order to create order from disorder ... most of the (re)combinations of design elements will have little or no value' (de Mul, 2011: 37).

As I have explained, at first I felt that openness related to choice, and that any restriction of options would be an enclosing factor. However, I came to understand the need for restriction, as described by de Mul. I realised that it is *activity* that I want to open up, and that this is not necessarily achieved by offering every possible variation of a technique or process. Too much choice – particularly where many of the choices look unsatisfactory, or are awkward to work – can stifle and close off activity just as much as a prescriptive knitting pattern. On reflection, I have come to see that open activity occupies a halfway point somewhere between the prescription of a conventional knitting pattern and unsupported, endless choice. This idea is expressed visually in Figure 5.25.

In this area of openness, the designer offers support and guidance by limiting the technical options; it is a supportive space in which the knitter is able to devise their own re-knitting project and make creative decisions. There is still a judgement to be made about the degree of support required in each given situation. I have found that providing clearly communicated instructions caters for a range of knitters; those with more confidence are able to adapt the instructions and stray further from the supported path.

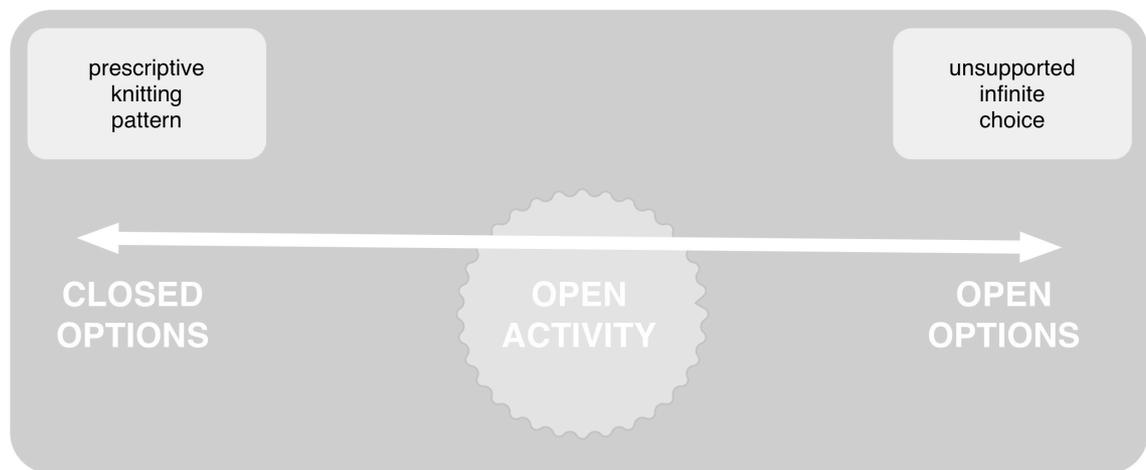


Figure 5.25. Relationship between open activity, prescription and choice

## 5.3 Web resource

### Building the resource

At Workshop 1, the knitters asked whether the resources I had developed and displayed on the walls of the studio could be made available to them online. In response, I created a re-knitting area in the research section of my website (now available at <http://www.keepandshare.co.uk/making/re-knitting>). Over the course of the project this area grew from a single page to a sprawling, hyperlinked resource in which I recorded the instructions, tools and advice I had developed. In keeping with the top-down design approach I described earlier in the chapter, the resource is designed to continue growing. Some areas are well-developed, while others remain as ‘stubs’, to be developed in the future. I built the resource in the open, in order to make the material immediately accessible to the group, and in a spirit of openness; I worked at all times on the live version of the site. Towards the end of the project, I added introductory information – describing the history and future potential of re-knitting – in order to make the resource usable by knitters outside the research group.

As the online resource has developed, I have realised that its design shapes how – and whether – it is used. I drew on Avital’s directives for creating material which supports amateur design and making; he suggests that this supportive infrastructure should be inspiring, engaging, adaptive and open (Avital, 2011). Accordingly, I have tried to make the online resource friendly, self-explanatory, visual and easy to use. The knitters responded positively to the resource, and from their comments it was evident that they had followed its development and engaged with the content.

*Your website is amazing. It's so much understanding of what you're writing, that's what comes across. You get confidence when you're reading, because you think, this woman knows what she's saying, therefore I can listen to this. [Alex]*

Creating the resource helped me to manage the huge amounts of information generated during the project; by organising the information into a logical structure, I organised my thoughts. Writing advice on various aspects of re-knitting required me to make explicit some of the tacit re-knitting knowledge I was developing. This opens up the knowledge to others; it also records it for my own use. Of course, much knowledge about making is impossible to record in straightforward written notes; the resource depends on the tacit knowledge of knitters, which must be deployed in combination with the advice and instructions I have provided.

### **Contents**

A contents page (Figure 5.26) explains the materials within the online resource. *The process* and *tips and exercises* relate to design, and will be discussed in Chapter 6.

In the *treatments* section, there is a page for each of the fourteen treatments. These pages include a short description of the treatment and the steps involved, and some (depending on their degree of development) provide links to *instructions*, *patterns* and *advice*. The *cut open and trim* treatment page is included in Appendix G1 as an example. For this treatment, there are details of external sources of instructions and a sub-page with step-by-step photographs (included in Appendix G4; step-by-step photographs for two other treatments can be found in Appendices G5 and G6). There is also a sub-page with advice (Appendix G2). Similarly, in the *steps* section there is a page for each step, where I have summarised the advice gathered from books and my own experience, and provided links to external sources. I have included more detail for certain steps. For example, I wrote detailed instructions for *ladder and reform*, as the content needed was not available in books; this page is included as an example in Appendix G3.

Within the *tools* section is a *gauge change* page which provides generic materials for working out changes in gauge. The page has manual instructions for calculating the multiplier and the full set of spacing tables, including a 'pick up' spacing table (Appendix F5), for use with treatments such as *integral embellish* and *cut open and trim*. An interactive spreadsheet tool, which combines the multiplier and spacing tables together, can be downloaded. A screenshot of one page of the interactive tool can be found in Appendix H1.

### **Yarn, needle and gauge**

Another page in the *tools* section concerns the relationship between yarn, needle size and gauge. I will describe the development of this material, as my aims shifted as work progressed.

## About the resource

Working with existing garments - which come in an infinite variety of shapes, sizes, colours, structures and gauges - requires more 'open' instructions than a conventional knitting pattern.

This resource comprises various **materials and tools** that can be drawn on and combined in many different ways. Guidance on how to work through a re-knitting project using the resource can be found in [the process](#).

The resource is being developed using **open source** ideas; read more about that [here](#).

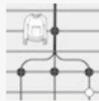
### The process



This section describes the process of choosing, adapting and executing your re-knitting treatment, using the materials and tools in the resource.

There is a general description and more detailed 'how to' instructions for those new to design.

### Spectrum



The re-knitting spectrum:

- illustrates the full range of treatments that could be done to an existing item of knitwear
- identifies the steps involved in each treatment

### Treatments

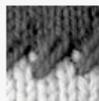


A treatment outlines a process which can be carried out to alter an existing item of knitwear.

There is a page for each re-knitting treatment, including...



**Instructions** for one or more methods for carrying out the treatment



**Patterns** to be used for the treatment



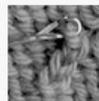
**Advice** on how to adapt the instructions and patterns selected for the treatment

### Tools



Tools are factual things: calculations, tables and graphs. The tools will come in useful for most treatments, as they help you to figure out what yarn and needle to use, and to negotiate a change in gauge.

### Steps



Steps are individual operations which are combined together to make a treatment. In this section you'll find advice on carrying out each re-knitting step.

### Tips and exercises



Tips on designing, gathered from a range of sources, are included here. The exercises help you to practise the design skills needed for a re-knitting project: mixing colours, altering stitch patterns etc.

### Gallery



The gallery shows examples of completed re-knitting treatments.

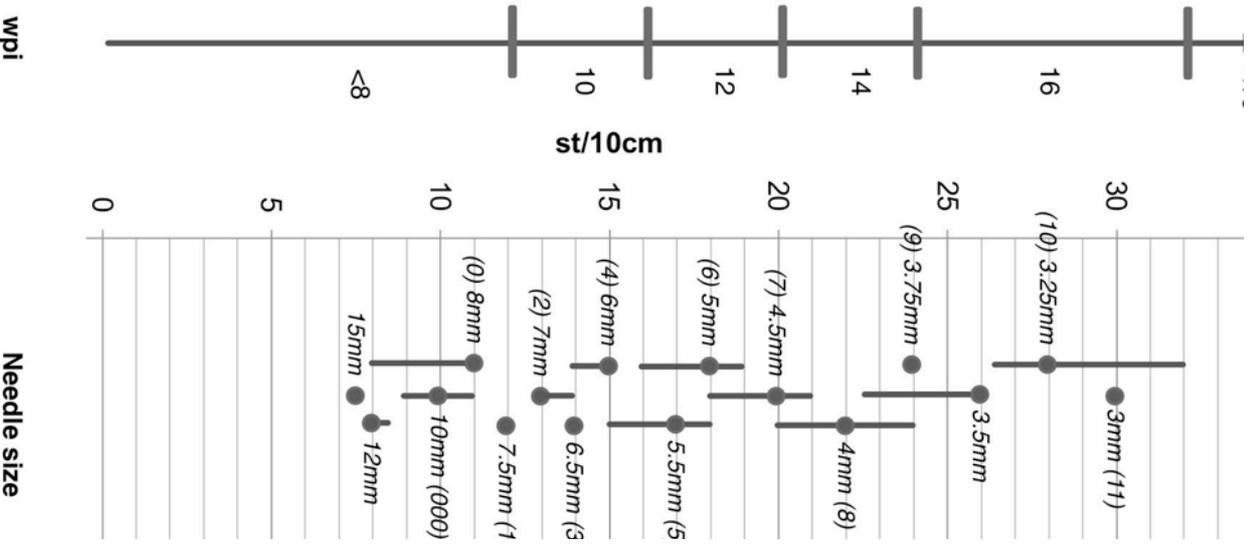
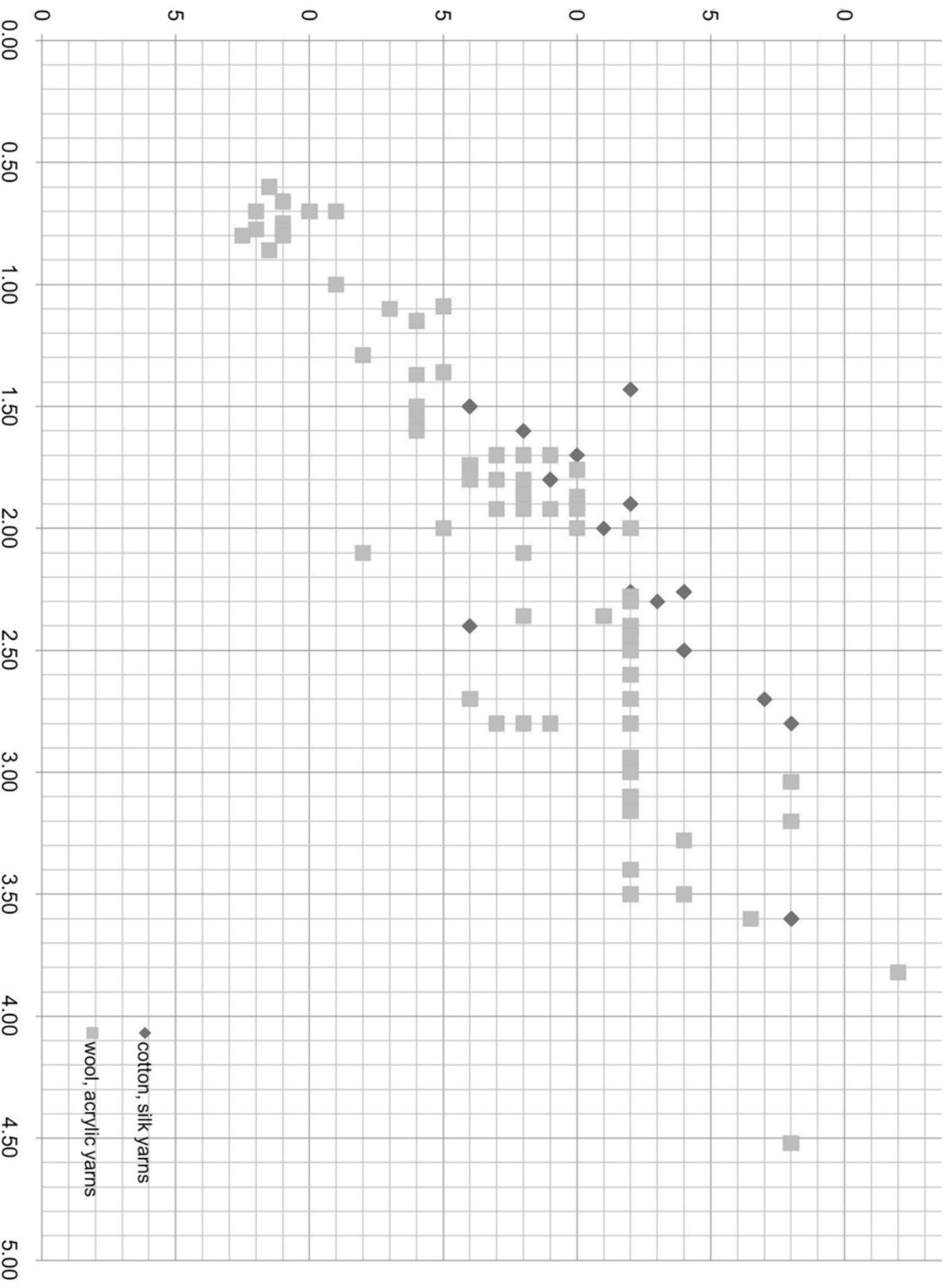
Figure 5.26. Contents of resource, from website

When I started to work on changing gauge, I thought that a knitter would measure the gauge of their old fabric, then choose a transition ratio which would determine the new gauge. I saw the need for a tool which would indicate the appropriate yarn type and needle size for the new gauge. I gathered data from various online sources which gave generalised figures for needle size, fabric gauge and 'new metric' (Nm) yarn count. The count indicates the length in metres per one gram of yarn. Although it is not generally used by amateurs, it can be easily calculated using information usually provided with the yarn, dividing the length in metres of one ball by the weight in grams. I used the data to generate graphs and formulae expressing the relationship between gauge and needle size, and needle size and yarn count. I then created an interactive tool which, given a required gauge, would suggest a needle size and yarn type. A screenshot of this tool can be found in Appendix H2; the spreadsheet itself can be downloaded from the web resource.

Although the tool worked effectively, there was a problem. When I began to work with the group I realised that a knitter would work in a different way than I had anticipated: deciding on the yarn for their new fabric first, then calculating the change in gauge required. In this situation, the knitter needs help to decide what needle size to use for a given yarn and to calculate the resultant fabric gauge. Although modern yarns are labelled with this information, I know from my conversations with knitters that many have old and unlabelled yarn that they would like to use. The workshops revealed that some knitters, such as Alex, have such a degree of tacit knowledge that they could accurately estimate a suitable needle size and expected gauge for an unlabelled yarn. However, assistance is required for those without such knowledge. In the group, we tried a method I had found online for estimating needle size and gauge by counting yarn 'wraps' in 5cm; unfortunately, we found it to be unsatisfactory.

With this new challenge in mind, I developed a replacement tool. I felt that the generalised data I had previously gathered was unreliable, and instead collected specific data on the yarn ranges of three major spinners: Patons, Sirdar and Rowan (Appendix H3). Aware that yarns of the same count could knit up differently due to a difference in fibre, I sorted the data into two groups: *cotton/silk* and *wool/acrylic*. I then produced a scatter graph plotting every yarn in terms of yarn count and gauge. I added an extension to the chart which relates gauge to needle size, using the same source data.

This chart (Figure 5.27) is more versatile and communicates the inexact nature of selecting a yarn and needle size more effectively than the previous spreadsheet tool. A knitter could take an unlabelled yarn, guess (using previous experience or comparison with labelled yarns) its yarn group and trace up and across from that group on the graph to get an idea of the likely gauge and a good needle size to try. If they wanted to match the gauge of an existing fabric, they could look up the stitches per 10cm in the y axis and trace across to see the approximate



count of yarn and needle size required. If desired, the original data chart can be used to find yarns that knit up at a specific gauge. Although further work would be required to make this tool more user-friendly, it proved useful in the workshops.

### **Collaborative production**

The entire re-knitting resource, as it currently stands, has been written by me. A further step towards openness would involve future content being collaboratively created by a community of re-knitters; this would be an example of commons-based peer production.

In today's society, individuals often collaborate in producing cultural content, knowledge, and other information, as well as physical goods. In some cases, they share the results and products, the means, methods, and experience gained from this collaboration as a resource for further development; this phenomenon is referred to as commons-based peer production.

(Troxler, 2011: 88)

As Troxler explains, the area in which commons-based peer production is most widely practised is software development. The open source operating system, Linux, is a prime example. This world-class system is designed by thousands of voluntary part-time developers, connected only by the Internet (Raymond, 1999). Linus Torvalds, its originator, blurred the boundary between user and designer, and thus 'ensured that the purpose and functionalities of Linux would now emerge from the efforts of multiple contributors' (Garud et al., 2008: 357). The embracing of multiple contributors does not just share the workload; it opens up the project to the desires and interests of the community.

Outside the area of software development, communities are using the web to share their collaborative efforts in digital product design (e.g. Thingiverse.com) and instructions for a range of making and repair projects (e.g. Instructables.com, iFixit.com). It is interesting to consider whether knitters would be interested in working collaboratively on the instructions and patterns within the re-knitting resource. Considering the commitment and enthusiasm of many amateur knitters, I believe that this may be the case. The Queen Susan Shawl project provides one inspiring example of knitters working together collaboratively; a highly complex Shetland lace shawl pattern was created by members of the Heirloom Knitting group on Ravelry in a matter of weeks (Fleegle, 2009).

I had originally hoped that the knitters would be able to contribute to the online re-knitting resource as part of the research project. However, as the workshops progressed I realised that this would demand too much from the participants.

## Gallery



Figure 5.28. Sample garment

As part of the sampling and development process, I tried out five treatments – *replace edge section*, *integral embellish*, *stitch-hack*, *afterthought pocket* and *cut open and trim* – on a sample garment (Figure 5.28). This allowed me to engage with the additional issues that arise when working on a real project, rather than a small sample, and the experience contributed significantly to the advice I developed for each treatment. The knitters found it useful to see the treatments materialised; having the garment as an example helped us to discuss practical considerations and alternative possibilities. Their experiences and suggestions also contributed to the sample garment; I used a variation on the *cut open and trim* treatment discovered in a ‘happy accident’ by Kiki, and decided on the specific *afterthought pocket* I would use in light of Julia’s experience of sampling the technique.

On the knitting website, Ravelry, members regularly post images of completed projects. Popular patterns are thus accompanied by multiple interpretations, with details of yarns used and adaptations made. A similar resource could be developed for re-knitting. Knitters would benefit from a gallery of examples, created by the community; it would provide an alternative source of advice and inspiration. To initiate the gallery, I wrote an account of each treatment I had completed, illustrated with photographs. The description of the first treatment is included in Appendix I1 as an example.

At the end of the project, the participants wrote descriptions of their projects; these were uploaded to the gallery, along with the photographs I had taken of their items before and after alteration. The descriptions are available in Appendix M; the photographs are included in the summaries of each project in Section 6.3.



6

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# AMATEUR DESIGNING

## 6.1 Developing design skills

In Section 4.3, we saw that many knitters have a desire to be more creative in their knitting. They wish to knit 'off-piste', but often lack the confidence, skills and experience to adapt existing patterns or create their own designs.

The research project involved the participants altering a knitted item from their own wardrobes; this task required them to generate ideas and translate them into practice, making complex design decisions in the process. In this chapter, we will look at the design skills needed, the ways in which I tried to share these skills with the group, and the design-related resources I developed. I will examine the process that the knitters went through in developing their own re-knitting designs, and describe the participants' individual re-knitting projects. In the final section, I will shift to an analytical viewpoint to reflect on the approach to design which emerged as the project developed.

In this chapter, I will refer to activities which took place at the workshops, Knitting Circles and Knit Club sessions; for further details, please see Section 2.2 and Figure 2.3.

### **Defining design**

As Pacey (1992: 217) describes, design is often seen as 'a modern activity practised more or less exclusively by a professional elite'. Like any other profession, the design industry has hierarchical organisations and systems for accrediting knowledge which protect its privileged status (Beegan and Atkinson, 2008). Within this hierarchy, amateur design is generally seen as either non-existent or crude and incompetent.

However, if we look at fundamental definitions of design we find a much more inclusive attitude. Simon (1996: 129) argues that 'everyone designs who devises courses of action aimed at changing existing situations into preferred ones'. Papanek takes a similar approach:

All that we do, almost all the time, is design, for design is basic to all human activity. The planning and patterning of any act toward a desired, foreseeable end constitutes the design process. Any attempt to separate design, to make it a thing-by-itself, works counter to the fact that design is the primary underlying matrix of life.

(Papanek, 1984: 3)

Using the definitions outlined above, we can see that many everyday activities can be framed as design: selecting an outfit, cooking a meal, decorating a home.

## **Knitwear design**

Although I embrace an inclusive approach, it is important to recognise that design contexts differ, requiring varying types of skills and knowledge. Eckert and Stacey (2000) have conducted empirical research into my particular area of interest, knitwear design; they describe it as a complex task, sharing characteristics with both fashion design and engineering. On a similar note, Petre et al. (2006: 186) explain that knitwear design requires ‘consideration of technical constraints within the earliest design phases and throughout the design process’.

In Section 4.3, I explained that many amateur knitters feel unable to create their own designs, and suggested the coded language of knitting patterns as a contributing factor. However, the complexity of the knitted structure itself can be seen as another significant barrier. From my own experience, I know that the design and making of an item of knitwear is a very different challenge to other craft activities, such as making a clay pot or sewing a garment from a piece of fabric. In these cases, the maker is able to use the materials to create an approximation of the desired design, fine-tuning the shape and adding decoration as desired. In contrast, when I knit an item I must plan many of the specifics – such as the number of stitches required and the placement of patterned elements – at the outset. Once made, a piece of knitting cannot easily be altered; problems must generally be resolved through unravelling and re-knitting. A purely exploratory approach to knitting can be adopted, but is unlikely to lead to a functional or aesthetically balanced result.

Some books supporting amateur knitwear design minimise this complexity, arguing that only common sense, an understanding of knitted fabric and simple arithmetic are required (Righetti, 1990). I agree with Righetti’s encouraging tone, but would stop short of her assertion that knitwear design is not complicated. As a professional knitwear designer-maker with a decade’s experience, I find that mistakes and unexpected outcomes still occur. Thus, I expect the making of my first sample – equivalent to an amateur producing a one-off garment – to involve unravelling, recalculating and re-knitting.

## **Design skills**

Rijken (2011) describes the mix of knowledge and skills needed for design as ‘design literacy’, a concept with three interacting elements.

These are the pillars of what we can call ‘design literacy’: the development of vision (strategic), the formulation of a design (tactical), and technical production (operational).

(Rijken, 2011: 156)

At first, I found it difficult to contemplate how I might encourage design literacy in amateurs. My own design skills have been developed over many years of higher education and professional practice; I was unsure about how to pass on these skills in a meaningful way. To overcome this uncertainty, I gathered information from design books targeted at amateur textile makers and fashion students (listed in the Bibliography). I also reflected on my experience of teaching fashion design at degree level.

This process helped me to identify useful advice, but also to make distinctions between industrial knitwear design, my own designer-maker practice, and the skills required for amateur re-knitting; some of these differences are outlined in Figure 6.1. I realised that further distinctions could be made between the design of whole garments and the design of re-knitting alterations. I kept these distinctions in mind as I planned the design-related activities that would gradually build up to the participants carrying out their own re-knitting projects.

<b>industrial</b>	<b>my practice</b>	<b>amateur</b>
create collections	create collections	create individual pieces
design for 'target markets'	design for known customers	design for themselves
work to standard sizes	make to customers' sizes	work to their own size
design for the capabilities of the factory	design for the capabilities of my studio	design for their own making preferences
make samples before production	make samples, then knit to order	make a single garment

*Figure 6.1.* Differences between industrial knitwear design, my knitwear design practice, and amateur knitwear design

Because I was working with competent knitters, each participant already had a useful degree of the 'operational knowledge' element of design literacy. Specific re-knitting knowledge was developed via the deconstructing activity in Knitting Circle 2. We worked together to take apart several mass-produced knitted garments, opening seams, removing trims, and cutting, unravelling and laddering the fabric; this experience started to build a tacit knowledge of deconstruction. Relevant technical skills were also developed while knitting samples to test the four selected treatments, described in Chapter 5. The other activities, which are described here, were intended to develop the other aspects of design literacy.

### **Knitwear design skills**

During Knitting Circle 1, I asked the group how they thought designers created knitwear. Although their language shows that they were unsure of their answers, they identified several aspects of knitwear design, including gathering inspiration, an awareness of trends, sourcing of materials, sampling, and calculating patterns:

*I'd like to think they were inspired by, I don't know, a seashore or something, something they'd seen, and made a sketchbook of, and then created something from... [Catherine]*

*Presumably, people are inspired also by textures, aren't they. I was just thinking of the bark of a tree. [Kiki]*

*I suppose they follow other fashion, don't they. Fashion designers who are doing clothes ... [and] the colours, the current, the trendy colours. [Julia]*

*Presumably some people specialise in just using natural wools, in those beiges and browns and sheepy colours. [Kiki]*

*I imagine they also fiddle around a lot, trying out stitches and combinations of stitches. [Kiki]*

*I presume they've learned how to do patterns, which is a lot of maths, isn't it. If they're decided on the shape, they can do all the calculations, I would imagine on a sample of knitting. [Julia]*

### **Design process**

At the start of Workshop 1, we talked about the design process. From the outset, I wanted to remove some of the mystique around design, and to talk about the processes and skills involved. I shared this quote with the group:

Design is not one way of thinking, but two: it is a mix of creativity and analytical reasoning ... In many design problems, the generation of possible solutions and their gradual improvement is the only way forward. That is design.

(Dorst, 2003: 14)

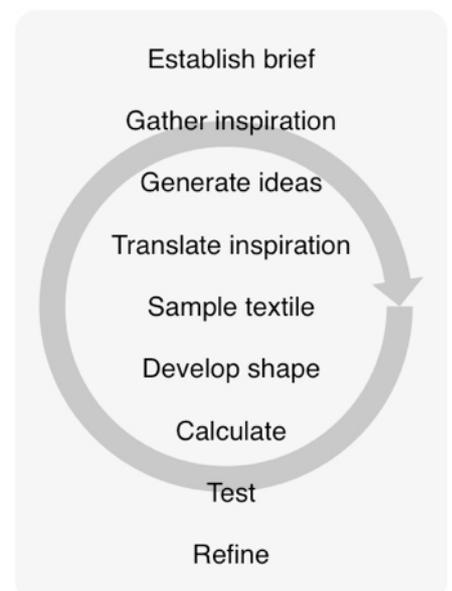


Figure 6.2. Knitwear design process

We then discussed a simple diagram representing the knitwear design process, which I based on my own practice (Figure 6.2). Although the list of steps is linear, the circular arrow indicates iterations and gradual development. In presenting the process, I suggested that many amateurs miss out several of the steps represented, including *generate ideas* and *sample textile*. As others have pointed out, sampling is an essential part of the design process, as it allows the designer to see how colours, yarns and stitches work together:

Yarns affect the character of stitch patterns. Never decide on a pattern without first knitting it in the intended yarn.

(Stanley, 1982: 19)

Because 'Color does not exist in a vacuum,' often we cannot tell how two (or more) colors will work together until we actually make interlocking stitches (or stripes) of them in a swatch.

(Righetti, 1990: 112)

Professional designers – including myself – produce many samples before settling on a final design (Sharp, 1986). In my experience, amateur knitters generally jump straight to knitting the item, without knitting the recommended tension sample which confirms the fabric will have the correct gauge. This approach is maintained, even when trying to adapt a pattern or create something original. The knitters suggested reasons for this reluctance to sample:

*You just think about the end product, and just go straight for it. It's because you're fixated on doing whatever it is, for whoever it is, by a certain time.* [Helen]

*It seems like wasting time, because you've got the wool, and you want to end up with your garment. You just want to get on with it.* [Julia]

*There's no culture of playing with wool, unless you're trying to do fancy odd things. There's no culture for ordinary knitters of playing around.* [Alex]

*Sometimes for me, it's anxiety-driven. It's... I'm not sure if I can do this, if I can do it fast enough, perhaps it'll work. You want to get to the end to check if you've done it.* [Kiki]

I explained to the knitters that I see the sampling stage as the most enjoyable part of the design process. It is playful, but also increases the chance of a positive result. I described how I carry this playful approach through to the *test* and *refine* stages, reviewing each panel as it is knitted.

## Gathering inspiration

One of the skills that I developed as a fashion design student was the ability to gather inspiration in response to a brief. This inspiration is then used to inform the designs. However, many people new to design try to combine too many elements of inspiration at once:

A pitfall to avoid is the temptation to use, in a single design, everything one knows and all the ideas one has. For a design to be of any quality, it is essential that it should have unity of idea.

(Stanley, 1982: 41)

With this in mind, I decided to ask the participants to gather inspiration at the start of the project, before we discussed the specifics of their garments. I hoped that this would allow them to create an enduring resource that could be accessed for specific projects, on each occasion selecting one or two items.

Before briefing the participants on this task, I reflected on my own practice and the process of translating inspiration into an item of knitwear. While some types of inspiration might be easily related to a knitted textile – such as images which could be used for their colour or pattern – others are more difficult. I like to work with conceptual inspiration, such as a memory or intangible feeling; however, I needed years of experience to feel confident in doing so. Other types of inspiration, such as natural forms, are susceptible to overly-literal translation which (in my opinion) is usually unsuccessful. I asked the participants to gather images and materials that inspired or engaged them, of two particular types: knit-based and visual. I gave the group suggestions of where to look for inspiration, and types of materials they might gather (Figure 6.3). I felt that these guidelines would produce material that could be successfully translated. The homework sheet, with further details, can be found in Appendix J1.

where to search	knit suggestions	visual suggestions
in your home (old photos, books, knitting/craft stuff, ephemera, clothes)	knitting patterns	art
magazines	knitting books	craft
Internet	online (e.g. Ravelry)	non-knitted textiles
library	knit and fashion magazines	architecture
galleries and museums	old photographs	nature
markets	memories	historical photographs
	contemporary/traditional	historical/ethnic clothing
		fashion design

Figure 6.3. Advice for gathering inspiration

I was unsure of how the knitters would respond to this task, but they arrived at Workshop 2 buzzing with excitement. They shared their inspiration with the group, talking easily about colour, pattern, style and mood. They had gathered a wide range of materials, including magazine pages, photographs, textiles, ephemera and knitting patterns (Figures 6.4 and 6.5). The vast majority of the inspiration had been gleaned within their homes; Kiki described having gone through the whole house, starting in the attic.

Interestingly, several of the participants brought items that they had previously kept with the intention of a future creative application. For example, Alex brought images of garments that she had collected as ideas for colour combinations. Kiki brought an amazing selection of textiles, including weaving and crochet samples made by her mother:

*I have drawers full of things saved for one day, you might know what to do with them ... So, a mixture of nostalgia and hope for the future!*

By going through the process of gathering inspiration and reflecting on it, the participants made discoveries about their own taste, which they linked to identity:

*Interestingly, I've never thought about it, but I've got two distinct themes. And when I've thought about it, that's the way I am. In all areas of my life, it's got to be like this, or it's got to be like that. [Alex]*

*I've come down to what I know is me. [Julia]*

*What I've been thinking, looking through things, is that you think you change over your life, but actually in certain fundamental ways, you don't. [Kiki]*



Figure 6.4. Discussing inspiration: textiles



Figure 6.5. Discussing inspiration: magazines

*I can pick out colours now that I know I liked when I was eight. You're just drawn to the same things, always. [Margaret]*

Several of the participants brought items with emotional significance, often connected to family members. For example, Julia showed a beautiful sampler, made by her mother when training as an embroiderer in Berlin. Kiki had a number of such items, including an embroidered pillowcase which had come from her mother's Hungarian family. Catherine brought several items incorporating lettering, and said that she used to use lettering in her stained glass window designs. This provided an important connection with her former identity as a professional maker.

### **Colour matching task**

In my previous conversations with knitters, I have found that many lack confidence in choosing colours. Re-knitting projects almost always involve adding yarn to an existing garment; it would be impossible to source a perfect colour match in many cases, and therefore colour is an important consideration.

While working in a yarn shop, I witnessed the mesmerizing effect a rainbow of yarn can have on a customer's senses ... However, most knitters are nervous about acting on this innate love of yarn and colour, fearing they are not creative enough or won't live up to the fantastic potential.

(Montgomerie, 2008: 7)

I encouraged the group to take an experimental, individual approach to colour, and not worry about any 'rules' they may perceive. This approach is echoed by Righetti (1990: 112), who says: 'go ahead, dive in, have fun, play with color, break the "rules", and use colors that sing songs of joy to you, even if only your ears can hear them'. I introduced different approaches to colour; in the web resource, I characterised these as *play* (combining and recombining colours to find interesting combinations), *match* (matching colours to existing images and artefacts) and *theory* (using colour theory to build a palette).

I facilitated a *match* exercise, using fabric swatches to closely match the shades, and proportion of different colours, in one item from the participants' inspiration resources. I use this technique in my own design work, and find it to be an excellent way of creating unexpected combinations. The palette provides a starting point which can then be adapted according to the yarns available, and taken forward to the sampling stage. I showed the group examples from one of my sketchbooks, which helped them to understand the task. Figures 6.6, 6.7 and 6.8 show three examples of the inspiration items and palettes created.



Figure 6.6. Margaret's colour palette



Figure 6.7. Anne's colour palette



Figure 6.8. Alex's colour palette

The knitters enjoyed the tactile and visual nature of this process, and felt it to be a good starting point for a creative project. The activity also prompted reflection on perceived rules about colour.

*I get hidebound by what I've seen and what I've been told. I'm trying to break out of it. [Alex]*

*Somebody once told me that all greens go together. I'm thinking, what? It's a matter of opinion, isn't it? [Kiki]*

### Adapting task

The homework task from Workshop 2 (Appendix J2) asked the participants to experiment with the re-knitting treatments that we had sampled together. I suggested that they might play with colour and yarn to create variations, or adapt the patterns we had used. The purpose of this task was to build up the idea of sampling, and to test the online resources.

Several of the participants recapped processes they had learned in the workshops. Some tried out techniques that we had not covered together, such as Julia, who knitted samples of different cast-off finishes, and Alex, who sampled an *integral embellish* trim from a pattern she found in a book. Alex and Julia both planned and executed more complex samples; these can be seen in Figures 6.9 and 6.10.

The homework task was helpful in that it exposed problems. Kiki emailed me to say she was confused; I responded by giving some more structured suggestions for sampling, which I later used within the *tips and exercises* section of the web resource. Using these suggestions, she produced a range of samples which fed into her final project (Figure 6.11). Anne described how she had mis-remembered the calculations required for *replace edge section*, and ended up with a frill, rather than a flat



Figure 6.9. Alex's homework sample



Figure 6.10. Julia's homework sample



Figure 6.11. Kiki's homework samples



Figure 6.12. Anne's homework sample

extension (Figure 6.12); this led into an upbeat conversation about learning from mistakes, and embracing ‘happy accidents’ as part of the design process.

## 6.2 Design resources

Two sections of the website resource, as discussed in Section 5.3, relate directly to design: *the process* and *tips and exercises*. The *tips and exercises* section is a synthesis of my own advice and insights gained from external sources. I wanted to use (and reference) the advice of others, in order to acknowledge the collaborative nature of knitting knowledge. I wrote the pages – relating to aspects of knitwear design such as *choosing colours* and *sampling* – in the final phases of the project, informed by the conversations I was having with the participants about these activities. The *choosing colours* page is available in Appendix K1 as an example of this section.

After testing the *replace edge section* treatment with the group in Workshop 1, I realised the need for some instructions that would guide a knitter through the many decisions to be made. In a situation like this, with diverse options and many factors to be considered, ‘most of us are not born with sufficient imaginative capacity to fully utilize the potential ... most of us need help’ (Rijken, 2011: 155). I wanted to create a pathway: a supported route through the jungle of possibilities.

At first, I tried to create specific sets of instructions for each treatment, incorporating the steps of the design process and the calculations required. However, I quickly realised that the options were too complex and multiple to cover in a meaningful way. I had the epiphany of a concise re-knitting process, which could cover all treatments: *choose – adapt – execute*. When working from written patterns in a ‘conventional’ knitting project, knitters just *choose* (select a knitting pattern) and *execute* (knit the pattern). When knitters use a different yarn, rework the stitches or change the size of a written pattern, they *adapt*. Hence, these stages are familiar to knitters, although for a re-knitting project, the *adapt* activity will take greater prominence.

With this insight, I was able to make a generic re-knitting process diagram (Figure 6.13) as an overview, and then offer more specific advice for each treatment (as explained in Section 5.3 and illustrated in Appendices G1 and G2). The diagram shows the joint inputs of wearer (in terms of wearing and knitting preferences) and garment (in terms of colour, condition, fibre, shape, stitch and so on). The *choose* and *adapt* areas include references to sections of the web resource. A knitter would *choose* a treatment from the spectrum and inspiration items from their resource, then select from the *instructions* and *patterns* suggested on the relevant treatment

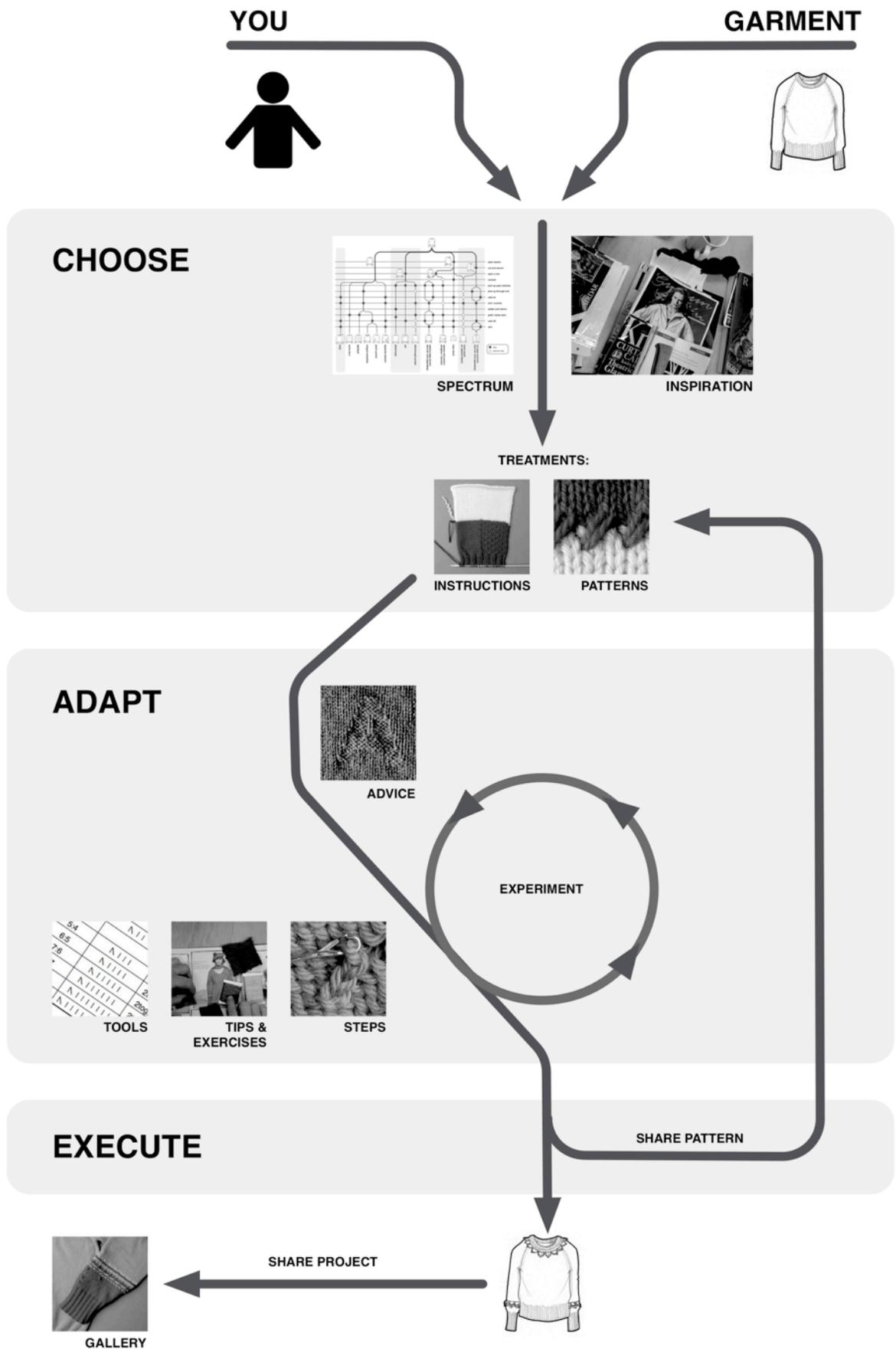


Figure 6.13. The re-knitting pathway

page. During the *adapt* phase, they would use the *advice* provided for the treatment, and also refer to the *tools, tips and exercises* and *steps* pages while they experiment with their ingredients. Finally, they will execute their design, and may choose to share their project in the *gallery* or contribute their pattern to the resource. I felt that there would be overlap between the three phases, but chose to present them as linear elements for the sake of clarity.

### **Creative ideas resource**

During the early stages of the project, while I was developing the re-knitting spectrum and gathering existing re-knitting knowledge from books, I was also gradually building another resource. The 'creative ideas' resource comprises over a hundred images of knitwear that suggest re-knitting ideas. Although the garments themselves are not re-knitted – they are generally images from fashion magazines – they provide seeds of ideas, and hints of alternative possibilities, not immediately apparent in the generic step-by-step samples I produced. As I described in the last chapter, a peer-produced gallery of completed re-knitting projects would inspire future knitters. At this stage, without such a gallery, the creative ideas resource provides an alternative source of inspiration. I displayed the images on the wall of the studio during Workshops 3 and 4, and the group referred to them as they developed their ideas. Due to copyright restrictions, I could not share the resource on the website. A sample of the images in the resource can be found in Appendix L1.

## **6.3 Designing the re-knitting projects**

### **Generating ideas**

In the afternoon of Workshop 3, we turned our attention to the participants' individual projects. As I described earlier in the chapter, amateur designers often miss out stages of the design process, jumping straight to the execution of a finished item without exploring alternative ideas. I wanted to support the knitters in generating a range of possible re-knitting solutions, and planned a structured idea generation activity. I referred to Ludvigsen's (2008) definition of design, as 'the conscious exploring of potential futures', in introducing this task; I proposed that we would be exploring the potential futures of the participants' garments. On the morning of the workshop, I found that several of the participants had already been thinking ahead about what they could do, and some had settled on an idea. I suggested the activity was a way of checking: *of everything I could do, do I want to do this?*

I was concerned that the participants might be stifled in their generation of ideas, if they thought too much at the early stages about practical and aesthetic considerations. I had expected that a structured activity was required so the knitters could generate ideas openly, and then evaluate

them. However, it soon became clear that they were able – and needed – to address a range of technical and aesthetic factors from the outset, and explore ideas in a holistic way. This makes sense; it is illogical for a knitter to contemplate ideas which they know they would not want to wear. Furthermore, as I described earlier in the chapter, knitwear design requires consideration of technical factors from the earliest stages of design. Contrary to my expectations, this approach did not stifle the generation of ideas. I will describe the factors considered during these design discussions in Section 6.4.

As the first stage of discussion, the participants talked about their garments and the motivations for alteration. I suggested that they choose one treatment, and generate five alternative ways of working that treatment on one garment. The challenge of five ideas was helpful: it prompted the knitters to ask each other: *what else could we do?* However, it turned out to be more effective to consider and compare different treatments and combinations of treatments, rather than versions of one treatment. I had suggested that the participants select an item from their inspiration resource after choosing a treatment, and use it to inform colour, stitch and yarn. In practice, the selection of inspiration occurred organically, as yet another element within the idea generation discussions.

At first, the knitters worked in pairs, discussing each project in detail. These conversations gradually opened up, with informal groups talking about their ideas. I had suggested that the knitters visualise their ideas by drawing or mocking up using paper or scrap pieces of knitting, and they did use fabric and yarn swatches to visualise potential colour combinations. However, as I will describe in the next section, in general their visualisation was much more tactile and integrated with the conversation: handling and trying on the garment, and gesturing to indicate patterns, positions and so on.

By Workshop 3, we had built up a sense of trust within the group, and this was apparent in the conversations. The participants generously made suggestions, asked questions and gave their opinions. They had respect for each other's preferences as they evaluated the ideas. As the discussions developed, they compared similar projects, shared expertise and gave encouragement. This peer support was felt to be crucial, and will be discussed in the next section.

### **Developing and executing the designs**

By the end of Workshop 3, the participants had completed the *choose* phase of the re-knitting process, selecting the garment to rework, the treatment and the inspiration that would inform the design. For their homework, they started the *adapt* phase, knitting samples of various types. We started Workshop 4 by discussing the projects as a group; several participants said they felt unsure about various aspects of their individual projects. I framed our task for the day as

*becoming sure*: reviewing the designs and making decisions, in order that they could go away and confidently execute the alterations. For the rest of the day, the knitters worked in groups of three, discussing the projects one by one. The supportive, conversational approach that had emerged during Workshop 3 continued, with the participants making suggestions, asking questions and giving feedback. I dipped in and out of the discussions, offering advice. My input tended to relate to the technical aspects of the projects; I referred to the information I had gathered on the web resource, and my own experience in working on the sample garment.

During the day, the participants made decisions about the design of their alterations, for example choosing the specific stitch pattern or stripe layout to be used. They reviewed their samples and knitted further samples to try out alternative options. The design decisions were informed by activity: the knitters tried on their garments or modelled them for each other, pinning their samples on to visualise the proposed alteration, and stitching temporary guidelines to mark chosen positions. As the plans developed, they became more precise, considering exactly where a fabric would be opened and the precise stitch design that would be used. The participants made decisions about the yarns they would use for their projects and chose the size of needle required to create a fabric of the appropriate gauge. They also discussed technical options for their project and, where necessary, worked out the gauge change calculations. They had knitted samples of different techniques as part of their homework; this process had identified areas that needed to be clarified, and they asked for advice where needed.

Some of the participants started work on their alterations during Workshop 4, but the majority of the work was carried out independently, and completed in the following weeks and months. I encouraged the knitters to contact me for help, if required, and Kiki and Anne visited the studio between group sessions for individual assistance. Each time we met as a group – first for Knitting Circle 3, and then for the monthly Knit Club – we discussed the projects. The participants were interested in seeing how each garment progressed, and understanding how the treatments had been carried out. They continued to support each other and used the opportunity of getting together to ask the others' opinions. Several of the knitters encountered unexpected problems during the execution of their alterations; the group provided sympathy, and encouragement for them to continue.

### **Individual stories**

Having established the way in which the participants and I worked together to plan and execute the re-knitting projects, I will now focus on the story of each individual garment. In putting together these descriptions, I have drawn on the data from each meeting along with the participants' own descriptions of their projects, which they wrote for inclusion in the online gallery and which can be found in Appendix M. As I explained in Section 2.2, I photographed all of the garments and samples in a consistent style.

## Alex

The item that Alex selected to rework was a hand-knitted cardigan that she had made some years ago (Figure 6.14). It was a replacement for a much-loved red cardigan knitted from the same pattern, which she had worn out. Although she had enjoyed wearing the blue cardigan for a while, she now felt it was boring, and did not reflect her identity as an alert and active person. The garment was still in good condition and Alex felt it was too good to discard; hence, it had become a problematic item in her wardrobe.

Alex came to Workshop 3 with the idea of opening the cardigan up and inserting a Fair Isle band around the middle. However, as she talked through the idea with Anne, she realised that would involve taking off the button bands, which she was reluctant to do. They agreed that she needed to add colour, and further discussion generated alternative ideas. Alex was concerned about the effort involved in reworking, saying that she did not want 'the cure to be worse than the disease'. She decided to replace the trims in a contrast colour and add Fair Isle patch pockets, feeling this would be fashionable, give the garment definition, and balance effort with reward.

Regarding colour, Alex said that she lacked confidence. I suggested that she use tones of one or two colours, rather than using several hues of the same tone. Having established a palette, Alex knitted a number of multicoloured samples for the pockets (Figure 6.15), trying out a slip stitch technique in which she was particularly interested. At Workshop 4, the group discussed the idea of Alex knitting two pockets in different designs. She liked this concept, feeling that it would look intentionally 'off-kilter', although in the end she decided to knit matching pockets.

Alex sourced a yarn for the trims which she knew would knit up at the same gauge, so no calculations were required. She carefully removed the trims and re-knitted them in moss stitch, using the original pattern for the



Figure 6.14. Alex's original garment



Figure 6.15. Alex's garment samples



Figure 6.16. Alex's re-knitted garment (detail)

collar. Because the pocket fabric gauge was different to the main body of the garment, she knitted the pockets separately and sewed them on, counting the rows to ensure they were positioned evenly. The pocket tops were finished using i-cord, a technique she had discovered while knitting toy teacups for her granddaughter.

