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# **HERITAGE IN ZAMBIAN FASHION DESIGN: AN IPA APPROACH**

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**PhD**

**2021**

# **HERITAGE IN ZAMBIAN FASHION DESIGN: AN IPA APPROCH**

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the  
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## **Abstract**

### **Heritage in Zambian Fashion Design: An IPA approach**

*Key words: fashion, design, heritage, Zambia, culture*

This study examines the meaning and role of heritage in Zambian fashion design. As a term commonly used in reference to things ranging from national monuments to personal legacies, heritage generally encapsulates the varied social implications and uses of the past. As such, it is a phenomenon shaped by and engaged with by a wide range of social actants. However, popular discourses which centre on expert knowledge and limited notions of what qualifies as heritage continue to influence realms of practice and theory. Therefore, a range of practices, experiences and things have been placed on the peripheries or completely discounted. Nevertheless, by drawing on the work of critical heritage theorists who offer broader frameworks of understanding the term, it is possible to engage in an examination of practices and perspectives which fall outside of the established bounds. For instance, it is possible to investigate populist engagement with heritage like those present in different quadrants of the creative and cultural sphere. Therefore, this study is focused on understanding the particular dimensions of meaningfulness and utility that heritage has in the fashion design practices related to the Zambian context. Consequently, the perspectives and lived experiences of Zambian designers who are either based in or from the country are examined. Adopting an Interpretive phenomenological analysis approach, this study is directed towards centring the voices of participants and understanding their views of heritage in relation to their creative practice. As such, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 11 participants. Finally, the findings of this study suggest that for designers from the Zambian context, conceptions of heritage are characterised by a complex interplay of communal and personal histories and identities. Furthermore, though materials and materiality do have relevance as part of the experience of embodying various cultural systems of meaning, they are not constitutive of heritage itself. These findings contribute to knowledge about fashion in general by providing a nuanced example of design practices that occur at the confluence of heritage and fashion. Additionally, the findings also expand knowledge about Zambian culture and how it is impacted by design professionals.

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Finally, thanks to each participant who graciously shared their time and story with me.

## **Declaration**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others. Any ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis has been approved. Approval has been sought and granted by the Faculty Ethics Committee on 10/06/19.

**I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 74,117 words**

Name: Nkumbu Mutambo

Signature:

Date: 30/09/2021

# Contents

<b>Abstract</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Author's declaration</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Content</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>List of figures</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>List of tables</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Chapter 1</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Theorizing heritage</b>	<b>15</b>
Heritage as industry	15
Heritage as representation	16
Heritage as present centred	18
Challenging expert knowledge	19
Heritage as pre-modern	20
Heritage as discourse	22
Heritage beyond objects	23
Heritage, memory, and identity	25
Continuity and collective ownership	26
Primordality and Authenticity	27
(re)Creating locality	28
Contestation and dissonance	29
Heritage as performance	31
Towards a definition	34
<b>Fashion and heritage</b>	<b>34</b>
Brand heritage	38
Nouveau heritage brands	39
Heritage beyond brands	41
Heritage and positionality	43

<b>African Fashion</b>	<b>45</b>
The idea of Africa in fashion	46
Heritage in African fashion design	49
Hybridity and heritage	50
Why Zambian designers?	51
Zambia and its fashion practices	52
Precolonial fashion practices in Zambia	54
Contemporary fashion practices in Zambia	55
Zambian designers	57
Chapter summary	58
<b>Chapter 2</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Methodological approach</b>	<b>61</b>
Epistemological stance	61
Why IPA?	64
Phenomenology	65
Hermeneutics	67
A note on design and the IPA approach	70
Study scope and analysis in IPA	73
Sample size in IPA	75
Data generation: Semi-structured interviews	78
Why use a western approach?	79
Semi-structured interviews as co-constructed	76
<b>Piloting the study</b>	<b>81</b>
Negotiating access	81
Pilot interview schedule	83
The interviews	85
Designer 1: Debbie Chu	86
Interviews as situated action	88
Designer 2: ChizÓ	90
Material probes	92
Interviews in South Africa	95
Reflections on interviewing designers	96
<b>Primary data generation phase</b>	<b>97</b>
Remote research	98