Alex was pleased with her finished project (Figures 6.16 and 6.17), and began wearing it straight away in conjunction with complementary items in her wardrobe.



*Figure 6.17. Alex's re-knitted garment and matching top*

## Anne

After first considering a fine gauge cardigan from her own wardrobe, Anne chose to renew a favourite jumper belonging to her daughter (Figure 6.18). Her daughter had owned the pure wool, mass-produced Fair Isle jumper for many years, and wore it for horse riding and gardening. It was slightly felted through wear, which made it warm and windproof.

Anne chose to replace the damaged cuffs and welt, which she initially described as a 'repair', rather than 'design', task. She considered knitting the replacements in a solid colour, but thought that would be too boring for the re-knitting project. Alex suggested knitting a multicoloured trim, and helped Anne to look through books for various options. Anne knitted three samples as her homework (the green, yellow and pink samples shown in Figure 6.19).

At Workshop 4, she discussed the samples. She particularly liked the stocking stitch-based chequered option, which had been identified as a traditional Fair Isle edging in a book. However, she was unhappy that the fabric did not lie flat. We discussed the possibility of knitting a turned-up hem, which would counteract this problem. Alex suggested an alternative: a multicoloured ribbed trim. Unable to find a pattern in a book, Alex knitted a sample to demonstrate the idea. Alex wrote out a row-by-row pattern, which Anne was able to use to knit her own sample and for the final garment.

Anne looked for 4-ply yarn, which she thought would match the gauge of the original fabric. However, the yarn available locally was not pure wool and the colours were brash in comparison with the jumper. We were amazed to find some 4-ply yarn within my studio that provided an excellent colour match.

By experimenting with needle size, Anne was able to match the gauge of the original rib. She tried to leave a few rows



Figure 6.18. Anne's original garment



Figure 6.19. Anne's garment samples



Figure 6.20: Anne's re-knitted garment (detail)

of the original rib to knit down off; however, this caused a half-stitch 'stutter'. Instead, she needed to start from the bottom of the main body. I showed her how to pick up the stitches before cutting the fabric; she described this technique as 'a revelation'. Having completed the ribs, Anne repaired a few holes in the main body by knitting small patches onto the fabric. She liked patching as an alternative to darning, but said she could achieve a neater finish next time.

Anne was pleased with the finished garment (Figures 6.20 and 6.21), feeling that she had given it a new lease of life. She reported that her daughter was delighted with the outcome.



*Figure 6.21. Anne's re-knitted garment*

## Catherine

Catherine bought the cardigan that she chose to rework (Figure 6.22) in a charity shop a few years ago. She had been attracted by its colour and the wool, silk and cotton knit. However, the item was 'rather sad' in its current state: it had no buttons and was much too large to wear.

Although Catherine was not particularly attached to the garment, she felt it was 'too nice not to do anything with'.

She discovered that the cardigan was constructed in an unconventional way: knitted sideways, with sleeve and body made from a single piece. This affected the choices she made as she designed; the fineness of the fabric presented another challenge. Having sampled with fabrics of this gauge, Catherine knew that the tiny stitches would be difficult to work with, and she was also apprehensive about the gauge change calculations required.

Catherine chose to shorten the sleeves of her cardigan to solve the size problem. The colour reminded her of the silk scarf she had used as inspiration for the colour task (shown in Figure 6.25). She found suitable shades in her collection of yarns, and knitted samples (Figure 6.23) with the aim of developing a striped fabric to use as a cuff on the shortened sleeve. With further sampling, she decided on the exact sequence of colours and stitches, and reduced the needle size to produce a firm band.

When Catherine came to remove the first sleeve, she encountered problems. The fabric had a tendency to disintegrate before she could pick up the open stitches, and the sleeve ended up shorter than intended. Learning from this experience, she used a different strategy for the second sleeve. To change gauge, she needed to use extremely fine needles and work two rows of decreases. This was very difficult; Catherine was concerned about some tiny irregularities in the first row. However, after sharing her concerns with the group she was reassured that these irregularities would not be seen.



Figure 6.22. Catherine's original garment



Figure 6.23. Catherine's garment samples

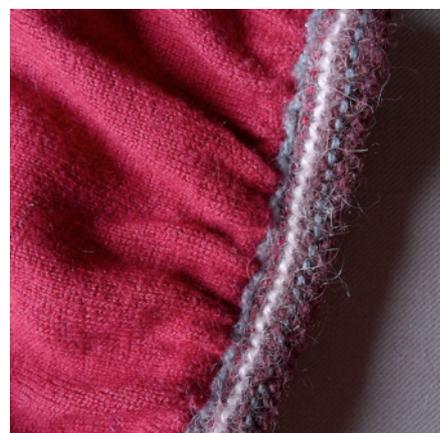


Figure 6.24. Catherine's re-knitted garment (detail)

In the early stages of the design process, Catherine had discussed the idea of adding an afterthought pocket with a spotted lining. However, the construction of the garment made this difficult. Instead, she used the spare fabric from the sleeves to create a patch pocket; when she had finished the cuffs, she decided on the shape, placement and finish of the pocket, knitting a trim to match the cuffs. The third element of the alteration was the addition of vintage Bakelite buttons.

Although Catherine's caring responsibilities made it hard for her to find time to work on her project, she persevered and completed it about six months after Workshop 4 (Figures 6.24 and 6.25). Some weeks later, she reported that she had worn her reworked cardigan to a friend's wedding, and 'almost constantly since'.



*Figure 6.25. Catherine's re-knitted garment and colour inspiration*

## Julia

Julia chose to alter a fine gauge lambswool jumper she had in her wardrobe, which she had purchased a few years ago from Edinburgh Woollen Mill (Figure 6.26). The garment was in good condition; although she liked the colour and warmth, it was a little tight and had not been worn for some time.

Julia had the idea to use the *cut open and trim* treatment to ‘cardiganise’ the jumper after I talked about the treatment and showed the samples I had made. She decided to add an *afterthought pocket* to match the button band trim, in order to make the whole intervention look intentional. She also planned to add a stitch-hacked initial on the front of the pocket.

We talked in detail about how to work the three treatments she had selected and discussed the different options for knitting an afterthought pocket. Julia was particularly concerned about the fine gauge of the garment. After Workshop 3, she sampled the treatments (Figure 6.27), and reported that she had learned a lot through this process. I helped Julia with the gauge change calculations needed, first guiding her through the process, and then checking her working as she gained confidence.

For the trims, Julia chose to use the colour palette she had created in the colour matching task, which was based on a silk scarf (shown in Figure 6.29). She sourced yarns, and at Workshop 4 developed them into a colour scheme with which she felt happy.

Julia worked the ‘cardiganise’ treatment first, planning the exact position and layout of the pocket when this was complete. She encountered problems in the execution of the treatments, which required her to re-do several time-consuming processes. For example, she started to stitch-hack her initial, but felt that the design was lost in the



Figure 6.26. Julia's original garment



Figure 6.27. Julia's garment samples



Figure 6.28. Julia's re-knitted garment (detail)

mottled fabric of the garment and painstakingly returned the stitches to their original configuration.

When Julia had completed the alterations (Figures 6.28 and 6.29), she seemed to have mixed feelings about the outcome: she was a little critical of the finish of the trims, yet pleased that she had been able to achieve such a complex task. Over time, her concerns subsided. At Knitting Circle 3, she said she *thought* she would wear the garment; a few months later, she wore it to our monthly Knit Club and reported that she was now very pleased with it.



*Figure 6.29.* Julia's re-knitted garment and colour inspiration

## Kiki

Kiki decided to re-knit a lambswool and mohair cardigan she had bought from Laura Ashley many years ago (Figure 6.30). The cardigan was well-worn, with disintegrating cuffs and patches over holes in the elbows. It had been a favourite, but had not been worn for a long time, because it now felt too tatty.

Kiki considered various options for reworking her cardigan. In discussion with Catherine, she developed the idea of shortening the sleeve and knitting a new, tighter sleeve to look as if another garment were being worn underneath.

The other knitters responded positively to the samples which Kiki had knitted for the adapting homework task (shown earlier in Figure 6.11), feeling that these would be a good starting point for the design. Kiki liked the idea of adding brighter colours to the dark background, which linked to various items in her inspiration resource. She initially wanted to use yarn which she had inherited from her mother, but found that it was too thick and rough. Using alternative yarns, Kiki knitted patterned samples in a number of colour combinations; I helped her to make a choice from these options. At the same time, we simplified the plan for the project, choosing to re-knit the sleeve in its original shape.

Kiki had trouble removing the first sleeve, inadvertently cutting into the armhole section; I helped her to resolve this issue. She wanted to re-use some of the original yarn, and so unravelled the fabric she had removed. Although the worn yarn was very weak, she was able to salvage a reasonable amount. She knitted more samples, altering the needle size to match the gauge of the original garment (Figure 6.31).

We chose to plan the sleeve in two stages, knitting down to the elbow and then reviewing the pattern and the amount of yarn remaining. As she knitted the first section, Kiki needed



Figure 6.30. Kiki's original garment



Figure 6.31. Kiki's garment samples



Figure 6.32. Kiki's re-knitted garment (detail)

to shape the panel. She thought she would be able to do this, but found that her brain became 'tangled up'. She drew a grid on the computer, which allowed her to plan the pattern and decreases in a format she could understand. When she reached the elbow, Kiki used photocopies to mock up the lower section, and asked the opinion of the group to help her to make a decision. She was keen for the cuff to echo the scallop of the main body hem. Together, we adapted a picot edging to create a delicate scalloped edge.

Although she had been unsure about the design whilst knitting it, Kiki felt that the project 'came together' at the end, and was pleased with the outcome (Figures 6.32 and 6.33).



*Figure 6.33. Kiki's re-knitted garment with samples and yarn*

## Margaret

Margaret chose to 'regenerate' a woollen cardigan which she had knitted for herself over a decade ago (Figure 6.34). The cardigan was riddled with moth holes, and had a huge hole at each elbow. She had felt unable to throw the garment out, because it was strongly linked to happy memories of her time living in Scotland. She loved its colour, warmth and comfort. She was inspired to replace the sleeves of the cardigan by the image of the re-knitted stockings, which I showed the group at Workshop 1 (Figure 5.5).

Margaret brought a bag of yarn to Workshop 3 that she was keen to use for the replacement sleeves. During the first idea generation discussions, she unexpectedly discovered a small sample of Fair Isle knitting that she had made sometime previously (Figure 6.35) amongst the yarn. The group agreed that the sample was perfect as a starting point for the replacement sleeves. Margaret charted the pattern from her sample, re-knitted it in the yarns she wanted to use, and bought a book of Fair Isle patterns to give her further ideas.

A key design consideration for Margaret was the exact position at which the new sleeve started; she wanted it to look 'right', but was reluctant to open the armhole seam. She planned to knit two Fair Isle bands: one at the transition to the new sleeve, and another before grafting on the original frill edging. Margaret used the original garment pattern to plan the sleeve decreases. She removed the first sleeve at Workshop 4, opening the fabric stitch by stitch. She knitted her sleeve in the round, which slowed down her progress but eliminated the sleeve seam.

When Margaret knitted the first sleeve, she decided to continue the patterning for the entire sleeve, choosing colour and pattern as she went along. She described this playful process as 'liberating'. When she came to knit the second sleeve, she asked for advice from the group:



Figure 6.34. Margaret's original garment



Figure 6.35. Margaret's inspiration sample



Figure 6.36. Margaret's re-knitted garment (detail)

whether to knit it the same, or different. She eventually chose to knit the same patterns and alter the colour sequences.

Margaret darned the small holes in the body of the garment, and stitch-hacked her initials into the back, like a label (Figure 6.36). She felt that the stitch-hack did not show up particularly well, but enjoyed the process of opening the fabric, reconfiguring the stitches and grafting it closed.

Margaret was pleased with her renewed garment (Figure 6.37) and wore it as soon as it was finished.



*Figure 6.37. Margaret's re-knitted garment*

## 6.4 Analysis of amateur designing

In the previous section, I described the collective activities that supported the participants in designing their projects, and focused on each individual project in detail. I will now adopt an analytical position to consider the approach to design which emerged as the project developed. As I described in Section 6.1, before the workshops I felt that the design of re-knitting projects by amateurs would be very different to industrial knitwear design. Through analysis and reflection, I have gained a nuanced understanding of the characteristics of this design practice.

In this section, I will refer to the individual projects and also draw on discussions about further design and re-knitting projects which took place during the workshops and Knit Club sessions. Many of the same issues and themes arose during these conversations, supporting my findings from the six 'main' projects.

### **Design considerations**

As the knitters developed their re-knitting ideas they took multiple relevant factors into consideration. The individual's motivations for changing that particular garment, and the issues which needed to be resolved through re-knitting, were central to the design discussions. This is similar to Alexander's (1979: 485) description of the repair and alteration of buildings: 'at every moment we use the defects of the present state as the starting point for the definition of the new state'. I will discuss these motivations and issues further in Section 7.2. As the participants generated, evaluated and developed their ideas, they considered many further factors, which I will outline below. All of these factors are interconnected, and need to be weighed up and balanced during the design process.

### *The garment*

The garments themselves were central to the design discussions, and the technical aspects of each idea were discussed at length. The knitters thought about how a proposed treatment would be executed, considering the fabric gauge and structure and the construction of the garment. They considered the practicalities of adding new sections, including the direction in which they would be knitted, and thought about joins and transitions, which might involve cutting, unravelling, picking up or sewing.

Along with these technical considerations, the knitters contemplated what alterations would suit the garment. For example, Alex considered knitting frills onto her cardigan, but concluded they would not suit the style; the rectangular pockets she eventually chose were felt to balance the boxy shape. Catherine's project involved discussions about how a shortened sleeve and pocket would work with the loose shape of the cardigan.

### *Wearing preferences*

An important consideration for the knitters was whether any proposed treatment would suit them; hence, much of the conversation involved assessment: *would I wear that?* In some cases, this assessment related to a sense of personal style:

*If I did something simple like that, I know I would be prepared to wear it. I like the frills, but I don't think I'd wear them. It's not me, I'm not frilly. I like them, I think they look lovely, but they're not what I'd wear.* [Julia]

*I want to lift it, but I don't want to be radical ... I've got to feel comfortable in it. It's no good if I'm no further forward in that I've got a beautifully embellished cardigan I'm not wearing.* [Alex]

At times, the consideration involved the knitter reflecting on her own clothing preferences. For example, when planning the alteration of her cardigan, Catherine thought carefully about what sleeve length would be useful. When thinking about her fine gauge cardigan, Anne considered how the garment fitted on her body; she said that as her arms were relatively short, she would consider simply cutting off the cuffs, which were damaged. In planning her alteration, Alex considered – as she does when buying or knitting new garments – how the item would complement others in her wardrobe, and how the design could correspond with current fashions.

### *Complexity*

Whilst generating and developing their ideas, the participants considered the scale and complexity of various options, and consciously chose one which felt right for them; we can think of this consideration as suiting their knitting preferences. In some cases, options were felt to be too ambitious; for example, Kiki simplified the plan for her garment to make it more manageable. In the description Anne wrote about her project, she too described considering her level of ability:

*This project appealed to me as it was fairly straightforward and something I felt was within my limited capabilities.*

For some of the knitters, time was the critical factor; Margaret described not being too ambitious, because she had little leisure time available to complete the project.

In the discussions about her project, Catherine expressed concern about knitting in the round using double-pointed needles, a technique required for the treatments she was considering. Rather than shy away from this option, she practised the technique and gained sufficient

confidence to use it on the final garment. Meanwhile, Margaret specifically took the opportunity to use new techniques which appealed to her:

*I might stitch-hack my initials, because I'd love to just do a bit ... I quite fancy the idea of knitting down, because I've not done that before.*

The conversations revealed that the knitters were not just considering which treatments they felt able to do, but what they were willing to do. Some had lines that they were reluctant to cross, such as Margaret not wanting to open the armhole seams of her cardigan. Alex felt that if she put in too much effort, the process would affect her feelings about the outcome:

*I don't mind putting effort into it, but you've got to have a reasonably quick result to feel good about it. If I've got to slave over it, I'm going to hate it! I'm going to take against this garment.*

In the early stages of the process, Julia considered two possible projects, comparing them in terms of effort and reward:

*I think that one would be easier. But this one, I think I'd be more pleased with the result. I'd feel I'd achieved a bit more with this one.*

#### *Colour and yarn*

All of the projects involved adding new knitted elements to the existing garments; the aesthetic appeal of these combinations was felt to be of great importance. Although there are many knitting yarns available, the choice is not infinite; given a restriction of thickness and fibre, colour options are often rather limited. Hence, the knitters had to choose from what was available and be willing to adapt their plans accordingly.

Both Margaret and Catherine were keen to use yarns that they already had, rather than acquiring new ones; in Margaret's case, this directly affected her design decisions, as she had only small amounts of each yarn. Kiki wanted to re-use the yarn from her cardigan, but because the garment was so worn she needed to add in new yarn; once again, this affected the design. Anne was frustrated by the lack of availability of 4-ply yarns for her project; although she found some, the colours were too brash and she was pleased to replace them with yarns found in my studio. Julia found the colours she wanted, but the yarns were very fine, requiring her to use three strands together to achieve a suitable gauge. Colour choices link to other considerations; the knitters discussed what would look good against the existing fabric, and what would suit them. For example, Kiki chose to rein in her proposed colour combination, feeling it to be too adventurous for her taste.

### *Intentionality and wholeness*

Unsurprisingly, the knitters felt it was important that their re-knitting alterations produced an improved outcome. However, Margaret felt that this was not necessarily straightforward:

*It's a very fine line, between altering something and ending up with something naff, and ending up with something where actually you've improved on it.*

The design discussions revealed a crucial issue: whether the alterations would look intentional and purposeful. The idea of *looking like it's meant to be like that* arose again and again in the conversations. This issue of intentionality relates to a broader concept of wholeness, which emerged from the comments. During the early stages of the design process, several of the participants expressed concern that their additions might look *stuck on*. Julia's response to Margaret's comment (above) links these issues of intentionality, wholeness and purposefulness:

*Yes, as if it's meant to be like that, rather than sticking it on for the sake of it.*

The knitters addressed these concerns by using the repetition of design elements to *tie everything together*, making the original garment and the new additions part of a new whole. This repetition involved the use of matching or toning colours (Alex, Anne, Margaret); the repetition of a new trim at multiple points on the garment (Catherine, Julia); the re-use of the original yarn (Catherine, Kiki); and the matching of new and old trims (Kiki, Margaret). When the participants reflected on their projects, positive comments mentioned the additions *looking like it's part of what it's supposed to be* and *looking like a whole*; they were described as *looking interwoven, blending in* and *hanging together*. Comments made by Alex about her project revealed the desire to preserve the 'essence' of her garment, which could be seen as another aspect of wholeness:

*At the end of the day, I do like the cardigan although I haven't worn it. I don't want to mess it about too much, and spoil the essence of what it is. It would be mad to cut it in the middle and start putting Fair Isle bands and things in it, because it would lose the being as the thing I like.*

### **Tacit knowledge**

Analysis of the discussions which took place at the workshops showed that the knitters drew on their tacit knowledge of knitting throughout the design process; I argue that this was crucial to their ability to design. In Section 6.1, I indicated that knitwear design is complex and requires an understanding of the knitted structure. At the workshops, I saw the knitters use this understanding. It informed their initial ideas; their consideration of technical issues; their ability

to anticipate how a proposed alteration would look; and their evaluation of the complexity of a proposed alteration.

In some cases this tacit knowledge was specific: for example, Julia had prior experience of grafting, and Alex drew on her knowledge of 'steeking' (a technique used in Nordic and Fair Isle knitwear) when we discussed the *cut and secure* treatment. The knitters also drew on the knowledge they had gained during the earlier workshops, and referred to techniques that they had tested together. However, in the main the knowledge was more general; it allowed the participants to instinctively feel which options would be awkward to knit, even when encountering new techniques. They drew on this embedded and embodied knowledge to ask questions as they thought through their alterations and knitted their samples, for example regarding the precise order of steps within an operation.

It is particularly interesting to realise that the majority of this tacit knowledge, which enabled the participants to design, has been gained through the use of knitting patterns. In Section 4.3, I described conventional patterns as limiting opportunities for creativity. In the introduction to her book which aims to support knitters in designing and calculating their own garments, Barbara Walker (1972: 10-11) writes: 'those who blindly follow commercial knitting directions may never have given themselves time to understand garment construction, so they remain always at the same level of untutored helplessness'. Before embarking on this research, I would have agreed that written patterns render knitters dependent on designers; however, this project has shown me that when knitters use patterns, they build up a stock of transferable tacit knowledge. While knitters may *feel* rather helpless, when given a supportive space they are able to apply this tacit knowledge and use it to successfully design garments for themselves. The participants recognised the importance of tacit knowledge in design; Kiki, in particular, felt she needed to develop this knowledge in order to be more creative in the future:

*I want to do more just straightforward knitting, to get better at it, because I don't think I'm familiar enough, or whatever, to just start being immensely creative (laughs). I want to get more familiar with how knitting works, generally.*

### **Use of inspiration**

In Section 6.1, I explained my concern that the knitters, like others new to design, might try to combine too many elements of inspiration. Looking back, this was not the case; the participants tended to use one item of inspiration, selected from their inspiration resource or found specifically for the project. In re-knitting, the garment itself is a huge consideration; the inspiration must be selected with the needs of the garment in mind, and may not be required at all if the item has design elements which can be referenced in the alteration. Anne's project, for example, did not require external inspiration, drawing instead on the colours and patterning of

the original jumper. Julia, Catherine and Kiki took colour inspiration from items in their inspiration resources. Margaret used the swatch she found amongst her yarns as inspiration for her sleeve pattern, while Alex used slip stitch patterns, which she had been collecting for a while, as a starting point for her pocket fabric. In all cases I was impressed by the visually sophisticated way in which the original inspiration was translated into the final garment.

The issue of copying, which relates to the use of inspiration, emerged in the Knit Club sessions following the re-knitting project. As I will explain, this issue is more relevant to projects where a garment is knitted 'from scratch', rather than re-knitting projects; however, this is an important issue for amateur design, and so I will briefly discuss it here.

At Workshop 1, we had discussed the importance of inspiration for originating new ideas, and the fact that existing stitch patterns and garments are recognised as valid sources of inspiration for commercial knitwear design (Eckert and Stacey, 2000). However, at the later workshops I noted a sense amongst the knitters that this constituted 'copying', a perception I discussed in Section 4.3:

*I find the books inspirational, because I'm a copier rather than a creator. I need something to start me off. [Anne]*

During discussions about future projects at the Knit Club sessions, the issue of copying became more prominent. In two instances, the participants had seen garments which they wanted to reproduce for themselves: in one case, a mass-produced woolly hat; in the other, a machine-knitted cardigan made by a designer-maker. Anne, who wanted to knit the cardigan, was anxious about 'copying' the designer-maker's unique design. As a designer-maker myself, this placed me in an interesting position.

I have had my own knitwear designs copied by a high street retailer, and found it to be a distressing experience. As I explained in Section 3.3, the fashion industry has minimal legal protections for its creative design. In my case, the retailer's copy was so close to my original that I was successful in gaining recompense. However, from my experience in the fashion industry, I know that five minimal changes are generally considered sufficient to avoid legal challenge. A similar situation to my own arose in 2012, when a high street retailer produced items which bore a strong similarity to original designs by the small jewellery company Tatty Devine. In the uproar that followed, one of the Tatty Devine designers, Rosie Wolfenden, protested: 'what's the impetus for small brands to start up if people can just take away their ideas?' (quoted in Crowhurst, 2012). As a designer, I sympathise with the desire for protection; however, I see the ability to appropriate and modify as an essential condition for a vibrant fashion commons.

While this may seem like a contradiction, there are two important distinctions to be made: firstly, between copying and appropriating; secondly, between commercial and amateur activity. While I disapprove of the creation of direct copies, I believe that creative appropriation connects us with others; it allows us to revive and recombine elements from the fashion commons in a new cultural context. Furthermore, in a blog post responding to the Tatty Devine dispute, Rosie Martin – a designer who supports amateur fashion making – argues that ‘there is a qualitative difference between mass market imitation and the individual hobbyist’ (Martin, 2012). I agree; I would defend my designs against copying by anyone producing items to sell. However, I would be more comfortable about an individual making a garment for themselves to wear, based on one of my designs. Because any such activity would be inherently small in scale, it would not harm my business; additionally, I know that any ‘copy’ would, in fact, be an example of creative appropriation. By translating my idea to match their own wearing and knitting preferences and using their own materials, the maker would create their own item, influenced by my design. Hence, my feeling was that even if Anne tried to faithfully copy the cardigan she had seen, the finished result would be quite different from the original.

When leading workshops on calculating patterns, in which I encourage knitters to measure items from their wardrobes as the basis for their own new designs, I have noticed a sense that this activity is subversive or even illegal, despite such an approach being common practice in the fashion industry. This anxiety indicates that when supporting amateur design, it is important to address the issue of copying in order to help amateurs to reflect on the role of appropriation in fashion, and to reach their own ethical position. Interestingly, concerns did not arise during discussions about the mass-produced hat which Julia wanted to reproduce. This indicates that the ethics were felt to be different in this situation: either that the large company would not suffer from one design being reinterpreted, or that the design was sufficiently generic that it was not seen as ‘belonging’ to them in the first place. It is also worthwhile to note that concerns about originality did not arise during the re-knitting projects, in which ideas drawn from inspiration had to be integrated with the specifics of each existing garment.

### **Visualising and sampling**

Re-knitting involves the alteration of an existing garment. On one hand, the presence of this original item is useful during the design process; it can be tried on and manipulated to visualise a proposed alteration. However, imagination is required to see beyond the current state of the garment; the difficulty of visualising *what it would look like* arose repeatedly in the design discussions.

As I mentioned in Section 6.3, the knitters visualised their ideas in different ways. Although a few of them used drawing, it seemed that in general their drawings were not felt to be sufficiently ‘evocative’ to aid visualisation. I had suggested that they use paper or fabric to mock

up alterations, and on a few occasions this worked successfully, as when Alex used a scarf to illustrate how a new panel could be added to a cardigan. However, on other occasions it was clear that such attempts might actually be a hindrance, with an unconvincing visualisation likely to deter the knitters from developing an idea. Describing, gesturing and manipulating the garment itself, and placing yarns in combination to explore colour combinations, were much more useful methods of visualisation during the early stages of the design process. In describing their ideas, the participants sometimes referred to archetypal designs or details of specific garments from the creative ideas resource; this resonates with the practice of professional knitwear designers, as described by Eckert and Stacey (2000: 523), who explain that 'previous designs and other sources of ideas furnish a vocabulary both for thinking about new designs and for describing designs for others'.

In Section 6.1 I explained that amateur knitters often do not knit experimental samples, and avoid the recommended tension sample before working from a pattern. During this project, the knitters embraced sampling; it was notable how quickly it became second nature for them to experiment. Transcripts of the design discussions show frequent mentions: *you'd have to sample it ... I'd have to try it out ... I'll have to do a bit more experimenting ... I need to do more swatches*. Samples facilitate the process of visualisation; the participants found it useful to pin their swatches onto the garments to see how the new sections would look. Pinning and copying aided visualisation up to a point, but eventually it was necessary to take the plunge, as Alex describes:

*There comes a point where you've got to try it out ... I got to the stage where I couldn't think any more. I needed to do something practical, to see the wool in situ.*

### **Peer support**

Analysis of the group sessions revealed various types of peer support and knowledge exchange taking place. I would expect some of this support in any knitting group; for example, the knitters took the opportunity of being together to ask advice on knitting problems and to compare techniques and experiences. They showed off items they had made and shared resources, such as patterns and yarn. This support was valued by the group, and continued into the re-knitting projects. For example, those considering similar treatments shared the knowledge they gained through sampling.

Peer support provided further benefits for the knitters as they engaged with design. When they reflected on the project at Knitting Circle 3, the knitters said they felt the support of the others was particularly important for their ability to design. This comment from Kiki summarised the collective view:

*I need to feed off other people, I think, to get ideas, and then to gain confidence in my ideas, I suppose.*

The data shows many examples of the participants talking with one another to generate possible ideas for their projects, asking for opinions about shortlisted options and making specific suggestions. It was felt that this collaboration was essential for generating, evaluating and developing ideas, as this comment from Anne demonstrates:

*I don't know that I'd be very good on my own, sat at home, trying to come up with something. So I love the collaboration bit of it, chatting about it, the exchanging of ideas.*

In retrospect, I would describe the method of designing which emerged during this project as 'dialogic'; the ideas developed through conversation. Each participant explained their idea multiple times; with each iteration, the idea evolved and became clearer. I see this as a conversational equivalent of drawing; like many other designers, I draw and redraw to explore and fine-tune my ideas (Schön, 1991; Lawson, 2005). Instead, the knitters discussed their ideas whilst visualising them, using the practical methods previously discussed. They felt that the input of others particularly helped when they had become stuck on a particular idea, and in making decisions, as Julia reflected:

*It is nice to bounce the ideas off, because with my colours, I liked them but I didn't know how to put them together ... We chose two of them, and that really helped to make it.*

It is important to note that, on the whole, the knitters trusted their own instincts and valued the opinions of the others in the group. Although I was seen as an expert on the technical aspects of the re-knitting treatments, it was clear that the participants felt confident in their collective ability to make aesthetic assessments and consider what would suit them and the garment. There was no sense that their preferences and decisions should be 'checked' with me, as a professional designer. The participants referred to 'acting as consultants' for each other, which encapsulates this point.

In her comment about the benefits of peer support, Kiki suggested that designing in a group enabled her to gain confidence in her ideas. I found this very interesting; in Section 4.4, I discussed the wearing of homemade garments and argued that due to the marginal nature of homemade clothes in contemporary culture, wearers often lack confidence. I proposed that it was rather risky to make clothes without the sanctioning influence of professional manufacture; this risk would surely be increased when working without even a professionally-designed

knitting pattern for support. This comment, made by Alex in her initial interview, suggests that she would be unsure about any design decisions made in complete isolation:

*It's a scary thing to be creative, when you've got nobody anywhere giving you a nod that you're on the right line.*

By making alongside other knitters, the participants benefited from an alternative source of sanctioning. I would link this support to the concept of *the gaze of others*, discussed in Section 3.1. As I explained, when we dress we anticipate the gaze of others, and imagine their appraisals of our clothing choices. Just as in the conversations about clothes in general, this consideration ran throughout the design discussions, with comments referring to *what it looks like* and *what people expect to see*.

The consideration of the gaze of others is essentially a concern for the opinions of the community; through this project, the knitters were able to establish the opinions of a number of trusted peers. They consulted with them throughout the design process, from the sharing of inspiration at Workshop 2 through to the presentation of the finished item. I see this as a rare opportunity to consult with, and gain approval from, the gaze. In Section 3.2, we saw that many people welcome support when making decisions about buying clothes; this support is available when shopping with friends and family, or by accessing advice from professionals or the media. However, such support is less accessible during the making process, which usually takes place in the private space of the home. During the project, we took 'the homemade' from the home into a more social, yet supportive, environment.

The peer support which developed was particularly valuable, as it was based on a reasonably well-developed understanding of the others' personal style; while much feedback on clothing is communicated through offhand remarks, this support drew on open and reflective conversations about dress preferences which arose naturally during the course of the workshops. It seems likely that the positive feedback the participants received will contribute a degree of confidence when the garment is worn.

### **Contingency**

In Section 6.1, I explained that the nature of the knitted structure requires forward planning; many of the specifics must be decided before an item is commenced. Although the desired item may be achieved on the first attempt, problems are likely and must be resolved through unravelling and re-knitting. I felt that part of the key to amateur design would be the extent to which these 'mistakes' were embraced as part of the making process, given that 'one of the differences between a professional and an amateur is that the professional is less afraid of making a mistake' (Nabney, 1991: 7).

This project has focused on the re-knitting of existing garments, which can be seen as a type of repair. Research into repair shows it to be a deeply contingent and open-ended activity; Dant (2010: 7) describes how 'often the nature of the task is only imprecisely specified in advance and its actual demands only emerge as the work progresses'. Similarly, Crawford (2009) identifies repair as a stochastic art, which deals with elements of risk and potential failure. Thus, the qualities of repair are at odds with the approach that I have described as being required for knitting. Because the object being repaired presents challenges which cannot be anticipated, the plan for a repair cannot be worked out fully in advance. Unlike the process of knitting a new item, where the fabric can be unravelled and re-knitted many times, many repair tasks cannot be 'undone' once in progress.

On reflection, I can see that a blend of these two approaches emerged during the participants' projects. Each knitter worked out a loose overall plan, which was held in mind with the recognition that elements of it may change. Because knitting is serial – the processes must be worked one after another – they started with the parts they felt most certain about, planning those in detail and executing them. At the end of each section, they took the opportunity to take stock and consider whether the overall plan needed to be adapted before moving on to the next element. If a section did not turn out as expected, in many cases they were able to unravel it and start again, resolving the problem or rethinking the approach. However, each project involved operations that could not be undone, such as the cutting off of unwanted sections, or the cutting open of a jumper; these were considered carefully before execution.

In some cases we consciously embraced the approach of splitting the activity into separate sections; this allowed the knitters to leave some decisions open until part of the alteration had been executed. For example, when I helped Kiki with the design of her sleeve, we planned it as far as the elbow; when she had knitted to that point, she then planned the pattern for the lower sleeve based on the quantity of original yarn still available. Kiki felt this approach was beneficial, as the upper section helped her to visualise the completed design. Similarly, Catherine chose to work on the cuffs of her cardigan first, planning the pocket only when the cardigan was altered to its new shape and she had the sleeve fabric, from which the pocket was to be constructed, to play with. In both cases, the knitter consulted with the group when reaching the end of a section, and used this feedback to inform their next move.

As I had anticipated, the knitters made discoveries about their garments, which informed the way in which their work progressed. Julia, for example, found that the fabric of her jumper was slightly 'squint', which caused problems when she cut it open; dealing with this on the first side was time-consuming, but she was able to apply what she had learned on the second side. I felt that the knitters dealt with the problems that arose during their projects well. Although Julia

described the issues with her cardigan as ‘disheartening’, and Catherine said she had been in tears over her project, both persevered and were pleased with what they achieved in the end.

The design discussions revealed a willingness amongst the participants to *see how it comes out*, and a flexibility about the exact aesthetic of the outcome they produced. I found this surprising because when we discussed the idea of re-knitting at Knitting Circle 2, they talked about the need for an ‘end game’: a plan for the entire alteration. However, I remembered that knitters are used to their knitting turning out differently than anticipated. In Section 4.4, I described this as a negative aspect of knitting; however, it seems that in this instance it helped the participants to be relaxed and open-minded, and willing to revise their plans if necessary. Catherine said she liked the process of growing and changing, as did Kiki, who suggested this approach made her more creative. A comment made by Alex, in response to a question about what advice the participants would give to another knitter considering a re-knitting project, indicates that she too became comfortable with the contingency associated with re-knitting:

*It doesn't have to be an immediate success. You've got to allow for, not exactly failure, but for things to turn out in a surprising way. Because you don't know.*

### **Patterns**

One of the attractions of re-knitting was the opportunity this activity presented for the knitters to design, and to work without a conventional written pattern. However, analysis of the projects has shown that the knitters did not work without patterns altogether. As I have just reiterated in the discussion of contingency, knitting must be planned in advance, to some extent; any plan could be regarded as a ‘pattern’. In some cases, the plan would be worked out for each stitch in advance; in others, the knitter has a more general idea that is interpreted as they reach each stitch. The plan may be written down in a conventional or unconventional textual or visual format, or held in the head of the knitter. Embracing all of these versions of planning has enabled me to develop a much more fluid idea of the ‘pattern’, which goes far beyond a printed document produced by a professional designer.

I have come to realise that patterns shift between locations. This can be observed in the use of conventional written patterns; knitters talk approvingly of stitch patterns with a memorable repeat which can be held in the head, without constant referral to the written text. The pattern is then recorded in the knitting itself; skilled knitters can ‘read’ a pattern from a completed fabric. Thus in this example we see the pattern shift from written code, to the head of the knitter, to the knitted fabric. This was the case with Kiki’s re-knitting project; she used a stitch pattern from a book, which became familiar enough for her to hold in her head, and was recorded in the finished knitting. However, these shifts do not necessarily take place in that order. Margaret ‘read’ her pattern from the knitted swatch found amongst her yarns, translating it into a visual

pattern (Figure 6.38); as she knitted her sleeve, she held the patterns in her head. While she improvised the combination of stitch patterns on the first sleeve, she then 'read' this knitting to copy the layout for her second sleeve. When Alex drew on her tacit knowledge to knit a stitch sample for Anne, she composed the pattern in her head as she knitted; she then wrote it down, row by row, for Anne to follow. When Anne knitted the pattern, it transferred from the paper to her head, and finally to the finished garment.

A conventional garment pattern played a part in Alex's re-knitting project; because she had knitted the item she was altering herself, she was able to use the original pattern to knit the replacement collar and trims. All of the knitters wrote down the pattern they would use for at least part of their project, many in a conventional row-by-row format (such as Catherine's, Figure 6.39). When I helped Kiki to plan her sleeve, I drew a pattern in the form I would use for my own work (Figure 6.40); while this gave Kiki the general idea for the sleeve, she found that she needed to draw out a visual grid-based pattern, with one square for each stitch (Figure 6.41). This was particularly interesting, given that Kiki had said on previous occasions that she was unable to read visual patterns supplied in books. Her method of notation made sense to her, but was not based on a conventional scheme.

In summary, we can see that the knitters were using and producing patterns in a flexible manner, to suit their own preferences and the needs of their project. In some cases, the written notes they made would be usable by another knitter; in others, even the person who wrote them would struggle to understand the information a short time after producing it. This was not a problem, as these patterns were a tool for producing the finished item, and were not intended to be passed on.

### **Design literacy**

Finally, I would like to return to the concept of design literacy. As I explained in Section 6.1, Rijken (2011: 156) proposes three pillars of design literacy: strategic, tactical and operational. The participants demonstrated their operational skills, which relate to their tacit knowledge, gained from their knitting experience and the re-knitting exercises we did together. It is interesting to reflect on the question of whether the knitters exercised and developed their strategic and tactical skills during the project. I believe so; they all developed a vision, and formulated a workable design which was flexible enough to work with the contingencies of the existing garments.

Hence, I feel that the support offered by the project did develop the design literacy of the participants. I consider their re-knitted garments to demonstrate a surprisingly high level of aesthetic and technical sophistication, given the lack of previous design experience. The knitters were similarly impressed by their achievements, as this comment from Margaret indicates:

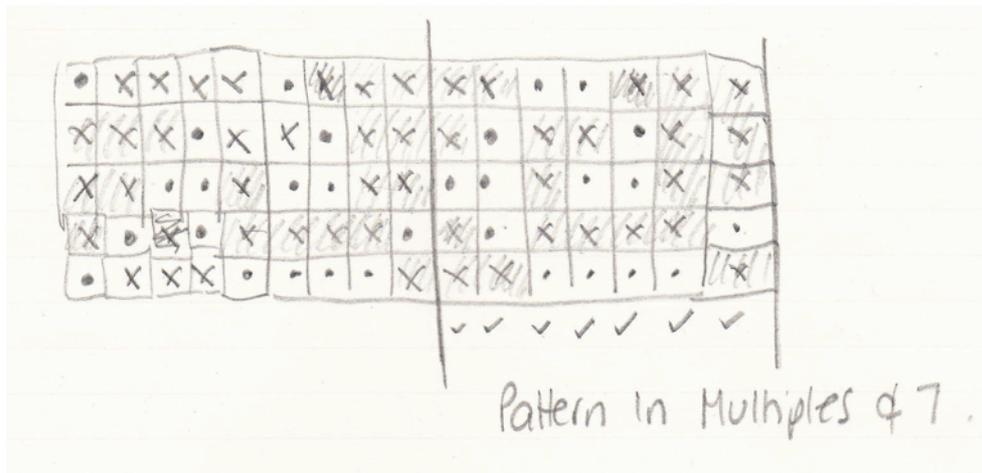


Figure 6.38. Margaret's visual pattern

Sample 1 → Knit 1 row (pickup sts)  
 Step 1 garter st. K2tog, K2tog. (2.25 mm)  
 Step 2

blue (2)  
 white (1)  
 red (1)  
 light brown 2K  
 3mm (w) (1)  
 dark brown 2K  
 white 1 + 1

grey K P 3 ←

Sample 2: Knit 1 row (pick up sts) 2 strands blue  
 Step 1 garter st. K2tog, K2tog (2.25) blue  
 Step 2 slip 3tog T4 3tog K2 white (2)

Row 1 row  
 Red (4ply) 1 row (2.25mm)  
 Light brown 2 K rows.  
 white (2.5mm) (K)  
 Blue (4ply) 1 row K. (3mm)  
 Dark Brown (3mm) P1 K1 edge.  
 P row  
 P row  
 cast off. in fwd.

2nd off sample

blue dec rows  
 Knit row  
 Knit row (rs)  
 Knit row (ws)  
 K row (rs)  
 K row (ws)  
 K (rs)  
 K (ws)  
 P (rs)  
 P (ws)  
 cast off

white  
 red  
 l. brown  
 l. brown.  
 white  
 blue  
 d. brown

Figure 6.39. Catherine's row-by-row pattern



*I think everything everyone's done has improved on what was there. It's really made it a different original garment.*

This result resonates with research by Kaya (2010) into the transfer of knowledge from a designer-researcher to textile makers. She found that by making together in a workshop environment, and offering constructive suggestions as the participants developed their own ideas, she was able to help them to learn how to design.

It is interesting to note that the participants undertook many of the activities that they identified, in our discussion at Workshop 1, as being integral to professional knitwear design. However, they did not try to emulate professional designers; instead, they had sufficient confidence and support to develop their own design culture, appropriate to this particular group of amateur knitters redesigning garments for themselves to wear.

In Section 6.1, I described how many amateur knitters lack confidence in making creative decisions. During the project, I observed the participants grow in confidence and begin to trust their own instincts about aspects of design such as colour, balance and silhouette. Kaya (2010) describes the participants in her research gaining in self-esteem as a result of taking part in the design workshops. Although this was not a direct focus of my research, comments made by the participants indicate that they, too, gained in self-esteem and self-confidence. In Section 7.1, we will explore in more detail the impact of this increased sense of confidence, and interest in design, on their existing knitting practices.



7

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## DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I will discuss the issues which emerged during the research. The perspective will broaden with each section, taking us from the immediate impacts of the re-knitting project, through a discussion of re-knitting as a practice, to finally re-engage with the overarching topic of sustainability at the end of the chapter. First, I will briefly examine the ways in which the experience of the research project affected the participants' established practices and perceptions.

### Techniques

The participants agreed that the experience of trying new techniques during the workshops would make them more confident in the future, in terms of overcoming problems and becoming more adventurous:

*We've done things I wouldn't have attempted before. And things I haven't done yet, because I've thought they're beyond me... I do feel now, I can have a go. [Julia]*

The participants drew on these techniques in their later projects. Anne, for example, completed a large wrap which she had been knitting for months, but found it had turned out too long. Rather than accept the garment in this state (as she may have done in the past), she brought it to a Knit Club session and talked through ideas for how to alter it. During her re-knitting project, Julia had learned that she could ply up yarn to achieve a suitable thickness, and subsequently did the same when knitting mittens for her granddaughter.

### Designing

The knitters enjoyed the experience of designing during the re-knitting project, and were excited by the prospect of continuing. Catherine reported that the experience of design had been very positive and allowed her to reclaim her identity as a maker:

*This is the bit that is me and the bit that has felt 'asleep' for a hundred years – reawakened, excited and raring to go.*

In Section 6.4, I described how quickly the participants embraced the knitting of samples as an integral element of the design process. This shift in perspective would influence their future knitting activity, as Alex described:

*It's one of these things you're told that you can't believe until you've done it. Everybody has to do it for themselves to understand what you get out of it, you*

*can't be told. Certainly I feel, now, that doing any samples or trying out wool is not a waste of time because it adds to a benefit of what you're eventually going to do.*

Alex gave an example of this new sampling practice: she had adapted the stitch pattern for a cardigan, cutting down the number of colours and using yarns she already had. She was pleased with the result:

*It just worked out so well, I couldn't believe it. I thought wow, you know? This actually works. I would have thought that was beyond me before, that was something that designers did.*

Kiki, too, started to knit samples as part of her 'regular' knitting activity, experimenting with Fair Isle patterns and keeping them in a file for future reference.

During the Knit Club sessions, I was able to see some of the items that the knitters worked on following the re-knitting project. Several of these involved design and an experimental approach; for example, Kiki knitted a blanket using the same stitch as her re-knitted cardigan and a playful approach to colour. She also knitted two dresses for her granddaughter, varying the pattern to integrate Fair Isle detailing. Margaret showed a cardigan she was knitting using yarn left over from other projects. She had used a commercial pattern, but experimented with complex colour combinations to suit the yarn she had available. Catherine mentioned her ideas for the future:

*Now at home there are pieces of fabric, pictures, pots, pebbles, shells... with matching yarn balanced on top of them – really excited.*

At Knitting Circle 3, Margaret spoke about the project having 'opened her mind' about knitting:

*That's one of the things I've got from it, that you start thinking of knitting differently. Instead of stitches, it can become a fabric. So you're starting to think, rather than just the loops of knitting, you can think of the fabric of knitting. You feel like it's more plasticine, you feel like you can mould it more, rather than just be stuck with these rows.*

She explained that this new thinking, in which she saw the knitted fabric in a three-dimensional way, had given her ideas for design.

Despite a desire to continue, comments showed that design was still an intimidating activity, to some extent; for example, when I asked the group to help redesign a jumper at Knit Club 4, Kiki said her 'heart started pounding'. One particular area in which the knitters felt they lacked

confidence was that of colour. At two Knit Club sessions, we tried out colour exercises; working together in this way was felt to be helpful. A shift could be observed since the early workshop sessions; whereas Alex had previously described herself as being 'hidebound' by colour rules, after the exercises she was describing her own preferences as being 'highly personal' and dependent on individual perception.

### **Reflecting**

The re-knitting exercises and projects prompted the participants to reflect on various aspects of their experiences as knitters and wearers. For example, on several occasions discussions about clothing preferences spontaneously arose. In some cases, the participants talked about their individual preferences, comparing their opinions about colour and style. The conversations often moved beyond the preferences themselves, with the participants reflecting on their habits and choices. In one discussion, Kiki and Catherine questioned the whole idea of particular styles 'suiting' an individual. At the end of the project, when I asked the knitters what they had learned, Catherine wrote about the pressure to 'look and think and be' a certain way; she suggested that the project had helped her to have confidence in a more individual approach to dressing.

As the knitters developed their own design ideas, from time to time they mentioned their dissatisfaction with shop-bought clothes:

*There's always a shortcoming. You see something, you like the colour or the style, or you find it more or less fits, but there's something wrong with it. [Alex]*

Although the participants had expressed similar sentiments in response to my questions in the individual interviews (discussed in Section 3.3), these conversations occurred spontaneously and I perceived a subtle, but potentially significant, strengthening of views since the beginning of the project. Without wishing to overstate this shift, I observed an increased willingness to express dissatisfaction with ready-made clothes and conventional knitting patterns. I also sensed a greater ambition for the participants' own designing and making. For example, in a discussion at Knit Club 4, Alex spoke about expert amateur knitters who expend a great deal of time and energy in redesigning or originating a pattern to suit their own individual ideas and preferences, and talked with admiration about the attitude necessary for such an approach:

*It's the drive to have what you want, not settling for what you can get.*

Another subtle change related to the relationship between homemade and shop-bought items. In Section 4.4, I quoted Alex saying that she liked knitting traditional styles, as she did not want to seem as if she were trying to copy high street knitwear. By Knitting Circle 3, this concern seemed to have lifted, to some extent:

*I'm up inside all sorts of jumpers when I see them in shops now to see how they're made. I'm very interested in the construction, and how I could do it. How it could be made at home, to get the same thing.*

The project also prompted reflection on issues relating to sustainability. The deconstruction activity, in which we took apart items of mass-produced knitwear, led directly to discussions about the people who had made the garments, the skills involved and the likely conditions of manufacture. While working on their garments together, the participants talked about their concerns about waste and discussed repair and rejuvenation, comparing the contemporary context with practices of the past.

In my practice, I have noticed that when people learn to knit for the first time, the activity often prompts reflection in relation to fashion consumption. I introduced this idea in Section 1.3, suggesting it as one of the benefits of greater participation in amateur making. This was the case with Sarah Ditum, who describes the impacts of learning to knit:

I don't make all my own clothes, but at least having tried to be my own sweatshop means I know what garments are worth ... in terms of what another person had to do to make the things I wear. It means I buy well and buy less.

(Ditum, 2012)

People who have knitted for a long time, such as the participants in my research, are less likely to gain the sudden insight experienced by those learning to knit for the first time; I suspect that a novel experience is required to disrupt what may have become a habitual approach. It seems that the unfamiliar challenges of design and re-knitting have given the participants a comparable space to reflect and reach new understandings. I see this reflection as an important impact of the project, drawing the participants' attention to topics which are usually taken for granted, and giving them the opportunity to think about their habits and preferences both in comparison with others, and in a wider context.

## 7.2 Opening knitted garments

Next, I will explore motivations for and barriers to re-knitting, in order to understand what is involved when knitters extend their practices to engage in this activity. To guide the exploration, I am reconnecting with the theme of openness and considering the act of 'opening' knitted garments: a potentially simple physical process which involves complex cultural factors.

## Open and closed

According to Fletcher (2008: 187), the ready-made garments supplied by mass production are 'presented to us as complete or "closed", with an almost untouchable or sacrosanct status', which means that we are unlikely to personalise them. Walker (2006: 54) adopts a similar position, describing ready-made products as predefined and inviolable, 'presented to us as a fait accompli'. In their work on packaging re-use, Fisher and Shipton (2010) discuss 'open' and 'closed' objects; they describe open objects as being open to modification, a definition which resonates with my own approach.

The gaps between open and closed products will be different in different situations. For example, the contemporary movement for openness in technological hardware is primarily concerned with physical restrictions. Frustrated by sealed units and proprietary tools, makers protest, 'if you can't open it, you don't own it' (Jalopy, 2005). In contrast, as I described in Section 5.1, the knitted structure is inherently open and tinkerable; activity is limited by a lack of knowledge of how to open and alter the fabric, and cultural expectations of the ways in which we should interact with our clothing.

In thinking about open and closed objects, it is useful to mention the concept of affordance, originally developed by Gibson (1979). Affordance can be described as *what a particular thing allows us to do*. As Chemero (2003) explains, it is relational: dependent on both the physical features of the thing and the perceptions and abilities of the user. For example, the most obvious affordance of a chair is providing support, and therefore we perceive that we can use it to sit on; we may also perceive alternative uses, such as propping open a door or making a den. Affordance is usually discussed in terms of what can be done *with* a particular thing, as in the example of the chair. When looking at the experience of altering existing items, we are interested in a related but different question: what can be done *to* a particular thing. Although he does not make this distinction, Norman (1988) provides a useful example: he tells a story about vandals damaging railway station shelters in different ways (doing particular actions *to* the shelters) depending on the materials from which they were constructed. As he describes, glass has the affordance of being smashed, while the smooth, porous surface of plywood affords the drawing of graffiti.

For this research, I wanted to explore whether we perceive that we can alter an item of knitwear (seeing it as open) or whether we feel we cannot do anything to it (seeing it as closed). Furthermore, I was interested to discover whether perceptions of what is possible can be challenged, and whether some actions are perceived as more possible than others. I will consider these questions by thinking on two levels: first, opening the knitted fabric, and then opening the garment as a whole. I am continuing to focus on the approach that I described in Chapters 5 and 6: re-knitting alterations which engage with the structure of the knitted fabric and

treat each stitch as a reconfigurable unit. This is a technically complex activity, in comparison with other means of restyling existing garments, such as cutting and sewing.

### **Opening knitted fabric**

Many of the treatments I have developed for reworking existing knitted garments involve opening the fabric through unravelling, laddering or cutting. Knitters have different experiences of, and feelings about, each of these actions.

Unravelling – the deconstruction of the fabric, row by row (see Figure 5.2) – is a common activity within conventional knitting. Unravelling directly reverses the formation of loops involved in knitting, and the yarn remains in its original state, as a continuous strand. Knitters unravel and re-knit their work in order to correct mistakes; this might be a small section of a single panel, or an entire garment which has not ‘turned out’. Some knitters also unravel existing items of knitwear (whether hand-knitted or mass-produced) to reclaim the yarn. Hence, unravelling can be seen as an integral element of knitting practice. Although unravelling is sometimes associated with disappointment, it does not seem to involve a great deal of anxiety and the process offers the satisfying opportunity to start afresh:

*I'm known as a backwards knitter. I'm always pulling stuff out and doing it again. I can't bear to be defeated by some balls of wool, and I can't bear waste. [Julia]*

Laddering (see Figure 5.3) occurs accidentally when a stitch is dropped; as this comment from Anne shows, for some knitters this is a worrying experience:

*I'm always scared, if you drop a stitch or something, I'm always scared it's going to run right down to the bottom.*

However, most knitters know how to repair a ladder, and are able to use this technique as an alternative means of correcting mistakes.

The actions of both unravelling and laddering, therefore, are seen as relatively safe; in contrast, knitters generally have a horror of cutting knitting. If I mention the word *cut* to knitters, the response is usually a sharp intake of breath and a look of panic; more than once I have heard ‘sacrilege’ muttered in response. This horror is understandable; when a knitted fabric is cut, the structure of intermeshed loops is disrupted (Figure 7.1) and it cannot be unravelled into a continuous thread. Cutting cannot be reversed, as unravelling can; therefore, it is a more ‘savage’ means of opening a fabric. Although it may be seen as ‘un-knitterly’ (referring back to the idea of *knitterly*, discussed in Section 5.2), cutting is used in the creation of traditional Nordic and Fair Isle knitwear, where garments are knitted as tubes and then ‘steeked’ – cut open to

create sleeve and front openings. However, it is still regarded warily; even Alex, who is an experienced and confident knitter, said that she had never ‘dared’ to use this technique.

During the deconstruction activity at Knitting Circle 2, we took apart several mass-produced garments. Because the garments were stained and scruffy, and because I presented the task as a safe, experimental activity, the knitters quickly overcame their reservations about cutting. I discovered a shared assumption that any unsecured knitted fabric – whether open stitches not held on a needle, or a cut edge – would immediately disintegrate. The participants were amazed to find that this was not the case; the nature of the knitted structure is such that ladders need manipulation to ‘run’, and a fabric cut vertically does not come apart without vigorous handling. Anne described this discovery as ‘liberating’, while Catherine referred to ‘a new world’.

The experience of deconstruction, therefore, proved to be essential in developing a deeper understanding of the knitted structure and building a willingness to open existing fabrics. Discussing perceptions of plastics, Fisher (2004: 26) explains that ‘affordances ... are discovered by users through interaction with them’. This was the case in this project; by playing with knitted fabrics, the participants discovered qualities that they had not previously perceived and this changed their attitude to alteration.

Unsurprisingly, concerns did not entirely disappear; when I mentioned cutting a stitch in the cardigan I was knitting in order to correct a mistake, the knitters responded with the familiar look of panic. When discussing Julia’s finished project, Alex suggested that she would be able to ‘dine out for years’ on the story of cutting her jumper into a cardigan. However, overall the knitters had gained in confidence, and referred to the possibility of cutting when discussing future projects:

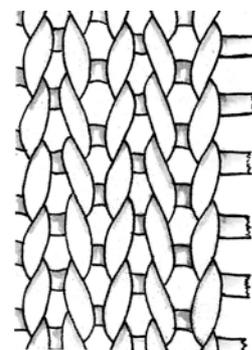


Figure 7.1. Knitted structure, cut vertically

*The Fair Isle jumper I was knitting for my grandson, I always worry about the neckline going over their heads. I suddenly thought, I could cut a steek if it doesn't go over his head. I thought, wow! I actually feel confident about doing that. It's a big difference. [Alex]*

### **Opening knitted garments**

Taking a broad view, we can first think about attitudes to changing knitwear in general: whether people perceive that *any* item of knitwear can be altered. As I explained in Section 5.1, this is no longer a common practice; although we may have a vague cultural memory of items being unravelled and reworked, the lack of current activity indicates that the idea does not occur to most people, beyond fixing problems that arise during the making process. Indeed, the research participants' experiences of re-knitting were limited to unravelling jumpers for yarn, thirty or even fifty years ago.

The structure of the research project created a focus on re-knitting, rendering it a conceivable and desirable activity. By trying out re-knitting techniques, the knitters gained an understanding of how items could be changed, which gave them confidence. Comments made by the participants during the project show that the examples of re-knitting I provided, and seeing others undertaking the same activity around them, also created a sense of reassurance. At the end of the next section I will discuss ways in which this 'permission' could be provided more widely, by nurturing a culture of re-knitting.

Looking now within the 'bubble' provided by the project, we can think about which garments were seen by the participants as suitable for re-knitting. At Knitting Circle 2, I asked the group to undertake a ranking exercise: I gave them brief descriptions of seven fictional items of knitwear (Appendix B3), and asked them to sort the descriptions according to how happy or reluctant they would be to open and change such a garment. I included a range of factors which I thought might be important, such as origin (shop-bought or homemade); condition; fibre; size and style, in relation to the wearer's preferences; and value, in terms of both price and emotional attachment. The participants' responses to this task helped me to understand their thinking, and to analyse the discussions which took place in the later workshops about the real-life garments the participants had chosen to alter.

I saw that all of the items selected for re-knitting had two factors in common. Firstly, they had one or more identifiable problems, such as holes or other damage (Anne, Kiki, Margaret); an issue with fit (Catherine, Julia); or being rarely worn (Alex, Julia). Secondly, each garment was considered valuable in some way, whether in terms of emotional attachment (Anne, Kiki, Margaret), a valuable or high quality fibre (Catherine, Julia), a garment in too good a condition to discard (Alex, Julia), or a homemade item representing a great deal of embedded effort

(Alex). Items which fitted this profile were considered suitable for re-knitting and worth the effort involved, and could be taken forward to the design stage. While discussing design ideas, the participants weighed up whether they thought they could achieve a positive outcome, in terms of the design considerations described in Section 6.4. In most cases, the participants felt that they could achieve an improvement, and went ahead with the project. There was an exception: Anne had considered working on a cardigan with damaged cuffs, but chose an alternative project as she was unsure whether she would be able to achieve a satisfactory result on the fine-gauge fabric. Of course, these factors were very personal; both the sense of value and the identification of a problem were subjective. However, there was a clear logic to the participants' selections.

My analysis of the participants' selection of garments is limited, in that I could only observe the garments that they chose to bring to the workshop; each person went through a process of selection at home, considering which items were suitable for re-knitting. It is impossible to say, therefore, whether items were left in the wardrobe because they did not fit the profile described above, or whether other factors were in play at that stage.

### **Origin**

One factor which I thought might be important was whether items were shop-bought or homemade, bearing in mind the idea, discussed above, that manufactured items are closed and inviolable. I had purposely addressed this issue in the ranking exercise, but the discussion showed that the participants did not feel it was important. When they talked about selecting items for re-knitting, it was clear that they were less confident about tackling fine-gauge knitwear, all of which would be mass-produced, and therefore shop-bought. However, this concern related to their ability to achieve a satisfactory result when working with the tiny stitches, and to successfully calculate the change in gauge that would be required, rather than the origin of the item. At Knitting Circle 3, we reflected on the participants' projects and I asked again about differences between shop-bought and homemade items. Interestingly, Alex and Margaret – the only participants who had altered items they had made themselves – said they would still be more inclined to alter homemade items in future:

*It would be another step to change something that was bought. [Alex]*

This preference was not expressed by the other participants, perhaps because they have fewer homemade items in their wardrobes that could be selected. In fact, Catherine said that she would be more inclined to work on fine-gauge, mass-produced items than hand-knitted garments, feeling that she would be more able to achieve a successful and intentional-looking result.

Although feelings were mixed on this issue, I did gather some indications about why homemade items might be considered more suitable for re-knitting. Firstly, we can consider the contingency of re-knitting, discussed in Section 6.4; as I described, when the knitters opened and altered their garments, they made discoveries which affected their design decisions. When a homemade garment is altered, there are fewer mysteries to be uncovered; the methods of construction are familiar. This point is raised by Walker (2006: 57): 'if we had a hand in its creation, we would be more able to effect a repair because we would already have an understanding of the object – what it is made from, how it is made and how it works'. Although the basic structure of hand-knitted and machine-knitted fabric is the same, knitters are less familiar with the construction techniques of mass-produced items and the sense of contingency and risk is therefore heightened; this may affect the knitter's assessment of whether they can achieve a positive result.

Further comments reveal another aspect of homemade clothes which helps knitters to perceive them as suitable for alteration. In her interview at the start of the project, Julia spoke in detail about her experiences of unravelling homemade garments which had not turned out successfully. As she described two garments which were 'waiting for an unpick', I sensed that she could almost *see* the balls of high-quality yarn which could be extracted from these unsatisfactory items. Because she had made the garments, she perceived them differently to the way another knitter would; she also perceived them differently to shop-bought items. A conversation I had with a knitter at one of my 'conventional' knitting workshops indicated a similar phenomenon. We were talking about the tendency of knitters to be critical of the things they have made, as discussed in Section 4.4; the knitter observed that when she has made something, she still perceives it as separate sections, while others see the garment as a whole.

In both cases, we can see that when a knitter has made an item, they retain the memory of its previous states (as balled yarn, as work in progress, and as separate panels before sewing up). While this may, indeed, be one of the reasons why knitters are critical of their own work, it is also potentially useful for re-knitting; it means the knitter continues to perceive the item as open, and able to be altered. Re-knitting requires the knitter to treat each stitch as a building block; to do so, the stitches must be recognised, and it seems that it is easier to recognise stitches if you originally formed them.

### **Condition**

On reflection, I would identify the condition of a garment as most important in terms of its being perceived as open or closed. As I have described, each of the participants identified a problem with their garment, to be resolved through re-knitting. In the cases where this problem related to the physical condition of the item, there was a clear motivation for action and everyone seemed to perceive the garment as open and suitable for alteration. At Knit Club 4, I asked the group to

help me to redesign a plain red cashmere jumper. The jumper was in perfect condition, and I did not identify any problem with it. Although the participants generated a range of ideas for the jumper, towards the end of the activity Anne explained that she was having difficulty:

*See, I do find it difficult to just look at that jumper, all nice and complete ... I just think it's a very nice jumper.*

The other participants agreed. This suggests that the wholeness of the garment made it difficult for the knitters to imagine it being different, and therefore it was perceived as closed in comparison to a damaged garment which is open and invites action. Drawing on the writing of Heidegger, Tonkinwise (2004) argues that we generally see manufactured products as being finished and complete, despite all things actually being 'in motion'. He suggests that when things break down, they 'defy the finishedness of things ... [and] manifest things as alive, as matter-in-motion' (Tonkinwise, 2004: 8). Hence, while all knitted garments are in motion, with the capacity for alteration, it is when they become damaged and the structure starts to degrade that this property becomes more obvious.

To summarise: rather than identifying a specific perception of mass-produced garments as 'closed', which I had expected, I discovered a general assumption that complete, finished items would not be altered, which applies to both shop-bought and homemade clothes. I suspect that this assumption is related to the growth of industrialised clothing manufacture and fast fashion, the reduction in the cost of new clothes and a consequent decline in practices of repair. It was surprisingly straightforward to shift this assumption and create a structure within which it was acceptable to modify items of knitwear; through playing with knitted fabrics, the participants quickly extended their perceptions of what could be done to their garments. While garments in perfect condition were altered, it seemed easier for the participants to perceive items as open and suitable for modification if there was a recognisable problem to be resolved.

### 7.3 Re-knitting as a craft of use

Having established the issues involved in opening knitted garments, I will now explore the data to consider whether re-knitting could become a regular activity. First, I will examine the participants' responses to re-knitting. I will then consider the ways in which re-knitting could be integrated into their existing wardrobe practices, and finally look beyond the project to consider how a culture of re-knitting might be nurtured.

## Responses to re-knitting

In the information I distributed to potential participants about the research project, I said that we would be developing knit-based techniques for transforming existing knitwear. Hence, all of the knitters who took part had expressed an interest in this activity and were intrigued by the idea, as this quote from Margaret (referring to a little-worn item from her wardrobe) illustrates:

*I'm extremely interested to try and change [it] ... I would be delighted to try and jazz something up. The thought of being able to create, and make something individual, I think sounds fantastic.*

However, the participants were generally unsure about what re-knitting would involve, or what it might look like:

*I can't see it, I can't visualise, I can't imagine what you would do. I'm not very imaginative in that way. [Kiki]*

Alex said that she did not know of any techniques that would successfully enhance a garment:

*My experience of altering things, or dressing them up, is limited but ... they always involved changing the buttons or putting lace on it or something like that. And it just never looked right. It was never good enough that you'd want to wear it. It was a lot of effort, and the result was unsatisfactory.*

As I explained in the previous section, the participants quickly embraced the potential of re-knitting. When I shared the re-knitting spectrum (Figure 5.9) with them at Workshop 1, they responded positively to the treatments. Some particularly appealed to them; for example, several people liked the idea of 'cardiganising' their jumpers using the *cut open and trim* treatment, feeling it would make these garments more wearable. They liked the finish of the trim used for this treatment, considering it to be elegant in appearance and relatively simple to execute. The technique, along with others such as grafting and stitch-hacking, was felt to be knitterly and therefore particularly satisfying.

Following the project, the knitters reflected on their transformed garments; they were pleased with them, and considered their alterations to have improved the original items. They also felt positive about the activity of re-knitting, as this comment by Margaret indicates:

*It's been really quite exciting, what you can do with existing garments that you've got. Just to turn them into something really original, which I think is fantastic ... It's*

*quite a liberating thing. You feel like you can go in and alter and put back together. It's a really nice thing to do.*

The knitters described feeling proud of having achieved a complex task:

*I'm impressed with the way it all works, the construction of it. I think that's really clever. And I'm quite pleased that I've been able to do it.* [Julia]

They also felt good about having been able to transform an unworn item and return it to wear:

*It does feel good (noble... perhaps, sounds too pompous) to reinvigorate a rather sad garment.* [Catherine]

*I feel, sort of, justified that I've been able to turn it into something I want. And I shall feel self-righteous when I wear it!* [Alex]

In his book *How Buildings Learn*, Stewart Brand quotes Brian Eno, who reflects on the appreciation he feels for buildings which change over time. Eno's comments connect back to the concept of things as 'matter-in-motion', discussed in the previous section; the 'taste' for evolution that he mentions could also apply to garments and the practice of re-knitting.

We are convinced by things that show internal complexity, that show the traces of an interesting evolution ... This is what makes old buildings interesting to me. I think that humans have a taste for things that not only show that they have been through a process of evolution, but which show they are still part of one. They are not dead yet.

(Brian Eno, quoted in Brand, 1994: 11)

### **Wardrobe practices**

Having established that knitters are willing to embrace re-knitting as a positive and enjoyable activity, I will now think about the potential for this means of rejuvenating garments to be adopted as an everyday wardrobe practice or 'craft of use', as described by Kate Fletcher and discussed in Section 1.3.

Cwerner (2001) describes wardrobe practices as the routine and intimate habits and procedures associated with the organisation, maintenance and disposal of clothes. As he points out, fashion theory has long had a singular focus on the display of clothing:

Whatever the analytical focus or theoretical perspective employed, it is almost invariably taken for granted that clothes are being worn ... however, for most of their useful lives, clothes are stored away, unseen, even forgotten: in short, clothes 'spend' most of their time *at rest*.

(Cwerner, 2001: 79, original emphasis)

Banim and Guy (2001) agree that our relationship with clothes goes far beyond the time they are on our bodies. Their research, along with that of others (Bye and McKinney, 2007; Woodward, 2007), shows that the construction of identity through dress, as discussed in Section 3.1, takes place during storage, maintenance and disposal of clothing, as well as acquisition and use. As Cwerner (2001: 80) argues, wardrobe practices are 'intimately related to the meanings, functions, and identities activated by dress and fashion'. Therefore, to consider how re-knitting could be integrated into these wardrobe practices, we must understand not only the practical decisions which wearers make about keeping, maintaining and discarding clothes, but also the significance of these decisions in terms of identity.

We can use the term 'wardrobe' to refer to the entire set of clothing belonging to a person (Cwerner, 2001). Inventories made by Woodward (2007) of the wardrobes of 27 women showed a total number of items (not including underwear) ranging from 35 to 182, and an average of 98 items. An Internet survey of almost 8,000 adults (female and male) in the UK asked respondents to estimate the number of items in their wardrobes; the average (including underwear) was 115 items (Gracey and Moon, 2012). These respondents reported owning 7.4 items of knitwear, on average. In Section 3.3, I introduced the idea of the fashion commons and linked it to the description given by Gibson (2000: 356) of fashion as 'a storehouse of identity-kits, or surface parts'. Cwerner describes the wardrobe as 'a safely stored *pool* of identity tokens' (Cwerner, 2001: 80, original emphasis); thus, we can think of the wardrobe as the wearer's own miniature fashion resource, from which they construct their identity each day.

### **Unworn clothes**

Woodward classifies the contents of a wardrobe in three categories:

The *inactive clothing* incorporates unworn and formerly worn clothing; *potential clothing* incorporates clothing that is worn rarely or sometimes or clothing that is tried on, even if it never leaves the bedroom; *active clothing* includes work clothing and clothing that is worn often or habitually.

(Woodward, 2007: 45, original emphasis)

Woodward found that, on average, 37% of clothing in the wardrobe was active, 51% was potential and 12% was inactive; however, these proportions varied a great deal between

participants. Recent research for the Waste & Resources Action Programme (WRAP) used two categories of clothing: active, and unworn in the last twelve months. Their survey respondents estimated, on average, that 30% of their clothing had been unworn in the past year (Gracey and Moon, 2012).

All of the items altered by the participants in my research had an identifiable problem, and had not been worn for some time. Hence, unworn clothes – whether ‘inactive’ or ‘potential’, according to Woodward’s classification – are of particular interest. Several studies provide valuable insights into unworn clothes, addressing the interrelated questions of why clothes are unworn, and why unworn clothes remain in the wardrobe (Banim and Guy, 2001; Bye and McKinney, 2007; Cluver, 2008; Laitala and Klepp, 2011; Gracey and Moon, 2012). The findings of these studies are broadly consistent with each other and my own data, although there are notable differences in focus, terminology and methodology.

The WRAP study asked respondents about the reasons why their items had not been worn in the past year. A common reason given was ‘occasional wear’: the items were used for formal or special occasions, or for specialist activities (Gracey and Moon, 2012). Although these items are seldom used, they need to be kept, as Helen explained in her interview:

*I've got a few suits and things that just stay in my wardrobe and have done for years, because I still think... that's my funeral suit, or something. I keep them forever, not because I particularly like them, but because I need to have certain of them in my wardrobe.*

Many of the reasons given in the WRAP study, all of which arose in my own data, related to problems with the clothing itself. Items were frequently unworn because they were no longer considered suitable, in terms of style and fashion, and particularly because they no longer fitted. Another common response referred to clothing wear and tear, with respondents indicating that their items were worn out, stained, shrunk or damaged (Gracey and Moon, 2012). Cluver (2008) identifies similar reasons for clothes being unworn, and usefully links them with the implications for identity. For example, she suggests that shifts in the shared meanings of clothing mean that people need to change their clothes over time in order to maintain a consistent identity; it is likely that this situation would be interpreted by wearers as the items being an unsuitable style, or outdated.

### **Keeping clothes**

Some of the items which fall out of wear are discarded, while others may be mended and returned to active use; I will discuss both processes later in this section. The participants described damaged items being downgraded, and worn for messy tasks such as gardening; this

approach was also identified by Fisher et al. (2008). However, many items will remain unworn in the wardrobe; we can now consider why that may be. As Banim and Guy (2001) describe, it is tempting to view these unworn clothes purely as a waste of money, which feeds a view of women being 'duped' by fashion. Studies such as the WRAP report, which estimate the economic value of unworn clothes (Gracey and Moon, 2012), are in danger of encouraging such a position. However, research indicates that unworn clothes are kept for complex reasons and have an important part to play in the construction of identity.

Cluver (2008) researched reasons for keeping unworn items via qualitative interviews and a reflective personal project, in which she reviewed her entire wardrobe. Banim and Guy (2001) examined the same topic, using reflective essays, clothing diaries and wardrobe interviews. Bye and McKinney (2007) carried out a web-based questionnaire, focusing specifically on reasons for keeping clothing that no longer fits. Although, as they observe, 'discarding unwearable garments is not a completely logical process' (Bye and McKinney, 2007: 484), these studies identified a wide range of reasons for keeping clothing, many of which arose in my own data and will be explored briefly here.

Much clothing is kept due to its value; this may be sentimental value, the actual cost of the item when it was purchased, or a more abstract sense of quality:

*I don't wear them that often but they were very expensive, so I hang onto them.*

[Anne]

*They're not my sort of clothes really, but I don't like to just get rid of them – they're nice quality.* [Kiki]

A further reason relates to an item being treasured as an aesthetic object:

*I have a beaded evening dress, which I bought 30 years ago. I don't think I'd get into it now. It's so beautiful, I can never get rid of that.* [Alex]

Interestingly, homemade items seemed to be perceived as particularly valuable. For some, this value related to the effort embedded within a homemade garment:

*It took such an effort to knit, I would be loath to throw it out, because of all the effort.* [Margaret]

In other cases, the value was more sentimental, relating to personal memories and connections with others:

*I love it and I keep thinking I've got to mend it. I want this to keep going forever, really. Because it was something nice that my sister knitted. [Helen]*

Cluver (2008) suggests that some items are kept because of attachment; she argues that we become attached to items which symbolise others, or represent positive aspects of the self.

According to Banim and Guy (2001: 205), unworn items 'help provide continuity or discontinuity with women's current identities', thus playing an important role in the reflexive, continuous process of identity construction. For example, they describe how kept clothes 'allow women to maintain a connection with former, important aspects of themselves and their lives' (Banim and Guy, 2001: 207). This was particularly apparent in the case of Catherine, who described a special drawer of treasured items which provided an important and emotional link with her previous identity as a professional:

*In this drawer, I have things that are really special, that I've really liked. That's almost like the 'old me' drawer, if that makes sense. It's what I would have worn to work, or... Because you've been seen for years and years and years as the person who changes all the catheters, or whatever. But once upon a time, I was somebody. [And does that drawer help you to feel that?] Yeah, I suppose so, yeah.*

Many items are kept in full recognition that they will not be worn again, at least by their present owner; Cluver (2008) refers to these items as 'permanent inactive'. However, much of the conversation that took place in my research indicated an impulse to keep clothing *just in case*; there was an implicit expectation, or hope, of future use. Cluver describes these items as 'temporary inactive'. In some cases, the participants had particular circumstances in mind, such as the hope that their body shape might change in the future:

*I always hope I'm going to end up slim and sylph-like one day, so it'll come in then. [Anne]*

The hope of future use is not only related to size and fit; the participants talked about keeping items of a specific colour, which might come in useful to complement other garments, and items which suit particular climatic conditions (such as hot weather, which had been elusive in the summer during which the interviews were conducted). Items are also kept *just in case* of changing fashions, and of the wearer changing their style or becoming more adventurous:

*I very rarely throw things out. I always think they're going to come round. [Anne]*

*You think, if you can keep hold of it, your mood might change... [Margaret]*

*I might still wear it, occasionally. A party maybe, or if I'm feeling daring. [Kiki]*

Woodward (2007) points out that many unworn garments are 'reactivated' and returned to regular wear, often being worn in a different way. Even so, it is likely that a significant proportion of these garments being kept *just in case* will not be worn again. On one hand, this attitude can be seen as legitimising hoarding; keeping items in case of circumstances which are unlikely to arise. Indeed, several of the participants referred to themselves as hoarders. However, from another viewpoint we can see the miniature fashion resource of each individual as a source of resilience; the wardrobe provides wearers with a means of dealing with the contingency of identity construction, and of fashion.

As I described in Chapter 3, the meanings associated with clothing and the social norms for 'appropriate' dress are constantly shifting; in this context, it seems prudent to keep items *just in case*, for – as the participants mentioned more than once in the discussions about keeping clothes – *you never know*. In Section 3.1 I quoted Woodward (2007: 157), who argues that 'clothing gives women a sense that they have a self and indeed that they can change it'. The active, potential and inactive garments in the wardrobe allow this sense to be explored, even if many of the items remain unworn.

### **Sorting and disposing of clothes**

The WRAP research showed that many respondents had unworn clothes in their wardrobes, not because of a conscious decision to keep these items, but because they had not got round to disposing of them (Gracey and Moon, 2012). The participants in my research described the same experience:

*I don't particularly think I'm really attached to them, like 'ooh I could never let that go'. I'm a bit lazy at sorting it all out, really. [Anne]*

At the initial interviews, I spoke to each of the participants about sorting out their wardrobes and deciding to keep or dispose of items of clothing; these conversations revealed a range of strategies. Only one of the participants in my research (Helen) described sorting out her clothes as a regular annual activity. Kiki described having a clear out every year or two, which would occur spontaneously:

*Every now and then I say oh, for heavens sake, what are we keeping all this stuff for, and we have a huge – well, seemingly huge – clear out. It often starts in a bit of a temper, when I feel things have got on top of me. I just start cleaning things, and I get to a drawer, and then it becomes a pleasure. An absolute pleasure. Because*

*I'm clearing out and tidying up, and I'm seeing things that I haven't seen for a long time that are really nice (laughs). So I'm saying ooh that's nice, oh yes I'll keep that.*

Margaret, too, described sorting her clothes as a spontaneous activity, prompted by untidiness and an overflowing wardrobe. Alex and Julia described a different approach to sorting the wardrobe, involving unworn items being removed gradually, one by one:

*I'm running a campaign, this year, to get rid of things like the clothes I had at work. I'm systematically going through it, and emotionally getting to the point where I can let it go. And not every week, but every other week or so, I make sure I take something to the charity shop, even if it's just a couple of scarves. It doesn't hurt so much to take one or two things, and just keep doing it constantly. [Alex]*

*I have got a lot in my wardrobe that I haven't managed to part with. Occasionally I do get rid of the odd one. But it's usually one at a time, rather than having a big clear out. [Would that feel too much of a wrench?] Yes, it would (laughs). But if I do them one at a time, it's not so bad. [Julia]*

As these comments show, for many people the task of disposing is emotional; it involves a process of divestment, or letting go (McCracken, 1990). Cluver suggests that these emotions are caused by the close relationship between clothing and the self:

This process can be relatively painless when it entails the disposition of items to which one is no longer or has never been attached, such as items that were 'never me' or were an 'extension of a past-undesired self'. However, a consumer may find it difficult to dispose of possessions closely associated with the extended self, as the disposition of such a possession may symbolize the disposition of a part of the self.

(Cluver, 2008: 29)

Hence, we can see that the process of disposing of clothes, just like the keeping of unworn items, relates to identity construction (Gregson et al., 2007).

Once the decision has been made to dispose of an item, the wearer must then contemplate what to do with it. Recent research (Birtwistle and Moore, 2007; Fisher et al., 2008; Gracey and Moon, 2012) identifies a range of disposal habits, including donating to charity, using as rags, selling, giving to friends or family, and throwing in the bin. Cluver (2008) explains that wearers choose a disposal method in line with social norms, and appropriate to the garment in question. As the participants in my research spoke about disposing of clothes, it was clear that their

decisions took account of the condition and perceived value of each item. Items which are unworn, yet perceived to be particularly valuable, present a problem; they are felt to be 'too good' to give to charity and require an alternative means of disposal. For example, Julia described a jumper she had knitted from yarn she had spun herself, which was too small for her. She chose to keep this item, which represented a great deal of embedded effort, to give to one of her grandchildren in the future.

Conversations about disposal also revealed a deep concern about waste and a general sense of thrift amongst the participant group. Alex described her attitude to waste as being ingrained since childhood:

*There's a very strong sense that you mustn't waste anything, you mustn't throw anything away, and you must wear it out.*

However, concerns about waste can be problematic in terms of clothes which no longer suit the identity of the wearer; both keeping the item in the wardrobe and giving it away can be seen as 'a waste', as Julia describes:

*if you don't wear it, why keep it? It's better to be used, and pass it on. I can agree with both ways of thinking, really.*

### **Integrating re-knitting into wardrobe practices**

Having gained an in-depth understanding of wardrobe practices, we can now consider how re-knitting might be integrated as a craft of use. As a process which renews garments, it can broadly be seen as an act of repair. As with re-knitting, clothing repair was once commonplace; it is now carried out less frequently, and generally limited to 'minor tasks such as sewing on buttons and fixing hems' (Fisher et al., 2008: 30). While the WRAP study quantified the percentage of respondents *able* to carry out various repairs (Gracey and Moon, 2012), Laitala and Boks (2010: 20) point out that 'different considerations play a role when deciding to repair the clothing or not'. This was certainly the case with the participants in my research; they all reported mending clothes, but described particular conditions under which they would or would not repair:

*It depends which ones they are, actually. Not necessarily everything, I would repair. Just my favourite things. [Kiki]*

*The latest thing I was mending, I've got some very voluminous trousers in a very fine linen, and they were really wearing thin. So, I was desperate to keep them going because there's a jacket with them, and I wanted to keep that going. [Anne]*

*I wouldn't darn a jumper. I think if it's got a hole in it, then it's past it. [Alex]*

*I've just ripped my working trousers. But that material's quite thin, I don't know if you can mend it. So I probably wouldn't mend that, even though it's a real pain.*

[Margaret]

Analysis of these considerations reveals the logic behind mending to be very similar to that which I have described for re-knitting. Wearers are weighing up whether the garment is sufficiently valuable to be worth the effort, and considering the prospect of a successful outcome, given the nature of the problem and their own level of skill. In terms of repair, a successful outcome would generally mean the item being returned to its original condition, or as near as possible. When the research participants engaged in re-knitting, they showed a strong desire to improve on the original item, indicating that re-knitting is a related but separate activity which goes *beyond* repair. A similar discussion – of conservative repair versus transformation – can be found in Alexander's (1979) writing about the evolution of buildings. The distinction corresponds with Sennett's (2008: 200) ideas of static repair, which will 'restore the object to its former state', and dynamic repair, which will 'change the object's current form or function'.

Thinking back to Section 7.2, the items selected by the participants for re-knitting all had one or more identifiable problems, and were considered valuable in some way. Earlier in this section, we saw that there are many such items kept in the wardrobe. They are not disposed of or downgraded, because the wearer considers them too valuable; however, they are not worn, because they are damaged, do not fit, or are considered unsuitable in terms of style. Hence, they remain in limbo, and cause a problem for wearers who feel the items are being wasted. The solution, often, is to hide the items back in the wardrobe:

*Put them out of sight a bit, so you don't have to think about them. [Julia]*

From the evidence of this pilot project, I suggest that re-knitting could become an option for resolving these unworn clothes, to be considered alongside the other options already discussed: downgrading to 'scruffy' purposes, such as gardening; keeping, as is, in the wardrobe; disposing, via various routes; and repair. The appropriate option for a particular item would depend on its perceived value and condition; it should be noted that 'condition' could refer to both physical and emotional aspects. A simplified summary of this logic is visualised in Figure 7.2. As the project showed, re-knitting is a labour-intensive activity, only accessible to knitters with a sufficient degree of tacit knowledge; while the complexity of an alteration can be controlled, to some degree, at the design stage, this activity would not be used for every garment in the wardrobe. However, in suitable circumstances re-knitting would be an effective way of returning selected garments to active use.

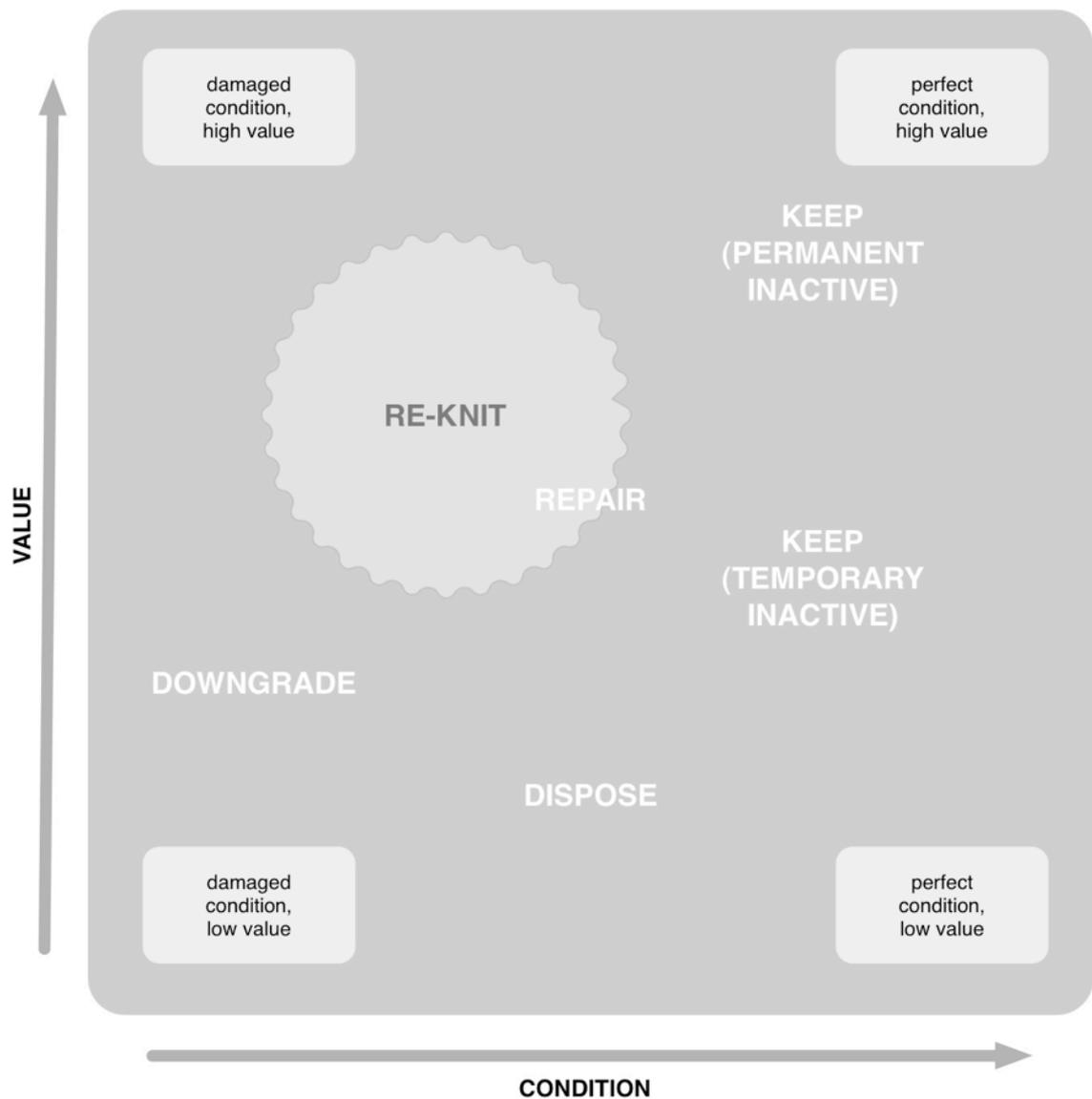


Figure 7.2. Options for unworn clothes, according to perceived value and condition

The Knit Club sessions, following the main project, provided tentative evidence that the participants had embraced re-knitting as a wardrobe practice. Several brought items of knitwear that they wanted to rework, and discussed them with the group; others mentioned various projects that they had in mind. Catherine, for example, described having ‘a large pile of knits waiting for new futures’. However, to date only one project has been completed, a *total reknit* treatment by Alex (the most prolific knitter in the group):

*Because this cardigan had a deep welt, it was always going up my back. And I like things to be warm, so it irritated me and I didn't wear it for that reason. I considered altering it. I took the band off, and I was going to try and lengthen it by taking the rib off. But when I looked at it without the front band on, I thought, it's not going to work, because of the shape of it. I thought, well I've got this far! (laughs) So I've*

*just pulled the whole thing out, and I've re-knitted it into a jumper, with a lace pattern.*

Alex explained how she was starting to see re-knitting as an extension to her knitting practice:

*I think I've realised that knitting the garment is not the end of the journey. Whereas before, when you knitted something, you either wore it out, or got tired of it, gave it to charity. But it's no longer the end of the journey, it can always become something else. I may not think of that extended life at the time I'm knitting it, but it will always be in my mind when the time comes, either it's gone out of fashion, or I've got tired of it. There's another option there.*

Margaret alluded to this anticipation of an extended life when discussing her re-knitting project. She recognised that the new sleeves would last longer than the worn fabric of the body, and suggested that she might end up re-knitting the rest of the cardigan at some point.

In considering re-knitting as a craft of use, it is interesting to note that the participants had already been keeping garments with the vague intention of reworking them. For example, Julia described a worn-out jumper belonging to her son that she had kept for twenty years, always thinking she would 'do something with it'. In our conversation about disposing of clothes, Margaret revealed that she keeps everything, *just in case* of reworking:

*I've always got this mad idea that one day I'll be making loads of stuff. And you think well, keep it, because you know, why chuck it away, I might need that when I create something one day.*

As I explained in Section 5.1, it is much more common to rework via sewing than knitting. While this project focused on 'pure' re-knitting projects, re-knitting elements could be integrated with sewing techniques, according to the preferences and requirements of the wearer and their garment.

### **Growing a re-knitting culture**

There is definite scope for wider participation in re-knitting; as I explained in Section 4.1, there are estimated to be several million hand knitters in the UK (UK Hand Knitting Association, 2009). From my experience, I believe that a significant minority – those who welcome more complex knitting challenges, and the opportunity to be more creative – would be interested in extending their practices to embrace this activity. One way in which a culture of re-knitting might develop is through word of mouth. I have had a positive reaction to the web resource from many knitters, including this email:

*I just wanted to say how interesting I have found your PhD project. How liberating to think about personalising knitwear, both from new and also some beloved sweaters in the wardrobe that are showing signs of wear. Joy to realise that I can give them a new lease of life. I am grateful that you have been so generous in sharing these wonderful ideas; I am an 'inside the box' person and it has never occurred to me that I am 'allowed' to add to someone else's design. Copy it yes, but rework it, wow!*

While some knitters might be encouraged to have a go at re-knitting from the materials that I have placed online, I feel that further support would be required to build wider participation, develop shared knowledge and build a community of practice. The participants described the research project as a structure within which they could work creatively.

*Well, that's been the thing about these workshops, and the space between them, is... I'm getting permission by being here. To play around with things, and it's not wasteful to spend time doing things and pulling them back. It's a freedom that you have, but you don't know you've got. [Alex]*

This 'permission' can be seen as relating to both the *process* and *outcomes* of re-knitting; in Chapters 5 and 6 I described how the participants gained confidence in their projects by working within a supportive group, and were inspired by seeing examples, such as my sample garment and each others' projects. Hence, in order to support a sustained re-knitting culture – involving design and creative experimentation – the space and permission provided by the project would have to take place on a larger scale.

Gauntlett and Thomsen describe the four main characteristics of a culture which supports amateur creativity:

The creative mindset is supported when there are stimulating environments and resources (*having*), when there is a lot of inspirational activity and the engaging support of peers and mentors (*doing*), when there is an ethos which supports the passions of makers (*being*), and where there is a solid body of expertise and knowledge, and support for learning (*knowing*).

(Gauntlett and Thomsen, 2013: 7, original emphasis)

As I described in Section 4.1, knitting already enjoys a vibrant online culture, in which amateurs share their experiences and projects with like-minded peers. Thus, it would be logical to use the Internet to create a larger-scale 'space' to support re-knitting. In Section 5.3 I discussed the idea of developing the re-knitting materials into a collaboratively produced online resource; this could

include a gallery of diverse re-knitting projects and opportunities for peer-supported learning. The participants in my research recognised the value of sharing online in this way:

*You get a sort of pool of knowledge, don't you, which seeps into everybody's consciousness, actually. [Kiki]*

While an active online space would provide an opportunity to share re-knitting knowledge regardless of geographical boundaries, the research project has demonstrated the value of face-to-face activity in supporting amateur creativity. While specific skills could be passed on at one-off workshops, it was by meeting regularly that the participants gained the peer support that was so crucial to their ability to design; our sessions provided the impetus for them to continue and complete their projects. They felt that without further support they may gradually revert to a more conventional approach. They identified my role as particularly important:

*I think you're the catalyst for us to be creative. And to voice what we think. I think without you, we would retreat into... we would do what we know, and continue with that. [Alex]*

Hence, the question would be how I – or other designers – could provide this sense of catalysis on a larger scale. My feeling is that a blend of online support and local (offline) groups would offer an ideal model, enabling the community to share knowledge and access inspirational activity, whilst benefiting from real-world interaction.

## 7.4 Sewing up

To conclude this discussion, I would like to reflect on the project overall and reconnect with the overarching themes of the research. I think of this like 'sewing up' a finished piece of knitwear: joining the separate panels to create a coherent whole. First, I will reflect on re-knitting from my own point of view, as a designer-maker. Then I will examine re-knitting in terms of well-being and openness, and finally consider to what extent re-knitting can be considered a strategy for sustainability.

### **The designer's role**

In Section 1.1 I described my practice, explaining that in recent years I had partially shifted from designing and making items of knitwear for sale, to supporting amateur knitting by producing hand knitting patterns and running workshops and projects. This project has been a continuation of that journey, exploring the ways in which I, as a practising designer, can facilitate

and support a more creative and experimental mode of folk fashion. I characterise this as a type of open design, in which the designer helps others to build their own capacities, and a type of design activism. My approach corresponds with the 'hacktivist' designer role described by Otto von Busch:

This role is not the one of a classic unique genius of fashion. Instead it is in the form of orchestrator and facilitator, as an agent of collaborative change. It is not the divine creator of the original and new, but a negotiator, questioning and developing design as a skill and practical production utility ... It is a combination of designing material artefacts as well as social protocols.

(von Busch, 2009: 63)

I feel that my particular role involves two strands: metadesigner and hyper-amateur maker. I will discuss these strands in turn, comparing them with my previous role as a designer-maker.

During the project, my activities have shifted. In the past my primary design activity was producing 'closed' patterns for knitted garments, to be produced either by me (to sell) or by amateurs (for themselves). For this project I have been designing fragments of knit processes, gathering knowledge, developing instructions and advice, and creating a structure within which to present these resources. I see this role as that of metadesigner, as described by de Mul (2011) and discussed in Section 5.2. I am designing information: writing, drawing and photographing as well as knitting. In Section 5.3, I suggested that the re-knitting resource could become a peer-produced resource in the future. If we consider the activity of managing such a resource, the activity becomes even more 'meta': designing the structure in which others create content to help others design and make. This new type of activity changes my relationship with finished objects; when I design and make, I have the satisfaction of holding a new garment that I have constructed. As a metadesigner, I 'might never see or even be aware of the results of [my] endeavours, changed as they will be by users to suit their own needs' (Atkinson, 2011: 30).

It is worth considering: does this new role satisfy me as a designer? I think so; Atkinson encourages designers to see open design as an opportunity to become more closely involved with making, and I like this attitude. It reminds me that by supporting and influencing the work of amateurs, my efforts can have a far greater impact than would be possible when making by myself. Becoming a metadesigner involves a change in my relationship with amateurs, with a significant shift towards collaboration. For me, this is positive; it presents me with a new way in which to interact with others, beyond selling products. Jones (1991: 205) describes this new role (as adopted by a designer of his acquaintance) in a particularly engaging way: 'his role, once he'd given up part of the design function to his clients, became, as he said, that of professional encourager.'

Crawford (2009) discusses the process of learning a practical skill, suggesting that novices gain an increasingly nuanced understanding of the activity as they progress. He argues that this learning is often guided by a more experienced practitioner. Although Crawford makes this point in relation to paid work, the idea holds true for leisure activities such as making, and I see this as the other element of my new role. As well as designing structures in which others can be creative and support each other, I aim to operate as a 'hyper-amateur' maker. In this mode, I try out the same tasks as other amateurs, working with items from my own wardrobe – but consciously permit myself to spend more time and energy, and to work with more ambition and courage, than they might feel is possible or desirable. This 'hyper' approach enables me to push the boundaries of my ideas, identify problems and opportunities, and create examples that will, it is hoped, inspire others.

Both of these strands have much in common with the role of a teacher, supporting others to develop their own skills and knowledge. However, my 'teaching' does not take place within an educational institution. In practical terms, it could involve face-to-face workshops, online video tutorials or a printed book, as well as the peer-produced web resource I have already discussed. As I have described in this and the previous two chapters, I have gained an appreciation of the support needed to guide amateur makers in designing and re-knitting. By developing my understanding of the tacit knowledge of amateur knitters, I can see that the best way to assist others to learn is to facilitate the exploration of new techniques and possibilities.

In his discussion of designers supporting amateurs to engage in design, Jones (1991: 205) suggests that 'to share the design process with users is not as easy as it sounds. It needs a change of roles, of self-images, on both sides'. Previously, I have described the way in which the participants embraced design and developed their identities as creative makers. It makes sense to consider: what about my own self-image? On reflection, I can see that my previous identity as a designer-maker was partially dependent on distinguishing myself from amateur knitters. In a sphere like knitting, which has such an overlap between professional and amateur practice (Humphreys, 2009), it is perhaps necessary to make this distinction in order to gain respect for the tremendous effort involved in setting up and sustaining a professional practice. Like other 'studio craft' practitioners, I have used the validation of institutions such as 'the museum, the media, and the marketplace' (D. Stevens, 2011: 44) in the construction of my identity.

However, I have become uncomfortable with engaging with a hierarchy that implicitly denigrates amateur activity. As I described in Section 4.3, knitting has evolved over centuries of activity by 'untrained' amateurs (usually women), via communal evolution and the contributions of talented individuals, who would be recognised in their own communities but are now forgotten. When I design and knit, I am benefitting from the effort of these people, and it feels disrespectful to

deny this relationship. I am much happier with the new identity that I have developed for myself, as a metadesigner and hyper-amateur maker: I now feel like an individual who is recognised as having particular expertise *within* the amateur knitting community, rather than someone defining themselves by sitting apart.

I conducted this research in the real-world context of my practice, but free from the usual constraints of running a business. Hence, this project has not addressed the question of whether the new role I have developed would enable me to support myself. As I described in Section 4.3, there is a tension between an open culture and the need for individuals working within this culture to make a living. However, I can see opportunities to gain a financial return for some of the activities I have described, such as running workshops, writing books, creating work for exhibition and so on.