Conducting semi-structured interviews remotely	99
Revised interview schedule	101
The researcher's identity	104
Naivety and silence	105
Chapter summary	107
<b>Chapter 3</b>	<b>109</b>
<b>The analytic process and the findings</b>	<b>110</b>
A note on the researcher's past and position: a reflexive account	112
<b>The analytic process</b>	<b>114</b>
Reading and re-reading	115
Noting and commenting	115
The hermeneutic circle	116
Emergent themes	117
<b>Final group themes</b>	<b>119</b>
A note on the use of images	120
Ownership	121
(Dis)Connect	127
Opposites	131
Function	136
Material and materiality	141
Chapter summary	153
<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>156</b>
<b>Theoretical implications of the findings</b>	<b>157</b>
Material, materiality and the body	158
Designers as interpreters	160
Habitus and structuring influences	162
Delinking heritage from objects	164
Chitenge as hybrid heritage	165
Heritage beyond the chitenge?	167
Heritage and use context	170
The everyday as use context	173
Heritage and locality	174
No prefigured forms	177
Collaborative (re)creation	179

Lack and loss in the creative process	181
Heritage beyond brands	182
Chapter summary	184
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>187</b>
<b>Concluding thoughts and proposals for the future</b>	<b>188</b>
<b>Theoretical framework</b>	<b>188</b>
Methods	180
Findings	191
Theoretical Implications	193
Limitations	196
<b>Appendix</b>	<b>197</b>
<b>References</b>	<b>216</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 2.1 Lusaka Collective store, Lusaka, 2019	86
Figure 2.2 Lusaka Collective store, Lusaka, 2019	86
Figure 2.3 Outside Debbie Chu, Lusaka, 2019	87
Figure 2.4 ChizÓ sign and studio, Lusaka, 2019	92
Figure 2.5 ChizÓ sign and studio, Lusaka, 2019	92
Figure 2.6 Bark cloth samples from Barktex	94

## List of Tables

Table 3.1 Designers and brands	111
Table 3.2 Superordinate themes	119

## Introduction

The main objective outlined for this study is to examine the meaning and role of heritage within contemporary fashion practice. While heritage can be understood generally as the way in which people mobilise/deal with the past in the present (Graham et al., 2000), the centrality of materiality and conservation within the dominant discourse, has left little room for discussions about intangible, personal, or unofficial forms of heritage (Smith, 2006). Therefore, popular conceptions of heritage often centre on monumental relics of the past like stately homes, natural formations, and landscapes which are managed by experts and preserved for future generations. However, theorists critical of the privileging of the limiting narratives and value systems that are implied by much of the established practice and thought in disciplines like museology, cultural management, archaeology, and conservation have called for theorisations of heritage which take into account the plurality of its manifestations and conceptualisations around the world. For example, heritage has been framed as “a cultural practice involved in the construction and regulation of a range of values and understandings” (Smith, 2006: 11), as a form of social action (Harrison, 2010), and as a perpetually emergent phenomenon (Crouch, 2010). Therefore, rather than being understood merely as a collection of officially recognised artefacts and sites of national or historical significance, the term heritage can encompass a wide range of objects, experiences, practices and processes. Moreover, in addition to destabilizing the monumental-object-based view of heritage, such broad theorisations legitimate engagements with heritage by non-experts and allow for an interrogation of a wide range of practices that involve some form of mobilisation or use of the past. One such area of practice is fashion design. For instance, Baudrillard (1993) has noted that fashion generally involves “recycling” of the past. Though such considerations can take various forms, including, for example, the basic aim of maintaining continuity seasonally, or of trying to incorporate historical materials or production methods, the fashion design process generally involves some consideration of the past. In addition to the popular model of the European luxury brand (which are also commonly referred to as heritage brands), there are a multiplicity of ways in which heritage impacts fashion design. These engagements are often related to various personal and communal histories and identities. Some useful examples of such fashion practices which deviate from the luxury brand model of heritage can be