### **Re-knitting, well-being and openness**

Now, I would like to explore the degree to which the practice of re-knitting might contribute to a sense of well-being, in comparison with 'conventional' knitting. In Section 4.2, we gained an understanding of the multiple well-being benefits of making, relating to aspects such as relaxation, personal satisfaction and social connection. Using Max-Neef's (1992) list of human needs (introduced in Section 1.2), I argued that knitting contributes to our needs for identity, participation, leisure, creation and subsistence. Re-knitting is simply a different type of knitting activity: remaking existing pieces, rather than creating new ones. Therefore, I believe that many of the well-being benefits of knitting, such as the social aspects of the activity, the exercising of bodily-kinesthetic intelligence and the opportunity to 'leave one's mark', would still be relevant. The economic benefit of making at home, which has been lost as the prices of shop-bought clothes have fallen, comes back into play when reworking existing items; a valued piece could be returned to wear for the cost of a small amount of yarn. While this benefit may not correspond directly to well-being, it could be significant to those on low incomes.

In some ways the well-being experience of re-knitting is different to conventional knitting. In Section 4.2, I discussed the satisfaction of building an item from the bottom up, and bringing something new into the world. Re-knitting is somewhat different; it involves tinkering with the things around us, rather than building new ones. However, I feel that this activity has the potential to deliver an equal, if not greater, sense of agency. In the same section, I described the difference, discussed by the participants, between *relaxing* and *concentrating* knitting. I would expect an experienced knitter, knitting a garment from a pattern, to find the majority of their making to be relaxing; a small amount of concentration would be required for tricky areas. As I described in Section 6.4, re-knitting is more open-ended and contingent than conventional knitting; hence, it requires longer periods of conscious thought. Because only parts of a garment are usually being replaced, re-knitting is likely to involve a smaller amount of the relaxing mode

of knitting which is valued by many. Of course, concentration is not unsatisfying; in fact, it can be seen as a 'flow' experience (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). However, the balance between the two modes is different when re-knitting, and thus the practice may appeal more to some knitters than others. For some, the challenge of design would be attractive; those looking for a more low-key experience might prefer, like others in the past, 'to eliminate ... the time consuming and anxiety-ridden process of drafting original designs' (Cabeen, 2007: 216).

### **Wearing re-knitted garments**

Having considered the process of re-knitting, let us think about the well-being experience of wearing re-knitted garments. In Section 4.4 I suggested that wearing homemade clothes could provide an ideal way to meet our needs for identity and participation, because it connects the practices of making and wearing. In principle, re-knitting brings those practices closer together, because it applies the knitter's making practice to the clothes within the wardrobe. When we re-knit, we are able to mould our identity *within* a single garment, adding new meanings associated with the practice of making. Hence, we can see re-knitting as a 'possession ritual' or 'transformative ritual', as discussed by McCracken (1990) and Gregson and Crewe (2003). Writing about second-hand objects, Gregson and Crewe (2003: 145) argue that 'the rituals involved in transforming the commodity into one's own result in high levels of attachment and the creation of new forms of meaning'. Alex felt that her cardigan did not reflect her current identity; by updating it to correspond with current fashions, she was able to change the meaning that she perceived in it. Margaret was keen to maintain the meanings associated with her cardigan, which reminded her of her lifestyle in Scotland. By replacing the sleeves, she preserved these meanings, and added new feelings of achievement and creativity.

However, in Section 4.4 I also explained that many people are disappointed with the garments they make for themselves; these items do not always pass into active use. Although the participants in my research were pleased with their finished garments, this was a small-scale project and I suspect that the satisfaction rate of re-knitting more generally would be similar to that of conventional knitting. One aspect of re-knitting which is significantly different is the presence of the garment during the design process. The fact that you cannot try on a garment before you have knitted it is acknowledged as a drawback, which can lead to disappointment. As I described in Section 6.4, the knitters benefited from trying on and manipulating their garments whilst designing. This helped them to gain a reasonably accurate understanding of how the finished item would look and feel, which in turn – I believe – helped them to feel pleased with the result.

In Section 3.3 I constructed the metaphor of the fashion commons and suggested that this commons had been subject to enclosure through the industrialisation of clothing manufacture, which compromises our ability to access the many positive aspects of fashion. In Section 4.4, I

discussed making as a way of reclaiming access to the fashion commons, and of wearers gaining agency in relation to their dress. I argued that because knitters are largely dependent on written patterns, they are restricted in their making by the patterns available and often wish for more freedom and creative input.

Is the practice of re-knitting more effective than conventional making in opening up the fashion commons? I argue that it is, to some extent. By designing for themselves, the knitters were no longer restricted by written patterns, and were able to appropriate, adapt and recombine elements from a vast range of styles. Their choices were restricted by various factors, including the availability of yarn; however, these issues would be encountered in conventional knitting, too, and were not felt to be overly problematic. In Section 1.3 I wondered whether the ability to make more creative decisions might amplify the well-being benefits of making. I believe this is the case; during the workshops, Margaret talked about the satisfaction of taking an item 'somewhere else' through the creation of an original design, rather than – as can be the case when adapting an existing pattern – 'ending up with a mish-mash of what it should have been'. The knitters considered re-knitting and design to be more creative than conventional knitting; hence, by taking part in this activity they were strengthening their identities as creative people.

In Section 4.4 I suggested that knitters are wary of looking as if they are trying to produce 'cheap' copies of high street garments, and tend to confine their practice to styles which fit in with the tradition of hand knitting. Re-knitting provides the opportunity for knitters to use hand knitting to rework mass-produced garments, and therefore to mix these two cultures of making within a single item. This transgression of boundaries is potentially risky; if the 'amateur' homemade is juxtaposed with the 'professional' finish of manufacture, it may be perceived more negatively. However, if we think back to the discussion of 'wholeness' as a design consideration in Section 6.4, it would seem that the new and old sections of the garments were perceived to have merged, producing a new type of garment, *neither* handmade *nor* shop-bought. In his discussion of the repair of buildings, Alexander makes a similar point:

When we repair something in this new sense, we assume that we are going to transform it, that new wholes will be born, that, indeed, the entire whole which is being repaired will become a different whole as the result of the repair.

(Alexander, 1979: 485)

On one hand, the items in this new, marginal space could be seen as even more vulnerable to negative meanings than purely homemade items; on the other, they could be items for which a collective meaning has not yet been developed. Certainly, within the 'micro fashion culture' of the participant group, the re-knitted garments were perceived as embodying positive meanings, which contribute to a positive wearing experience.

### **Re-knitting and sustainability**

Finally, I would like to consider the central question of this research: the extent to which re-knitting can be considered a strategy for sustainability. As I have emphasised previously, this would not be a universal strategy; re-knitting requires a tacit knowledge of knitting, a desire to design, and time to plan and execute potentially complicated alterations. Sustainable fashion is a multi-faceted field, requiring a diversity of strategies; this should be seen as one amongst a constellation of potential practices and activities. Like von Busch (2009), I have sought to develop an activity that is open to *anyone*, rather than *everyone*.

In simple terms, re-knitting has obvious sustainability benefits: it returns unworn clothing to wear, potentially reducing waste and the consumption of new items. By re-knitting an item, the knitter layers it with new meanings; the sense of attachment associated with this process means the garment is likely to be kept, and worn, for longer. However, as I explained in Chapter 1, the relationship between fashion and sustainability is incredibly complex; to focus on a single issue – such as the product life of an individual garment – is to sideline this complexity. Instead, a holistic, third order view of the fashion system is required, which embraces well-being as an integral element of sustainability and questions the relationship between fashion and consumption. I have focused on well-being throughout the thesis; as I have just explained, I believe that the process of re-knitting can contribute to well-being, and that the wearing of re-knitted items can be a positive and empowering experience. Now, I will discuss the implications of the project for the crucial question of consumption.

Firstly, we can consider the impact of re-knitting on the attitudes and behaviour of its practitioners. As I explained in Section 7.1, the project prompted the participants to think critically about their own clothing preferences, the ability of mass-produced clothes to meet these preferences, the conditions in which garments are manufactured, and the issue of waste. Although I made a conscious decision not to discuss sustainability or my activist agenda with the group, these topics arose naturally in conversation. While this research did not attempt to monitor the consumption behaviour of the participants, from their comments I feel it is likely that the experience of re-knitting has caused them – to some extent – to buy less or buy differently, and to treat other items that they already own in a different way. In Section 1.2, I discussed the idea that the cultural movement of openness and participation could spread from the digital sphere to transform institutions across society. The same notion has been associated with fashion; in her article about knitting her own clothes, Ditum (2012) argues that ‘to think of ourselves as makers, rather than just consumers, is the first part of refusing to accept everything in our culture as obvious and inevitable’. Williams et al. (2009) argue that because the fashion system sets the pace for consumer attitudes more widely, change in this area could influence other sectors, and ultimately have a powerful impact.

In Chapter 1 I quoted Breward and Evans (2005: 2), who explain that 'fashion is a process in two senses: it is a market-driven cycle of consumer desire and demand; and it is a modern mechanism for the fabrication of the self'. I argued that in order to build a more sustainable fashion system, we would need to separate these processes. Given that fashion, in its current incarnation, is so dependent on consumerism, this would mean a significant shift in fashion culture. However, as we saw in Section 3.1, the current state of affairs is by no means permanent; fashion has operated quite differently in particular historical, geographical and societal situations.

This project has provided some indications that alternative fashion practices – such as re-knitting – can provide the well-being benefits associated with fashion and meet our needs for identity and participation in ways which are not dependent on consumerism. While a fashion system revolving around these alternative practices would involve much less frequent consumption of new items, it need not be dull; as we have seen from the six examples in this research, the process of re-knitting can intensify and energise the relationship between wearer and wardrobe. On reflection, I would say that the participants were positively engaged with their clothing choices when reworking their garments, a situation which I identified as ideal when discussing fashion and well-being in Section 3.2.

Wearers are able to construct their identities – or 'fabricate the self', to use the terminology of Breward and Evans – by reworking their existing garments, rather than purchasing new ones. As Reisch (2001: 378) describes, 'obtaining non-material satisfaction calls for attention, demands involvement, requires time'. Thus, a culture of re-knitting could see a shift in leisure activity, from shopping to (re)making. In the case of the research group, we saw that spending time making with others can be a pleasurable experience, which creates social connections. However, this shift does not just represent a different *use* of time; Crawford (2009: 55) argues that 'to fix one's own car is not merely to use up time, it is to have a different experience of time, of one's car, and of oneself'. I suggest that the same is true of re-knitting: in comparison with shopping, it provides a different *experience* of time, of one's clothes, and of oneself.

During the research, I was surprised – and inspired – by how often I heard about garments which had not been bought new by the wearer, instead being purchased from charity shops, given as gifts, made at home or passed on, after some use, by friends or family. Kiki, in particular, said that she rarely bought things for herself; she had inherited a lot of clothes from her mother when she died. Research by Corrigan (1994) in Ireland in the 1980s identified seven different modes of clothing circulation, only two of which involved the purchasing of new items. As he explains, 'it is as if a "primitive" economy were to be found at the private heart of advanced capitalism; pre-capitalist modes have not been stamped out, but have found a refuge in the family' (Corrigan, 1994: 442). Given my interest in initiatives which lay the seeds for

alternatives to capitalist systems, this evidence of a ‘non-cash, non-public, informal economy’ (Dant, 1999: 102) is fascinating. We can see the reworking of garments as another element within this economy, which can recirculate garments back into active use or to new wearers.

One of the most exciting aspects of the project has been the discovery of alternative means of sanctioning and validation in relation to dress. In Section 4.4, I described shop-bought items as being sanctioned by a chain of professionals, providing reassurance to the wearer. In contrast, homemade items represent and display the decisions of a single person, and have the potential to be unwittingly transgressive of social norms. This issue was summarised by Alex:

*Somehow it's validated if you pay a lot of money for it, but if you do it for yourself...*

As I described in Section 6.4, the research participants benefited from an alternative source of validation: a group of peers. Together we created a micro fashion culture, which developed localised meanings and values for a re-knitting practice, in connection with wider social norms. By working with me – a professional designer, recognised within the group as an ‘expert’ – the group were able to draw on another means of sanctioning. The objective standards of the knitted structure provide yet another source of validation, which would apply to many craft practices. The rigour of making – such as the inescapable reality of a knitted stitch being correctly formed, or a stripe matching neatly at a seam – represents an alternative authority to identified fashion trends.

I would describe all of these means of sanctioning as ‘alternative dress codes’; Fletcher (2011) argues that such codes can build a more personal rationale for clothing choices. The growth of more personal and localised dress codes would contribute to a more diverse fashion culture. Furthermore, such codes – which are based on conversation and immediate material experience – could start to challenge the obsession with image within fashion culture. Interestingly, this shift was anticipated by designer Thierry Mugler in 1982, in a book looking forward to the fashion of the twenty-first century:

Fashion will be more human, closer to the needs of the people in terms of their well being and well feeling, not ‘well showing’.

(Thierry Mugler, quoted in Khornak, 1982: 7)

In Section 1.3, I described my work as design activism, and stated that I wished to disrupt the current paradigm of industrial production and over-consumption in fashion. My approach is consciously political; it is interesting to contemplate whether the knitters participating in this activity are activists too. Throughout the project, my emphasis has been on individual well-being and the development of a personally rewarding practice which, if scaled up through greater

participation, could have an effect on the wider fashion system. I believe the participants enjoyed the experience of re-knitting because of the immediate personal benefits – such as the satisfaction of the process and the attraction of returning a valued item to active use – and because the activity corresponded with their own concerns about consumption and waste. They would not consider themselves activists, although their activities contribute towards the aims of my activism.

In Section 3.1, I explained that subcultural modes of dress are regularly absorbed by mainstream fashion. Today's fashion industry is so expert at spotting and repackaging marginal styles that there is little or no distinction between the mainstream and the alternative. Hence, there is a danger that designers and retailers could imitate remaking practices such as re-knitting and co-opt a tinkered aesthetic as another high street trend. It is hard to predict the effect this would have: on one hand, this aesthetic could quickly become undesirable, negatively affecting those wishing to continue a re-knitting practice. On the other, it could increase appreciation of personal alterations. However, I suspect that this will not be a problem. As we have seen, re-knitted garments do not have one recognisable aesthetic; while the items may look *somehow* different to purely mass-produced or homemade clothing, this difference is not easily pigeonholed.

To round off this discussion, I will consider to what degree the craft of use I have developed is dependent upon the current industrial system, which I set out to challenge. As I described in Section 7.3, we each have dozens of unworn garments hanging in our wardrobes, which can be seen as the symptoms of over-consumption; these are the items which re-knitting can restore to use. Hence, to take a pessimistic view, re-knitting could be seen as a type of recycling, which 'offers business an environmental excuse for instant obsolescence' (Fairlie, 1992: 280). It is important to question whether sustainable strategies are producing new ways of living, or simply reinforcing capitalist culture (Carlsson, 2008). However, for all the reasons discussed in this chapter, I believe that re-knitting and other similar practices do offer an alternative means of participating in fashion. Working with the material that surrounds us is not to condone the system which produced it, but to take a pragmatic approach to the challenge of sustainability: an approach which starts from individual practices and small-scale actions. As Marxist historian Eric Hobsbawm notes:

The most extreme revolutionaries ... must also be reformists, unless they abandon the world altogether.

(Hobsbawm, 1959: 11-12)



I described the last section of the previous chapter as ‘sewing up’. Now, it is time to ‘sew in the ends’ of the thesis, tidying away the loose strands and, in the process, reviewing the arguments and analysis I have presented.

### **Purpose**

Working as a designer, knitter and activist, I set out with the intention to explore amateur making – specifically, hand knitting – as a strategy for sustainable fashion. Motivated by the call by Fletcher and Grose (2008: 1) for ‘fashion that helps us flourish’, I aimed to take a holistic view of fashion, focus on well-being as an integral element of sustainability, and question the seemingly inextricable bond between fashion and consumption.

From my experience as a designer-maker, I felt that amateur making – folk fashion – could provide a more diverse, satisfying and sustainable means of participating in fashion. However, I identified the need to understand the experience of wearing homemade clothes in a culture dominated by mass-produced, shop-bought clothes. I was particularly interested in the issue of creativity; from conversations with knitters, I knew that many were frustrated by a dependence on patterns. Hence, I wanted to open up my design practice to share design skills and investigate the impact of this experience on the participants.

Inspired by a recent resurgence in mending amongst a new generation of makers, I chose to explore the potential of knitting as a means of reworking existing garments; I felt this could challenge the linear production-consumption model of the fashion industry. In order to explore all of these ideas, I initiated re-knitting as a new ‘craft of use’ (Fletcher, 2013a), and worked with a small group of female amateur knitters to study how it developed.

### **Aims**

I specified three aims for the research. I will revisit them, one by one, and outline my findings.

*To investigate the relationship between amateur fashion making and well-being, with special reference to hand knitting.*

In Chapter 3 I gained an understanding of the ways in which fashion helps us to meet our needs for identity and participation and explored the anxiety which is often associated with it; I concluded that the relationship between fashion and well-being is inherently ambivalent. I constructed a metaphor of fashion as a commons and argued that industrialisation has enclosed this commons, alienating wearers from the making of their clothing and restricting the options for identity construction. In Chapter 4, I examined the experience of making clothes at

home, with a particular focus on hand knitting. I saw that the process of making offers many benefits, and that wearing homemade items can be empowering in terms of identity. However, because homemade clothes are marginal within contemporary fashion culture, wearers are sometimes unhappy with the things they have made and lack confidence in their positive reception.

*To explore the ways in which a designer-maker can support amateur re-knitting and design activity.*

In Chapters 5 and 6, I described my work with the participant group, developing methods for re-knitting existing garments along with strategies for developing design skills. I learned about the support required to open up amateur creativity; I came to see open activity as occupying a halfway point somewhere between the prescription of a conventional knitting pattern and unsupported, endless choice. The six participants each re-knitted an item of knitwear from their wardrobes; I found that they were able to design, and that tacit knowledge and peer support were important factors. In Section 7.4, I identified two strands of my new role: metadesigner and hyper-amateur maker.

*To explore the ways in which amateur re-knitting and design activity affects the practices and perceptions of amateur makers.*

In Chapter 7, we saw that the participants had enjoyed the experience of designing and re-knitting, and wanted to continue. I examined the feelings associated with opening existing garments, and investigated which garments the participants were more inclined to alter; I found that condition was a more important factor than origin. I developed an understanding of the relationship between wardrobe practices and identity, and saw that re-knitting could provide a way of returning unworn items to active use. These items could be transformed both physically and in terms of the meanings associated with them. At the end of the chapter, I considered how re-knitting relates to well-being. I concluded that many of the well-being benefits of conventional knitting would be transferred to this new practice, and that in some respects – including the experience of wearing the re-knitted item – re-knitting may be more positive in terms of well-being.

In Section 7.4 I reconnected with the overarching purpose behind the research, and evaluated re-knitting as a strategy for sustainability. This would not be a universal strategy, and should be thought of as one option within an array of approaches. However, I found it to be effective not only as a means of extending product life, but more holistically as an alternative means of participating in fashion and as a way of addressing the relationship between fashion and consumption.

## **Key insights**

Moving beyond the original research aims, four key insights have emerged from the research, which I will highlight and discuss briefly here. These are the metaphor of fashion as common land; the nuanced understanding of the experience of wearing homemade clothes in contemporary British culture; evidence of the ability of amateurs to design for themselves and ways in which this can be supported; and the understanding of the factors that should be considered when trying to develop a culture of reworking. These insights arose in the immediate research context of amateur fashion making, and the main audience for this research is the emergent academic field of fashion and sustainability. However, as I will explain, there is scope for each of these insights to be generalised and translated to related areas of academic enquiry and design practice.

In the process of exploring the theme of openness in relation to fashion in Chapter 3, I developed a metaphor of fashion as common land. This metaphor is distinctive, firstly because it recognises the way in which styles are constantly revisited and reinvented, and the processes of identification and differentiation. Secondly, the metaphor places the emphasis on wearers, rather than producers. In doing so, it provides a way of thinking about fashion which focuses on identity construction and the fabrication of the self, rather than the more usual interest in market-driven or industrial processes. This may be helpful to fashion and sustainability researchers, who need to imagine alternatives beyond the current system and challenge the seemingly inextricable link between fashion and consumption. The metaphor is versatile enough to be adopted and extended by others, to explore particular aspects of fashion theory and practice. For example, I have already started to think about using the idea of the fashion commons as a new way of understanding individuals' wardrobes – with each person 'borrowing' garments from a vast, disorganised fashion library.

In Section 3.1 I identified a lack of engagement with fashion theory amongst researchers in fashion and sustainability. I explained that texts often refer to the relationship between fashion, identity and well-being, without explanation. By constructing the metaphor of the fashion commons, I have started to bridge the gap between fashion theory and sustainability, and I would hope that this work will be of value to others seeking to make similar links.

Moving on to the second key insight, the whole research project was initiated by a discord between a romantic view of the homemade that I encountered in discussions about design for sustainability, and the experiences of amateur knitters that I heard at the workshops I ran as part of my practice. I felt that the experience of wearing homemade clothes was more complex than was suggested by this romantic view, and my literature review identified a gap in knowledge relating to this topic. Because fashion and sustainability is an emergent area of academic study, the literature in this area is limited and provides little writing on amateur fashion

making. I hoped I might find useful material in the area of fashion theory; however, making is absent from the vast majority of this literature, which assumes that the items being worn are shop-bought. Similarly, use is missing from craft theory, which is primarily concerned with process.

In Chapter 4 I deconstructed the romantic view of the homemade, providing a more nuanced understanding of the ambivalent experience of wearing homemade clothes in contemporary British culture, based on women's lived experiences. While this understanding will be particularly relevant to fashion and sustainability researchers who are interested in exploring amateur fashion making as a strategy for sustainability, it may also be of value to fashion theorists, given the lack of prior research in this area. Although clothes occupy a special category, because of their proximity to the body and the important role they play in identity construction, this point would translate to other types of possessions where the homemade is marginal in relation to a mass-produced and highly marketed mainstream.

The third key insight relates to the ability of amateurs to design for themselves, and ways in which this can be supported. As I explained in Chapter 6, knitwear design is a complicated process because technical constraints must be considered from the earliest stages of design. Even so, many knitters are keen to move beyond commercial patterns and exercise greater creative freedom in their making. This research shows that amateur knitters are able to design for themselves, and draw on their tacit knowledge – gained from years of following patterns – when doing so.

This finding might suggest a lesson to the open design community. In this thesis I have used several essays from the recently published book *Open Design Now* (van Abel et al., 2011), which have provided valuable ways of thinking about how trained designers can support amateur design and making. However, I feel that the most common underlying attitude within the book is that 'users' could not be expected to have significant skills of their own. It seems that many in this community feel that professional designers are needed to create a limited space for amateurs to play within – a safe, cushioned space, where they cannot do too much aesthetic or functional damage. I suspect that in particular situations, this may be required. However, in areas such as knitting, where there is a valuable resource of tacit making knowledge and a long history of crossover between domestic and industrial activity, this attitude does a great disservice to amateurs. In this context, rather than creating a protected space, it is far more supportive to create a sense of permission, in which amateur makers feel they are 'allowed' to experiment and make creative decisions – to 'do what designers do'. In the project, I found that integrating peer support into this permissive space was key to its success; by trying out their ideas in front of their peers within the group, the knitters gained confidence in their re-knitted garments which carried through to the wearing phase.

In the re-knitting project we saw that the amateur knitters designing for themselves were undertaking a fundamentally different task to the professional knitwear designer producing a garment for mass production. In this task, the amateurs were experts. They alone knew their own individual – and sometimes idiosyncratic – preferences as knitters and as wearers, which can be seen as forming the specification, or brief, for their design activity. Hence, this project provides a timely reminder that users *do* have useful skills; that people designing for themselves are undertaking a task which is fundamentally different to industrial design; and that because people are designing *for themselves*, they should be recognised as experts.

The fourth and final insight provides an understanding of the factors that should be considered when trying to develop a culture of reworking. In Chapter 1, I referred to the work of Gill and Lopes (2011: 312), who suggest that ‘the challenge for the material practices of design might be recast in terms of a negotiation with those things already in existence’. In this project, we were negotiating with items of knitwear already in existence. While the specifics of this negotiation are particular to the unique structure of knitted fabric and the cultural meanings of knitted garments, I feel that much that occurred during this process would be relevant to other areas of design and material culture – from sewn garments to products and even buildings. In fact, the quotes I have taken from writing on architecture indicate that many of the concerns that emerged during the design research project – such as the need for intentionality and wholeness when reworking garments – are common to the reworking of buildings. Jeremy Till, who is leading a research project on scarcity and creativity in the built environment, has suggested that the ideas in the re-knitting resource could be upscaled to architecture (Till, 2013). Similarly, my conclusions about the factors which should be considered when trying to develop a culture of reworking – which I will outline below – could translate to many other areas.

The first factor I have identified is the need to be sympathetic to the material structures of the already-made, and to apply the in-depth knowledge we have as makers to the task of remaking. In the case of re-knitting, this relates to my approach of treating existing knitted fabrics as combinations of stitches that can be reconfigured, rather than continuous sheets, and the idea of reworking in a ‘knitterly’ fashion. Secondly, I see a need to recognise the social and emotional aspects of remaking; that is, to understand the factors that affect what we perceive to be possible and desirable, and ways in which this perception can be altered. In the re-knitting project, I identified condition as a key influencing factor, and discovered that deconstruction – carried out in a safe, playful environment – is a powerful means of prompting reflection and changing perceptions. Finally, I argue that we must develop a supportive culture around remaking, in order to foster a sense of shared practice and gradually build tacit knowledge in individuals and communities.

In addition to these four key insights, I would draw attention to the wealth of new re-knitting resources that have been created in the process of this research. As I explained in Section 5.1, re-knitting was common in the past, but the practice has fallen out of favour and the tacit knowledge associated with this practice has largely been lost. The new resources I have created, which are accessible through my website, are already proving to be of interest to amateur knitters and knitwear designers.

### **The research process**

Having described the central findings and insights emerging from this research, I would now like to briefly discuss the distinctive aspects of the research process and reflect on its effectiveness. As I explained in Chapter 2, I used a bricolage approach to developing a methodology, combining elements from various sources. The workshops I had already run as part of my practice provided the starting point for this bricolage; I had found that this particular context encouraged open and thoughtful conversation amongst participants. To build on this starting point, I drew on two emerging methodological areas: *research through design* and *participatory creative research methods*. I now consider the ‘workshop’ methodology I developed to be sitting at the intersection of these two areas.

This project can be seen as an example of research through design, in that I was engaged in the generative process of designing re-knitting techniques. Because these techniques were intended to be adapted by amateur makers, it was crucial that I had the input of a group of makers during this process. As the research progressed, I started to see the participants as co-developers; thus, the project could be described as employing a co-design or participatory design research approach. However, the input of the participants went far beyond the development of the re-knitting techniques and into the realm of participatory creative methods. As we knitted together, conversation flowed, providing me with invaluable data about the lived experience of making clothes. Because the participants each altered a garment from their own wardrobe, I was able to see the techniques in action and understand the considerations, concerns and triumphs which emerged from this experience.

The success of this methodology hinged on the gathering of data *during* the creative activity. Rather than talking to makers about their practice retrospectively, as would be the case in an interview-based strategy, I was able to hear the participants’ feelings first-hand as the project progressed. This enabled me to capture their thoughts before they engaged in remaking; during the first sessions, when we started to deconstruct garments and try out the techniques; as they considered their initial design ideas; during the actual re-knitting process; and finally, after the projects were completed. In the relaxed and informal setting of the workshop, the participants spoke openly, linking the activities we were undertaking with their previous experiences and aspirations for the future.

In practical terms, I feel that the research design was successful. An extended project such as this has the potential to be chaotic, and indeed an element of unpredictability was present in the early stages. However, this unpredictability was managed through the creation of a flexible framework of sessions, activities and discussion topics (shown in Figures 2.1 and 2.3). The continuation of my contact with the group after the planned sessions was of significant benefit. I was able to see how the participants' practices progressed, hear their reflections on the project over a longer period, and discuss my tentative findings as I analysed the data. Despite my belief in the merit of the group workshop approach, I must note the importance of the individual interviews which I conducted at the start of the project; they revealed in-depth personal insights that would not have been accessed otherwise. Similarly, the knitting tent method – which also gathers insights which emerge from the process of making – was a valuable adjunct to the main workshop methodology. This activity allowed me to collect data from a much larger community of participants, strengthening and extending my findings from the main participant group.

The workshop recordings provided an invaluable insight into the experiences of the participants, including much detail that I missed during the sessions themselves. Group sessions with multiple conversations were difficult to transcribe, though it was possible, thanks to the use of multiple audio recorders and the webcam images. The video data was useful for identifying who was where, when; it also showed, to a degree, the garments, yarns and other materials that the participants were discussing. However, much of this detail was hidden, because of the position of the participants in relation to the camera. In the future, I would use a 'bird's eye view' to record this tabletop activity; this would enable me to observe materials and gestures and link them more directly with the conversation.

In summary, the workshop methodology, in which the participants and I designed and discussed re-knitting techniques together, proved to be effective in providing a rich body of data which directly addressed my research aims. In Section 2.1, I described a lack of established methodologies in art and design research; I found few relevant examples described in sufficient detail to inform my own project. This project provides an example that I hope will be useful for art and design researchers working creatively with participants in the future.

### **Limitations**

Of course, there are some limitations to the research. The most obvious limitation is the size of the sample; the analysis is based around just six participants. Thus, their experiences cannot be regarded as generalisable; however, this would be the case with any qualitative research. The benefit of such a small group is the depth and quality of the data I gathered, and the level of detail I have consequently been able to give in my analysis. I feel that a larger group would not have bonded so closely, and thus the discussions would not have been so open. Although the participants fit into a similar demographic in terms of gender, age and ethnicity, in many cases I

found a diversity of experiences within the group; the strength of qualitative research is in exploring the nuances of this diversity. The data from the knitting tent and the online comments thread provide useful triangulation for the topics discussed in Chapter 4.

Another potential criticism of the project is its impact in terms of sustainability. As I explained in Section 2.2, I did not restrict participation on any grounds other than knitting activity; however, several of the participants expressed an interest in the environment, and during discussions about shopping it became evident that none were buying clothes at the rapid rate suggested by the statistics included in Section 1.3. Hence, it could be argued that it would be easy to get this group to engage in re-knitting, and that this practice would have a minimal impact on their consumption behaviour. To some extent, this criticism is fair; I agree that it is important that strategies are developed which explore alternative fashion practices for those fully engaged with fast fashion. However, there are estimated to be several million knitters in the UK (UK Hand Knitting Association, 2009); I wanted to see how easy it would be to encourage members of this community to shift their practice in a new direction. The fact that it was possible to support the knitters to reorient their activities, and that they were so interested in doing so, is a positive sign. There is scope to scale up this activity, which would produce a cumulative effect on consumption and fashion culture.

### **Participant benefits**

It was important to me that the participants would find the experience of taking part in the research worthwhile. In the project leaflet, I anticipated the benefits of taking part as an opportunity to learn new knitting techniques; to be involved in research and contribute to a new knitting initiative; and to meet like-minded people and have fun. Later conversations with the participants indicated that they were attracted by these opportunities. They saw the project as a forum for developing their creativity in relation to knitting, as Margaret explained:

*In the past, knitting's just been a relaxation, a switch-off, whereas now ... That was what was interesting, when I heard, because I thought ... that fits in with my desire to be a bit more creative with it.*

At Knitting Circle 3, the group discussed what they felt they had got out of the project. They agreed that they had learned new skills, exercised their creativity, and gained in confidence; they said that their perceptions of knitting, and what was possible, had changed. They had particularly enjoyed collaborating with others, and being part of a supportive group.

I would like to note the benefits of taking part for Catherine, in particular. She became involved in the project as a way to rediscover her identity as a maker. At her interview, she explained that this was the first time in thirteen years that she had felt able to take respite time from her caring

responsibilities, and to make space for herself. This comment is taken from an email Catherine sent at the end of the project:

*I suppose I feel rather constrained and that my role as a carer is all consuming – rather lost. But by meeting, listening and talking to other members of our group and by making the time to come to workshops/knitting circle, I can see that it is possible to be me – to still be able to carry out my ‘medical mum’ (hate that expression) duties and have a little time to make and find and express me again. (I cannot thank you all enough for letting me see this is possible.)*

### **Looking forward**

To finish, I would like to look to the future. As I have reiterated above, there is a surprising lack of academic knowledge in the area of amateur making; there is great scope – and need – for further work investigating the relationships between amateur making and fashion, and between amateur making and sustainability. In terms of the opportunities created by this research in particular, it would be fascinating to explore how other groups might respond to re-knitting, and to investigate remaking as a means of prompting reflection amongst non-makers. I would also be interested to explore the potential for an online space to support amateur design and re-knitting, translating the support that was developed during this project to a larger scale.

I have considered what recommendations I might make to other designers – and design educators – interested in adopting an activist approach and exploring the idea of openness. Much discussion about the tinkering and hacking of physical objects recommends that these objects should be designed differently, providing more opportunities for post-purchase alteration. I agree that this approach is essential in some areas, such as electronic hardware. However, I am dubious about the progress that will be made in terms of sustainability, if we need to wait around for designers and manufacturers to make things differently. I feel it is more transgressive – and potentially much more productive – to instead encourage ‘everyday’ people to perceive the things around them in a different way. If we start to see garments and other objects as ‘matter-in-motion’ – things that can be altered – we will be better able to shape those things, and ourselves, in a way that meets our human needs. Designers have the capabilities to support people in making this shift; therefore, my recommendation to designers would be to focus their energies in this area. I have found it to be a most fulfilling challenge.



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## List of appendices

*Please note:* The research project produced an abundance of data, of which a representative sample has been included here.

The full re-knitting web resource can be viewed at [www.keepandshare.co.uk/making/re-knitting](http://www.keepandshare.co.uk/making/re-knitting)

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\* Appendices E and L are not included in the electronic version of this thesis. They include copyrighted material from a range of sources, for which clearance would be impractical to secure.

<sup>†</sup> Spreadsheet versions available to download from the web resource.

# *Knitters wanted*

## **Do you enjoy knitting as a hobby?**

Amy Twigger Holroyd is looking for people of any age who enjoy knitting to take part in her PhD research project, 'Re-Knitting and Free Knitting'.

You'll be part of a small group of knitters taking part in a series of day and evening workshops at Amy's Keep & Share knitwear studio near Hereford. You'll work together to investigate the experience of knitting items to wear, and develop knit-based techniques for transforming existing knitwear.

- Learn new knitting techniques with an award-winning designer-maker, for free, with materials provided
- Be involved in ground-breaking research into amateur knitting and contribute to a new knitting initiative
- Meet like-minded people and have fun!

You don't have to be an expert, but you should knit on a regular basis, and have knitted at least one item of clothing in the past.

You need to be able to attend the following sessions at the Keep & Share studio in Lugwardine, near Hereford:

**Thursday evenings, 7-9pm**  
27 September, 4 October 2012, 24 January 2013  
**Saturdays, 10am-4pm**  
20 October, 3 November, 1 December 2012,  
5 January 2013

If you are interested in taking part but cannot make these specific dates, please get in touch – the timetable may be amended to suit the group.

**Interested? Contact me!** I'll send you more detailed information about the project and answer any questions or concerns.

Alternatively, you can find further information online:

**[www.keepandshare.co.uk/research/knitters-wanted](http://www.keepandshare.co.uk/research/knitters-wanted)**

**Amy Twigger Holroyd**  
amy@keepandshare.co.uk  
01432 851162

Keep & Share, Lugwardine Court,  
Lugwardine, Hereford HR1 4AE

# *Re-Knitting and Free Knitting*

.....

## **CALL FOR PARTICIPATION**

I am looking for people of any age, who enjoy knitting as a hobby, to take part in a research project, 'Re-Knitting and Free Knitting'. You don't have to be an expert, but you should knit on a regular basis, and have knitted at least one item of clothing in the past. It doesn't matter whether you usually hand knit, crochet or machine knit at home, but you need to have reasonable hand knitting skills for the workshop activities.

## **ABOUT THE RESEARCH**

I am a knitwear designer-maker, working under the banner of my label, Keep & Share. I'm currently undertaking PhD research at Birmingham City University, investigating the experiences of amateur knitters and the potential for amateur making to create a more sustainable fashion future. I'm also investigating how I, as a designer, can support the activities of amateur makers.

You'll be part of a small group of knitters taking part in a series of workshops at my Keep & Share knitwear studio. We'll work together to investigate the experience of knitting items to wear, and develop knit-based techniques for transforming existing items of knitwear.

## **WHAT'S INVOLVED**

First, I will visit your home to talk about the knitwear in your wardrobe. This interview will take place at a time to suit you during September 2012.

We will then meet as a group at my studio in Lugwardine (just outside Hereford) several times between September 2012 and January 2013 for 3 evening knitting and discussion sessions and 4 day-long making workshops. I'll ask you to spend some time on a specific creative/making task after each workshop.

Finally, I will organise a short follow-up interview in spring 2013, to share the findings of my research with you and discuss the project.

We'll be playing with existing items of knitwear. Sample fabrics, 'scrap' garments and other materials will be provided, but during the course of the project I will invite you to alter an item of knitwear from your own wardrobe – perhaps something you no longer wear.

## **BENEFITS**

- Learn new knitting techniques with an award-winning designer-maker, for free, with materials provided
- Be involved in ground-breaking research into amateur knitting and contribute to a new knitting initiative
- Meet like-minded people and have fun!

## **COMMITMENT**

This project is designed around a small group of participants attending a series of workshops together, over a period of time. Because of this, I ask each participant to confirm that they are able to attend all of the sessions as a condition of enrolment.

However, ethical research depends on your consent. If you wish to withdraw from the project at any time, you can do so and you don't need to give any reasons why you no longer want to take part.

To take part, you need to be able to attend **all** of the following sessions at Keep & Share:

- two Thursday evening sessions, 7-9pm (27 September and 4 October 2012)
- four Saturday workshops, 10am-4pm (13 October, 3 November and 1 December 2012, 5 January 2013\*)
- and a final Thursday evening session, 7-9pm (24 January 2013\*)

\* subject to change to suit the group

If you are interested in taking part but cannot make these specific dates, please let me know – the timetable may be amended to suit the group.

## DATA

The nature of this research project means that many types of data will be gathered, including:

- some personal details
- audio recording of the interview in your home
- my notes on the items in your wardrobe and the group sessions
- video and audio recording of all the group sessions
- your practical samples, photographs, notes and drawings, produced at the workshops

This data will be used and shared in different ways.

- Personal information, such as your phone number, is confidential and will not be disclosed to anyone.
- Audio and video recordings of the interviews and group sessions will only be shared with individual researchers who agree to preserve the confidentiality of the information. They will not be shared in public.
- Other data (words quoted from the audio and video recordings, photographs of practical samples and visual material, and demographic information) will be used in research outputs, such as my thesis and website. They may also be used by other researchers in the future.
- You can choose whether I use your actual first name in relation to this published data, or a pseudonym.

You are free to keep all of the work you produce in the workshops, as it will be photographed for the research project. I may organise an exhibition or event in the future to showcase the project; if so, I may request the loan of your items for the exhibition.

If you withdraw from the project, I will assume that you agree for me to use the data I have already collected, unless you state otherwise.

## INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

In this project, we will be testing the techniques and tools I have developed, and working together to develop new techniques and tools. This raises the potentially complex issue of intellectual property.

In order to simplify matters, I request that you agree to assign the copyright you may hold in any materials related to this project to me, Amy Twigger Holroyd.

In return, I guarantee that if I distribute any material we have created together, I will use a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 3.0 Unported license. This allows others (including you) to copy, modify and distribute the work on a non-commercial basis. I will credit you for your contributions.

Information sheet prepared 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012, dates amended 13<sup>th</sup> September 2012

.....

## CONTACT

Researcher:

Amy Twigger Holroyd

Keep & Share

Lugwardine Court

Lugwardine

Hereford

HR1 4AE

01432 851162

amy@keepandshare.co.uk

University:

Birmingham City University

Birmingham Institute of Art & Design Research Office

3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Gosta Green

Corporation Street

Birmingham

B4 7DX

0121 331 7824

biadresearch@bcu.ac.uk

**CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PROJECT:  
RE-KNITTING AND FREE KNITTING**

- I have read and understood the project information sheet dated 31<sup>st</sup> July 2012.
- I agree to participate in the project and consent to the conditions regarding data described in the information sheet.
- I confirm that I am able to attend all of the sessions listed in the information sheet.
- I understand that my taking part is voluntary; I can withdraw from the project at any time and I do not have to give any reasons for why I no longer want to take part.
- I agree to assign the copyright I hold in any materials related to this project to Amy Twigger Holroyd.

-----  
**Participant** Name (please print)                      Signature                      Date

-----  
**Researcher** Name (please print)                      Signature                      Date

.....

**CONTACT**

Researcher:  
 Amy Twigger Holroyd  
 Keep & Share  
 Lugwardine Court  
 Lugwardine  
 Hereford  
 HR1 4AE  
 01432 851162  
 amy@keepandshare.co.uk

University:  
 Birmingham Institute of Art & Design Research Office  
 Birmingham City University  
 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Gosta Green  
 Corporation Street  
 Birmingham  
 B4 7DX  
 0121 331 7824  
 biadresearch@bcu.ac.uk

# *Re-Knitting and Free Knitting*

**HOME INTERVIEW SCHEDULE**

**NAME:**

**DATE:**

.....

**Introduction**

Read and sign consent form

Explain use of recorder / photographing garments

Plan for interview: Talk a bit about you (as a person, not a knitter!), then about your garments and clothes more generally, and then about the knitting that you do

I'm looking for your opinions and experiences, and to understand your point of view

.....

**About you**

Tell me about yourself.

Age (by decade)
Working status / occupation
Family / children / caring
Leisure activities / social life
Where you grew up / background / how long lived in Hereford

.....

**Garments from your wardrobe**

Tell me about this garment.

	Frequently worn 1	Frequently worn 2	Rarely worn 1	Rarely worn 2
Where did you get it from / price				
How long have you owned it				
How often do you wear it / wear history				
Why is it frequently / rarely worn				
(If rarely worn) Why do you keep it				
How do you feel when you wear it				
How long do you expect to keep / wear				
Do you feel attached to it / why				
Brand				
Fibre				
Country of manufacture				
Washcare				
Condition				
Photograph				

.....

**Looking ahead**

As part of the workshops I'll be inviting you to alter a knitted item from your wardrobe, to return it to active wear or extend its wearable life.

You can decide about this later, and don't worry, you don't have to do anything that you don't want to!

Any thoughts right now about which item it might be, and what you might do to it?

.....

**Your wardrobe**

Think about what you've told me about these items. If we were to carry on through the rest of your knitwear / whole wardrobe, would these items be typical?

	Knitwear	Whole wardrobe
How long have you owned		
Where did you get them from / price		
Proportion frequently / rarely worn		
For rarely worn: why don't you wear them / why keep		
How long do you keep clothes / keep wearing clothes		
Do you feel attached to them		
Number of wardrobes / items / knitwear as proportion		
Homemade / handmade items		

I'm interested in decisions about clothes. First, tell me about your experiences of choosing new clothes (not just knitwear, and not making things). Then, choosing what to wear from your wardrobe.

	Buying/making	Getting dressed
Frequency / pleasure / chore		
Easy / hard / stressful / anxious / confident		
Context important / not important		
Level of choice – wide / narrow / easy / hard		

I'm also interested in decisions about mending and getting rid of clothes. Do you mend clothes? Tell me about it.

Now, tell me about getting rid of clothes. What prompts a decision to keep or get rid of clothes? How do you decide? What do you do with them?

What influences the choices you make about what to wear?

Fashion / trends	Availability – what's in the shops
Family / friends	Other sources of authority / value

.....

**Your knitting**

Can you tell me about your knitting?

When do you knit / how often
Importance to you
Assessment of your own skill
Connection with others / knitting groups / online
What have you knitted in the last year
Your knitting career / when learned / what knitted in the past / stop-start

Could you compare how you feel about spending time knitting / shopping / mending?

Where do you knit at home – can you show me? Can you show me your knitting stuff/stash?

.....

**Debriefing**

Is there anything else you'd like to say? How did you find the interview?

If you think of anything you'd like to add, you can tell me at a group session, on the phone or email.

I'd like you to bring an item that you've made to wear to the first group session on Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> September (or a pattern or photo, if you don't have the item) – successful or unsuccessful, up to you!

.....

## KNITTING CIRCLE 1 – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Knitting habits:

**Why do you enjoy knitting and crochet?**

**What do you like to knit, and why?**

Fibre / yarn type
Gauge / speed
Complexity
For yourself / others
From patterns / make it up / vary patterns

**How would you describe your approach to knitting, or the way that you knit?**

Obsessive
Tension squares
Successful
Skilled
Always finish
Imperfections / correcting mistakes

**How do you decide what to make?**

Style / process
Picking yarn, colour
Think about fashion / lifetime
Find patterns you like
Unique / classic
Compared to buying

Wearing homemade clothes:

**How do you feel about wearing something you've knitted?**

Feels different to wearing a bought garment
Behave differently (care / disposal) than with bought garment

**Do your things look 'homemade'? Is that good or bad?**

**What do you think others think of you wearing homemade garments?**

Depends what they think of knitting
Would you wear to a social event (where you keep getting changed)

Problems:

**Does anything frustrate you about knitting?**

Designing:

**How do you think designers design knitwear or knitting patterns? Do you think you could?**

Process
Skills
Inspiration
What help they would need to design

A shop-bought jumper that used to belong to your mum. It's a classic style, but is showing its age a little, with some wear and a couple of stains.

A hand knitted top you picked up in a charity shop. It's nicely made, and is a lovely yarn, but is a dated (not yet vintage!) style.

A classic mass-produced but sturdy woolly jumper. You've worn it to death, so there are holes in the elbows and the cuffs are frayed.

An acrylic Marks & Spencer cardigan that you found in a charity shop. You've worn it quite a bit, and it's still in good condition, but you've become a bit bored with it.

A classic cashmere cardigan. You've got happy memories of wearing it for special occasions, but it's a little bit small now and so you don't wear it much.

An upmarket and unusual piece of knitwear that you received as a gift. You really like it, but it doesn't seem to go with the rest of your clothes.

A jumper, hand knitted for you by your sister. You rarely wear it because it just doesn't look quite right on – perhaps it's the collar?

## KNITTING CIRCLE 3 – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Reflections on the project:

**What have you learned?**

**Has your view of knitting changed?**

Practical skills
View of what is possible
Confidence
Specific part of workshops / in general

About your altered garment:

**Why did you choose that one?**

**How do you feel about it now?**

Why that one rather than others in the wardrobe
Definite fault / homemade
Sense of connection
Intend to wear it / any concerns / homemade look

Designing:

**How have you found the experience of designing for yourself?**

Expressed desire to be creative, experimental, disobedient
Not using a pattern

Re-knitting:

**How do you feel re-knitting compares to 'normal' knitting?**

Relaxing / concentrating
Satisfaction

Future:

**Will you do more re-knitting in the future?**

**How will you use what you have learned?**

More adventurous / tackle projects rejected this time / learned what not to do
Support needed – from designer / from peers
Need for the re-knitting resource
Changed attitudes to making / mending / clothes / fashion

Advice:

**What advice would you give to another knitter interested in re-knitting an existing garment?**

Intentionality / balance / inspiration
Most helpful elements of workshops

- |   |                    |  |
|---|--------------------|--|
| 1 | 0:00.0 -<br>3:50.9 | [Information sheet / consent form - sign] [Question about how many in group] [Voice recorder, taking photos] [Talk through interview plan - looking for your opinions/experiences]   |
| 2 | 3:50.9 -<br>5:26.8 | [Tell me about yourself] OK... I grew up in Geneva, in Switzerland. I have three brothers, some of whom are still there. I came over here just to finish my schooling, at about 16, 17, because I wanted to get to know the country I was supposed to come from, as it were (laughs). Although my mother was actually Hungarian, so it's a mixed background. And ended up here, sort of, about forty years later! Having met my husband at university, then we lived in London for a while and then when we started having children we decided to come here. We had three children and that eventually led on to my training to be a child psychotherapist, which I did for a little while, until I retired early at the age of fifty. And then I did various jobs in schools, support assistant and things like that. And now I'm basically retired, but I still work two days a week in a shop (laughs).   |
| 3 | 5:26.8 -<br>6:28.1 | I've always, sort of, dabbled... well, I say always, that's an exaggeration... you know, when I was pregnant I tried to knit little baby things. I think I've turned out just like my mother. I have drawers full of bits of ideas she had for doing things, and bits of samples she crocheted and knitted with an idea for a project. Some of which came to fruition, like the one behind you, which actually I finished after she died. And, well, there's various things. And drawers full of wool... yarn, I mean, really... She was into weaving by the end of her life, as well as crochet. Not so much knitting, actually, she didn't do so much knitting. And I seem to have ended up exactly the same. I have drawers full of things that look like, you know, they have potential, and I feel I don't really get very far.   |
| 4 | 6:28.1 -<br>7:33.6 | Except this, for example, this is the some of the yarn she left, and I decided to knit it up, and then of course you get bored after a while so you stop (laughs). I'm not quite sure how to finish it off, or just to leave it like that... I have various things like that. And so, I wanted to use her wool, because it was such lovely stuff and it reminded me so much of her. So I made a blanket for my daughter, which actually I was quite pleased with in the end. Just squares, all different patterns, actually a bit like these, using all the different colours totally randomly without thinking, and then joining them together in various ways, just over-stitching and crocheting them together so it's all lumpy and bumpy, and when I'd finished it I thought oh god, this is awful, you know (sighs). Anyway, I gave it to her for Christmas and she was thrilled, went back to London and when I went to see her one day, it was on her bed and I walked into the room without expecting to see it, and I thought wow, that's nice! (laughs) So, it's encouraging! |
| 5 | 7:33.6 -<br>7:53.9 | But that's how I am as a... sort of... attempting to be a creative person. I never quite get there, or don't often get there. [Or surprise yourself if you do?] Occasionally I do, it's true. So I'm really interested in what your thing's going to turn out like.  |
| 6 | 7:53.9 -<br>8:17.1 | [Tell me about what you do as leisure activities] Well, a lot - as you can see, it's a huge garden. When the weather permits we do the garden, we have a camper van which I bought...  |
| 7 | 8:17.1 -<br>8:43.6 | Actually an important thing about me that I didn't tell you is I had breast cancer in 2007, and when I was ill, just before I started chemotherapy, I said I wanted a camper van! (laughs) So we went out literally the next day and bought this camper van, and it's been great. So we do that, we go, you know, not far, Wales and things. Occasionally France. And then we walk, we do  |

quite a lot of walking.

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- 8 8:43.6 - 9:21.5 I read, do the crossword, the Times crossword. What else do I do... knitting, occasionally, crochet. And one of my children is expecting a baby at last, so I'm exploring more knitting. [Nice small things?] Yeah! Which is nice because it's small, but some of them, I bought one and I don't even understand the instructions yet. (laughs) What else do we do? You know, eating, drinking, friends. Rather too much drinking some of the time...
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- 9 9:21.5 - 9:59.4 [When did you move to Hereford?] That would have been... towards the end of 79, I suppose. August 79.
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- 10 9:59.4 - 10:11.7 [Age?] I'm 62.
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- 11 10:11.7 - 11:48.8 [Move onto your garments... You had trouble choosing?] Yes, well partly because I was thinking what's behind it, so I was trying to second guess... But also when it came to choosing, I thought, it's hard to choose. But it's an interesting process in itself, actually. [Give me a mini description...Are these your frequently worn?] This is hardly ever (laughs) surprisingly... This was used to be a lot, but now no - so it made me think, why am I not wearing this any more? It also made me think, why don't I wear that. This, I've worn so much, it's coming apart, and I don't know what I'm going to do... It's one that I adapted a bit, because I bought it at TK Maxx, and, it said a small... did it... I can't remember, anyway, ended up enormous. I bought it quickly without trying so I cut it, and just stitched it. I think that's all I did. Daring... But now it really is, I mean it's sort of tatty, and I'm thinking, ooh perhaps I could just sew that up a bit. And this it's similarly, now this was my mother's, you can see I was very close to my mother (laughs), and she had some really lovely, quality, sort of cashmere stuff which I love wearing, because it's warm and light and soft. But this one's, you know, and we've had moths. (sighs) Furious about that.
- 
- 12 11:48.8 - 12:58.4



[So, was this one that you used to wear a lot but now haven't worn?] Yes, I used to wear it a lot, I bought it myself, which is rare. A lot of my things come from my mother (laughs). I mean, she died quite a while ago, and I also buy things at charity shops. But this was a full-scale Laura Ashley purchase. And I love that mottled... [OK, so let's do that one as one that you now rarely

wear... I have some prompts. Can you remember how much it was?] No! Absolutely, couldn't... [full price?] Yes, I think so. Well, it was a long time ago. I mean, really, I'm not good at that sort of thing, actually - how long and how much, it's not good. No, honestly, I couldn't give you a realistic answer.

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- 13 12:58.4 - 13:14.6 [How long have you owned it?] A long time! [A large number of years?] Yes... over ten, could be fifteen.
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- 14 13:14.6 - 14:06.0 Again, you can see, it's just frittered away, so it is quite old. And I've tried to stitch it, and I've put things (elbow patches) on here. [So, you used to wear it a lot? For a long time?] Oh, yes. [And how long do you think you haven't been wearing it?] Three, four years? [And do you think that was a conscious decision or it just went to the back of the wardrobe?] I don't think it was fully... I mean, it was conscious in the sense that I rejected it, but I don't think I said right, I'm not wearing that any more. I think it may be because it's a bit tatty, and so it feels a bit uncomfortable when you wear something too tatty.
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- 15 14:06.0 - 14:48.6 [When you wore it a lot, why did you wear it a lot?] Because I love it. I love being warm, and I get cold quite easily, in this country, the draughts and things. I love the flecky quality of it, it goes with jeans, which I wear a lot. It's sort of comfy, without being hugely heavy and thick, it's warm.
- 
- 16 14:48.6 - 15:11.4 [Do you think you'll start wearing it again? Or does it need a new lease of life?] Well, I think I might like to, yes, give it a new lease of life. If that were possible, I would.
- 
- 17 15:11.4 - 15:55.9 [You know I'm going to show you lots of exciting ways of giving things a new lease of life. If that wasn't the case, what do you think you would do to it?] Well, I'm not very imaginative in that way. I don't know, I would, erm, just keep stitching it, probably. [And do you think there would come a point when you thought....] I think that may be what happened. I think that may actually be what happened, because I have stitched along here and it still frayed, and I see another hole here. In the end, you think, oh god, shall I chuck it out.
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- 18 15:55.9 - 16:35.0 Also, I'm a bit of a hoarder, things that I like I don't like getting rid of, even if they just sit there. And then every now and then I say oh, for heavens sake, what are we keeping all this stuff for, and we have a huge - well, seemingly huge - clearout. [And how often does that happen?] I would imagine it happens, one way or another, about once a year, probably. Or once every two years? And I think your thing has stimulated me to do one. Generally, not just clothes. I've gone from the attic.
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- 19 16:35.0 - 16:47.4 Which reminds me, I have actually a huge bag of wool, if you're remotely interested.
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- 20 16:47.4 - 17:08.0 [So, you're holding on to it. Do you feel attached to it?] Yes. [Because you wore it a lot, or because you like it?] Both.
- 
- 21 17:08.0 - 18:31.8 [Fibre?] 90% lambswool, 10% mohair  
[Where made?] Made in Hong Kong. Believe it or not.  
[Washcare?] Handwash warm.  
[Condition - you've said about the raggy cuffs, where it's coming apart] There have been holes, and there are, I've just spotted another one. And the elbows went through, and I stitched on and the stitching is coming off there (laughs). And particularly the cuffs, is the very worst, I think.
- 
- 22 18:31.8 - 19:43.8 Although these days, every time I get something out of a cupboard, I find the moths have been. They're difficult to get rid of. [Yes, I've got a thing, that's like a sticky pad and it's got the female pheromones, I think, so it's meant to attract the male moths. And I have got quite a lot of them stuck to it, so that means that it's some kind of a trick.] Oh, I must try that. [Yes, I think the idea

is that it doesn't get rid of the grubs, but at least you're getting rid of the source.] Well, I've sprayed and sprayed and sprayed, and everytime I see one, ccch. I'm not sure I know what they look like, but if I see anything flying... They're really little, and they flap, and they go to the dark, don't they, rather than the light? But I've also got cedar wood things, all over the place. I'll try that sticky thing. [I got it off eBay, and I have to say, I was a bit dubious, but it's caught plenty of them, so...] Well, it stops the cycle, presumably, and then eventually they'll die out.

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23 19:43.8 - [Take photo]  
20:10.4

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24 20:10.4 -  
21:59.9



[So now, if we do another rarely worn..] OK, well this is, these are very rare. [So, if you pick one of those] Yes, it doesn't really matter which. They're both very similar in history. [Tell me about it] Also not bought by me. I have a friend who's got more money than is good for her, and she buys things and she also has a weight problem, so she gets very fat and then she gets very thin. And she was chucking it out (breathy - horrified). I said, I'll have it, and then I rarely wear it. The times I have worn it, I have played in the community band, and I wear it then (laughs), where you have licence to do something a bit flashier. Because in some ways I'm very conservative. In some ways. So there we are, the same with that one (indicates other rarely worn garment). They were too big for me. So this one I just stitched, I didn't cut because of what it is, I thought, I can't (whispers). I did the same on that. [You just took it in a little bit.] Because I just found it a little bit shapeless. [It's a lovely piece, but yes for me it would require a certain occasion, or attitude] Well, some people would wear that all the time, wouldn't they? And I suppose there's a bit of me that wishes I was that sort of a person (laughs).

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25 21:59.9 - [How long ago do you think that was?] Ah, now... (pause) Well, that could  
22:44.6 have been seven, eight, nine. [Have you worn it apart from in the band?] Occasionally I have, yeah. [But never regularly?] No.

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26 22:44.6 - [Why do you still have it?] Because I think it's gorgeous (laughs). And I might  
23:03.4 still wear it, occasionally. A party maybe, or, if I'm feeling daring.

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27 23:03.4 - [How long do you think you'll keep it?] I'm likely to keep that forever. Well, I  
23:25.6 suppose if it got moth-eaten and completely disintegrated, I might not. But

otherwise, yeah. It hasn't been eaten.

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28 23:25.6 - 23:52.2 [Would you say that you feel attached to it?] In a different way, yes. I do, because it's so lovely. But not, not in the same way as something that's been worn a lot, or that belonged to my mother, or... [And does it remind you of your friend? Or is it...] I think it's more that it's a beautiful piece.

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29 23:52.2 - 25:42.9 [no label - but we think it's pure wool]  
[And do you think, was it knitted by somebody, or was it bought made. Do you know?] Well, I was just wondering that, because it's Rowan, it's got the Rowan label as well, so it says designed for Rowan Yarns. What did you ask? You mean, was it individually knitted? [Was it bought made, or would she have knitted it?] Well, she certainly wouldn't have knitted it. But she did occasionally - I say did because she's run out of money - occasionally have things knitted, so it may have been... [But it's funny to have the label. I don't know if you could buy things ready made.] Right, whereas this one, actually, maybe I'm getting confused. This one says Rowan, as well, but I'm pretty sure that was knitted for her. But, I don't know. No, you're probably right. [But anyway, it came to you as a ready-made thing.] Yes.  
[And the condition is good?] Pretty good, yes.  
[Take photo]

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30 25:42.9 - 26:01.7 [I like these little bits - re pattern] I know, that's what I was looking... It's the sort of thing, you know, if I did it, I'd think oh my god, what a mess. [Yes, it takes a certain...] Daring, yes.

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31 26:01.7 - 27:52.1



OK, there's this, both cashmere. There we are. [Where did it come from?] TK Maxx in Woking. Doing Christmas shopping for other people, I rarely buy clothes for myself. Partly because I don't like the hassle, and I don't know what it is exactly, I don't like spending money on myself too much. Although I like nice things. And there it was on the rail, and I thought ooh I like that, I'll have that. And the label did say, I'm sure it said small or medium, it seems to have gone - oh yeah, I obviously cut it off with the length, didn't I - and then I was disappointed because it was huge. But it must have just been long, because I didn't... I haven't done that, have I? Or have I? Was I extremely daring? Oh, I might have been. But then what did I do up here (armhole), did I just fade? Oh, did I go right, I went right through the seam [and down the

sleeve, maybe]. I guess I must have. But why hasn't it... oh no, because it would fray, wouldn't it? [Not really sideways] Oh! [Yeah, if you go up the knitting, it's quite...] Oh, ok. Brilliant. [I like this detective work!]

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- 32 27:52.1 - 29:00.5 [How long ago did you get it?] Well, it could be in a similar time frame, maybe a bit more recent. Six... I'm sure it was before I had cancer, I always date it by cancer, 2007, which is 5 years. 6, 7? [And did you alter it pretty much straight away?] No, I didn't immediately. Maybe it got baggier over time, not immediately. [And have you worn it...] A lot. It was just in the wash, actually, I had to get it out of the wash, it's filthy. Well, it's getting to that point where I'm thinking, god, can I really wear this again. I'm certainly going to have to do something down here. And I'm thinking, can I think another one exactly the same?
- 
- 33 29:00.5 - 30:03.8 [How often do you wear it?] Oh, every other week? And if I don't get grubby food all over it, I'll wear it for several days in a row. [And why would you say that that particular one gets worn a lot?] Actually, it didn't necessarily so much at the beginning. I decided I liked that colour, and I got this (scarf). And this I did get when I got my cancer, because I went online immediately to get scarves to wear when my hair fell out, and this turned out not to be quite right for a headscarf, but I grew to love it. And I just love that combination. And then people say, oh that looks nice, so I wear it again (laughs). [So it's the colour, and the colour in combination with other things that you like to wear?] Yes. And I do like cashmere. Again, warm, cosy and so soft.
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- 34 30:03.8 - 30:30.9 [Can you remember how much it was?] Well, I'm thinking £30, reduced from £60 or something like that. Because I would never buy cashmere otherwise, I mean it's usually about £120 isn't it? So maybe it was already reduced twice.
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- 35 30:30.9 - 30:51.3 [How long do you expect to keep it? So you're at the cusp...] I'm really at the cusp. In fact, you know, I was going to wash it and then probably start looking at what I can do.
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- 36 30:51.3 - 31:05.6 [Do you feel attached to it?] I do. But not so much sentimentally, if you know what I mean, it's more because I like the way it looks, and feels. It's not my heartstrings.
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- 37 31:05.6 - 32:29.2 [What's the brand in the back neck?] Mmm... Deane & White (tone of surprise, never having noticed before).  
[100% cashmere?] Yes  
[Where made?] No  
[And we don't have the washcare label, still. But how would you wash it?] By hand, absolutely.  
[So the condition is...] Very tatty. [The particular problem now is under the arm?] Yes, that's the biggest one. And the cuffs. It's funny how the cuffs... I mean, it looks like someone's been chewing it. But, I haven't (laughs). So when it's first washed, you think, oh that's alright, and then half an hour later you're going oh, tuck that in.  
[Take photo]
- 
- 38 32:29.2 - 33:45.7 [Shall we do the one that was your mum's?] Yes. Well, it's a similar story, actually, except it was my mum's. [When did you acquire it?] Well, my mother died in '98, so I guess that's when I got it. [And did you get a lot of clothes?] Well, I chose quite a few things, and other things I kept just because they were very her, and they're in the attic. But over the years, you know I've said this is ridiculous, I don't need a physical object, you know. But some things I keep. [Do you keep more the things that you wear, or do you also keep some things...] You mean of clothes? (pause) Yes, now, I have more things that I wear than not. The others are just a tiny representative sample. I didn't take

that much, because they lived in Geneva, anyway, so we weren't going to transport that many things. But the wool, I had crates, binbags full.



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- 39 33:45.7 - 34:59.1 [How long do you think your mum had had it?] Quite a while. [Do you remember her wearing it?] Oh, yes. And she also adapted things, she was very keen on looking good, and so almost everything she bought, she would - I don't do this - she would take it in a bit there so it was a bit more shaped. And this was stitched, I can't quite remember, I think it might have been just along the cuff, or whatever you call this (welt). And the reason she would have done that, is because without that, it would come here (indicates under the bottom), which meant that it went in, and she didn't find that flattering (laughs). So I unstitched it. [It's fascinating!] I know, it's weird to think about all these things.
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- 40 34:59.1 - 35:23.9 [Do you wear it a lot?] I do wear it quite a lot. And again, because it's comfortable. I love that colour, and that also, I love this sort of mixture (indicates colours together). Although it's a pain to wash, of course, these things. But I do it anyway.
- 
- 41 35:23.9 - 36:52.8 [And do you think you've worn it a lot, consistently since you got it from her?] No, I don't think I did at first. Not immediately. [And do you think that was practical, sentimental, emotional? Conscious or not conscious?] That's a very good question. No, it wasn't particularly conscious. Maybe because it still felt more like hers, possibly. It is really interesting, you know, all this. Because there's another cardy, which I kept because I used to adore it when she had it, I thought wow, I'd love one like that. And then of course I've got it, and I've never worn it until I was looking through things for you, and I've started wearing it (laughs). I suppose because the other one was more individual, so it felt even more like her. This is a bit more ordinary. [That's really interesting.] It is. [And the other one, had you forgotten about it?] No, absolutely not. [But it was only when you went through looking and you were thinking about whether you wear things or not?] Yes... I have tried it on every now and then, and thought no, it's not me.
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- 42 36:52.8 - 37:48.7 [How do you feel when you wear that one?] I feel great! Well, I did. Again, it's getting pretty tatty. I think I changed the buttons. My mother went in for slightly glitzy buttons, and I don't like them. [So maybe it became more you when you de-glitzed the buttons?] Yes, that's interesting. I wonder if I

changed the buttons on the other one ages ago and I've forgotten about that. I don't know. [A way of it becoming more you?] Yes. I don't know, that doesn't look like me, my sewing (indicates buttons). It's too neat! So maybe not.

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- 43 37:48.7 - 38:28.3 [Does it have a label in?] My mother cut labels out. Because they showed. Or actually, here, because they itch! Gosh, why do they do that?! It's not normal! Does everybody complain about that? [I think so... I'm laughing because my husband takes the labels out of everything.] I know, I'm going shopping, and I'm going, what's that?! [And the only thing it does is stick out and make you feel silly] Yes, as well! But this one down here, I think it's because if it flapped open, it showed. And it's been repaired.
- 
- 44 38:28.3 - 39:40.3 [It's cashmere?] Yes.  
[When you said it's getting tatty..] Well, I think the moths did get this one. There, and there. And I've already stitched it several times. I think I've stitched up here under the arm. Er, this is beginning to look like someone's chewed it. The cuffs are not too bad. [So it's partly a bit of wear, and partly moths] Yes.  
[Take photo]
- 
- 45 39:40.3 - 42:14.7 [As part of workshops, we'll try out several techniques and eventually I'll invite you to alter an item from your wardrobe, to return to active wear, or extend its wearable life. You can decide later, but do you have any thoughts now about what you might like to give a new lease of life to?] Well, I wouldn't mind trying with that (indicates TK Maxx one?), because this will have to go, I think, in the bin otherwise, because there's a limit to how many times you can darn it up, especially when you don't know how to darn properly. Possibly this (mother's cardigan), I mean I don't have a picture of what it would be, so... I don't know about this one, but that's partly because I can't see it, I can't visualise, I can't imagine what you would do, but why not, why not? And I'm sure I've got others too. [So you've got several candidates] I should think so. But it's picturing what it might be like. But I don't mind sacrificing this one, if you like, and then saying oh god, I don't like that. Or this, I think you have to be realistic in the end. [Yes, these things always seem so... Things are important to you, and you say why am I being sentimental, but on the other hand, that's what life's all about...] Yes, but it comes a time when you can let go.
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- 46 42:14.7 - 44:24.5 [The point of doing four garments was to give us a way of talking about the wardrobe - it's hard to think of so many items - but I would like to now try that. So if we think now about your knitwear, if we carried on garment by garment, do you think you would be saying more similar stories?] No, I've got some that are very practical, like this. Some that are perfectly good quality, that I wear because they're useful, when I'm cold. I've got a black cardigan, in fact I've probably got 2 or 3 black cardigans, different weights, I've got a navy blue one which is quite heavy like a jacket. I've got several like this, what else have I got. I've got, I do have some others that I've kept because I have liked them, but I don't have anything... Oh well I do have one which I bought at, erm, Benetton, one of my rare purchases, again, I think I bought that one myself. At Benetton, quite a few years ago when there used to be a Benetton in the pedestrian street next to Laura Ashley, it was a long time ago. Which is a, is it knitted or crocheted, long sleeveless thing, which I loved at the time and it seemed to be unfashionable now. That's in good condition and I have worn it recently, a bit.
- 
- 47 44:24.5 - 45:44.5 [And you said you have practical things, what's the difference between the pieces you've talked about and pieces which are practical?] Well, this you can shove it in the machine, it's easy. I think you can even put it in the drier. It's cotton, or something. I've got a jumper from Marks & Sparks, just v neck, which is machine washable, red. I like red a lot, doesn't show, does it? I have

a similar one from Sainsbury, shove it in the machine. I have a more special version of that, which is cashmere, which was my mother's, which is a v neck but with also a little collar, and I wear that sparingly, because it's looking a bit like it might not last that long. And practical things that I can... I'm not going to get down on my hands and knees and scrub the kitchen floor in that, or rush out to the garden. Like this, I might go in the garden and do a bit of, and get carried away and it gets.... and I think it doesn't matter.

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- 48 45:44.5 - [The practical things, would you say that you feel attached to them?] No.  
45:55.8 [They feel more...] Useful.
- 
- 49 45:55.8 - [Most of the things in your wardrobe, have you had them for a long time?]  
46:33.9 Long, long time, mostly long. Well, the Sainsburys one, perhaps not so long, they don't last so long because actually they do get a bit tight when you wash them, eventually. Marks & Sparks slightly better. Mostly quite a long time, I think.
- 
- 50 46:33.9 - Oh no, sorry - I've just gone through the wardrobe in my head. I also have a  
47:13.5 few cardis that I've picked up in charity shops, over the last year or two. You know, like you need a beige cardi sometimes, and I've got a thick one, a thin one, a short one. And they, I look at my wardrobe, and think oh I don't wear that one very often, but you never know, one day when it's a bit colder or a bit warmer, you might want it. So that's the practical sort of...
- 
- 51 47:13.5 - [So some of those things come from high street shops, from charity shops,  
47:26.6 things from your mum, or from friends] Yes.
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- 52 47:26.6 - [And do you have a lot of knitwear that you rarely or never wear, or was it  
48:12.4 hard to find things?] No, there are quite a few that I don't wear very often. There's more cashmere (laughs) which I wear, you know, they're roll necks which I wear underneath something when it's cold in winter but not that often. There's cardis that I don't wear that often because they're the wrong weight, or... It sounds like I have a huge wardrobe, I don't think I do, actually.
- 
- 53 48:12.4 - [How many items of knitwear do you reckon you have?] Oh... all of them?  
48:44.2 OK, I'll have to go in my head (counts under breath). Forty? I wonder if I'm right. I'll have to check afterwards.
- 
- 54 48:44.2 - [If we broaden out again to your whole wardrobe, everything else, do you  
50:23.7 think there's the same mix of things - shops, charity shops, inherited?] Yes, absolutely. [And similar that most things you've had for a number of years?] Yes. [And some things you wear a lot and some things just sit there?] Absolutely. [And if you had to summarise the reason why you still have the things you don't wear a lot... for the knitwear, it was things that come in handy now and then. Are there lots of things like that, that come out every now and then?] There are some things that never come out. And there's two things. One is, I've got them because they're lovely. Like, my friend was chucking them out and I thought, oh that's nice. But they're not my sort of clothes really (laughs). But I don't like to just get rid of them. So I do periodically, I mean, get rid of one or two, and then I keep. So they're nice quality, they look nice, and you never know... And there's others that I do wear occasionally, if I'm in the right mood, I'll say oh, that'll be fun to wear that.
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- 55 50:23.7 - [Could you tell me about when you do clear out clothes - every year, two  
52:01.1 years - is that stressful, a chore, a pleasure?] Well, it often starts in a bit of a temper, when I feel things have got on top of me, and I just start cleaning things, and I get to a drawer, and then it becomes a pleasure. An absolute pleasure. For two reasons, one because I'm clearing out. Three reasons, because I'm tidying up, and three I'm seeing things that I haven't seen for a long time that are really nice (laughs). So I'm saying ooh that's nice, oh yes

I'll keep that. [So maybe that feels like a positive decision...] Yes. [You're reminding yourself of things that you've previously chosen to keep] Yes, absolutely. And then I also feel I'm in control again. I've tidied up, I've made decisions, I've made choices. The place is looking a lot tidier, and more space! [And you said it comes in a...] Temper? [Is it spontaneous?] Yes, often. [You don't think, it's September, I must clear out...] No, absolutely not.

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56 52:01.1 - 54:19.2 [When you get rid of clothes, where do they go?] Ah, well, that's always a dilemma. It's usually two piles. One is throw and the other is charity shops. Almost always. Although there's quite a few things that I'm thinking, you know, it's almost too good to do that with. And then I wonder and I wonder, I think shall we do a car boot sale, and we never do. So they usually end up in a charity shop. This time, I'm going to take stuff to a charity shop. Because it wasn't only clothes, it was also material, vast quantities of material. [And the difference between the two piles, is that condition?] Yes. [If you think it's no good to anybody.] Yes. But even then I'm wondering, surely somebody can use that, am I going to put this in the actual dustbin? I mean, I've got a pile there, it's material and really tatty clothes. And I even went online yesterday, thinking what can you do with these things? I actually didn't find anything. [No, it's unclear - textile banks say they want clean, wearable clothes. But charities pick things to sell, and what's left over gets torn up into rags for insulation, or cleaning rags for industry. So there is something that happens, but I don't know how you're meant to get them to that waste stream.] Well, one thing I did find with the bits of material, online was an idea I hadn't thought of, was a charity that works with people with learning difficulties, I know there's a shop in Leominster, where they also have a workshop. And I thought, well I'll take that, because there's lots of nice material that you can play around with. [You feel a responsibility to the stuff?] Yes, I mean some people always feel that, but the older I get, the more I feel that waste is difficult.

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57 54:19.2 - 56:27.4 (Renovated chair is delivered to house)  
It's the chair! Talk about sentimental, this is a chair that was in my parents' house that we finally had re-covered because it was so tatty. All the insides were falling. We only just got it, this summer, because we happened to go to Geneva in the camper van. For some reason it had got left behind in Geneva.  
(Sees chair - very pleased! Brief banter with upholsterer)  
[That's the thing with proper furniture, that you can have it re-covered.] Yes, it's worth it.

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58 56:27.4 - 58:03.6 [You've vaguely estimated the number of knitwear items, can you estimate the whole wardrobe? Items, wardrobes?] I've got one wardrobe. I have - knitwear, t-shirts don't count, do they, no, just the woollies - well, my wardrobe is upstairs in the bedroom, it's probably about that wide, and there's a shelf above which has got three stacks like that, and then a few more up there which are the ones I don't wear so often. And then the hanging space is underneath, which includes some cardis. [So not masses?] Of clothes? No, I don't, actually. Partly because of lack of space, so eventually I have to say, I can't put any more in here, I have to throw some out. [So when you talked about it being a spontaneous thing, it's to do with trying to put things away?] Exactly. Yes. Actually I think I probably have mini-clear outs more often than once a year, this is a really big one, it started in the attic.

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59 58:03.6 - 59:44.0 [Do you have homemade or handmade items within the wardrobe, that you've made or someone else has made?] Erm... (pause) I think I've only got one... homemade. Because when I try and make things for myself it doesn't work. Knitted, you mean? [Knitted or sewn] Oh, well, I have got some skirts - again, I never wear skirts - I've got a couple of skirts that I made, which I don't wear (laughs). [How long ago did you make those?] Oh, one of them

would have been a long time ago. In fact both of them, probably a long time ago. Fifteen years? (quietly) Why do I keep it? And one is a sort of like waistcoat my mother made out of pre-knitted material, sort of jersey type thing, which again I don't wear so much, I used to wear it, I don't wear it any more, with a little pointy... coming to a point like that. Where was I? Homemade.... No, not much. I have tried making, there was something I just loved, took me so long to knit it I forgot where I was and what size I was knitting, and it turned out like this, I had to give it away to a charity shop.

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- 60 59:44.0 - 1:01:59.2 [The things that you've shown me, all of them you've mended or altered, so would that be representative of things in your wardrobe? Is that common?] Er.. [It seems like you've forgotten what you've done....] Yeah... [maybe because it was a while ago?] Erm... Would I repair a lot? (pause) Well, it depends which ones they are, actually. Not necessarily everything, I would repair. My favourite things. [Does it feel like a reasonably natural thing to do, if there's a hole in a jumper, you sew it up?] Yes. I try to. [because that's not natural for some people] Yes, I do it for my husband, if he's got a hole in his jumper, or if a button falls off. I mean, some people actually throw things away when a button falls off, I can't believe that. I can't believe it. [No, not when it's so repairable and so visibly obvious in how to go about it] Yes. And if you lose the button and it happens, I would actually change the buttons, probably... well, depending what it was. [Yes, so you'd be thinking whether the garment is worth that investment of effort. Does that sound right?] Yes, yes. [So when you're saying it depends what it is, it's whether it's something that you enjoy wearing?] Sure. And sometimes buttons are so expensive (laughs) that the item might not have been.... [Good point!] Or, if it's got buttons all the way up to here, and it's that one that's come off (indicates a middle button), I might take this one off (indicates top or bottom button) and put it there, if it looks alright.
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- 61 1:01:59.2 - 1:04:12.9 [I'm interested in decisions about clothes... I'm interested in your experience of choosing clothes, buying new clothes, and so you said you didn't...] (whispers) I hate it. I think, I quite like looking nice... well, I like it a lot, actually, if possible. I don't like the expense (laughs). I'm quite generous, but I don't like the expense for myself. I don't like the hassle. I never like the way I look when I look in the mirror in a shop, or hardly ever. And maybe it's a bit babyish, you know, I want it done for me, someone buy me something lovely. [Because it requires effort?] Yeah... effort, choice, decision-making. Sometimes, my husband has bought me things for Christmas, and I've loved them and worn them. When I do buy things, it's often when I'm shopping with him, actually. And he says, oh go on, go for it. And then I have permission to spend the money, it's ridiculous! (laughs). [He helps you to make the decision?] He helps me to make the decision about whether it looks alright, although I think I can also do that, but it does help me a bit, but it's more the permission to spend the money, it's really weird. And I mean, it's not because he's an authoritarian (laughs) at all, at all! On the contrary, it's more me that's authoritarian.
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- 62 1:04:12.9 - 1:04:48.5 [Is that similar for other items you might buy for yourself? Is it just about clothes or is it generally treating yourself?] Generally treating myself, probably. Although these days, I don't even need that many treats, and I look in shops, a kitchen shop, and I think ooh, lovely kitchen shop, and then I think ooh, I don't need that, I don't need that (laughs). But yeah, he's more likely to say oh go on, let's do it, or treat yourself.
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- 63 1:04:48.5 - 1:05:53.6 [You said something about decisions and choice - how do you feel about the choice that's available in shops, if you chose to go shopping?] I'd go mad. There's so much. And, in clothes shops, I find the fact... My memory of clothes shops is, you know, you have the shirts here and the jeans there and the trousers... Now you have to wander round the whole shop to see what's

there, it seems to me. So, it's lovely in one way, that there's so many lovely things, but it makes it more difficult. And actually, I literally live in jeans. Black jeans, blue jeans, pale jeans, cord jeans. [So it would be better if there were lots of jeans lined up for you, not distributed around the shop for you to hunt down?] Yes, exactly.

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64 1:05:53.6 - [So that was talking about buying clothes... how is it in charity shops? Is it  
1:06:51.6 similar, or does it feel that you happen upon something?] Yes, I happen upon something. I go into them, just because it's quite fun... well, I think it's going to be fun, even there I get bored, and they're only tiny. But when I have bought things in charity shops it has been because it almost leapt out. So, oh, I like that, oh it's the right size, oh it's only £3, get it. And then sometimes I then throw it away again after a couple of weeks (laughs). [It's easier to give things a trial run?] Yes, because it's not so much money. And it's easier to see things, to spot them quickly, you don't have to spend hours. It seems to me you have to shop quite a lot to find what you like in bigger shops.

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65 1:06:51.6 - [Do you ever choose to go shopping?] For clothes, for myself? Do you know,  
1:07:47.3 I don't think I actually... I very rarely actually choose to. If I'm in town I might pop into Marks, and have a quick look. Or I suddenly remember, oh I wanted a something-or-other. And if I'm in the right mood I might just about get it, but otherwise I'm very quick to say, oh I can't be bothered. Until the jeans really look so tatty that I really have to. [So it's more out of necessity, and then a task that needs to be accomplished, than... some people would go to town every Saturday afternoon to look round] Yeah no, oh god no, absolutely can't bear it.

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66 1:07:47.3 - [If you think what you've told me about shopping for clothes... If you think  
1:10:05.2 about when you get dressed, either in the morning, or getting dressed for a particular occasion, how do you feel about that?] (laughs, under her breath) It's ridiculous! Well, getting dressed just normally, it's very easy, because there's only about four things that I wear, mostly. This kind of thing, this, and the other one (indicates clothes she's wearing). For a particular occasion, then I start getting neurotic, what shall I wear, what shall I wear, if we're going out with friends. And I usually end up wearing almost the same thing as I wear during the day anyway, you know. Perhaps a slightly less tatty jumper, or a blouse or a shirt or something, with a slightly nicer scarf. But that's it. We don't have occasion to really dress up that much. And, my son got married in May, my oldest son, and I wore a dress that I'd bought maybe 6 years ago, 7 years ago, for somebody else's wedding, one of the same generation. And I thought, I don't care if someone says she wore that at the last wedding, I'm not buying another bloody dress. Because I don't like myself in dresses much, and this one looks ok. So we did buy a little short cardi to go with it. That was it. [So, you felt like there was an expectation...] Absolutely. [.. that you should have something new] Yes. [or that you hadn't worn to a wedding where there might be the same people] Yes. [but you were happy not to do that.] Yes, I mean if it had been last year, I might have thought oh that's a bit much, it is my son's wedding, but it was a few years ago, I can't even remember whose wedding it was. So I have (laughs) two outfits that I can wear at weddings, we haven't had that many weddings.

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67 1:10:05.2 - And this isn't relevant to your PhD, but it's quite funny. The first outfit I bought  
1:11:14.1 at the last minute for a really old friend's daughter's wedding, so I've known her all her life, and I finally found a trouser suit in Chadd's, red trouser suit, which was rather nice. Turned up at the wedding, someone was wearing exactly the same one, only she was wearing a black hat with it! (laughs) We had a good laugh, it was alright, it didn't matter. [I'd hate that!] I know, it's the only time it's ever happened, is it your worst fear? [Yes, it fills me with horror!] What about wearing the same outfit twice at the wedding? [Oh, I don't mind that, it's having exactly the same as somebody else, it really upsets me.]

Well, it is a horrible thought, but in the event, we were able to laugh it off, oh my god.... Chadds, I bought it at! I thought nobody else... But it was a Windsmoor or something like that, so it was a bit of a middle aged woman's trouser suit, I suppose.

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68 1:11:14.1 - [Could you say something about what, if anything, influences the choices you  
1:13:23.1 make about what to wear?] What influences me in choosing what to buy? [Both to buy, and to wear, if those things are different...] Well, buy I suppose I have to... My tastes are often quite expensive, but I don't feel I have the money for that. So, price would be a consideration in buying. Erm... (pause) Well, most often it's practicality. If it's a special occasion, I suppose I might spend a bit more if I had to. But it's so rare, I don't know. [Would you say that you know what you like, you're looking for things which are you and you know when you've found them?] Yeah (hesitant) yeah, I think so (long pause). It's an interesting question. [In a previous interview, someone's comparison was that one of her daughters will get a magazine and find the page that says, these are in fashion this season, and she'll say I'm going to buy that] Oh, I see... Right, no way. [She said she'd never do that, I know what I like, and I'll look until I find it] Yes, yes. For everyday things, for sure. I mean, it's easy, it's jeans and jumpers and cardis. And I love scarves, I have one whole drawer of scarves. A whole, quite big... and they're all folded on their side so I can see them.

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69 1:13:23.1 - [I think you mentioned the thing from Benetton, that you said you didn't think  
1:14:07.6 it was particularly fashionable any more, how much is that a consideration, where things are...] Oh, generally not, because this is, is this ever not in fashion, see what I mean. But that was a bit more particular. And maybe in my head it was stuck to a particular time (pause). Yes, not fashion... maybe it was wrong for an older woman, or something. I'm not sure. Something didn't feel quite right for me. [But you didn't necessarily exactly identify what] Yes.

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70 1:14:07.6 - [When you said, when is this not in fashion, it's nice casual, easy-to-wear  
1:15:29.2 clothes, do you think part of why you wear those clothes is because they're not in or out of fashion?] (slightly hesitant) Yeah. Well, they're easy. And I suppose I quite like the look. [So you're not consciously looking... Because, a lot of your clothes, you've had for a long time, but you don't... Some people, when they shop, might look for things, and they're looking thinking, I don't want something that will go out of fashion quickly. That might be a consideration when they're shopping...] Right. No, I'm not very fashion conscious, in the sense that I'm not even sure I know what's in fashion. And that conversation comes out with my daughter. I don't know! She's saying, no, I can't wear that, it's not... and I say oh, really, I'm sorry (laughs). [So you're happy in what you wear, you're not making some sort of calculated thing] No [But the things that you do wear aren't particularly in or out of fashion] No [so then that all sits together quite happily] Yeah.

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71 1:15:29.2 - Actually, just recently - it's funny how things come to you - I quite liked the  
1:16:35.1 leggings look, with a thing, just to... I don't like it, thinking for me, and I'm thinking, am I too old to do this, I wouldn't want it short, because I wouldn't show my bum, but with something about that long (indicates tunic length), I think it might actually suit me, because, you know, my legs are quite slim. I haven't quite got round to, online I bought a pair of leggings with a sort of geometric, they're beige, red and black. And now that's a pattern I have always loved, since I was a tiny child, it reminds me of Mexican, or even American Indian designs. And I've always loved that. I'd love to wear those leggings (wistful) with a red sort of tunic? Would you call it? Yeah, not completely shapeless, maybe with a collar. So I do have an idea there, I doubt whether I'll ever do it. Well, I might possibly to a party of a very good friend.

- 72 1:16:35.1 - [So maybe you've seen people wearing things around] Mmm [and you've  
1:17:10.0 thought, that could look ok on me.] Yeah. So I have started looking in the street, do women my age do that, and does it look ridiculous. My daughter says (vehemently) no, you'd look really good! I'm not so sure. [I think it would look good.] (Quietly) Thank you. I'll try it. I haven't found a red tunic, or a beige tunic. [Maybe when it leaps out..] Maybe when it leaps out in the charity shop.
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- 73 1:17:10.0 - [Talk about your knitting career, what you knit and when. You told me about  
1:19:47.7 knitting when your kids were little...] Yes. Well, I don't know about all of them. Certainly when I was expecting the first, I knitted some stuff. And he might even have worn it, or I might have put him in it. It's gone in phases, really. You get a sort of, ooh, I'm going to knit, knit knit knit. I've knitted a jumper or two. I knitted quite a nice, sort of brownny-beigey-fawny coloured one in really nice wool, for my husband, which worked quite well. But then it got all bobbly. I haven't learnt which kind of wools go bobbly, and which don't, and I hate bobbly. I don't like bobbly at all. [It tends to be the softer ones] And they say, oh, isn't that lovely. [Yes and it's hard, because feeling a nice material is often what prompts people to want to knit] Exactly. And I saw, it was Rowan, what did they call it, it's a kind of cotton, indigo thing that when you wash it, it fades like denim. Oh Rowan Denim, that's what it was called. And I saw that one knitted in the shop window of the wool shop when it used to be opposite Primark, I don't know if Primark was there then, and she's now in the Paperway opposite. And it was lovely knitted, it's sort of like a jacket, a jeansy jacket. So I bought piles of the stuff, and started knitting it and then left it, and then picked it up again and left it, probably over a period of many years. And when I finally got it done, it was just awful (laughs sadly). It was the wrong shape, and the wrong size, and I had to give it up, I just had to. I think I even unpicked it once, all the way and started again. So if you're wanting the yarn, the wool, there's a couple of balls in there of it, that were left over.
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- 74 1:19:47.7 - So that's the sort of career of knitting I've had, a bit discouraging, and not  
1:21:01.0 working. Because I've never learnt particularly from anybody properly, and I've never had anybody to ask (desperate voice). And you know, you see Stitch & Bitch groups, and you think I'll go, and then you think no, they all know how to knit, they won't know what I want.
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- 75 1:21:01.0 - Apart from that, of course, there's the blankets, which I've started knitting  
1:21:55.7 lately, which have been good. And I'm knitting one now, which is for the son. And I knitted it much too big, or I got bored, so I cut it (laughs), and I used this to practice edgings. But crochet I do, which is actually slightly easier, I find. But I don't follow patterns in crochet, I don't know how to follow a pattern, which is a shame. So, it's been a difficult career. [And in phases] in phases, when I suddenly think yes I can do this, and I start enthusiastically and then it all goes wrong and I can't bear it (desperate voice).
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- 76 1:21:55.7 - [When you are in a knitting phase, how often do you knit?] Well, if I'm in a  
1:23:08.3 phase, I can hardly tear myself away from it (laughs), I'll sit in front of the telly. [A knitting binge?] Yeah, yeah, absolutely. It's interesting, I think I am a bit of a binger, in things generally. [And is it in front of the telly?] In front of the telly, yeah, or if we're on holiday in the van, sitting in the van, or.... I suppose often sitting in front of the telly, actually. But sometimes upstairs, I've got my own little room upstairs, which is my little boudoir. After lunch, I might sit and... because my husband's retired now, and we go to our separate rooms for a little rest and things, so I might knit up there. [So you have a space where you can keep things?] Yes... boxes and boxes full of yarn.
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- 77 1:23:08.3 - [How do you feel about spending time knitting, does it feel worthwhile?]  
1:25:23.7 Yeah, yeah. I mean, if it works, I absolutely love it, it's great. If it doesn't work,

I feel terribly disappointed and frustrated and angry. [So your feeling about the activity is related to the output] Yes! Although at the time, I quite like just that actual, sort of doing of it. It feels that there's something therapeutic about just doing it. I mean, I sometimes wonder about just knitting a, a nothing. Except that it would get boring, and it does. This one's got boring, it's just one little... [So, does it get boring if there isn't enough variation, or is it that it's taking a long time? What makes it...] Well, if it's plain, it's because it's taking a long time. If there's a lot of variation, I suppose I wouldn't get bored, but I need... I need results. I think I need results. And a result could be someone walking into the room and just saying wow, that's going to be really nice. I need encouragement. [Do you get that?] Well, sometimes... I mean, if I wave it in front of my husband, he'll say yeah, that's going to be great. Or if he doesn't like it, I started something, and he said I don't think that's going to be right for a baby, and so I put it away. And I think he's right. And you know, if my daughter's here, she'll get it or if a friend comes round. But yeah, I'm probably quite demanding.

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- 78 1:25:23.7 - [Does your knitting stuff tend to live in your boudoir?] Yes [It's nice to have a  
1:27:33.9 place where it lives] Mmm. I love having my own space. And it's got potential, because it's got crates full of wool, and it's got drawers with material and it's got, you know, little scraps of material that I kept because they were pretty. Shiny, sparkly things. [So that's where, when you said about having your mum's stuff...] Absolutely. I've got her stuff too. Little sketches, she did little sketches of things she had ideas for, and squares that she knitted or crocheted as ideas. It's that sort of amazing potential. [Great to have those ideas as a resource] Mmmm. [But then if you get discouraged about what you sometimes produce, then maybe you have mixed feelings about realising some potential...] (Pause) I don't think I have mixed feelings about realising it. I have mixed feelings about the process. Sometimes, not very good at dealing with frustration or problem-solving. And then I sort of wish I had my mummy here to show me (desperate voice) sort of thing you know, or somebody, that I could go and say what do I do here, for god's sake! I don't know how to unpick complicated patterns. [Mmm, there's lots of complications to deal with in knitting and crochet.] Mmm. But I think, as I'm getting older, I'm getting better at it.
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- 79 1:27:33.9 - [That's everything. Unless there's anything else that's popped into your  
1:28:20.2 head?] I should think hundreds of things will pop into my head. [Do tell me if so]. Oh right, ok. I'm going to go and count my jumpers now!
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- 80 1:28:20.2 - I was going to mention actually, just now, something to do with leaving  
1:29:16.3 something behind, is also a thing. You know, continuity. This was actually crocheted by my aunt, god knows how many years ago. And look it's.... and I repair it to keep it. And that blanket, which my mother was crocheting for me when she got ill, and I promised I her I would finish it and I did. You know, things like that, there's another one upstairs. Something nice about leaving something behind that you have made. [And the lovely story of you using your mum's yarn, that you're making something new] Yes, and I gave to my daughter the squares, the squares one. I'm going to show you a picture of that, I'll get one, not now, but I'll bring it.
- 
- 81 1:29:16.3 - [Will send more info for the group sessions... Bring something you've made -  
1:30:36.8 knitted or crocheted. Something to wear, but if you wanted to bring a blanket, it can be quite broad. Just as a way of introducing ourselves to each other.]
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- 82 1:30:36.8 - [Chat about my research project, how long it will take.] Sounds really  
1:36:42.8 interesting. [Explaining - very little research about amateur making, especially about making and using/wearing. Familiar stories to people who knit, make - the difficulties and the satisfaction of having made something. The two sides of that, that making things can be such a rewarding thing to do, but also, it's

not problem-free.] It must be also not just restricted to knitting, but any kind of creative process actually has that path. I mean, I did a furniture-making course, the same sort of thing, only that came to an almost complete dead-end when I finished the course. It's so difficult, I didn't feel I could do it by myself. But that might just be my personality. Well, I made this with my husband's help. You see, I always need someone to hold my hand! It's interesting, I wonder if that's a common experience too.

[I find with people and knitting, a lot of people with vastly varying skill and experience, tend to think that they don't do things properly, and they don't really know how to do it.] Well presumably, in the old days, as they say, when we lived in smaller communities, or when you lived in the same street as your mother, or - I mean, my mother lived 800 miles away, I couldn't ask her even if she knew - so you don't have those little groups of women who you could ask.

[And if they've made something and they do wear it, they'll show you the mistake, the very first thing] I know! That's interesting. Do you think men do the same? I bet they don't. I mean, I hate generalising really but... Because my husband often says to me, don't point out the mistake! Like, when I cook for people, I'm actually quite a good cook, I think so myself, but I will still say, before they've even put it in their mouth I'll tell them what's wrong with it. He says, don't do that, and he doesn't. Interesting.

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83 1:36:42.8 - [More conversation about the research]

1:41:37.4

Yeah, I think the creative process is very interesting, or the creative urge. I mean, I have a friend who's an artist, and I always say, god I wish I could do that, you're so creative. And then she comes here and she says, I wish I could do that, you're so creative, you know, the crochet stuff. And I say, that's not creative, that's just making things (laughs). I mean, I know I do have a strong creative urge. [Well, I look forward to sharing some cardigan renovation techniques...] Cardigan renovation! Yeah, I'm really looking forward to it. It captured my imagination.

W2-29

16	1:15:00.0 - 1:20:00.0	<p>Anne realises - oh.... well that didn't work, did it. Amy - yes, undo this row. Anne - oh yes, didn't realise - there are only three rows!! Kiki - yarn is unyielding. Like that Rowan stuff in the book. I like it through the colour.</p> <p>Amy - you've invented something new, Anne. Kiki - that's how great a class. Every time they made a mistake, worked out how done it at it though, that's the thing.</p> <p>Amy - running machine knitting workshop. People say, how did I do Amy/Anne - show repeat. Done first cast off. Knit 1 and cast off 1. T</p>	<p>ches. Woman said, ran remember how you did ay.</p>
17	1:20:00.0 - 1:25:00.0	<p>Kiki - look, mine went all wiggly! Julia - not there yet.</p> <p>Julia - oh yes, isn't that lovely! Kiki - not that nice... Julia - it is, can't Amy showing Anne. Anne - don't know what I did.</p> <p>Margaret looking at Kiki's sample.</p> <p>Amy - how's it looking. Kiki - looked awfully rigid until cast off, then undulation of frill. Kiki - so not good choice of yarn. Amy - well, that I want nobbly, sticky outy thing.</p> <p>Anne - I do know what I did. I knitted 2, then I knitted 2 more to cast Anne - yes, I think that's how I would have understood it.</p> <p>Julia/Amy - how's it look? Think it's ok. Julia dubious. Amy, looks lo Amy - on calculator sheet, put mockup calculator. Could have same Can see how it looks without having to knit.</p> <p>Julia - say that again.</p> <p>Amy - here, fixed how big bells are. If I think want them bigger, rather than knitting all, could copy. When starting, thinking how you want it to look. If wanted it bolder. Can photocopy, gives you a way of seeing think. Or say, going to use this yarn, this many st/10cm, multiplier to</p>	<p>ite nice.</p> <p>ture a bit. But get this on a soft.... unless ybe just cast off 1.</p> <p>py bigger or smaller.</p> <p>than knitting all, could copy. When starting, thinking how you want it to look. If wanted it bolder. Can photocopy, gives you a way of seeing think. Or say, going to use this yarn, this many st/10cm, multiplier to</p>
17	1:20:00.0 - 1:25:00.0	<p>Julia - shall I choose another one?</p> <p>Amy - going to move on. That was your embellish taster. Everybody homework. Borrow needles or whatever.</p> <p>OK, going to do stitch-hacking now. So if we clear the decks a little things.</p> <p>Anne - can we take home patterns? Amy - yes, will copy. Julia - on instructions were right. Will print out more copies.</p> <p>Kiki - am I doing another one?</p> <p>Amy - no.</p> <p>Doing stitch-hacking. Kiki -ooooh, don't even know what that is. [tidying up]</p> <p>Kiki - going to have to get a file for the big sheets.</p> <p>Amy - ok, so what going to do now, more playing. Knitting always s Might need notebooks.</p>	<p>and take home as out of places to put photos and wasn't sure if</p>

Anne - oh yes, didn't realise, didn't realise, didn't realise, only 3 rows! [not ready ahead]

Amy - you've invented something new Kiki - how great discoveries made!

Amy - missed its book. Use mistake.

Anne - but have to remember how did it.

Amy shows correct cast off.

Kiki/Julia - oh, worked!

Amy - you hiding structure.

Kiki - not good choice, teach me.

Anne realises what did.

Amy - suggests how to change instr.

Julia dubious. Amy - lovely.

Amy tries to explain mockup calculator, copying bells bigger/smaller.

Move on.

Start now. Ticks up.

Take home pattern? Yes, and put on web - new photos/instr.

*Note:* Data from the example workshop transcript page shown in Appendix C2 (W2-29) is highlighted. The activities listed in the Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 sections correspond to the workshop activity diagram, Figure 2.3.

## FOR CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY

### *Plan for workshops*

- W2-2 Strict time plan today! Taster of activities.  
 W2-2 First activity, talk about inspiration in 2 groups. Talk about whether enjoyed, what found, any ideas on how to use. Then report back, summarise.  
 W2-40 Next time, will prepare 2 treatments, you pick 1. Cut and trim, afterthought pocket. Do treatments in morning, then discuss ideas for garments.

### *Benefits*

- W2-1 Alex using Amy's yarn as colour resource  
 W2-1 Alex passes on? Info re yarn needs.  
 W2-1 Kiki brought Debbie Bliss book, does anyone want.  
 W2-2 Kiki brought knit item for advice. Julia thought about same – too cheeky? Describes problem, idea of how to fix.  
 W2-2 Discussion – how do you unravel?  
 W2-13 Comparing knit habits. Always knitting on the go? Yes.  
 W2-28 Kiki – cast off in pattern? Never sure.  
 W2-41 Kiki – anyone want this book? Alex – I will.

### *Mood*

- W2-1 Keen/interested in what going to do  
 W2-34 Completely exhausted last time. Catherine – the maths. Amy – logic. Kiki – connection, what does this mean? Catherine – panic, everyone else understands it!  
 W2-41 Tiring/seasick. Eye stuff.  
 W2-41 Kiki – getting to grips with it. Got home – what?!

### *View of Amy, others*

- W2-2 Julia – not experienced like Alex.  
 W2-15 [After re-did replace edge sections stuff] Such a lot of work!

### *Group interest in research*

- W2-2 Kiki – how record 2 groups?  
 W2-21 Catherine – R4 programme, Thinking Allowed, about jeans. Fascinating, like what you asked us. Amy describes Sophie W's research. David Mitchell podcast, Mark Thomas rant. Catherine describing son's approach to clothes – 'that's not me'.  
 W2-41 Thanks Anne for getting up early!

## FOR CHAPTER 3: FASHION / CHAPTER 4: MAKING

### *General*

- W2-2 Julia – reflecting on making. Reckon of all, happy with half. Really disheartening. Knit, try on, disappointed.  
 W2-2 Kiki – knitting for babies, less fussy/small.  
 W2-4 Margaret – middle section of Rowan, love seeing what people have done with knitting.  
 W2-4 Alex – a lot of pleasure in looking at magazines and books – people don't understand.  
 W2-4 Alex – don't like handle of silk or mohair.  
 W2-6 Catherine – have knitted cardis for daughter, soon will stop wearing.  
 W2-7 Kiki's mum – adapting clothes to suit figure.  
 W2-8 Alex – might knit something different, but wouldn't wear. Have to feel comfortable

- and wouldn't in mad colours.
- W2-12 Conversation re clothes. 'To wear those trousers, you'd have to...'
- W2-13 Anne – shopping with friend. Like different things. Subtlety – that's just you. No! Sometimes surprised if try. Personal shopper, interesting experience. Not right then right. Budget, idea of what want. See what you're wearing.
- W2-13 Timeline for fashion. Anne – 20 years come round. But shorter and tighter!
- W2-21 Alex re Sasha Kagan waistcoat. Used lime green that's fashionable at the moment. Suited as not next to face.
- W2-37 Alex making scarves for grandchildren. Will be sad when they're too big!
- W2-37 Alex – had to shorten sleeves on tailored jackets.

*Time*

- W2-4 Margaret re patterns – would take forever and a day.

*Using patterns*

- W2-1 Alex – knitted dk patterns in 4 ply, couldn't get prem baby clothes.
- W2-2 Alex – Debbie Bliss patterns, sizes always large.
- W2-4 Alex – copied fairisle from Shetland postcard. How?
- W2-4 Margaret – love patterns. Alex – so expensive. If don't use their wool, hard to get them to tone, get nice colours.
- W2-6 Catherine has knitted from same Rowan Denim book as Kiki. Started and never finished that one! Julia never done Rowan.
- W2-6 Managing pattern sizes – circle, get lost.
- W2-13 Alex – made hat, doesn't fit. Will fit granddaughter so ok.
- W2-15 Anne – granddaughter's dress. In book, too sludgy. Colours not as nice in acrylic. End up, just misses what you wanted.
- W2-21 Julia asking Alex if knitted from Sasha Kagan book. Yes, one. Drove me mad, 3 colours in one row.
- W2-37 Alex – read, don't need to decrease for shoulders. But I have slopy shoulders so have to. Julia – I'm quite square, ok.

*View of own skill re patterns*

- W2-1 Kiki, Debbie Bliss book too hard for me.
- W2-2 Alex – DB large sizes, 2 year old, 28" chest. Kiki – doesn't mean anything to me.
- W2-6 Kiki – Rowan Denim. Keep patterns, maybe one day grown up enough.
- W2-6 Julia – can't do complicated.
- W2-6 Kiki – hard to judge whether can manage pattern.
- W2-20 Julia re Sasha Kagan – would be too hard for me, haven't done fairisle.
- W2-20 Looking for craft books in charity shops. Kiki – didn't buy as can't knit that well.

*Form of patterns*

- W2-4 Do you work from chart? I can't, not visual like that.

*Wardrobe practices*

- W2-5 Anne – tidied bedroom, trying to keep tidy!

**FOR CHAPTER 5: RE-KNITTING**

**Activities (on-topic conversation)**

**Presentation: replace edge section**

- W2-15 Reflecting on W1 activity. Fine ones (Alex – made me carsick). Wouldn't want to do some transitions on finest ones. So advice is to do 2-step, not 3:1. Re-doing samples so fewer options, 2 different ratios. Photo and row by row instructions. Had tried to have all variations. Restricting helped me and users. Also done chunkier to finer. Have their own patterns. Given more guidance, more likely to be successful. Writing spacings with symbols. 2 steps complicated – 2 numbers need relationship. Trying to make more practices user-friendly.

**Presentation: integral embellish**

- W2-18 Embellish. Wanted to pick up, knit, cast off. Looked for patterns. Most cast on,

- only a couple cast off. Wanted to translate to use at workshop. Knitted first. Too big for frill. By following instructions, understood method. Width of purl controls size of bells. Felt more confident to vary.
- W2-18 Group checking on how done. Demo on ways to pick up through – different methods. If 1:1, middle of stitch. On cardi, like multiplier for hem. Gap in between each pickup.
- W2-18 Pattern written out for these ones. Example of using pattern as resource, needed adapting. Show picot.
- W2-18 Next – lots knitted sideways. Pick up, knit 2/3 rows. Cast on, k2tog, joins. Requires adaptation. Kiki – tried to do on blanket, didn't know how. Shows samples. Tested – understood – varied – pattern.
- W2-18 For cast on ones – can just reverse? Not quite. Have to try.
- W2-19 Tried another – was trying to change too much. Alex – yes, it's time and effort to result. Yes, better to start closer. Alex – enough things around without having to be hell-bent on something.
- W2-19 Patterns, photos a bit crap. Get fabric, try and knit.

**Presentation: yarn/needle resource**

- W2-19 Last time – if want to use this yarn, what do I do. Some yarns no st/10cm, no needle, no length, no ball band. How know needle size or st/10cm? Also issue of count – cotton heavy etc.
- W2-19 Got all info from Rowan, Sirdar, Patons. Weight, metrage = count, needle size, st/10cm. Sorted into fibres. Plotted so each group different symbol. All over place. Cotton/silk heavier. Decided that was useful. Others all jumbled. Rowan Summer Tweed exception!
- W2-19 Understand? Not sure. Explains – count: heavy to light. Vertical, how knit up. Few to many st/10cm. General trend upward line. Thinner yarn, more st/10cm.
- W2-19 Also when using tools. Want to knit at 25 st/10cm. No yarn recommended to knit at that tension. E.g. my sample jumper, wanted to knit at 30 st/10cm. Nothing recommended. Used 28 st/10cm yarn on smaller needle. Encourage people to experiment but don't want it to be really saggy or tight – good to aim for recommended size. W2-20 Kiki – wondering how much leeway.
- W2-19 Tying myself in knots, trying to work out what useful.
- W2-19 This is a chart of all data, sorted by st/10cm. Can look up.
- W2-19 Alex – tried to do this myself. Couldn't figure how to use. Thought would be more useful than it was. Charts by themselves not helpful. Can't do quick comparison.
- W2-20 Alex – easier to follow than lists.
- W2-19 Also looked at needle size. Range shows recommended, dot shows most common.
- W2-20 Alex – found this chart useful. 4ply and DK, different needle sizes, st/10cm chart. Useful for substituting. OK for hat, gloves, scarf. Harder for fitted jumper. Amy – had similar, no so much detail. Very old book.
- W2-20 Amy – think 4 ply in olden days, now is heavier. Inconsistencies in data from different sources. Wonder if things are changing. Kiki – found 2 charts online. Inconsistent. Yes, feel happier with actual data. Alex – British Standard? Don't think so.
- W2-20 Yarn groups from American Yarn Council.
- W2-20 wpi seems so dodgy. Kiki – couldn't make it work.
- W2-20 Can change, a work in progress.
- W2-20 Margaret (re Alex's?) – would find that useful. Loads of yarn, don't know what it is. If knew, could use. Amy – if 4ply/dk, Alex's useful. If don't know, maybe wpi?

**Practical activity: integral embellish**

- W2-23 Embellish patterns – choose one.
- W2-23 Anne – stuck on 1<sup>st</sup> line! Thinking multiple of 4 is about picking up.
- W2-23 Next, pick a fabric. Sorted jumpers by gauge. Don't worry about fine – not picking up. Won't be same gauge, will have to do spacing thing. Smaller or bigger. Chop a piece out. St/10cm already on label.

- W2-23 Handouts – printed out calculator page from website. Trying to keep paper to a minimum, but otherwise up and down too much.
- W2-23 Going to knit off whatever scale you want. Pics on printouts 100% at 22 st/10cm. Tension not critical. Use suggested needle size from ball band or chart. Now, pick yarn. Put yarn info on sheet per box.
- W2-24 Misunderstanding – Alex thinks aiming for a match so 21 ok for 19.
- W2-24 Explaining yarn suggests needle. If no needle, use chart.
- W2-24 Calculate multiplier, look up nearest on spacing table, see in sts column. Drawn as V and dot.
- W2-24 Kiki – are we doing this to fit into garment without strange number left over? No, ratio between gauges.
- W2-25 Kiki trouble with spacing table. Start with 1? How skip 2 to start?
- W2-25 Discussion about which direction to pick up. Go in from edge or will unravel. Hard to stay in line, don't worry. Easier to pick up with crochet hook? Cut yarn to get it to front. If hard picking up fine, don't go all way across.
- W2-25 Julia re spacing table – go up or down or easiest one?
- W2-25 Question about multiple – stitches on needle.
- W2-25 Catherine had picked butterfly. Couldn't work out! Do another.
- W2-25 Confusion over cable method.
- W2-26 Picot cast off instructions confused – long-winded. Amy tries to explain. Margaret's picot not right – didn't go back to \*, but beginning.
- W2-26 Showing Kiki byo. Later, keeps going wrong.
- W2-26 Anne – this is easier (than picking up open stitches). Amy – yes, and not as dangerous, can't undo, and can go very chunky.
- W2-27 Confusion over bells pattern – how written. Can write so clearer, would be longer. What I did not necessarily right, trying to be concise. Might change how written. Kiki – don't know what experienced knitters would make of it.
- W2-27 Julia went wrong. Amy – can fix.
- W2-27 Kiki gets it. Realises it's symmetrical.
- W2-28 Anne, Julia, Kiki need help. Kiki – yard hard to knit. Dodgy bit. Take out? Amy – no, have dodgy bell. Julia doesn't think hers looks right, but is. Amy explains pattern.
- W2-28 Alex checks meaning in pattern. 'That's what I did, otherwise wouldn't have had right number of stitches'. Amy – that's how written in original book.
- W2-28/9 Anne totally wrong, didn't cast any off. Amy explains. Anne – oh yes, didn't realise, only 3 rows! (didn't read ahead) Amy shows correct cast off, Anne realises what she did. Amy suggests how to change instructions.
- W2-29 Julia dubious. Amy – lovely!
- W2-29 Take home patterns? Yes. And will put on web.

#### **Presentation: stitch-hacking**

- W2-30 Another treatment – stitch-hack. Started it all off, popped into my head. Most garments in exhibition (gives details). Pics on web. Story of first item. Do a little taster.
- W2-30 First, show end point. [wow, amazing] Story of Jayfor. Arty thing – info from label. Like text/typography. Where grafting is, cut stitch. Opened row, held safe. Laddering, reorganising, column by column. Grafted back (row of sewing).
- W2-30 Chart to plan out. Make graph paper to correct gauge. (Group asking questions to check understanding.) This is my extreme version. Have finer ones! Addictive, like x stitch, to see image. Reveals itself column by column. Kiki – like slow-motion scan.
- W2-30 As absorbing as knitting. Like hard knitting, not watching TV too!
- W2-30 Kiki – mindboggling! Anne – amazing!

#### **Practical activity: stitch-hacking**

- W2-30 Give out sample fabrics. Just ladder one stitch. Safe when away from 1<sup>st</sup> line.
- W2-30 Latch tool. Machine needle, different sizes. Try... can have crochet hook if prefer. [demonstrates]

- W2-31 Kiki – can imagine just doing that for hours! Rhythmic.
- W2-31 Everyone has a go. K side – K. Turn over – makes P. Love it, great. Satisfying click.
- W2-31 Margaret – you’ve done that for each column? Can’t believe how neat. Incredible. Kiki – is that all?
- W2-31 When done reverse column, try 4 from each side – swap.
- W2-32 Next to 4x4, duplicate. Often go up/down 1. Better to learn by doing.
- W2-32 Kiki looking at chart for Jayfor, understanding ‘so you did...’
- W2-33 Stitch-hack nice, don’t have to calculate or worry about yarn!
- W2-33 All getting on ok with latch tool.
- W2-33 Conversation about how long hacking takes.
- W2-33 Kiki – can do in different colour? Adapt somehow? No... Effective in light colour, fabric with sheen.
- W2-33 Going to do initials on sample jumper. Anne – so fine! Shows chart for finest one.
- W2-33 Anne 1 stitch out. Kiki skipped a column.
- W2-33 Shows ladder 2, reform. Stay in middle.
- W2-34 Try 3 st version. Very chunky on chunky fabric, neater if finer. Kiki – didn’t stay in middle. Can move?
- W2-34 This fabric one strand. Others, multi or might be stuck together. For 2s and 3s, yarn in new position. Steam, will look better. Conversation re steaming.
- W2-35 Kiki – in what order pick up 3? Outside in? Symmetrical? Yes. Very knitterly! [conv re knitterly]

**Practical activity: grafting**

- W2-35 Grafting. Goes with stitch-hacking to close fabric. Julia has done. Anyone else? Alex – for socks. Annoying to do (on needles). Seamless, but toes wear through. Do 3-n cast off, stronger.
- W2-35 Passes out grafting samples.
- W2-35 Grafting – join 2 pieces with open stitches. Creates structure of row of knit, seamless. I do in contrast thread – too clever, no-one knows what I did! And if use original yarn, have to graft tight to tie knot. Lots of patterns, graft with stitches on needles. I can’t follow (Julia/Alex – no). Laborious. Don’t know if right till off needles. Go wrong, get stuck. I do it with everything flat. Visual. So if grafting, hold stitches safe on thread. Gets in way, but more flexible than a needle!
- W2-35 Put stitches onto waste thread.
- W2-35/6 Conversation re EZ grafting instructions in books. Amy reads EZ pithy quote about grafting.
- W2-36 Going to use contrast thread so can see. Margaret – glory in it! (EZ reference)
- W2-36 Depending how stitched through, will face one way or other. Just be vigilant, make flat. Easier than trying to always go same way.
- W2-36 Simplest and most delightful on stocking stitch. Can do on other structures. Ribs only if knitted same way. Half stitch out otherwise. Better to discover – but bear in mind!
- W2-36 Amy does demo, explains. Catherine – like surgery! Do too loose, can tighten up.
- W2-36 Kiki – makes link with swiss darning. The same? Must be... Amy- yes, making structure of knitting.
- W2-36 Alex – gosh, a doddle when flat!
- W2-37 People having problems, showing again.
- W2-37 This is excellent. It’s lovely making the V.

**Other**

*Web resource*

- W2-9 New stuff on website – info for each step. Tips and point to resources. Can’t put resources online, but sharing with you.
- W2-10 Example of what’s in resource – advice on colour in fairisle. Building up bit by bit.
- W2-18 Anne – must look at website, not had access to internet for weeks. Back now.

- W2-29 Will put embellish patterns on web with new photos/instructions.
- W2-36 Amy shows grafting instructions for pdf resource: EZ, swiss darning instructions (clearest I've found). Hadn't included most mending as not knit-based. Mend It book instructions for proper knit darning.
- W2-38 [for homework] Will put stuff used so far on web. Not there yet. Will add integral embellish and replace edge section.
- W2-41 Margaret – yarn/needle stuff going on web? Amy – there now. Not others' advice yet. Starting to work out what.

*Choice, authorship, editing*

- W2-26 Julia losing track/rhythm picking up. Amy – ditched more complex ones. Good!
- W2-35 When doing step by step samples, realised needed to graft. Chose to do instructions with grafting done flat, way I thought more straightforward and 90% in workshops agree.

*Need for guidance*

- W2-40 Only tried some treatments and some versions. Options are limitless. So if want to do something not sampled, I will help figure out how to do it (skeleton) – to same stage as others.
- W2-40 [to Catherine] will figure out that butterfly calculation!

*Difficulty of explaining, naming*

- W2-28 Bit mindblowing trying to get head round how to guide people through process. Head round all the elements.
- W2-41 Amy – don't think I'll sit for hours this time!
- W2-41 Amy – had thought I'd work everything out, then do workshops. Realised impossible. But also better interactive. Had done stuff, not sure how to explain! Next time, more followable. By trying to explain, realise what's hard to explain, what's confusing. Julia – how we've understood.
- W2-41 Useful to have to put on web, becomes formal, not scrappy. Have to resolve – calculators, tables etc. And work within structure of website, pages with titles. Have archived so can see previous versions.

*Using yarn/needle chart*

- W2-24 Anne uses chart. Picked yarn, 4 Nm. Nothing on line of 4! Amy – use gist. Catherine, similar.
- W2-28 Margaret/Amy using chart.
- W2-41 Yarn/needle chart seemed to work, trust more than info from others.

*Reflection on workshop 1 re-knitting discussions, activities*

- W2-1 Kiki – didn't understand yarn stuff last time.
- W2-2 Amy – reflection on last time – very helpful. Hadn't tried to explain before. Made lots of notes, became clear.
- W2-24 Kiki thinks counted st/10cm wrong. Explain, near enough.

*Feelings about web resource*

- W2-41 Catherine – fab to have resource on the web.

*Amy responding to interests of group*

- W2-27 Amy – and I want to overcome difficulties for you (of working with fine fabrics, as I know you want to do cardi). Catherine – yes, that's the kind of knits you would do.

*Stitch-hack*

- W2-38 Kiki – if stitch-hack a letter on big item, don't have to undo whole column? Has to come down? Can go up or down. [demo] If very fine, stitch through stitches before undo. Undo to width needed – planned on chart. Finish at back. Hold stitches safe. Plan area back to stocking stitch, otherwise hard to graft.
- W2-38 Anne – if graft with separate thread, tie on? Yes. [demo] Kiki – can see immediately if wrong. Tie in reef knot, weave in.
- W2-39 On stocking stitch can ladder up, so grafting like underline.

## FOR CHAPTER 6: AMATEUR DESIGNING

### Activities (on-topic conversation)

#### **Presentation: inspiration gathered**

- W2-1 Discussion – how much inspiration brought. Lots of books so brought essence.
- W2-1 Reflection on experience of looking for inspiration. Alex, 2 themes. Julia – come down to what I know is me. Kiki – think you change, but don't. Margaret – yes, colours. Lots to go through, hard to narrow down.
- W2-3 Anne inspiration. Pattern book – like pictures, colours, feelings (styling of photos). Like the patterns. Gudrun S catalogue – like the feeling though gmts wouldn't suit. Sort of ethnicity.
- W2-3 Alex inspiration. White, clean, tidy. Landscapes (because walk a lot). Exuberance but coordinated, not eclectic or thrown together. Margaret – can see that from what you wear.
- W2-4 2 themes – white, linear, graphic. Colour but still tidy, regular. Fairisles.
- W2-5 Alex's house tidy, linear like inspiration.
- W2-4 Margaret inspiration. Pre-Raphaelite, Arts & Crafts. Went to show at Tate, love colours. Also astrology. Symbolism in cards. Like how everything has a meaning. Pattern books – love them, glorious, phenomenal. Would take forever. Middle section of Rowan book – love looking what people have done with knitting.
- W2-5 Anne. Realising what she likes. I never seem to have the things I say I like. Compares her 'homely' inspiration to Margaret's art.
- W2-6 Julia/Kiki – hard to pin down, got loads.
- W2-6 Kiki inspiration. Showing patterns she likes.
- W2-6 Catherine inspiration. Brought nana's patterns. Like the textures. Like shape of neck, gloves attached? Brought pictures for colours.
- W2-6 Kiki inspiration. Brought sleeve of jumper. Julia – would have been back in fashion now. Didn't know how to repair. Kept sleeve, thought try to knit one day.
- W2-6 Julia inspiration. Brought son's jumper. Was going to throw out. Wanted for colours. Haven't thought how to use.
- W2-7 Kiki inspiration. Bits chopped off items in past. Mad aunt leggings, friend's, kids clothes. Pillowcase from mum's Hungarian family. Something made by great-aunt. Something painted by friend. Mum's samples. Always liked Mexican, Aztec geometric. Did at school? (W2-9). Art deco, art nouveau. Like bright and subtle.
- W2-7 Julia inspiration. Shells. Realising a theme – coming back to same things. Colour, texture, greys. Fabric from Japan. Embroidery sample, magazine tears in file.
- W2-7 Catherine inspiration. Brought own photos – textures, colours. Things that remind me of a happy day. Kiki – nostalgia. Catherine – yes, good grief, been born in the wrong time! Friend gave mum's sewing stuff when she died. And lettering – if I think of the windows I've done it's always had a bit of lettering.
- W2-8 Now, share between groups. Can help each other if know what interested in.
- W2-8 Margaret inspiration summary. Colour, beauty. Pre-Raphaelite, Arts & Crafts. Colours, shows favourite picture.
- W2-8 Anne inspiration summary. Homey, children, colours. Wool from friend's sheep.
- W2-8 Alex inspiration summary. Clean, linear, tidy. Shows item kept before, to get mind round matching colours. Colours, exuberance. Controlled in fairisle. Purple in Margaret's picture brings picture to life. 'It's that spark that is very difficult to have'. I'm quite controlled in my use of colour, can't get beyond that. Feel quite ordinary about it. Would like to be... Might knit something different, but wouldn't wear. Have to feel comfortable and wouldn't in mad colours.
- W2-8 Catherine inspiration summary. Mishmash. Have fairisle too, grandma great fairisle knitter. Texture – own photos. Others seeing subtle colours, nostalgia. Catherine – a little shocking.
- W2-8 Kiki inspiration summary. Love Catherine's subtle colours. Mine not subtle at all. Mixture. Been collecting for years. Save for one day you might know what to do with them. W2-9 A mixture of nostalgia and hope for the future!
- W2-9 Julia inspiration summary. Geometric too. Kiki – European influence! Like brighter

colours and pattern. Don't do in my knitting!

**Discussion: using inspiration**

- W2-9 Think inspiration plan worked. Usually, brief then inspiration. But danger too much. Advice from books, don't put all eggs in one basket. Resource – can dip in. Whereas if decide then gather, too much. And it's a nice thing to do [mmm].
- W2-9 Question of how it translates. Colour – easy to understand and translate. Pattern/mood – take more translation into language of knitting. Allow yourself to take some steps. Knit-based easy to translate to knit. [Actually maybe not!] Stitch, pattern, trim, silhouette. We'll start with colour.

**Practical activity: colour matching**

- W2-10 Different advice on colour. Start with my way – playful. Like chopping, playful, not worrying. Use fabric from old shade cards. Sorted into colour groups. And buttons (didn't use). Shows sketchbook and HK Design Book. Image – liked colour. Easy to get wrong shades, especially for non-colour. Brain shortcuts. With image, can try to match.
- W2-10 Task: 1 or 2 items from inspiration. Try to match colours. Exact, right shade. Proportion, lots/little. Do as collage or windings, stick in book. Sellotape/staplers.
- W2-10 Kiki – hard to match colours. Buying thread, shop assistant good.
- W2-10 Would do in steps – image, wrap, get yarns, knit. Could think about texture too. Do by trial and error.
- W2-10 Don't pre-judge colours. Alex – my problem, I get hidebound by what I've seen or been told. W2-11 Kiki – told all greens go together. Matter of opinion? (later) No-one saying this doesn't go with that. Good!
- W2-11 If doing at home, could use yarn, fabric, paint cards. Would have less to choose from. If choosing actual yarns, lots less. Part of translating – be prepared to go a few steps away. Maybe alter companion colours. Use process as a tool.
- W2-11 Alex – kept this for ages, wouldn't have believed so many colours. Never looked so closely. Margaret – same. Amy – perception, brain screens out.
- W2-12 Working out how to collage yarn/swatches. Discussion of Julia's – checking ok. Trying for same mood.
- W2-13 Kiki stressing about exact shade. Amy – a tool, not a final thing. Hedge bets.
- W2-13 Stick down collages and take photos.

**Discussion: colour**

- W2-12 Shows books on colour. Marked pages, colour wheel. I don't use that process. Flick through, see whether info useful. Alex – maybe to change colour scheme, make it right for you. Anne/Margaret – can't see how would use. Opposites, toning.
- W2-12 Alex talking about using colour wheel, reading off leaflet, doesn't mean a lot. Match method more real, visual.
- W2-12 Yarns look different knitted up. Would go through process, match, get yarns, then play. Maybe ditch one, alter. Adapt takes several steps.
- W2-12 Mailles book – inspiration and knit. Anne – nice books, nice to look through.
- W2-13 Conversation re using something designed as inspiration for colour. Reassurance if less confident. Photo – no sanctioning. Not less creative, you chose it. Julia – and use for different purpose. Just starting points. If simpler colour story, more confident in doing it yourself. In unexpected, more risky without inspiration. More uncertain of success.
- W2-14 Reflections. Enjoyed it, good starting point.
- W2-14 Amy shows web colour wheel. Interactive. Generally thought may be useful. Amy – I do how shown you. Match, translate. Don't use theory.
- W2-14 Alex – can do two colours, with three have trouble. Perception problem. Can't really see it. Start to worry. Amy – do by playing.

**Presentation: design process**

- W2-15 New chart. Complicated instructions, so many variables, couldn't cover all without creating something of such complexity no-one would use. Epiphany – choose,

- adapt, execute. Explaining chart. Ingredients – you, what like to wear. Yarn stash, inspiration. Garment. Colour, fibre, stitch. Choose what can do.
- W2-16 Everything interrelated. Was trying to write a sequence, circle better. Various factors – not always in play. Tools – spacing table, calculator. Excel file. Since put up, keep using myself. Interactive Excel version – can download. Trans options shows you the options. Spacing tables changed since last time.

**Presentation: sample garment**

- W2-16 Shows sample garment. Trying things out. Not ‘designing’. Cashmere, 60 st/10cm. Explain process of doing.
- W2-17 Used Bohus as inspiration – multicolour with slip. Chose TV set transition. Like bobbles, constantly changing pattern. Hard to get so happy with it. Did samples, knew wanted to use red and pink. Then thought, unravelled cashmere. Used substitute yarn. Fiddled about. Didn’t write down. Got closer, then tried actual.
- W2-17 Technical questions. How got floats at front? Alex explains.
- W2-17 Ironed cashmere straight to use. As doing, realised liked cashmere, changed pattern. Still adapting in execute phase. Didn’t sample rib, would have re-done if didn’t like.
- W2-17 Then embellished. Chose to do here. Picked up, too full – splaying. Re-do – not a problem. Knitted-on, find more satisfying [mmm].
- W2-17 How picked up? Crochet hook onto needle.
- W2-17 Would you wear it now? Yes!
- W2-17 Mocking up – photocopied, but still hard to visualise, not sure. Basted for embellishment. Visual line, on body – would get wrong if flat.
- W2-17 Cuff – used TV set, adapted. Adapted version could go back in resource, someone else could use and adapt. Catherine – even just the picture, the idea you could do that, gives confidence.
- W2-18 Catherine – like way used cashmere. Integrated. Amy – yes, risky. Didn’t know if would work. How many ends? Twisted?

**Discussion: homework**

- W2-38 [conversation – don’t want them to close down, worry, not play] So thought I would keep it structured – work with 1 of 3 things done so far. Knitting off open stitches, integral embellish, stitch-hack.
- W2-38 Info will be on web. Stitch-hack more open. Use paper, doesn’t have to be exact gauge. Take a sheet of knit paper. Could plot out and hack in.
- W2-38 Homework open. Could try one trim on different fabric, different yarn, combination of colours. 1 version or 20, fine.
- W2-39 If stuck, can come round, I can drop in.
- W2-39 Suggested use items from inspiration. Opportunity to think, this colour’s like inspiration item, have I got yarn that would look nice.
- W2-39 Take things with you – tools, scrap fabric. If forget, can post.
- W2-39 List of things to bring to W3 on homework sheet. Potential garments to alter, yarn from stash if want to use, representation of inspiration resource.
- W2-39 Bring potential garments to alter – don’t have to be ones showed at interview.
- W2-40 [Thinking ahead to W3] Will discuss ideas for garments, generating lots of ideas, not just first one!
- W2-40 By end of W3, decide garment and vague idea of what to do to it. Figure out by sampling – like cardi. Then W4, bring samples. More playing, thinking. So don’t start without more tweaking, support. If stuck, I’m here to help.

**Other**

*Homework (adapting)*

- W2-26 Preview of homework. Try at home – adapting. Take fabric.

*Thinking of own re-knitting project*

- W2-24 Anne trying fine, it beat her last time!
- W2-27 Amy to Anne – like how you did fine again. Anne – fine jumper, need to practise.

- W2-26 Kiki – going diagonal. Could be just what I need for my adaptation!  
 W2-26 Alex finished. Similar to other in book. Narrow, not complicated. An idea for her re-knitting project, might not do.

*Design process*

- W2-38 Today – bit of a taster. Encouraged you to get started on adapt idea.  
 W2-38 When knit from pattern, choose and execute.  
 W2-38 When used different yarn, reworked stitches, different size (Alex – or knitted front band up not picked up) – you adapt.  
 W2-38 Re-knitting has to involve adapting. Couldn't have designed prescriptively.  
 W2-38 On real thing, until do something irreparable, can change mind – part of the fun. All adapting.

*Inspiration resource*

- W2-18 Show inspiration item – jumper as if with replaced cuffs.

*Sampling*

- W2-10 Would do in steps – image, wrap, get yarns, knit. Kiki – in everything I do, want to do all at once.  
 W2-26 Alex – slipper socks, interesting construction. Amy – thought you would like fiddling with stitches. Alex – didn't like fine, made me ill.

*Being creative, ideas*

- W2-5 Margaret – Always wanted to knit a picture. Nice to do, once in life. Would like to create ... that's come out of myself, rather than ... obviously from things I've seen and liked. Would be imaginative.

*Knowledge of designers*

- W2-4 Alex links Pre-Raphaelites to Rowan style.

*Using inspiration*

- W2-5 Margaret [how to use?] would draw from this, colours. Also brought wool, like colours. It does start making you think of pattern more. How to use colours not just in stripes.

*Space to play*

- W2-10 Matching colours. Don't worry, try to get feeling back! Should give you a piece of knit to chop to loosen up!

*Re-knitting ideas*

- W2-6 Catherine image – don't know if gloves attached. Kiki – could be an adaptation!  
 W2-6 Something Kiki brought. Looks like mistake made. Idea for re-knitting?  
 W2-12 Alex making note of knitted-on braid. Idea for jumper!  
 W2-17 Anne – been thinking about thicker on finer. Would look a mess. That looks fabulous! [sample jumper] Amy – I was worried. Trial and error. Yours is drapy. Maybe better with a drapy but thicker fabric.  
 W2-40 Kiki – is there a treatment, insert [godet]? Difficult? Don't know why, in my head, that's what I want to do.

*Saving things, ideas for design from past*

- W2-6 Kiki – brought sleeve of jumper. Didn't know how to repair. Kept sleeve, thought try to knit one day.  
 W2-6 Julia brought son's jumper. Was going to throw out. Wanted for colours.  
 W2-7 Kiki – bits chopped off items in past.  
 W2-8 Kiki – been collecting for years. Save for one day you might know what to do with them.

*Colour*

- W2-1 [before say going to do colour today] Alex saying not good at colour, tried to analyse, using colour wheel, trying to educate herself to change to suit her.  
 W2-4 Margaret – love patterns. Alex – so expensive. If don't use their wool, hard to get them to tone, get nice colours.

- W2-6 Problems with colour. Not good at matching, looks naff. Modern dyes, harsh. Trouble matching in shop.
- W2-8 Conversation about controlled/uncontrolled colour. Margaret – picture, purple unexpected. Alex – brings picture to life. ‘It’s that spark that is very difficult to have’. I’m quite controlled in my use of colour, can’t get beyond that. Feel quite ordinary about it. Would like to be...
- W2-13 Julia – think of colours to put together. Use what I’ve got, always wrong tones. Idea’s there, but right tone difficult.
- W2-15 Anne – go shopping, thing in head, can’t find. Would be same with colours. Granddaughter’s dress. In book, too sludgy. Colours not as nice in acrylic. End up, just misses what you wanted.

*View of own skill re design*

- W2-8 Alex - Purple in Margaret’s picture brings picture to life. ‘It’s that spark that is very difficult to have’. I’m quite controlled in my use of colour, can’t get beyond that. Feel quite ordinary about it. Would like to be... Might knit something different, but wouldn’t wear. Have to feel comfortable and wouldn’t in mad colours.

*Mocking up*

- W2-29 Amy tries to explain mockup calculator, copying bells bigger/smaller.
- W2-30 Chart to plan out stitch-hack. Bit like x stitch. Copied to size wanted. On design process diagram, mocking up. Use photocopying like drawing.

*Creative ideas resource*

- W2-40 Creative ideas resource – pics on wall. Not altered items, but make you think. Not necessarily things I personally want to do. If see something, not necessarily something you want to do, bring it for resource. Been round M&S with phone!

**VARIOUS**

*Evaluating samples, what I like*

- W2-34 Margaret – like P version of chunky.

*How would I use this? Could you do...?*

- W2-27 Margaret – finished, pretty. Trying to think how would use it. Amy – come look at pics. M – could edge something. [sees pics] Wow, yes, could go where you want it. Amy – and can change gauge more than if knitting off open sts.

*Labelling samples*

- W2-41 Tags/labels for samples.

*Comparing previous adapting and re-knitting*

- W2-27 Amy – when adapting, e.g. different yarn. Getting back to what should have been.
- W2-28 Re-knitting takes it somewhere else.
- W2-28 Margaret – having a belief that what end up with is alright, not a mishmash of what it should have been. Amy – sampling gives me that confidence.
- W2-38 When knit from pattern, choose and execute.
- W2-38 When used different yarn, reworked stitches, different size (Alex – or knitted front band up not picked up) – you adapt. Done adapting, intentionally/not, if item not turned out right. Tends to be because something’s gone wrong. Alex – it’s necessity. Putting right, not deliberate, going to do this.
- W2-38 Re-knitting has to involve adapting. Couldn’t have designed prescriptively.

*Confidence*

- W2-28 Anne – 1 stitch left over. Alex – I did, just cast off. Kiki – when experienced you can dare to say these things!
- W2-35/6 Kiki – recommend EZ? Yes to read. Alex – not for beginner. Opinionated! Story about mittens. If you have knitted, read it, takes the fear out of it. You do it that way, if it works for you. Teaches you to not get hung up on things.

*Learning from mistakes*

- W2-29 Anne goes wrong. Amy – invented something new. Kiki – how great discoveries

made! Amy – unusual stitches book, group used mistakes. Anne – but have to remember how you did it.

#### *Existing skills*

- W2-26 Alex – it's like picking up for fronts. Do without thinking. Count and pick 2 in 3, 4 in 5, whatever.
- W2-32 Kiki – tried to do swiss darning. Thought can't be difficult. Looked in 2 books. Just couldn't get needle going in right place.
- W2-37 Julia – grafting lovely on shoulders. Conversation with Alex about how to graft shoulders.

#### *So much to learn*

- W2-36 Amy showed instructions for swiss darning, knit darning. If want to be shown anything like this, can do in and amongst. Anne – we need to come for a year! Will get head round this, it'll be over! Kiki – and need workshops for ordinary knitting!

#### *Satisfaction*

- W2-33 When done stitch-hack column, I have same feeling as row of knit.
- W2-33 K/P, could have knitted. If ladder 2, reform – couldn't do another way.

#### *Understanding knitting*

- W2-32 Amy – stitch-hacking makes me understand my knitting better [mmm].

#### *Relationship with me*

- W2-32 Conversation about exhibition with stitch-hacking in.

#### *Knitterly, assumptions about knitterly preferences*

- W2-27 Margaret – how do that? [re pic] Amy – don't know. Would knit on. M – yes, better. Part of garment more. [Developing preferences?] Love idea of knitting on.
- W2-35 Kiki – in what order pick up 3? Outside in? Symmetrical? Yes. Very knitterly! Kiki – been working on understanding knitterly. Read string of conversation. Interesting. Some superficial. Felt left out, can't be knitterly, don't know enough. But I'm learning! Amy – topic for discussion, not absolute.
- W2-37 Kiki – I've found something I can do! Amy – grafting is very knitterly! Kiki – I'm so happy!

#### *Perceptions*

- W2-23 [Embellish activity] This one too nice to chop! Choose one already used.
- W2-27 Margaret – my view of knitting really is just going boing [gestures]
- W2-38 to Margaret – what did you say it had done to your ideas of what knitting was? [gestures] It just opens your mind, it's really liberating.
- W2-31 Kiki – never knew knit sts not square. Never bothered to look.
- W2-31 Anne – can't imagine doing this to write a name!
- W2-36 Alex – gosh, a doddle when flat! When say grafting, people say ooh, serious stuff.
- W2-39 Bring potential garments to alter. Have to be hand-knitted? No. Julia – could go to charity shop. Might do that. Kiki – or something we've just found.

#### *Their view of my role*

- W2-38 Catherine – and that's what we want from you, isn't it? That hand-holding.
- W2-41 Catherine – you're providing us with a starting point and then we'll create. Space to move.

#### *Responding to Amy's instructions*

- W2-2 Julia – keep inspiration in 2 groups? Had in one, thought should do as told!

#### *Future intentions/aspirations*

- W2-6 Catherine – aspiring to be like Margaret R, own sheep, dyeing.
- W2-13 Anne – should get stitch book.
- W2-20 Anne – could spend a fortune on all these knit books. Did with gardening books.
- W2-41 [to Margaret] Liked how much you matched your book! Margaret – yes. Makes you think. Could knit a top to be my picture top. Amy – would you feel differently about it? Margaret – oh, fantastic. Would love to.

W2-41 Margaret excited about using yarn/needle info. Can figure out my yarn and what will do what.

*Playful/not*

W2-38 Before do for real garments, have feeling would become very serious again. [yes! terrifying! won't want to do it! especially if it involves cutting!] Don't want us to close down.

*Placing yourself within family*

W2-7 Kiki – mum's samples. 'We never get past samples apparently in our family'.  
W2-8 Catherine – Have fairisle too, grandma great fairisle knitter.  
W2-9 Julia inspiration summary. Geometric too. Kiki – European influence!

*Willingness to spend time sewing*

W2-2 Anne making project requiring lots of sewing ends. (Sometimes an evening of it.)

*Glasses for close work*

W2-11, W2-28

*Time*

W2-33 Conversation about how long hacking takes.  
W2-34 Julia re 2 st ladder – nice quick one!

*Historical references*

W2-31 Initial idea – names into jumpers. Haven't done it! Except fairisle.  
W2-31 Amy – lots of places knitted initials into jumpers. Alex – Sanquhar. Catherine – fishermen's jumpers. Amy – yes, and Welsh, Nordic.

*Fashion*

W2-6 Kiki – brought sleeve of jumper. Julia – would have been back in fashion now.

*Learning, realising what I like*

W2-12 [after matching activity] Anne – think I like textures, stitches more than pattern. Not fairisle/pictures.  
W2-28 Amy – yarn hiding structure. Kiki – learned, not good yarn choice.

*Invention*

W2-31 Kiki – is stitch-hacking your term? Yes, but don't invent in knitting. But this is repair technique, not using to repair. Alex – a sideways step of what exists.

*Re-knitting in wider context, motivations*

W2-31 Would only seem worthwhile in society with lots of stuff. Can change items to be more interesting. If didn't have enough, wouldn't do. Kiki – and leisure of time to play, not just surviving.

*Hacking, subversion*

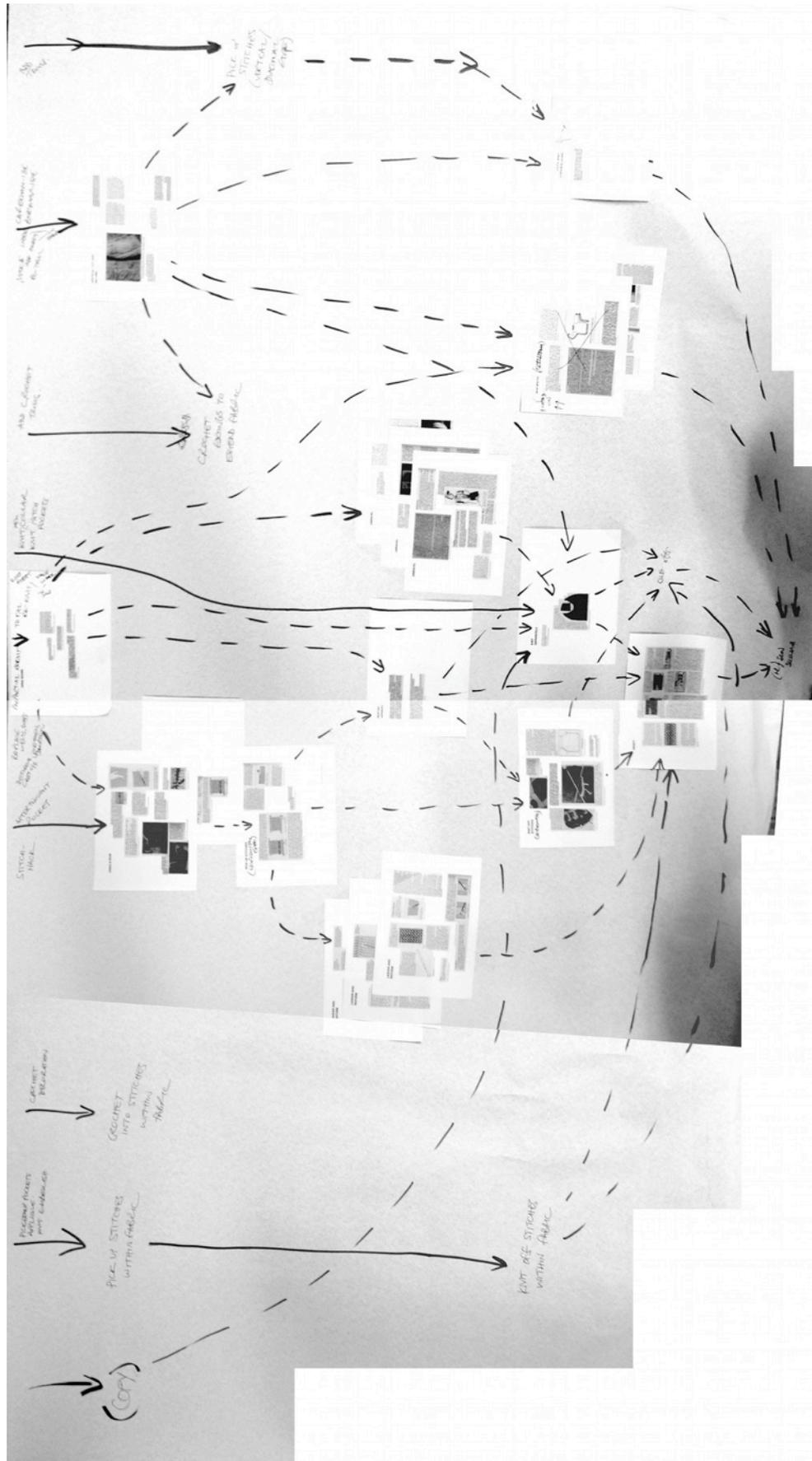
W2-31 Kiki – is stitch-hacking your term? Like computer. Yes, hacking = reorganising.  
W2-33 Stitch-hack nice, don't have to calculate or worry about yarn! Catherine – feels subversive too.

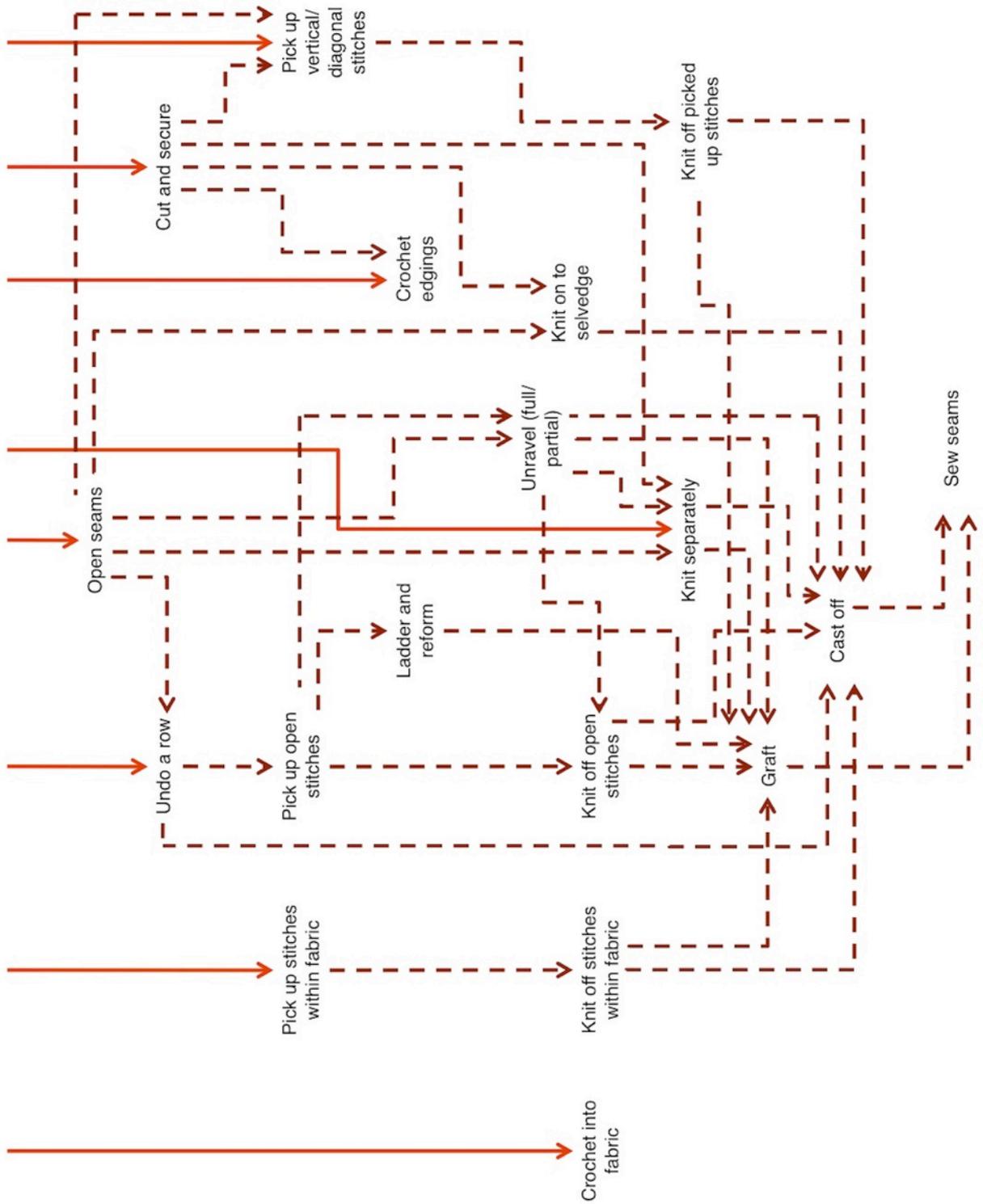
*Accounts of past projects*

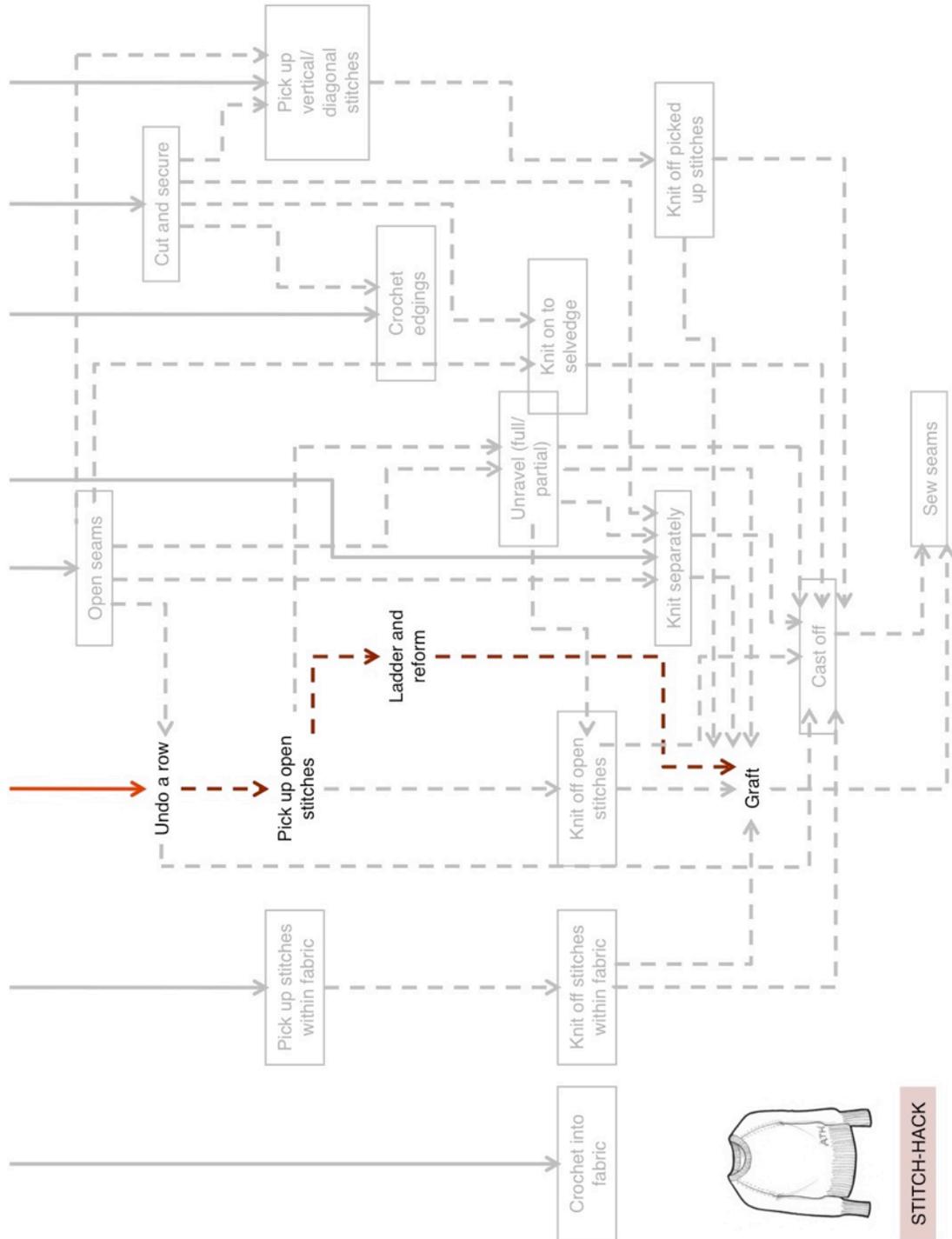
W2-1 Alex – dk patterns in 4 ply for premature son.  
W2-2 Kiki – item brought for advice.  
W2-2 Julia – asking advice about item making (kite jacket).  
W2-4 Alex – fairisles knitted in past, Shetland museum one.  
W2-6 Kiki – Rowan denim.  
W2-6 Catherine – knitted from Rowan Denim, started and never finished that one!  
W2-6 Catherine – knitted cardis for daughter  
W2-26 Alex – slipper socks, interesting construction.  
W2-35 Alex – kilt socks  
W2-37 Alex – scarves made for grandchildren.

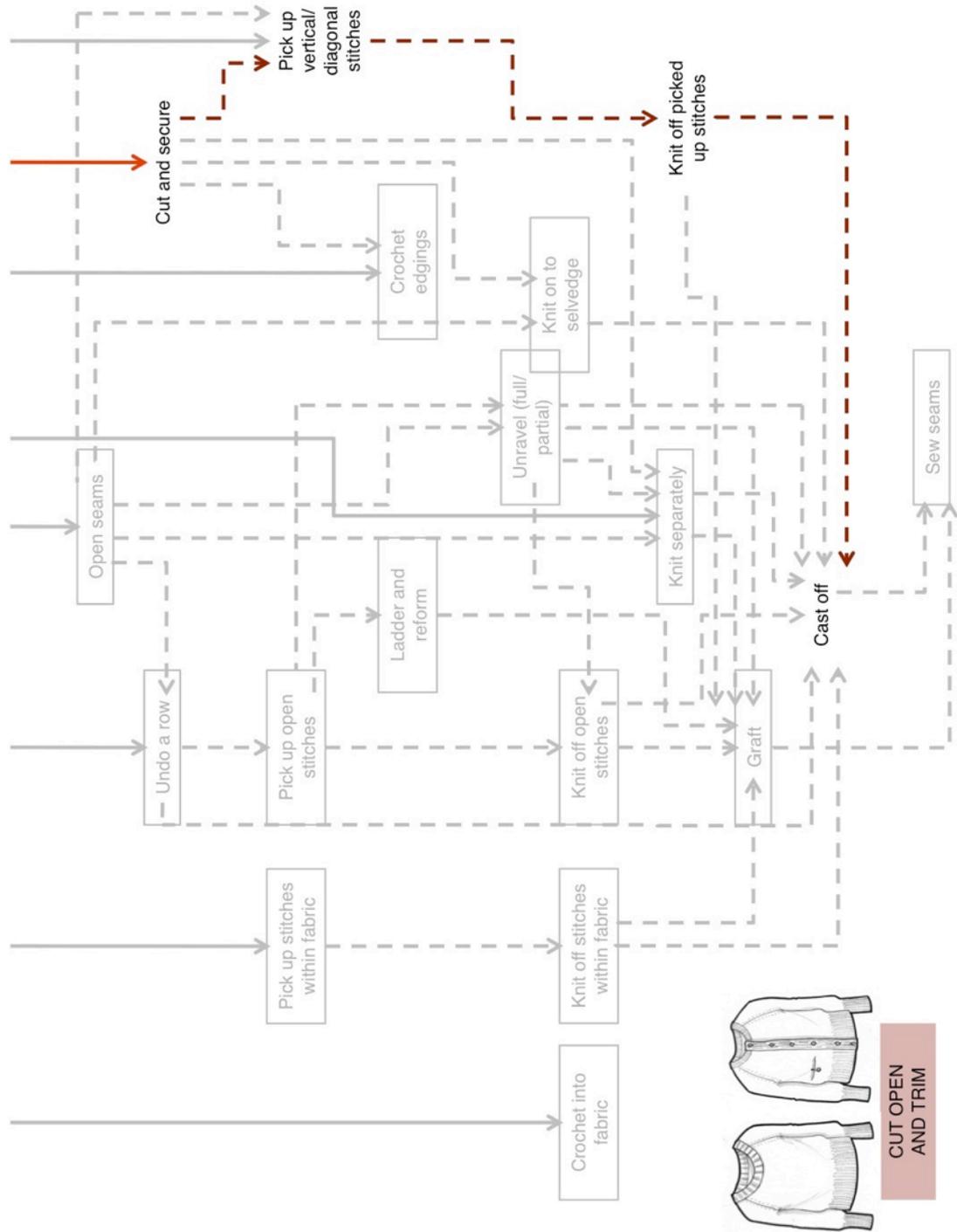












During the sampling process, I realised that more dramatic changes in gauge could be achieved by working the decrease as two steps. Each step could be a different ratio; their multipliers would be combined to produce the resultant multiplier. For example, a 2-step decrease of 2:1 (multiplier 0.50), then 4:3 (multiplier 0.75) has a resultant multiplier of 0.375 (0.50 x 0.75).

To establish an initial list of the 2-step options, I multiplied every combination of the ratios between 3:1 and 10:9 together, creating a list of 441 combinations (Appendix F2). There are several options for some multipliers (written to 2 decimal places). Initially, I refined the list to 158 options, according to several factors which I thought would affect how pleasant they would be to knit. When I started to sample, using the options I had approved, I realised that two factors were more important than the others. Firstly, I needed to eliminate all multipliers below 0.50, as I had with the 1-step table. Secondly, if you knit ratios without a common factor in between, the knitting looks irregular. For example, for a 2-step decrease of 5:2 then 3:2, the first step arranges the stitches into groups of 2; the second step cuts across these groupings, picking up groups of 3. Elegance in knitting depends on continuity of line; to achieve this, the groups of stitches between the two steps need to be related by a common factor.

I eliminated all options including ratios with multipliers below 0.50, and the ratios with irregular spacings. I also removed all options including ratios 10:9, 9:8, 8:7 and 7:6. These ratios have a limited gauge changing effect; from my sampling I felt that the 2-step decreases should be used for more dramatic changes in gauge, and that this effect should be quite evenly distributed between the two steps. From the remaining 64 options, I selected those in which the second number of the first ratio, and the second factor of the second ratio, were equal or in which one was a multiple of the other. For example:

3:2 – 2:1 (numbers equal)

5:4 – 2:1 (second number of first ratio is a multiple of first number of second ratio)

5:3 – 9:7 (first number of second ratio is a multiple of second number of first ratio)

This produced an edited list of 37 options. Each step of each option could be worked as a 2tog (plain), or a 3tog (slip), decrease. This produced four variations for each option, although I eliminated the *slip-plain (3tog/2tog)* option on the basis that it was not worth working a slip transition only on the first step. I drew out diagrams for each combination, and used them to establish whether the decreases would line up, or clash. The diagrams also revealed alternative spacing options, which I would not otherwise have identified. This sifting process narrowed down the list to 21 'approved' ratio combinations, some of which had multiple spacing options. I displayed these combinations, with a recommendation that *slip-slip* transitions not be used for fine gauge fabrics, in the 2-step table (Appendix F3).

## Appendix F2 Full list of 2-step decrease options

Resultant multiplier	step 1	step 2
0.11	3:1	3:1
0.13	3:1	8:3
0.13	3:1	5:2
0.13	8:3	3:1
0.13	5:2	3:1
0.14	3:1	7:3
0.14	8:3	8:3
0.14	7:3	3:1
0.15	3:1	9:4
0.15	8:3	5:2
0.15	5:2	8:3
0.15	9:4	3:1
0.16	8:3	7:3
0.16	5:2	5:2
0.16	7:3	8:3
0.17	3:1	2:1
0.17	8:3	9:4
0.17	5:2	7:3
0.17	7:3	5:2
0.17	9:4	8:3
0.17	2:1	3:1
0.18	5:2	9:4
0.18	7:3	7:3
0.18	9:4	5:2
0.19	3:1	9:5
0.19	3:1	7:4
0.19	8:3	2:1
0.19	7:3	9:4
0.19	9:4	7:3
0.19	2:1	8:3
0.19	9:5	3:1
0.19	7:4	3:1
0.20	3:1	5:3
0.20	5:2	2:1
0.20	9:4	9:4
0.20	2:1	5:2
0.20	5:3	3:1
0.21	3:1	8:5
0.21	8:3	9:5
0.21	8:3	7:4
0.21	7:3	2:1
0.21	2:1	7:3
0.21	9:5	8:3
0.21	7:4	8:3
0.21	8:5	3:1
0.22	3:1	3:2
0.22	5:2	9:5
0.22	9:4	2:1
0.22	2:1	9:4
0.22	9:5	5:2
0.22	3:2	3:1
0.23	3:1	10:7
0.23	8:3	5:3
0.23	8:3	8:5
0.23	5:2	7:4
0.23	7:4	5:2
0.23	5:3	8:3
0.23	8:5	8:3
0.23	10:7	3:1
0.24	3:1	7:5
0.24	5:2	5:3
0.24	7:3	9:5
0.24	7:3	7:4
0.24	9:5	7:3
0.24	7:4	7:3
0.24	5:3	5:2
0.24	7:5	3:1
0.25	3:1	4:3
0.25	8:3	3:2
0.25	5:2	8:5
0.25	9:4	9:5
0.25	9:4	7:4
0.25	2:1	2:1
0.25	9:5	9:4
0.25	7:4	9:4
0.25	8:5	5:2
0.25	3:2	8:3
0.25	4:3	3:1
0.26	3:1	9:7
0.26	8:3	10:7
0.26	7:3	5:3
0.26	5:3	7:3
0.26	10:7	8:3
0.26	9:7	3:1
0.27	3:1	5:4
0.27	8:3	7:5
0.27	5:2	3:2
0.27	7:3	8:5
0.27	9:4	5:3

Resultant multiplier	step 1	step 2
0.27	5:3	9:4
0.27	8:5	7:3
0.27	3:2	5:2
0.27	7:5	8:3
0.27	5:4	3:1
0.28	3:1	6:5
0.28	8:3	4:3
0.28	5:2	10:7
0.28	9:4	8:5
0.28	2:1	9:5
0.28	9:5	2:1
0.28	8:5	9:4
0.28	10:7	5:2
0.28	4:3	8:3
0.28	6:5	3:1
0.29	3:1	7:6
0.29	3:1	8:7
0.29	8:3	9:7
0.29	5:2	7:5
0.29	7:3	3:2
0.29	2:1	7:4
0.29	7:4	2:1
0.29	3:2	7:3
0.29	7:5	5:2
0.29	9:7	8:3
0.29	7:6	3:1
0.29	8:7	3:1
0.30	3:1	9:8
0.30	3:1	10:9
0.30	8:3	5:4
0.30	5:2	4:3
0.30	7:3	10:7
0.30	9:4	3:2
0.30	2:1	5:3
0.30	5:3	2:1
0.30	3:2	9:4
0.30	10:7	7:3
0.30	4:3	5:2
0.30	5:4	8:3
0.30	9:8	3:1
0.30	10:9	3:1
0.31	8:3	6:5
0.31	5:2	9:7
0.31	7:3	7:5
0.31	9:4	10:7
0.31	2:1	8:5
0.31	9:5	9:5
0.31	8:5	2:1
0.31	10:7	9:4
0.31	7:5	7:3
0.31	9:7	5:2
0.31	6:5	8:3
0.32	8:3	7:6
0.32	5:2	5:4
0.32	7:3	4:3
0.32	9:4	7:5
0.32	9:5	7:4
0.32	7:4	9:5
0.32	7:5	9:4
0.32	4:3	7:3
0.32	5:4	5:2
0.32	7:6	8:3
0.33	8:3	8:7
0.33	8:3	9:8
0.33	5:2	6:5
0.33	7:3	9:7
0.33	9:4	4:3
0.33	2:1	3:2
0.33	9:5	5:3
0.33	7:4	7:4
0.33	5:3	9:5
0.33	3:2	2:1
0.33	4:3	9:4
0.33	9:7	7:3
0.33	6:5	5:2
0.33	8:7	8:3
0.33	9:8	8:3
0.34	8:3	10:9
0.34	5:2	7:6
0.34	7:3	5:4
0.34	7:4	5:3
0.34	5:3	7:4
0.34	5:4	7:3
0.34	7:6	5:2
0.34	10:9	8:3
0.35	5:2	8:7
0.35	9:4	9:7
0.35	2:1	10:7
0.35	9:5	8:5

Resultant multiplier	step 1	step 2
0.35	8:5	9:5
0.35	10:7	2:1
0.35	9:7	9:4
0.35	8:7	5:2
0.36	5:2	9:8
0.36	5:2	10:9
0.36	7:3	6:5
0.36	9:4	5:4
0.36	2:1	7:5
0.36	7:4	8:5
0.36	5:3	5:3
0.36	8:5	7:4
0.36	7:5	2:1
0.36	5:4	9:4
0.36	6:5	7:3
0.36	9:8	5:2
0.36	10:9	5:2
0.37	7:3	7:6
0.37	9:4	6:5
0.37	9:5	3:2
0.37	3:2	9:5
0.37	6:5	9:4
0.37	7:6	7:3
0.38	7:3	8:7
0.38	7:3	9:8
0.38	9:4	7:6
0.38	2:1	4:3
0.38	7:4	3:2
0.38	5:3	8:5
0.38	8:5	5:3
0.38	3:2	7:4
0.38	4:3	2:1
0.38	7:6	9:4
0.38	8:7	7:3
0.38	9:8	7:3
0.39	7:3	10:9
0.39	9:4	8:7
0.39	2:1	9:7
0.39	9:5	10:7
0.39	8:5	8:5
0.39	10:7	9:5
0.39	9:7	2:1
0.39	8:7	9:4
0.39	10:9	7:3
0.40	9:4	9:8
0.40	9:4	10:9
0.40	2:1	5:4
0.40	9:5	7:5
0.40	7:4	10:7
0.40	5:3	3:2
0.40	3:2	5:3
0.40	10:7	7:4
0.40	7:5	9:5
0.40	5:4	2:1
0.40	9:8	9:4
0.40	10:9	9:4
0.41	7:4	7:5
0.41	7:5	7:4
0.42	2:1	6:5
0.42	9:5	4:3
0.42	5:3	10:7
0.42	8:5	3:2
0.42	3:2	8:5
0.42	10:7	5:3
0.42	4:3	9:5
0.42	6:5	2:1
0.43	2:1	7:6
0.43	9:5	9:7
0.43	7:4	4:3
0.43	5:3	7:5
0.43	4:3	7:4
0.43	9:7	9:5
0.43	7:6	2:1
0.44	2:1	8:7
0.44	2:1	9:8
0.44	9:5	5:4
0.44	7:4	9:7
0.44	8:5	10:7
0.44	3:2	3:2
0.44	10:7	8:5
0.44	9:7	7:4
0.44	5:4	9:5
0.44	8:7	2:1
0.44	9:8	2:1
0.45	2:1	10:9
0.45	5:3	4:3
0.45	8:5	7:5
0.45	7:5	8:5

Resultant multiplier	step 1	step 2
0.45	4:3	5:3
0.45	10:9	2:1
0.46	9:5	6:5
0.46	7:4	5:4
0.46	5:4	7:4
0.46	6:5	9:5
0.47	5:3	9:7
0.47	8:5	4:3
0.47	3:2	10:7
0.47	10:7	3:2
0.47	4:3	8:5
0.47	9:7	5:3
0.48	9:5	7:6
0.48	7:4	6:5
0.48	5:3	5:4
0.48	3:2	7:5
0.48	7:5	3:2
0.48	5:4	5:3
0.48	6:5	7:4
0.48	7:6	9:5
0.49	9:5	8:7
0.49	9:5	9:8
0.49	7:4	7:6
0.49	8:5	9:7
0.49	10:7	10:7
0.49	9:7	8:5
0.49	7:6	7:4
0.49	8:7	9:5
0.49	9:8	9:5
0.50	9:5	10:9
0.50	7:4	8:7
0.50	5:3	6:5
0.50	8:5	5:4
0.50	3:2	4:3
0.50	10:7	7:5
0.50	7:5	10:7
0.50	4:3	3:2
0.50	5:4	8:5
0.50	6:5	5:3
0.50	8:7	7:4
0.50	10:9	9:5
0.51	7:4	9:8
0.51	7:4	10:9
0.51	5:3	7:6
0.51	7:5	7:5
0.51	7:6	5:3
0.51	9:8	7:4
0.51	10:9	7:4
0.52	8:5	6:5
0.52	3:2	9:7
0.52	9:7	3:2
0.52	6:5	8:5
0.53	5:3	8:7
0.53	5:3	9:8
0.53	3:2	5:4
0.53	10:7	4:3
0.53	4:3	10:7
0.53	5:4	3:2
0.53	8:7	5:3
0.53	9:8	5:3
0.54	5:3	10:9
0.54	8:5	7:6
0.54	10:7	9:7
0.54	7:5	4:3
0.54	4:3	7:5
0.54	9:7	10:7
0.54	7:6	8:5
0.54	10:9	5:3
0.55	8:5	8:7
0.55	8:7	8:5
0.56	8:5	9:8
0.56	8:5	10:9
0.56	3:2	6:5
0.56	10:7	5:4
0.56	7:5	9:7
0.56	4:3	4:3
0.56	9:7	7:5
0.56	5:4	10:7
0.56	6:5	3:2
0.56	9:8	8:5
0.56	10:9	8:5
0.57	3:2	7:6
0.57	7:5	5:4
0.57	5:4	7:5
0.57	7:6	3:2
0.58	3:2	8:7
0.58	10:7	6:5
0.58	4:3	9:7
0.58	9:7	4:3

Resultant multiplier	step 1	step 2
0.58	6:5	10:7
0.58	8:7	3:2
0.59	3:2	9:8
0.59	9:8	3:2
0.60	3:2	10:9
0.60	10:7	7:6
0.60	7:5	6:5
0.60	4:3	5:4
0.60	9:7	9:7
0.60	5:4	4:3
0.60	6:5	7:5
0.60	7:6	10:7
0.60	10:9	3:2
0.61	10:7	8:7
0.61	7:5	7:6
0.61	7:6	7:5
0.61	8:7	10:7
0.62	10:7	9:8
0.62	9:7	5:4
0.62	5:4	9:7
0.62	9:8	10:7
0.62	10:7	10:9
0.63	7:5	8:7
0.63	7:5	9:8
0.63	4:3	6:5
0.63	6:5	4:3
0.63	8:7	7:5
0.63	9:8	7:5
0.63	10:9	10:7
0.64	7:5	10:9
0.64	4:3	7:6
0.64	5:4	5:4
0.64	7:6	4:3
0.64	10:9	7:5
0.65	9:7	6:5
0.65	6:5	9:7
0.66	4:3	8:7
0.66	8:7	4:3
0.67	4:3	9:8

Multiplier	intermediate new st/10cm	final new st/10cm		Ratio (old:new)	Spacing options		
					plain - plain transitions (2tog / 2tog)	plain - slip transitions (2tog / 3tog)	slip - slip transitions (3tog / 3tog) <i>not for fine or super fine fabrics</i>
0.25	30	15	step 2	2:1	∩	∆	∆
			step 1	2:1	∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∆
0.29	34	17	step 2	2:1		∆	
			step 1	7:4		∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	
0.30	30	18	step 2	5:3	∩   ∩	∆   ∩ ∩	
			step 1	2:1	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	
0.33	40	20	step 2	2:1		∆	∆
			step 1	3:2		∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩
			step 2	alternative			∆
			step 1	alternative			∆
0.33	30	20	step 2	3:2	∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	2:1	∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆   ∆
			step 2	alternative			∩ ∩ ∩ ∆
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∆   ∆
0.33	34	20	step 2	5:3	∩   ∩	∆   ∩ ∩	
			step 1	9:5	∩ ∩ ∩   ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	
0.38	30	23	step 2	4:3	∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	2:1	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
			step 2	alternative			∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
0.40	48	24	step 2	2:1		∆	∆
			step 1	5:4		∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 2	alternative			∆
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
0.40	36	24	step 2	3:2	∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	5:3	∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆
0.40	30	24	step 2	5:4	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	2:1	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
			step 2	alternative			∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
0.42	30	25	step 2	6:5	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	2:1	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
			step 2	alternative			∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
0.43	34	26	step 2	4:3		∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	
			step 1	7:4		∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	
0.44	34	26	step 2	5:4	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	
			step 1	9:5	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	
0.50	45	30	step 2	3:2	∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∆	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	4:3	∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
			step 2	alternative			∆
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
0.50	40	30	step 2	4:3		∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	3:2		∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 2	alternative			∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
0.50	50	30	step 2	5:3	∩   ∩	∆   ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	6:5	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
0.50	36	30	step 2	6:5	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	5:3	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
0.56	40	34	step 2	6:5		∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	3:2		∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
			step 2	alternative			∆
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
0.60	48	36	step 2	4:3		∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	5:4		∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 2	alternative			∆
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
0.63	45	38	step 2	6:5	∩   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	4:3	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
			step 2	alternative			∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆   ∆
0.67	50	40	step 2	5:4	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	6:5	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩	∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 2	alternative			∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩
			step 1	alternative			∆   ∩ ∩ ∩ ∆ ∩ ∩ ∩ ∩

	normal stitch
∩	2tog
∆	3tog

Multiplier	Ratio	Spacing options					
		yarn over transitions		inc transitions		inc2 transitions	
1.11	9:10	O	yo, 1 x 9	∨	inc, 1 x 8	∨	inc2, 1 x 17
1.13	8:9	O	yo, 1 x 8	∨	inc, 1 x 7	∨	inc2, 1 x 15
1.14	7:8	O	yo, 1 x 7	∨	inc, 1 x 6	∨	inc2, 1 x 13
1.17	6:7	O	yo, 1 x 6	∨	inc, 1 x 5	∨	inc2, 1 x 11
1.20	5:6	O	yo, 1 x 5	∨	inc, 1 x 4	∨	inc2, 1 x 9
1.25	4:5	O	yo, 1 x 4	∨	inc, 1 x 3	∨	inc2, 1 x 7
1.29	7:9					∨	inc2, 1 x 6
1.33	3:4	O	yo, 1 x 3	∨	inc, 1 x 2	∨	inc2, 1 x 5
1.40	5:7					∨	inc2, 1 x 4
1.50	2:3	O	yo, 1 x 2	∨	inc, 1	∨	inc2, 1 x 3
1.67	3:5	O   O	(yo, 1) x 2, 1	∨ ∨	inc x 2, 1	∨	inc2, 1 x 2
1.75	4:7	O   O   O	(yo, 1) x 3, 1	∨ ∨ ∨	inc x 3, 1		
1.80	5:9	O   O   O   O	(yo, 1) x 4, 1	∨ ∨ ∨ ∨	inc x 4, 1		
2.00	1:2	O	yo, 1	∨	inc	∨	inc2, 1

	normal stitch
O	yarn over
∨	increase
∨∨	double increase

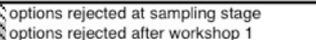
Multiplier	Ratio	Stitches	Rows
0.25	4:1	VVVV•	•
0.29	7:2	VVVV•VVV•	•   •
0.30	10:3	VVVV•VVV•VVV•	•   •   •
0.33	3:1	VVV•	•
0.38	8:3	VVV•VVV•VV•	•   •  •
0.40	5:2	VVV•VV•	•  •
0.43	7:3	VVV•VV•VV•	•  •  •
0.44	9:4	VVV•VV•VV•VV•	•  •  •  •
0.50	2:1	VV•	•
0.56	9:5	VV•VV•VV•VV•V•	•  •  •  • •
0.57	7:4	VV•VV•VV•V•	•  •  • •
0.60	5:3	VV•VV•V•	•  • •
0.67	3:2	VV•V•	• •
0.75	4:3	VV•V•V•	• • •
0.80	5:4	VV•V•V•V•	• • • •
0.83	6:5	VV•V•V•V•V•	• • • • •
0.86	7:6	VV•V•V•V•V•V•	• • • • • •
0.88	8:7	VV•V•V•V•V•V•V•	• • • • • • •
0.89	9:8	VV•V•V•V•V•V•V•V•	• • • • • • • •
0.90	10:9	VV•V•V•V•V•V•V•V•V•	• • • • • • • • •
1.00	1:1	V•	•
1.11	9:10	V•V•V•V•V•V•V•V•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.13	8:9	V•V•V•V•V•V•V•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.14	7:8	V•V•V•V•V•V•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.17	6:7	V•V•V•V•V•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.20	5:6	V•V•V•V•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.25	4:5	V•V•V•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.33	3:4	V•V•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.50	2:3	V•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.67	3:5	V•\•/•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.75	4:7	V•\•/•\•/•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
1.80	5:9	V•\•/•\•/•\•/•\•/•	• • • • • • • • •••
2.00	1:2	\•/•	••
2.25	4:9	\•/•\•/•\•/•\•/••	•• •• •• ••
2.33	3:7	\•/•\•/•\•/••	•• •• ••
2.50	2:5	\•/•\•/••	•• ••
2.67	3:8	\•/•\•/••\•/••	•• •• ••
3.00	1:3	\•/••	••
3.33	3:10	\•/••\•/••\•/••	•• •• ••
3.50	2:7	\•/••\•/••	•• ••
4.00	1:4	\•/•••	••

V	stitch
\	half stitch (left side)
/	half stitch (right side)
	horizontal bar between stitches
•	pick up new stitch

Appendix F6 Elimination of *replace edge section* slip decrease transition options

stitches slipped within 2tog	slipped stitches sit at front/back	stitches worked within decrease	yarn in front or behind slipped stitches	stitches worked between decreases	workshop 1 'approved' options and pattern names	final 'approved' options and pattern names
1 or 2	front	plain	back	plain	Rabbit Ears with stocking stitch	Running Rabbit (decrease version)
				reverse		
				offset		
		front	plain	plain	TV Set with stocking stitch	
				reverse		
				offset		
	reverse	back	plain			
			reverse	Garter Rabbit Ears with garter stitch		
			offset			
	front	reverse	plain			
			reverse			
			offset			
	back	plain	back	plain		
				reverse		
				offset		
		front	plain	plain		
				reverse		
				offset		
reverse	back	plain				
		reverse				
		offset				
front	reverse	plain				
		reverse				
		offset				

stitches slipped within 3tog	slipped stitches sit at front/back	stitches worked within decrease	yarn in front or behind slipped stitches	stitches worked between decreases	workshop 1 'approved' options and pattern names	final 'approved' options and pattern names
2	front	plain	back	plain	Rabbit Ears with stocking stitch	Rabbit Ears (decrease version)
				reverse	Rabbit Ears with garter stitch	
				offset	Rabbit Ears with offset garter stitch	
		front	plain	plain	TV Set with stocking stitch	TV Set
				reverse		
				offset	TV Set with offset garter stitch	
	reverse	back	plain	Garter Rabbit Ears with stocking stitch	Battlements	
			reverse	Garter Rabbit Ears with garter stitch	Morse Code (decrease version)	
			offset	Garter Rabbit Ears with offset garter stitch		
	front	reverse	plain	Aloe Vera with stocking stitch	Aloe Vera	
			reverse	Aloe Vera with garter stitch		
			offset	Aloe Vera with offset garter stitch		
	back	plain	back	plain		
				reverse		
				offset		
		front	plain	plain		
				reverse		
				offset		
reverse	back	plain				
		reverse				
		offset				
front	reverse	plain				
		reverse				
		offset				
1 + 3	front	plain	back	plain	Gather with stocking stitch	
				reverse	Gather with garter stitch	
				offset	Gather with offset garter stitch	
		front	plain	plain		
				reverse		
				offset		
	reverse	back	plain	Cherries with stocking stitch	Cherries	
			reverse			
			offset	Cherries with offset garter stitch		
	front	reverse	plain			
			reverse			
			offset			
	back	plain	back	reverse	Ric Rac with garter stitch	
				offset	Ric Rac with offset garter stitch	
				plain		
		front	plain	plain		
				reverse		
				offset		
reverse	back	plain				
		reverse				
		offset				
front	reverse	plain				
		reverse				
		offset				

 options rejected at sampling stage  
 options rejected after workshop 1

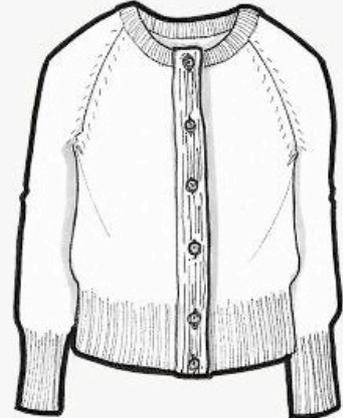
## Cut open and trim

### About this treatment

This treatment helps you to alter an existing garment by cutting a new opening and finishing the edge with a trim.

For example, you might create a new, more generous neckline. Alternatively, you might convert a jumper into a cardigan with a new front opening. The technique is familiar in nordic and fair isle knitting, where cardigans are knitted in the round.

There are various ways of working this treatment. The trim could be knitted separately and sewn on, or knitted off the existing fabric.



### Steps involved

- cut and secure
- pick up through knit or cast on
- knit/crochet
- cast off
- sew

### Instructions



The typical method described for a front opening in nordic/fair isle knitting is to cut the fabric and pick up a few stitches in from the cut edge, to make a sideways 'knitted off' trim. In *Knitting Around*, Elizabeth Zimmermann suggests folding the cut edge under and tacking it down (p172). Kate Davies suggests an alternative method, which encases the cut edge in a 'sandwich' of two layers of knitting. Detailed instructions (intended for fair isle knitting, but adaptable) can be found on her blog [here](#).

Montse Stanley includes some other suggestions for finishing cut edges by knitting off or joining a separate piece in *Handknitter's Handbook* (p240-1, 257).

Advice on cutting new openings can be found in *Textured Patterns for Machine Knitting* by Sheila Sharp (p91-2) and *A Resource Book for Machine Knitters* by Kathleen Kinder (p46).



>> go to **cut open and trim (sandwich)** step-by-step instructions

### Patterns

*not yet developed*

### Advice



>> go to **advice** on using/adapting the cut open and trim re-knitting instructions

### Gallery

You can see examples of this treatment in the gallery:

- Amy's 'tester' jumper - cardiganise

## Cut open and trim advice

[<< return to cut open and trim treatment page](#)

### If you're knitting a new trim, perpendicular to the old fabric

1. Measure the rows per 10cm in your existing fabric. This is your **old r/10cm**.
2. Choose a yarn you'd like to knit with, considering how chunky or fine you'd like your embellishment to be.
3. Choose a needle size to match your yarn. Either:
  - use the size suggested on the yarn ball band, or
  - use the [yarn/needle tool](#) to help you, or
  - guess (based on your previous knitting experience)
4. Find the stitches per 10cm for your new fabric. Either:
  - use the st/10cm figure suggested on the ball band, or
  - use the [yarn/needle tool](#) to estimate, or
  - knit a tension sample

This is your **new st/10cm**.

5. Calculate your multiplier.

**new st/10cm ÷ old r/10cm = multiplier**

6. Look up your multiplier in the pick up spacing table (available on the [gauge change tool](#) page):
  - find the number in the multiplier column that is closest to your multiplier
  - look in the 'rows' column and note the spacing pattern for your multiplier
7. Start your trim by picking up stitches through the knit according to the spacing pattern you've noted down.
8. Knit your trim, following the instructions and pattern.



## Ladder and reform

One of the many amazing characteristics of the knitted structure is the ability to ladder stitches and reform them. While this technique is usually used to correct mistakes, it can also be used to change the structure of an existing fabric - as in [stitch-hacking](#).

The easiest structure to ladder and reform is stocking stitch. It even ladders equally well upwards and downwards! More complex structures - particularly industrially produced, double-face knitted fabrics - will only ladder one way and may be more time-consuming or even impossible to ladder and reform satisfactorily.

### To ladder:

- Most knitters think a dropped stitch will ladder quickly and easily. Actually, most fabrics will need some help!
- First, expose a stitch - if you are knitting, drop it off your needle; if you are working with a finished fabric, [open a row](#).
- Make sure the stitches next to it are secured, otherwise they'll all try to ladder at once.
- To get the ladder to run, tug alternately side to side, top to bottom.
- For fuzzy yarns or well-worn fabrics, you may need to pull the loops out manually, using a darning needle or fine knitting needle.

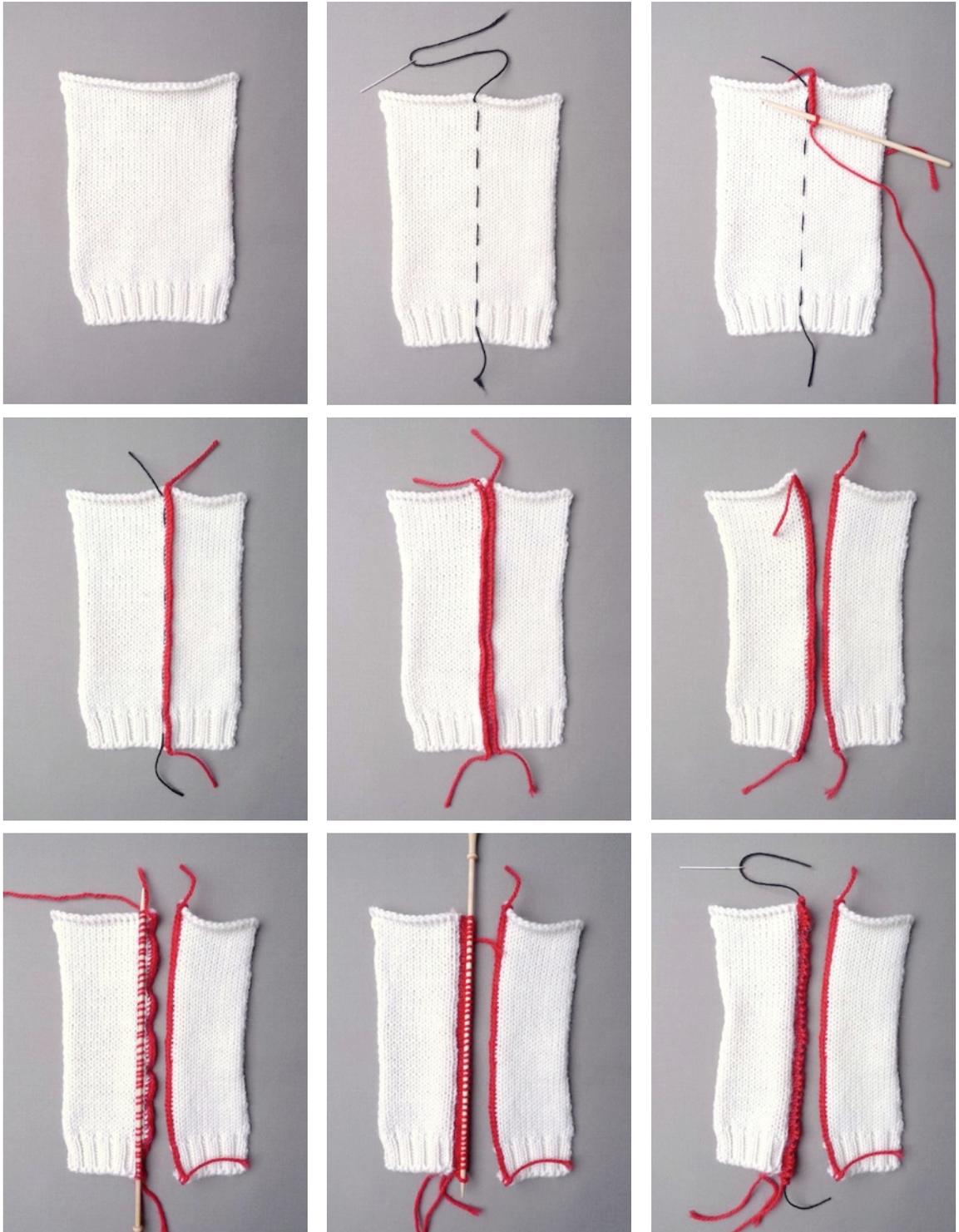
### To reform:

There are clear instructions for how to reform stitches (intended as repair, but useful for stitch-hacking too) in *Don't Just Think About It, Mend It!* by Maureen Goldsworthy (p50) and *Knitting Know-How* by Belle Meyers (p44).

- You can reform stitches with a latch tool or crochet hook.
- The latch tool takes a bit of getting used to, but once you've got the knack it's quicker and easier than a crochet hook. Go to the [supplies](#) page for more information on latch tools.
- If you reform stitches from the reverse of a stocking stitch fabric, you will form purl stitches.
- If you reform stitches from the front of a stocking stitch fabric, you will form knit stitches.
- You can change from knit to purl, and vice versa, in a single column: take the loop off the latch tool and pick up from the other side. If you are reforming a very fine fabric, a double-eyed transfer needle can be used - see the [supplies](#) page.
- You can create double gauge stitches by laddering two columns at once, picking up two stitches at the bottom of the ladder, and pulling 2 threads through for each stitch.
- Similarly, you can create triple gauge stitches: three columns, three threads for each stitch.
- You can create a 'safe' ladder by laddering two stitches, picking up both at bottom but then only pulling one thread through for each stitch.
- Further variations are possible!
- At all times, try to stay within the centre of the laddered column - otherwise your new stitches will be squished to one side. Use the kinks of the old stitches to show you the centre of the ladder.
- If you're going to [graft](#) an opening closed, it is good to return to plain, single gauge stocking stitch at top of each column.

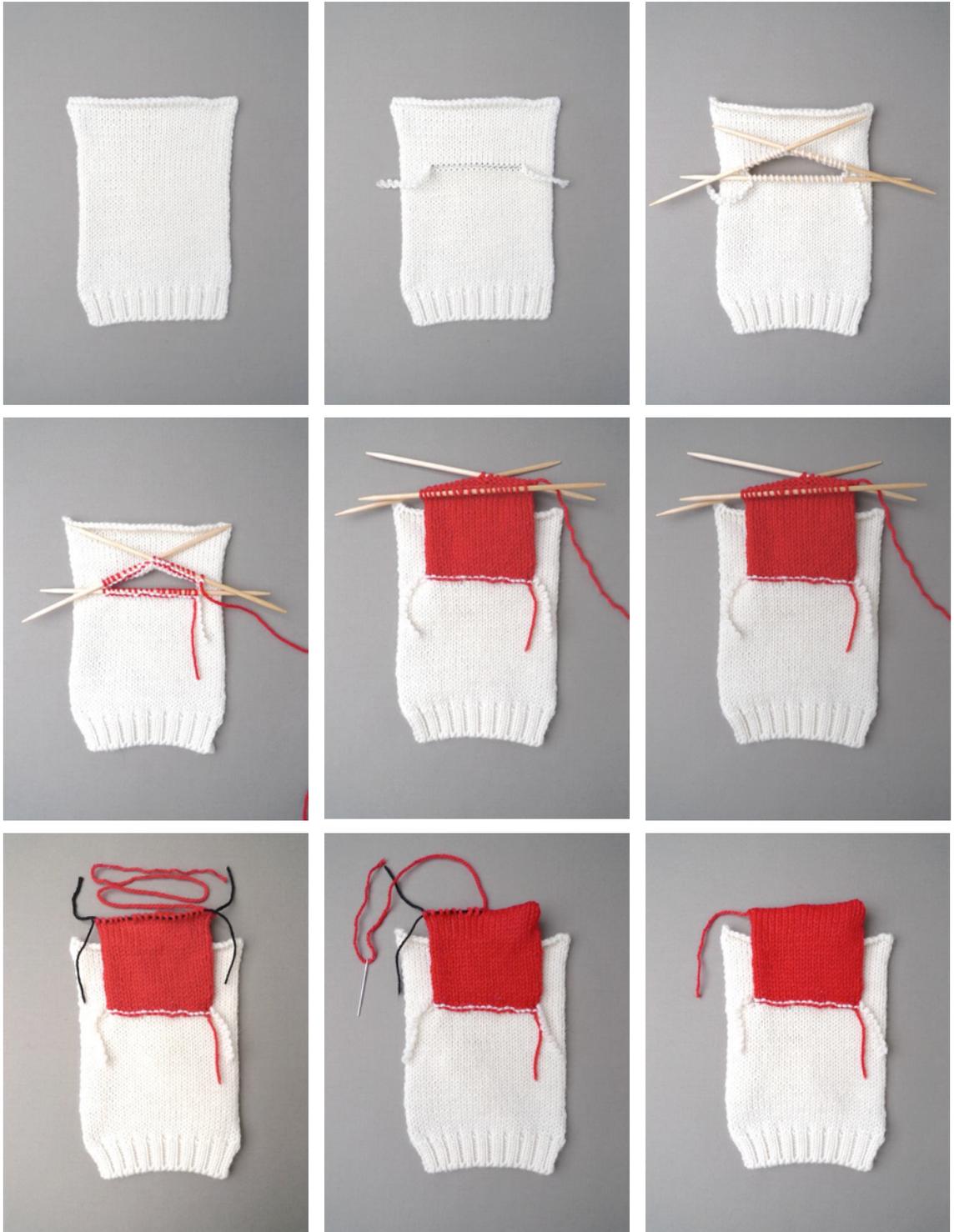


*From left: single stitches; double gauge (knit); double gauge (purl); triple gauge (knit); triple gauge (purl); safe ladder*

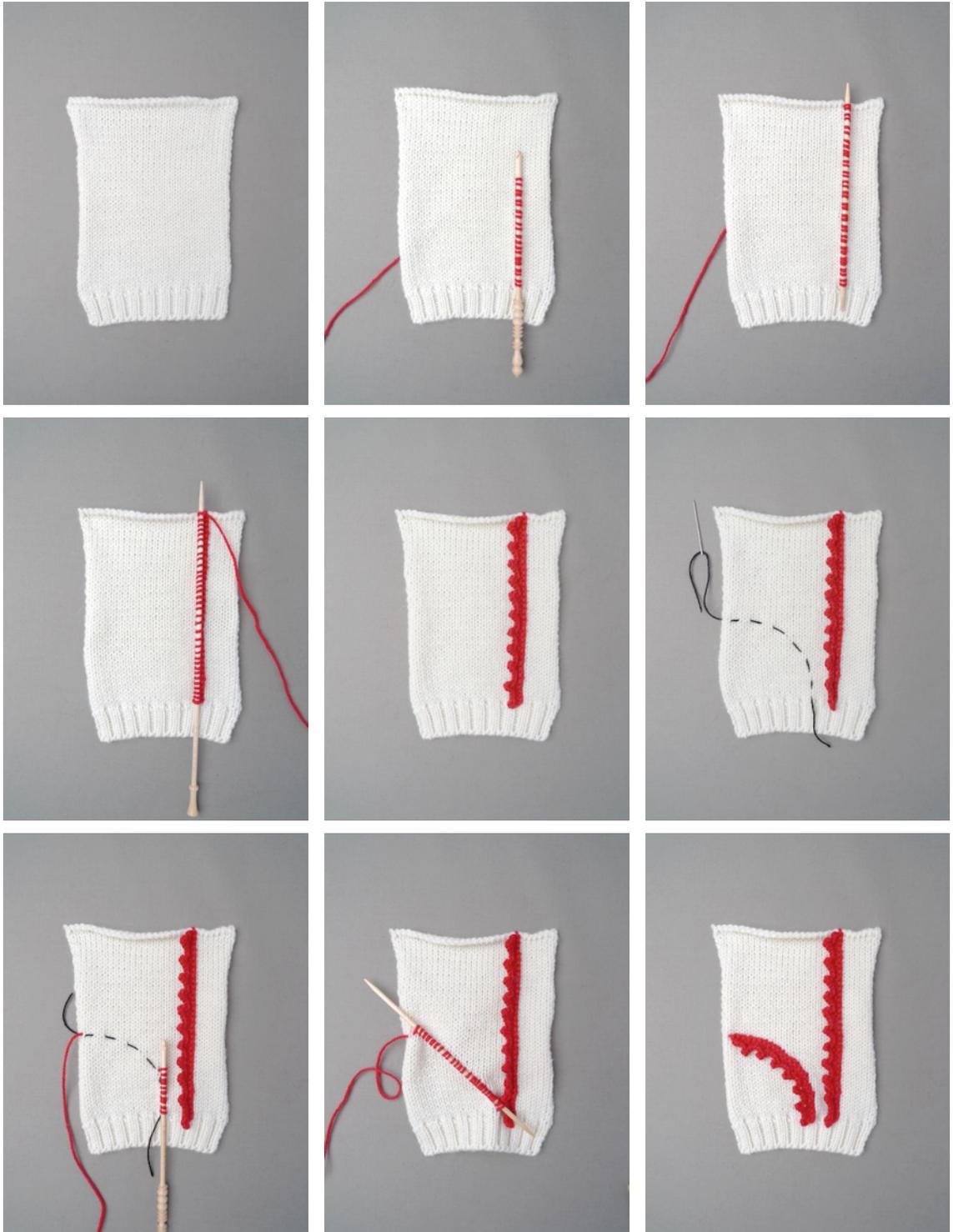




*Note:* Several options were developed for the *Afterthought Pocket*. This is the *double layer, knit in the round* version. The others are available in the web resource.







*Note:* As described in Section 5.2 and visualised in Appendix F6, seven slip decrease transition options were included in the web resource, along with some simpler transitions. The pattern for one, *TV Set*, is shown at Figure 5.24; two more are included here.

### ***Rabbit ears (decrease version)***



**Sample at 2:1 ratio.**

**Pick up a multiple of 4 sts + 1 st**

1st row (WS): \*p2, sl1 pwise, p1; rep from \* to last st, p1.

2nd row: \*k1; sl2 tog, k1, pss0; rep from \* to last st, k1.

Continue in stocking stitch.



**Sample at 4:3 ratio.**

**Pick up a multiple of 8 sts + 1 st**

1st row (WS): \*p4, sl1 pwise, p3; rep from \* to last st, p1.

2nd row: \*k3; sl2 tog, k1, pss0; k2; rep from \* to last st, k1.

Continue in stocking stitch.

### ***Cherries***



**Sample at 2:1 ratio.**

**Pick up a multiple of 4 sts + 1 st**

1st row (WS): \*p1, sl1 pwise, yb, k1, yf, sl1 pwise; rep from \* to last st, p1.

2nd row: \*k1; sl1, k2tog, pss0; rep from \* to last st, k1.

Continue in stocking stitch.



**Sample at 4:3 ratio.**

**Pick up a multiple of 8 sts + 1 st**

1st row (WS): \*p3, sl1 pwise, yb, k1, yf, sl1 pwise, p2; rep from \* to last st, p1.

2nd row: \*k3; sl1, k2tog, pss0; k2; rep from \* to last st, k1.

Continue in stocking stitch.

byo yarn over needle backwards (back to front) to make 1 stitch  
 k knit  
 k1tbl knit 1 stitch through back of loop  
 k2tog knit 2 stitches together  
 LH left hand  
 p purl  
 pss0 pass slipped stitch over  
 pwise purlwise  
 p1tbl purl through back of loop  
 rem remaining  
 rep repeat  
 RH right hand

RS right side  
 skp slip one stitch, knit one stitch, pass slipped stitch over  
 sl slip (knitwise unless stated)  
 sl2tog = slip 2 stitches together (knitwise)  
 st(s) stitch(es)  
 WS wrong side  
 yb yarn back  
 yf yarn forward  
 yo yarn over needle (front to back) to make 1 stitch  
 yo2 yarn over needle twice (front to back) to make 2 stitches

*Note:* A range of increase transition options were included in the web resource, of which two are included here. See Appendix G7 for glossary of pattern abbreviations.

### Shells



**Sample at 2:3 ratio.**

**Pick up a multiple of 2 sts**

1st row (WS): k1, yo, \*k2, yo; rep from \* to last 1 st, k1.

2nd row: k1, k1tbl, \*k2, k1tbl; rep from \* to last 1 st, k1.

Continue in stocking stitch.



**Sample at 4:5 ratio.**

**Pick up a multiple of 4 sts**

1st row (WS): k2, yo, \*k4, yo; rep from \* to last 2 sts, k2.

2nd row: k2, k1tbl, \*k4, k1tbl; rep from \* to last 2 sts, k2.

Continue in stocking stitch.

### Sawtooth



**Sample at 2:3 ratio.**

**Pick up a multiple of 2 sts**

1st row (RS): k1; insert RH needle into fabric 2 sts to left and 1 st down, wrap yarn as to knit and draw a long loop through [loop 1]; \*k2, loop 1; rep from \* to last 1 st, k1.

2nd row: Purl

Continue in stocking stitch.



**Sample at 4:5 ratio.**

**Pick up a multiple of 4 sts**

1st row (RS): k2; insert RH needle into fabric 2 sts to left and 1 st down, wrap yarn as to knit and draw a long loop through [loop 1]; \*k4, loop 1; rep from \* to last 2 sts, k2.

2nd row: Purl

Continue in stocking stitch.

*Note:* Four *integral embellish* patterns were included in the web resource, of which three are included here. See Appendix G7 for glossary of pattern abbreviations.

### **Bells**



#### **Pick up a multiple of 4 sts + 3 sts**

1st row (RS): k1, \*byo, k1, yo, p3; rep from \* to last 2 sts, byo, k2.

2nd row: k1, \*p1tbl, p2, k3; rep from \* to last 2 sts, p1tbl, k1.

3rd row: k1, \*byo, k3, yo, p3; rep from \* to last 2 sts, byo, k2.

4th row: k1, \*p1tbl, p4, k3; rep from \* to last 2 sts, p1tbl, k1.

5th row: Cast off

### **Picot**



#### **Pick up a multiple of 3 sts**

1st row (RS): Purl

2nd row: Purl

3rd row: Cast off 2 sts, \*sl rem st from RH needle to LH needle, cast on 2 sts using cable method, cast off 5 sts; rep from \* to end.

### **Butterfly**



#### **Pick up a multiple of 4 sts + 1 st**

*Set up:*

1st row (RS): Purl

2nd row: Purl

3rd row: Knit to end of row, cast on 5 sts using backwards loop method

4th row: k4, skp, turn

*Butterfly:*

1st row: sl1, k1, yo2, k2tog, k1

2nd row: k2, (k1, p1) in yo2, k1, skp

3rd row: sl1, k2, yo2, k2tog, k1

4th row: k2 (k1, p1) in yo2, k2, skp

5th row: sl1, k3, yo2, k2tog, k1

6th row: k2 (k1, p1) in yo2, k3, skp

7th row: sl1, k2tog, k5

8th row: Cast off 2 sts; k4, skp

Repeat these 8 rows.

Note: Spreadsheet version available to download from the web resource:  
[www.keepandshare.co.uk/tools/gauge-change](http://www.keepandshare.co.uk/tools/gauge-change)

**Calculate multiplier**

$$\text{new st/10cm} \boxed{24} \div \text{old st/10cm} \boxed{32} = \mathbf{0.75} \text{ (multiplier)}$$

**SPACING TABLE: 1 step decrease**

Multiplier	new st/10cm	Ratio	Spacing options			
			plain or slip transitions (2tog)	slip transitions (3tog) <i>not for fine fabrics</i>		
0.50	16	2:1	Λ	2tog	Λ	3tog, 1
0.56	18	9:5	Λ Λ Λ Λ	2tog x 4, 1		
0.57	18	7:4	Λ Λ Λ	2tog x 3, 1		
0.60	19	5:3	Λ Λ	2tog x 2, 1	Λ	3tog, 1 x 2
0.67	21	3:2	Λ	2tog, 1	Λ	3tog, 1 x 3
0.71	23	7:5			Λ	3tog, 1 x 4
0.75	24	4:3	Λ	2tog, 1 x 2	Λ	3tog, 1 x 5
0.78	25	9:7			Λ	3tog, 1 x 6
0.80	26	5:4	Λ	2tog, 1 x 3	Λ	3tog, 1 x 7
0.83	27	6:5	Λ	2tog, 1 x 4	Λ	3tog, 1 x 9
0.86	28	7:6	Λ	2tog, 1 x 5	Λ	3tog, 1 x 11
0.88	28	8:7	Λ	2tog, 1 x 6	Λ	3tog, 1 x 13
0.89	28	9:8	Λ	2tog, 1 x 7	Λ	3tog, 1 x 15
0.90	29	10:9	Λ	2tog, 1 x 8	Λ	3tog, 1 x 17

	normal stitch
Λ	2tog
Λ	3tog

Note: Spreadsheet version available to download from the web resource:  
[www.keepandshare.co.uk/tools/yarn-needle](http://www.keepandshare.co.uk/tools/yarn-needle)

Old gauge: <b>40</b> stitches per 10cm, in the range 7 - 80					
multiplier	old:new		Estimated	From data sources	new st/10cm
0.33	3:1	<b>Three old to one new replacement</b>			13.5
		yarn group	aran		
		yarn count: m/g	1.44	1.02, 1.41	
		needle size: mm	6.50	6.50, 7.00, 9.00	
0.38	8:3	<b>Eight old to three new replacement</b>			15
		yarn group	aran		
		yarn count: m/g	1.63	1.65	
		needle size: mm	6.00	n/a	
0.40	5:2	<b>Five old to two new replacement</b>			16
		yarn group	aran		
		yarn count: m/g	1.87	2.11	
		needle size: mm	5.50	5.00, 6.00, 7.00	
0.43	7:3	<b>Seven old to three new replacement</b>			17
		yarn group	aran		
		yarn count: m/g	1.87	2.11	
		needle size: mm	5.50	n/a	
0.44	9:4	<b>Nine old to four new replacement</b>			18
		yarn group	double knitting		
		yarn count: m/g	2.16	1.7, 1.91, 2.01	
		needle size: mm	5.00	4.50, 5.00, 5.50, 6.00	
0.50	2:1	<b>Two old to one new replacement</b>			20
		yarn group	double knitting		
		yarn count: m/g	2.55	n/a	
		needle size: mm	4.50	5.00	
0.56	9:5	<b>Nine old to five new replacement</b>			22
		yarn group	4 ply		
		yarn count: m/g	3.06	2.50, 2.82, 3.00, 3.02	
		needle size: mm	4.00	3.75, 4.00, 4.50	
0.57	7:4	<b>Seven old to four new replacement</b>			23
		yarn group	4 ply		
		yarn count: m/g	3.06	2.50, 2.82, 3.00, 3.02	
		needle size: mm	4.00	n/a	
0.60	5:3	<b>Five old to three new replacement</b>			24
		yarn group	4 ply		
		yarn count: m/g	3.06	2.50, 2.82, 3.00, 3.02	
		needle size: mm	4.00	3.50, 3.75, 4.00	
0.63	8:5	<b>Eight old to five new replacement</b>			25
		yarn group	4 ply		
		yarn count: m/g	3.38	2.82	
		needle size: mm	3.75	n/a	
0.67	3:2	<b>Three old to two new replacement</b>			26.5
		yarn group	4 ply		
		yarn count: m/g	3.76	4.33	
		needle size: mm	3.50	3.00	
0.70	10:7	<b>Ten old to seven new replacement</b>			28
		yarn group	4 ply		
		yarn count: m/g	4.22	3.20	
		needle size: mm	3.25	3.00, 3.25, 3.50, 3.75, 4.00	
0.71	7:5	<b>Seven old to five new replacement</b>			28.5
		yarn group	4 ply		
		yarn count: m/g	4.22	3.20	
		needle size: mm	3.25	n/a	
0.75	4:3	<b>Four old to three new replacement</b>			30
		yarn group	4 ply		
		yarn count: m/g	4.22	3.20	
		needle size: mm	3.25	2.75, 3.00, 3.25	
0.78	9:7	<b>Nine old to seven new replacement</b>			31
		yarn group	lace		
		yarn count: m/g	4.78	3.70, 4.03, 5.25, 8.00, 14.00	
		needle size: mm	3.00	n/a	
0.80	5:4	<b>Five old to four new replacement</b>			32
		yarn group	lace		
		yarn count: m/g	4.78	3.70, 4.03, 5.25, 8.00, 14.00	
		needle size: mm	3.00	3.00	
0.83	6:5	<b>Six old to five new replacement</b>			33.5
		yarn group	lace		
		yarn count: m/g	5.46	7.80	
		needle size: mm	2.75	2.75	
0.86	7:6	<b>Seven old to six new replacement</b>			34.5
		yarn group	lace		
		yarn count: m/g	5.46	7.80	
		needle size: mm	2.75	3.50	
0.88	8:7	<b>Eight old to seven new replacement</b>			35
		yarn group	lace		
		yarn count: m/g	5.46	7.80	
		needle size: mm	2.75	3.50	
0.89	9:8	<b>Nine old to eight new replacement</b>			35.5
		yarn group	lace		
		yarn count: m/g	5.46	7.80	
		needle size: mm	2.75	2.50	
0.90	10:9	<b>Ten old to nine new replacement</b>			36
		yarn group	lace		
		yarn count: m/g	5.46	7.80	
		needle size: mm	2.75	2.50	
1.00	1:1	<b>One old to one new replacement</b>			40
		yarn group	lace		
		yarn count: m/g	6.33	3.42, 5.24, 7.50	
		needle size: mm	2.50	n/a	

Brand	Name (cotton/silk group in italics)	Fibre	Yarn count (Nm)	st/10cm	r/10cm	Needle (mm)	Ball weight	Ball meterage
Rowan	Drift / Big Wool	100 wool	0.80	8	10	15	100	80
Rowan	Tumble	alpaca 90 / cotton 10	0.70	8	11	12	100	70
Patons	Bohemian	81 polyester / 19 acrylic	0.78	8	14	8	80	62
Rowan	British Sheep Breeds Bouclé	100 wool	0.60	9	13	8	100	60
Sirdar	Indie	51 wool / 49 acrylic	0.86	9	12	12	50	43
Patons	Melody Ombres	100 acrylic	0.66	9	14	10	100	66
Sirdar	Denim Ultra	60 acrylic / 25 cotton / 15 wool	0.75	9	12	10	100	75
Patons	Melody Solids	100 acrylic	0.78	9	14	10	100	78
Rowan	Drift / Big Wool	100 wool	0.80	9	13	10	100	80
Patons	Delish	65 acrylic / 35 wool	0.70	10	15	10	100	70
Rowan	Alpaca Chunky	98 alpaca / 2 polyamide	0.70	11	14	10	100	70
Rowan	Felted Tweed Chunky	50 wool / 25 alpaca / 25 viscose	1.00	11	14	8	50	50
Patons	Divine	76.5 acrylic / 10.5 wool / 10.5 mohair	1.29	12	16	6	100	129
Sirdar	Hayfield Bonus Aran Tweed	74 acrylic / 20 wool / 6 viscose	2.10	12	24	5	400	840
Rowan	British Sheep Breeds Chunky Undyed	100 wool	1.10	13	18	7	100	110
Rowan	Cocoon	80 wool / 20 mohair	1.15	14	16	7	100	115
Sirdar	Bonus Chunky	100 acrylic	1.37	14	19	6	100	137
Rowan	Renew	93 wool / 7 polyamide	1.50	14	20	6	50	75
Sirdar	Connemara Chunky	51 wool / 49 acrylic	1.50	14	19	6.5	50	75
Sirdar	Click Chunky with Wool	70 acrylic / 30 wool	1.50	14	19	6.5	50	75
Sirdar	Crofter Chunky	60 acrylic / 25 cotton / 15 wool	1.56	14	19	6.5	50	78
Rowan	Colourscape Chunky	100 wool	1.60	14	18	7	100	160
Patons	Beehive Baby Chunky	70 acrylic / 30 nylon	1.09	15	20	6	100	109
Patons	Classic Wool Roving	100 wool	1.09	15	20	6	100	109
Patons	Shetland Chunky	75 acrylic / 25 wool	1.36	15	20	6	100	136
Rowan	British Sheep Breeds Fine Boucle	91 wool / 9 nylon	2.00	15	22	5.5	50	100
Rowan	<i>Frost</i>	80 viscose / 20 alpaca	1.50	16	23	5.5	50	75
Rowan	Felted Tweed Aran	50 wool / 25 alpaca / 25 viscose	1.74	16	23	5	50	87
Rowan	All Seasons Cotton	60 cotton / 40 acrylic	1.80	16	23	5.5	50	90
Rowan	<i>Summer Tweed</i>	70 silk / 30 cotton	2.40	16	23	5	50	120
Rowan	Alpaca Cotton	72 alpaca / 28 cotton	2.70	16	23	5	50	135
Rowan	Pure Wool Aran	100 wool	1.70	17	23	5.5	100	170
Rowan	All Seasons Cotton	60 cotton / 40 acrylic	1.80	17	24	5	50	90
Rowan	Rowan Tweed Aran	100 wool	1.92	17	23	5.5	50	96
Rowan	Kidsilk Haze Trio	70 mohair / 30 silk	2.80	17	20	5.5	50	140
Rowan	<i>Savannah</i>	94 cotton / 6 silk	1.60	18	26	5	50	80
Rowan	Pure Wool Aran	100 wool	1.70	18	24	5	100	170
Rowan	All Seasons Cotton	60 cotton / 40 acrylic	1.80	18	25	4.5	50	90
Sirdar	Simply Recycled Aran	51 cotton / 49 acrylic	1.86	18	22	5	50	93
Rowan	Rowan Tweed Aran	100 wool	1.92	18	24	5	50	96
Sirdar	Hayfield Bonus 400g Aran with Wool	80 acrylic / 20 wool	2.10	18	24	5	400	840
Sirdar	Supersoft Aran	100 acrylic	2.36	18	24	5	100	236
Rowan	Kid Classic	70 wool / 22 mohair / 8 polyamide	2.80	18	23	5.5	50	140
Rowan	<i>Handknit Cotton</i>	100 cotton	1.70	19	28	4.5	50	85
Rowan	Pure Wool Aran	100 wool	1.70	19	25	4.5	100	170
Rowan	<i>Belle Organic Aran</i>	50 cotton / 50 wool	1.80	19	26	4.5	50	90
Rowan	Rowan Tweed Aran	100 wool	1.92	19	25	4.5	50	96
Rowan	Kid Classic	70 wool / 22 mohair / 8 polyamide	2.80	19	25	5	50	140

<b>Brand</b>	<b>Name (cotton/silk group in italics)</b>	<b>Fibre</b>	<b>Yarn count (Nm)</b>	<b>st/10cm</b>	<b>r/10cm</b>	<b>Needle (mm)</b>	<b>Ball weight</b>	<b>Ball meterage</b>
Rowan	<i>Handknit Cotton</i>	100 cotton	1.70	20	28	4	50	85
Patons	Canadiana Ombres	100 acrylic	1.76	20	32	4.5	100	176
Patons	Canadiana Solids	100 acrylic	1.87	20	26	4.5	100	187
Patons	Decor	75 acrylic / 25 wool	1.90	20	26	4.5	100	190
Patons	Classic Wool Tweeds	90 wool / 7 acrylic / 3 viscose	1.92	20	26	4.5	100	192
Patons	Classic Wool Worsted	100 wool	1.92	20	26	4.5	100	192
Rowan	<i>Denim</i>	100 cotton	2.00	20	28	4	50	100
Rowan	Lima	84 alpaca / 8 nylon / 8 wool	2.00	20	26	5.5	50	100
Rowan	Creative Focus Worsted	75 wool / 25 alpaca	2.00	20	24	4.5	100	200
Rowan	<i>Creative Linen</i>	50 linen / 50 cotton	2.00	21	28	4.5	100	200
Rowan	Rowan Tweed	100 wool	2.36	21	30	4	50	118
Patons	<i>Silk Bamboo</i>	70 viscose / 30 silk	1.43	22	28	4	65	93
Sirdar	<i>Flirt Dk</i>	80 viscose / 20 wool	1.90	22	28	4	50	95
Rowan	Baby Alpaca DK	100 alpaca	2.00	22	30	4	50	100
Rowan	<i>Wool Cotton</i>	50 cotton / 50 wool	2.26	22	30	4	50	113
Patons	Classic Wool DK Superwash	100 wool	2.28	22	28	4	50	114
Rowan	Cashsoft DK	57 wool / 33 acrylic / 10 cashmere	2.30	22	30	4	50	115
Rowan	<i>Summerspun</i>	50 cotton / 50 wool	2.40	22	30	4	50	120
Rowan	<i>Belle Organic DK</i>	50 cotton / 50 wool	2.40	22	30	4	50	120
Rowan	British Sheep Breeds DK Undyed	100 wool	2.40	22	30	4	50	120
Patons	Astra Variegated	100 acrylic	2.44	22	28	4	50	122
Rowan	<i>Revive</i>	36 cotton / 36 silk / 28 viscose	2.50	22	30	4	50	125
Rowan	Pure Wool DK	100 wool	2.50	22	30	4	50	125
Rowan	<i>Pima Cotton DK</i>	100 cotton	2.60	22	30	4	50	130
Sirdar	Simply Recycled Dk	51 cotton / 49 acrylic	2.60	22	28	4	50	130
Rowan	Colourspun	72 wool / 14 mohair / 14 polyamide	2.70	22	30	4	50	135
Rowan	Baby Merino Silk DK	66 wool / 34 silk	2.70	22	30	4	50	135
Sirdar	Wash 'n' Wear Double Crepe DK	55 acrylic / 45 nylon	2.70	22	28	4	50	135
Sirdar	Bonus DK	100 acrylic	2.80	22	28	4	100	280
Patons	Astra Solids	100 acrylic	2.94	22	28	4	50	147
Sirdar	Click Dk	70 acrylic / 30 wool	3.00	22	28	4	50	150
Sirdar	Country Style DK	40 nylon / 30 wool / 30 acrylic	3.10	22	28	4	50	155
Sirdar	Summer Stripes Dk	60 cotton / 40 acrylic	3.16	22	28	4	50	158
Sirdar	Calico Dk	60 cotton / 40 acrylic	3.16	22	28	4	50	158
Sirdar	Crofter Dk	60 acrylic / 25 cotton / 15 wool	3.40	22	28	4	50	170
Rowan	Felted Tweed DK	50 wool / 25 alpaca / 25 viscose	3.50	22	30	4	50	175
Rowan	<i>Cotton Glacé</i>	100 cotton	2.30	23	32	3.5	50	115
Rowan	<i>Wool Cotton</i>	50 cotton / 50 wool	2.26	24	32	3.75	50	113
Patons	<i>Grace</i>	100 cotton	2.50	24	32	4	50	125
Patons	Beehive Baby Sport	70 acrylic / 30 nylon	3.28	24	32	3.75	100	328
Rowan	Felted Tweed DK	50 wool / 25 alpaca / 25 viscose	3.50	24	32	3.75	50	175
Rowan	Rowan Fine Tweed	100 wool	3.60	27	38	3.25	25	90
Rowan	<i>Panama</i>	55 viscose / 33 cotton / 12 linen	2.70	27	36	3.25	50	135
Rowan	<i>Siena 4 Ply</i>	100 cotton	2.80	28	38	3	50	140
Patons	Kroy Socks	75 wool / 25 nylon	3.04	28	36	3.25	50	152
Rowan	Pure Wool 4 Ply	100 wool	3.20	28	36	3.25	50	160
Rowan	Cashsoft 4 Ply	57 wool / 33 acrylic / 10 cashmere	3.20	28	36	3.25	50	160
Rowan	<i>Wool Cotton 4 Ply</i>	50 cotton / 50 wool	3.60	28	36	3.25	50	180
Sirdar	Country Style 4 Ply	40 nylon / 30 wool / 30 acrylic	4.52	28	36	3.25	50	226
Patons	Beehive Baby Fingering	70 acrylic / 30 nylon	3.82	32	40	3.25	100	382

*Note:* Five alterations were carried out on the sample garment and described in detail on the web resource, the first of which is included here.

## Replace cuff

I started the re-making process by choosing my treatment - **replace edge section** (knit off downwards) - and the area of the garment I would work on - the cuff. The advice for the treatment told me that with such a fine knit (60 st/10cm), a 2-step decrease would be needed for the transition from existing to new fabric.

I used the **new fabric gauge range tool** to see what gauge my new fabric could be: between 15 st/10cm and 40 st/10cm. Looking at the yarns I had, I chose to use Rowan Pure Wool 4ply. The ball band told me I would get 28 st/10cm on 3.25mm needles, so I used that as my provisional new fabric gauge.

Next, I used the **interactive version of the spacing tables** to figure out my multiplier ( $28 \text{ st}/10\text{cm} \div 60 \text{ st}/10\text{cm} = 0.47$ ) and look at the potential spacing options. My multiplier was halfway between two options: 0.44 (26 st/10cm) and 0.50 (30 st/10cm). I chose to go for 0.50, as it had more spacing options to choose from, and decided to knit on a smaller needle (3mm) to achieve this gauge.

From the options available, I chose to knit the first step at 3:2 ratio, and the second step at 4:3 ratio. Because the old fabric is super fine, the adapting notes advised me to work the first step as a plain transition. I looked at the **2-step decrease samples** and chose to knit plain (2tog), then slip (3tog). Looking through the **plain (2tog)** and **slip (3tog)** treatment patterns, I chose the garter and TV Set patterns.

I chose the TV Set transition because it reminded me of a something that I find really inspiring: **Bohus knitting**. I decided to use this inspiration to adapt and develop the TV Set transition, to create a fabric with more multi-coloured patterns and bobbles.

To start to visualise what my cuff might look like, I photocopied the TV Set sample to the scale it would knit up (using the **mock up calculator**) and placed these copies alongside some buttons, to suggest the bobbles, and my chosen yarns:



Then, I started knitting, experimenting with bobbles, stripes and slipped stitches, and testing my tension. I'd had the idea of using some of the unravelled cuff yarn in a stripe, so I used a yarn of a similar colour in my samples. I learnt as I went along, and used more photocopies to help me:



I tried on the jumper and basted a guide line for where I wanted the cuff to start. When I'd finalised my design, I **opened the seam** and **opened a row** across the whole panel to remove the old cuff:



I measured the length and width of the old cuff. Then, I **picked up the open stitches** using a 0.7mm needle. I counted the stitches, and did some figuring out: how to place my design centrally and symmetrically, and how often to decrease to create the correct cuff shape.

I **unravelled** the old cuff a little, ironed it straight, and placed four strands together. I liked the re-used yarn so much, that I revised my design while I was knitting, to include a extra stripe.

I worked the rib without sampling - I figured that if I didn't like it, I could easily rip it back and re-knit. Happily, it turned out just right. I worked a stretchy **cast off** and finally **stitched the seam** using mattress stitch, and tidied away the ends:



Check out the next step: **add frills**.

## Homework: Gathering inspiration

Start to build a personal resource by gathering images and materials that inspire or engage you.

Gather the stuff into two groups:

### Knit

Knitting patterns, stitches, garments

### Visual

Any object or image where the colour, pattern and/or mood appeals to you

Some of the materials you gather might feel personally significant – e.g. pictures of family members, traditional tile patterns from a memorable holiday destination, objects that have been handed down. Other materials might be new to you, and just grab you aesthetically when you see them. Both have a place in your resource!

Don't worry about whether you think you could use your inspiration to design a re-made garment – you're just creating a pool of information that you may choose to draw from in future.

Depending on the item, you might photograph it, copy it, or put the original into your resource. If you have photographs or scans you would like printing out in colour, you can email them to me.

For now, keep your collection as loose pieces (don't stick in your notebook). Bring everything with you to the next workshop!

Where to search	Knit suggestions	Visual suggestions
In your home (old photographs, books, knitting/craft stuff, ephemera, clothes)	Knitting patterns	Art
Magazines	Knitting books	Craft
Internet	Online (e.g. Ravelry)	Non-knitted textiles
Library	Knit and fashion magazines	Architecture
Galleries and museums	Old photographs	Nature
Markets	Memories	Historical photographs
	Contemporary / traditional	Historical/ethnic clothing
		Fashion design

## Homework: Adapt a treatment

Have a go at adapting a treatment at home.

Choose from one of the three treatments we've done so far:

- replace edge section (knit off)
- integral embellish
- stitch hack

You could use the treatment patterns I've developed so far, or adapt another knit resource.

Adapting could mean...

- ... working out how to knit it on a given gauge of fabric
- ... playing with colour and yarn to create variations
- ... changing the pattern

Try to use an item or two from your inspiration resource to inform your sampling (e.g. colour, pattern, texture).

Take materials and tools with you from the workshop – if you realise you need something else, let me know and I'll post it!

The calculators and charts are on the website for you to refer to.  
([www.keepandshare.co.uk/research/workshops](http://www.keepandshare.co.uk/research/workshops))

I'll upload the step-by-step options, treatment patterns and treatment tips to the website next week.

Let me know if there is any information you need that's not on the website.

### Also, gather things to bring next time:

- Your homework samples
- Potential garments to alter
- Samples of yarn from your stash (if you'd like to use it)
- Inspiration resource
- Any images found for the 'creative ideas' knit resource

*Note:* The website resource includes tips and resources on several aspects of design, one of which is included here.

## Choosing colours

### Methods of choosing colours

If you are re-knitting, you are likely to need to build a new palette around the colour(s) of your garment.

There are lots of different ways of developing a colour palette for knitting. Three methods are briefly described here: play, match, theory. You might want to use one, or combine them together - for example, you could use an item of inspiration to start you off, but then add or replace colours in the palette using colour theory. The important thing is to come up with a combination that makes you happy:

**"Go ahead, dive in, have fun, play with color, break the "rules", and use colors that sing songs of joy to you, even if only *your* ears can hear them."**

Maggie Righetti, *Sweater Design in Plain English* (p112)

There is a nice description of how to choose and combine colours, using a playful approach combined with colour theory, in *The Progressive Knitter* by Maggie Whiting (p76-7). Another useful guide to choosing and combining colours for beginners can be found in *Textured Patterns for Machine Knitting* by Sheila Sharp (p86-8).

### Materials

If you have a stash of yarns, you can use the balls and strands to play with.

It's important to be able to see how the colours look in combination - they'll look different than in isolation.

Bunch the strands together, stick them down or wind them around a narrow piece of cardboard (for details of making a colour winding, see *The Progressive Knitter* - details above).



**"Hide the ball bands so that they don't distort the colours. Take one ball as the knitting colour and place strands of the other yarns on top of it. Add, remove and change the order of the strands."**

Montse Stanley, *Knitting Plus* (p8)

**"I usually work by gathering together various strands of yarns that I think will harmonise. I fiddle about with these, altering the proportions, maybe adding new ones or removing others."**

Sheila Sharp, *Textured Patterns for Machine Knitting* (p88)

If your yarn stash doesn't have a sufficient range of colours, use scraps of fabric and paper, paint colour charts, buttons, and anything else you can find - you can choose your colours and then look for yarns to match. You could stick these down as a little collage.



### Play

One method would be to play around with lots of colour options until you come up with a combination that you're happy with. If you're building your palette around your existing garment, lay swatches or strands across the fabric to see how the colours work together. Remember to try different shades, as well as different hues. Don't pre-judge what will work - have a go!

"Try many combinations, especially those that you would not normally use. You might have a notion that red doesn't go with green, or that blue doesn't go with brown ... don't let your preconceived ideas stop you from trying to combine them, otherwise you will never see what a startling difference a slight variation in shade can make."

Montse Stanley, *Knitting Plus* (p8)

"Cut strands, at least 20 inches long, of a lot of different yarns of different colors - at least four strands of each. Mix up all kinds of colors, group them together, and twist them into a hank. This will give you an idea of what would happen to those colors if they were married into a sweater. If the colors begin to quarrel, pull one or all of the strands of that color out. Don't hesitate; be ruthless; get the offender out. If you desire, replace the culprit with another color of your choice."

Maggie Righetti, *Sweater Design in Plain English* (p111-2)

### Match

You could find an image, fabric or object with colours that appeal to you, and use that to build your palette. If you're working with an existing garment of a particular colour, look for a photograph, painting or object in your inspiration resource that features that colour. Then, look for yarns that match the other colours in the inspiration. Keep testing and comparing - don't let your eyes deceive you!



"Wallpapers, fabrics, wrapping papers, and floor tiles have fine examples of color harmonies created by designers who are knowledgeable about color combinations. Study their designs and create your own ideas from their harmonies."

Pauline Fischer & Anabel Lasker, *Bargello Magic* (p31)

"If you run out of ideas completely, then I would strongly suggest Oriental rugs as an ideal resource. The Caucasian ones are particularly exciting ... a visit to either an exhibition or a store that sells these rugs and carpets could provide you with many ideas."

Sheila Sharp, *Textured Patterns for Machine Knitting* (p88)

### Theory

You could use colour theory to create your colour palette, using, for example, complementary or contrasting combinations.



Lots of books have details of colour theory; *The Progressive Knitter* by Maggie Whiting (p73-5) and *Colour Forecasting for Fashion* by Kate Scully and Debra Johnston Cobb (p78-9) are particularly clear. *Exploring Colour in Knitting* by Sarah Hazell and Emma King is great as it explains colour theory through the medium of knitting!

The free online *Color Scheme Designer* tool is an interactive, visual way of exploring colour theory. You could match the colour of your garment, and then see what shades the tool suggests to combine with it.

### Proportion

Don't forget that you can choose in what proportions to use your colours. For example, you might have a foundation colour which is used for the bulk of the knitting, with others as accents, used for single row stripes or edgings. If you're working from an item of inspiration, try to analyse the proportions of the colours used.



Great advice on colour proportion can be found in *Sweater Design in Plain English* by Maggie Righetti (p109-11). For example, she suggests that equal amounts of contrasting colours don't look good, and to instead divide them unequally (two-thirds and one-third), with a small hint of a highlight colour.

Play around with proportion at the same time as you try out different combinations. Visualise this by making one or two colours more dominant in your bunches, windings or collages.

### Reality check

Before you get too carried away with your palette and start **sampling**, think about whether you'll be happy to wear those colours. Do they suit your colouring? Are they too bright or too dowdy for your taste?

It's good to take a few days to review your choice.

**"These little bunches [of colours] I then leave in unexpected places - on a kitchen shelf or in a hall-way; this means that when I actually notice them again I can view them with fresh eyes."**

Sheila Sharp, *Textured Patterns for Machine Knitting* (p88)

**"Carry the hank of strands around with you until you feel your selection is a marriage made in heaven."**

Maggie Righetti, *Sweater Design in Plain English* (p112)

When you look at what yarn is available to use for your project (whether in your stash or in a shop), you might find that you have to compromise on your palette. If so, make sure you look again at the colours in combination - other shades in the group might need tweaking or rethinking entirely.

### Wise words

Here are few tips on mixing colours:

**"It is nearly always wise to introduce a small amount of an odd colour into a sober colour scheme; conversely, a neutral colour can tone down a too-bright one. Contrast is just as desirable as harmony but needs greater skill... Black should be used with great discrimination. Generally speaking, very dark brown produces far better results than black would do."**

Sibyl I. Matthews, *Needle-Made Rugs*

**"If you are going to mix colours, at first you will probably get better results with muted shades than with bright, contrasting colours, as these are more difficult to combine successfully. The safest combinations are those that use shades of a single colour."**

Montse Stanley, *Knitting: your own designs for a perfect fit* (p46)

"A vivid red, or a shocking pink ... can be toned down with cool pastels or soft neutrals. A muddy brown, or a dull beige, can be brought to life with vibrant jewel shades or primary colours."

Montse Stanley, *Knitting Plus* (p8)

"Try different shades of colors that are close together or shades of the same color with unusual accents."

Francesca Parkinson, *Knit and Crochet Your Own Designs* (p140)

"Find two colours of the same tone that you like together. Then find the same two colours in a lighter or darker shade. Choose a fifth colour that contrasts with the other four, and of course a base colour."

Sarah Don, *Fair Isle Knitting* (p19)

There are useful tips on building an effective fairisle colour palette - which may also be handy for other designs combining several colours - in *Fair Isle Knitting* by Sarah Don (p18-9), and *Traditional Fair Isle Knitting* by Shella McGregor (p60-1).

### Exercises



#### 1. Play with colour

This exercise is taken from *The Technique of Fashion Design* by Brenda Naylor (p117):

'Collect a bagful of scraps of coloured fabrics ... Separate, without looking, pairs of colours and then, no matter how dreary or dull they look together, hunt for another colour - or colours - that will react on both of them and turn them into an attractive, usable scheme.'

#### 2. Use your inspiration

Pick one item from your *inspiration* resource, and try to match the colours. Also, try to match and show the proportion of colours.



I had a perfectly good hand knitted cardigan in my wardrobe. I had become bored with it but it was too good to throw away and I was looking for a way to update it and make it more colourful.

I had considered embroidering it with flowers using wool or adding knitted flowers and leaves but I had never done anything because I am not really keen on embroidery or embellishments. I thought of knitting i-cords and sewing them on in loops and cable designs but again my heart really wasn't in it.

I thought about changing the collar and front bands to a lacy knit on border and found a few examples in pattern books. I made a sample of a frill knitted by picking up stitches vertically up one front, round the neck and down the other front. The first row increases in every stitch. The next row casts off. The frill worked but the scale was too small for the cardigan.

I noticed the current trend for garments with borders, bands and collars in contrasting colours and this appealed because I could brighten the cardigan and be in fashion in a way that balanced effort with result. I tried putting different colours next to my cardigan and choose two new colours. Wine is a contrast and pale grey matches to grey/blue marl of the original yarn. The original yarn is a standard DK with a tension of 22 sts and 28 rows to 10cm using 4mm needles and so I was able to find these colours in a standard DK yarn.

I knitted a strip of moss stitch border to test the tension of the new yarn and to pin on the cardigan and see if I liked the result. I did and I unpicked the front borders and collar and re-knitted them in wine moss stitch. I then unpicked the side seams for about 6 inches and cut off the bottom borders. This enabled me to pick up the stitches (using a 2.25mm needle) and to knit new borders in wine. I wanted something more to brighten the cardigan and thought pockets would help. I had none of the original yarn so I settled on a patch pocket using wine and grey. My first sample was a fair isle star motif in a square large enough to be a pocket but I did not like the result. I then tried two slip stitch patterns using wine and grey. The first was a tweed pattern which I did like. The second was a vertical stripe pattern which made a firm tight fabric and I liked this even better. It mirrored the vertical line of the new wine front bands and being firm was practical for a pocket.

I had two tries at finding the number of stitches to give me the width I needed for the actual pocket because of the slip stitch pattern pulling the width in. This pulling effect meant that I couldn't pick up stitches from the cardigan front and knit up from them. It had to be a patch pocket. I started with 2 rows of ss as the base for the slip stitch pattern and ended with 2 rows ss. However without the slip stitches in the final 2 rows the top edge was much wider than the striped part. I pulled back the 2 rows ss and knitted an i-cord cast off straight onto the striped knitting. This gave a nice rounded edge slightly wider than the stripes but not gaping. I then sewed the pocket onto the cardigan sides in the positions I had marked with a contrast yarn.

I already have tops in wine and so the 'new' cardigan fits into my wardrobe.

I am very pleased with the finished cardigan. I can wear it straight away and pockets are useful.

This is one of my daughter's favourite jumpers. The ribbing on the welt and cuffs had lots of holes and there were holes in one of the sleeves. The jumper itself had felted slightly which made it all the more desirable to my daughter as it was windproof and she wore it for horse riding. It was therefore very much worth saving.

This project appealed to me as it was fairly straightforward and something I felt was within my limited capabilities.

A major factor was trying to find suitable yarn locally. I couldn't find a good colour match or a yarn fine enough to match the original machine knitting yarn. Amy kindly came to my rescue with some of her yarn which proved a really successful match.

I decided to take off the ribs, pick up the stitches and knit a new rib down from the main body of the jumper. I knitted two or three samples with different designs and I chose a chequered design to team in with the fairisle pattern and which was more decorative than the original plain rib.

At first I decided to leave a couple of rows of the original rib so that it would blend in but I discovered that you cannot knit a rib stitch in the opposite direction to the original knitting as it is half a stitch out and the rib doesn't line up. I therefore had to pick up the first row of stocking stitch, cut the rib off just below and tease out the loose stitches. This gave me a perfect line of stitches to work from. I was then able to knit the required depth of ribbing for the cuffs and the welt. By using a 2mm needle and Amy's fine yarn I didn't have to make any adjustments between the original and the new knitting.

I also had to repair holes in the sleeves which I did by picking up the stitches at the bottom of the hole and knitting a matching patch which was grafted at the top of the hole and stitched in at the sides. I think I could have done this bit more neatly. I say I grafted in the top of the hole but I should have opened the row more rather than trying to graft to the stitches that were already open. I think I was too eager to finish and I didn't want to make the holes any bigger. This meant that I grafted my patch partly to the open stitches of the top of the hole and partly on top of the neighbouring stitches either side as my patch was wider than the top of the hole. This made it a bit lumpy. Because the original knitting was slightly felted and because it was a fairisle pattern this didn't show too much but I would be bolder another time and open the hole more so the top of the hole had the same number of stitches as the bottom of the hole.

This has given the jumper a new lease of life. I would never have considered anything beyond just darning the holes before and would have probably decided it was too damaged for that. This whole project has been a revelation to me in not being afraid to have a go at changing or improving a garment. It has been inspiring to have Amy to teach new techniques and to have other people to exchange ideas with.

*Why you chose that garment, and why you wanted to change it*

Bought the cardi in a charity shop

Liked lovely rich red colour and feel of the knit – silk, wool & cotton

Liked flattering shawl collar, knitted sideways

Rather sad – no buttons and plenty of pulled threads & holes.

Very large – sleeves looked particularly enormous – probably ‘cos knitted across.

Each panel of the cardi had been knitted in panels which were treated like fabric – cut and sew together.

Looked as if it had once been rather lovely

*What you chose to do, and why (and if you considered alternatives, what they were)*

Wanted to tackle the size of garment – sleeves looked particularly enormous and because of the way it had been knitted and constructed in panels this weight pulled the cardi out of shape.

Removed most of length from sleeves – leaving a short sleeve

Reduced the heaviness (look) and helped fit

Used ‘pick up and knit off’ technique to add short coloured cuffs to each sleeve – this gathered the original sleeve lightly and enabled it to fit closely to upper arm

2 step decrease – from fine knit (72 st/10cm). Used fabric gauge range tool. Interactive version of spacing tables. Chose 3:2 ratio. Wanted gathered look.

Tacked line to visualise length/shortness of new sleeve. Opened up seam & opened row – carefully stitch by stitch. Measured length from original cuff and distance from underarm seam.

Knitted stripes of colour mixing plain and purl rows to create ridges and differing stitch patterns.

Used excess sleeve to make a patch pocket with gather cuff and decorative blue stripe at its base, again using ‘pick up and knit off’ technique.

Pocket – used cut off old sleeve to form pocket. Picked up stitches as before & used same 3:2 ratio as cuffs.

Added vintage Bakelite buttons – sewn on with contrasting thread.

Thought about stitch-hacking pattern from inspiration hankie & trying to reduce the width of garment, possibly by asymmetric buttonholes.

*What samples you produced, and whether these helped you*

Made a number of samples of the cuff band, looking at colour sequencing and gauge. First attempts used recommended needle gauge for DK wool – contrasted with the garment’s fine knit too much. Eventually reduced gauge size right down to match fineness of garment.

Produced tight dense band which worked both visually and in edging the sleeves and pocket.

Inspiration from 1920s silk scarf from charity shop – bold simple shapes and deliciously simple colour combination. Sampled lots of colours (all from my stash!). Started with matching colours from scarf then reduced number of colours as looked more effective.

Tried to save some of the cardi’s red thread to knit with – proved to be quite difficult due to way garments made & nature of thread. Salvaged enough to do one row per cuff which really helped tie the new knit & original together.

Had to make a mini sample of sleeve cap one before tackling sleeve cap two as my pattern notes were not full enough – knitted on a circular needle – pattern notes written as if straight needles – knitted cuff too densely knitted to see stitches/rows clearly – unpicking nightmare as stitches v. small.

*Any problems you encountered when working on the real garment*

Unravelling difficult to pull back to usable row.

V. small stitches to pick up from original garment, first two decrease rows rather challenging – size of needles, slipping tiny stitches etc.

'Knitted fabric panels' made difficult to reclaim decent workable lengths of original wool.

Unpicking almost impossible – 'dropped stitches' brought tears to the eyes.

*How you feel about the finished item*

Very pleased – looking forward to wearing it!

My choice of project was to 'cardiganise' a jumper I had in my wardrobe. It was knitted in lambswool and was bought from the Edinburgh Woollen Mill shop. It had not been worn for some time but I liked the colour and the warmth. However, it was a bit tight so I thought this idea would make it more wearable. I chose the colours from a scarf in my source book and bought lace weight merino wool and used three strands together.

The first thing I had to do was count the rows per 2 inches in the garment and the same for my sample. This was 60 stitches in the original and 30 in the new which worked out nicely from the Spacing Table - picking up one stitch in the new wool for every two rows in the garment. The next stage was to mark the centre line in the front of the garment. Doing this by measuring the centre point from side to side actually worked out with a line at an angle as the garment appeared to be made up 'T' shirt style. I therefore did the line by eye. The garment was then machined either side of this line and then I bravely cut down the line. I then started to pick up the stitches for knitting the band. Unfortunately as I got higher up the garment the pick-up line started to work its way close to the securing machine line and this was clearly not going to work. I then marked a line quite wide of the machine line with a running stitch in a bright colour up a row of stitches which could be followed to pick-up to start the knitting. I had 173 stitches and used a size 12 circular needle to knit 7 rows in green stocking stitch. The loops on the reverse side were then picked up with another 12 circular needle and 6 rows knitted. These two needles were then held together to join the stitches knitting one from each needle together. Before doing this I had to trim away part of the original to avoid the enclosed knitting being too bulky. One row of light turquoise in a thicker yarn was then knitted followed by 8 rows of moss stitch in turquoise. This was the button side completed and the buttonhole side was worked in a similar manner, allowing 2 stitches for the holes and calculating the rows between each hole. I chose three colours of buttons; green, turquoise and purple.

The next part was the pocket. One line of horizontal row of 40 stitches was undone. I had originally intended to stitch hack a letter 'J' on the front part of the pocket but when I was about three-quarters of the way through I did not like the appearance as it seemed to be lost in the fine marl wool of the garment so I unhacked it! The number of stitches for 4 inches in the original garment was 44 and 36 in the new yarn. Using the Decrease Table this gave me a multiplier of 0.8 and a ratio of 5:4 so for every 5 old stitches I needed 4 therefore I knitted 2 together and then 3 singly and repeated this across the row to give 32 stitches. The pocket was knitted in stocking stitch from the top row down in the turquoise and the pocket flap knitted in the same way as the button plackets but reversing the colours and with one buttonhole for a purple button. Having tried a number of ways to secure the pocket to the garment I settled on a chain stitch in turquoise with a back stitch through in light turquoise.

This project took a lot of hours and I have certainly learnt techniques and tried ideas I would not previously have thought of and am very pleased with the result.

This was a cardigan which I had bought around 15 or even 20 years previously. It was badly worn at the elbows and at the cuffs and I had not worn it for a very long time. In that situation I would normally have thrown it away or if the damage was not too bad given it to a charity shop for recycling. It was a measure of how attached I was to it that it was still there in the wardrobe. I had no notion of re-knitting and my repairing skills had not gone beyond bad darning (which I had done on the cuffs and the elbows) and elbow patches which I had also added when even the darning went.

I should probably also say that my knitting skills were not very advanced either. I had knitted a patchwork blanket some small items of baby clothes and perhaps two jumpers which had been good enough to wear. Other attempts had ended in frustrating failure although I always came back to try a different pattern again and again and again...It was not until I took part in Amy's project that I was introduced to the possibility of more elaborate possibilities.

Along with the idea of re-knitting and repairing and embellishing the whole area of design was also relatively unknown to me and has been a fascinating process in itself.

The first step, after having been introduced to some of the techniques, was to decide basically what to do which involved playing around with different ideas and not thinking too specifically (if at all) about what was practical or possible. This involved using items which I had gathered together as inspiration; things which I liked for all sorts of reasons such as their colour, or texture or for sentimental reasons among others. Sharing ideas with others in the group was part of this creative process.

The next stage was to narrow down the possibilities to fit in with what was practically realistic in terms of time, skill, and materials available, and what I would actually wear.

With help I decided to do a relatively basic unravelling of the sleeves, trying to salvage as much as possible of the old wool and re-knitting, adding stripes or strips using additional yarn to pick out some of the flecks in the original charcoal grey. I had some yarn I had inherited from my mother which I also wanted to use.

I made a fundamental mistake when removing the sleeves. I forgot the technique we had been shown which is to snip one stitch and follow that along the row to get a lovely straight line. Instead I just marked the line by stitching around in a contrasting colour and cutting along that. This resulted in having to take off more than originally intended as the stitched line was not straight! However, luckily it was salvageable.

My next lesson was that I should have been much more careful in unravelling. The holes in the sleeves and the delicate nature of the old yarn meant that after the first sleeve I ended up with lots of fairly short bits. I did the second one much more carefully the resulting lengths were much better.

I wrapped all the yarn around a large plastic chopping board and washed it and dried it to try to restore it a bit and then knitted several different samples using different colours together with the old yarn and different stitch patterns.

Amy helped me to narrow down the possibilities at a certain point as too many variations made for a muddle and indecision. Eventually I settled on using a contrasting grey as there was not going to be enough of the charcoal and two shades of pink as well as the original.

We then photographed some samples and in order to place them in different ways in a mock up for the final decision on the pattern.

Working out the number of stitches and rows and the decreases necessary was something which I had never done and so relied on Amy to show me how it was done. I felt that I would be able to continue the pattern in the decrease rows without too much difficulty as the pattern was quite simple and repetitive. In the end I got into a terrible muddle with it although I could see that it should be straightforward so I drew out a grid for myself which made it quite clear.

The last decision was how to make the cuffs which in the original was a fluted lacy pattern, as was the bottom edge. In the end I decided to do a simple picot castoff to echo the bottom edge.

The cardie is now a different cardie but retains a feeling of the original and I am very pleased with the outcome. I have learnt a bit how knitting works and feel more confident in the possibility of getting over difficulties. I have much enjoyed the whole creative process, including the collaborative aspect of the experience in the group and the supportive atmosphere.

My favourite cardigan was full of holes – especially the sleeves. So I hadn't worn it for a long time, but, I couldn't throw it out – it had lots of happy memories!

The thought I could resurrect it was inspired by the photo Amy showed us of the socks – reknitted many times, so that, they were now v. old.

I decided to reknit both sleeves.

I would darn any other holes + do some stitch hacking on the back.

The sleeves 1<sup>st</sup>.

After removing the sleeve – I was going to knit stripes, but, after finding a sample of fairisle knitting in my wool bag – I decided the patterns would look more subtle + fit in better with the mottled nature of the wool in the cardi than stripes which seemed too sharp + defined.

I pulled out all my green + yellow wools, I had spare + after a few samples – I began.

I had counted 150 rows were needed + knew where decreases were.

I began, but, soon just enjoyed the random nature of the patterns + so decided as I went on how to pattern, rather than stick to a plan.

I found the process v. enjoyable + liberating.

I had already decided I wanted to graft the frilly end of the original sleeve back onto the new knitted sleeve.

The grafting was v. satisfying and worked well.

When it came to knitting the 2<sup>nd</sup> sleeve – I sought advice from the group.

I was so pleased with my 1<sup>st</sup> sleeve I wondered whether –

- 1) reknit 2<sup>nd</sup> exactly the same
- 2) reknit totally different
- 3) reknit some patterns, but, in different colour combinations

I decided on (3). + grafted frilly end as before.

Stitch hacking

Didn't show up v. well due to nature of wool, but, enjoyed cutting the garment, going into it + changing it + coming at again. It really felt 3D.

Garment – now finished, ironed + of course I've worn it already.