found in the nuanced case studies presented in the book *Modern Fashion Traditions: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity through Fashion* (Jansen & Craik, 2018). Though the settings and creatives examined in these case studies vary widely, many of them fall outside of the normative western context. Furthermore, the contributors of this book share a focus on critically examining the many ways in which the past is utilised and viewed in fashion. This is evidenced in their discussions of heritage in relation to concepts like exoticism, self-orientalism, dual consciousness, and identity construction. In addition to an underlying criticism of the prevailing dichotomous ideologies which have influenced theory in the field of fashion studies, this edited volume offers a point of departure in examining the oft taken-for-granted role and nature of heritage within different fashion systems. Therefore, this study aims to expand this area of knowledge by investigating how heritage functions and is conceptualised in other 'non-western' fashion contexts. Consequently, an African context was chosen as the setting for this research project.

Although creative expressions and material culture from the continent of Africa have and continue to be an abundant source of inspiration for designers based in the West ( See for instance: Thakoon 2011, Louis Vuitton men's ss12, Valentino ss17, Stella McCartney ss16, and Junya Watanabe men's ss16), African Fashion is often placed in an "ethnographic present" as opposed to the 'perpetual future' associated with Western fashion's continual rush to the next season." (Rovine, 2009). Consequently, the work of African designers is often viewed as part of 'traditional', unchanging cultural practices. Moreover, such views have their basis in Eurocentric notions about fashion and have resulted in the relative lack of scholarship on African fashion practices. As Eicher and Ross point out, specifically within academic circles "not until the 1950s and 1960s were African textiles and other items of dress appreciated as meaningful and vital aesthetic expressions in their own right" (2010). However, it is important to note that scholarship challenging the limiting binaries that place western fashion in opposition and implicitly as superior to African fashion has increased. Particularly over the past three decades there have been notable works from authors like Hendrickson (1996), Eicher (1995), Hansen (2000, 2005, 2013), Rabine (2002, 2016), Rovine (2004, 2009, 2010a, 2010b), Jansen (2020) and an edited volume by Allman (2004). Nevertheless, many misconceptions about African fashion systems persist and continue to shape wider perceptions and discourse. As such, it is important to continue to engage in research that adds to the voices which are working to dismantle such ingrained ideology through critical inquiry. To date,

most studies of African Fashion cover designers and phenomena from North, West, and East Africa. Even though some overarching themes can be applied across the board, the diversity and abundance of cultural experiences within the African context (be that on the continent itself or in the diaspora) suggest that there are still many perspectives left to explore in the field of fashion design generally and in terms of regional diversity. Therefore, this study is directed towards adding to knowledge about African fashion systems by focusing on the fashion practices of a southern African nation that is relatively underrepresented in literature: Zambia (more information on this context is presented in chapter one). Additionally, the aim of this research project is to interrogate what role (if any) does heritage play within Zambian fashion. Furthermore, the relative newness of industrialised fashion practices and business networks across most of the African continent suggests the great need as well as scope for innovation and ingenuity within African fashion systems. Indeed, this study is aimed at understanding some of the interesting and unique creative practices which are developing in and emerging from this context. As fashion designers arguable exert a high level of influence upon the creative processes of fashion, their views must be taken into account “in order to understand fashion and clothing fully” (Kawamura, 2005, p. 57). Moreover, as African designers, in particular, have been noted as being able to “provides insights into complexities of contemporary national and ethnic identities in Africa” (Rovine, 2010b, p.68), the primary aim of this research project is to illuminate the role and meaning of heritage within an African context by focusing on the point of view of fashion designers.

In addition to the practical intention of addressing gaps in the literature and redressing some of the prevailing misapprehensions about Africa and its cultural products, my interest in and decision to investigate this particular topic within the Zambian setting is also an outworking of an ongoing process of developing my design and research practice. For instance, for my master thesis project (completed in 2017) I investigated the role and meaning of ethnic dress in identity formation and nation-building for diasporic Zambian communities. In addition to this focus on understanding the views and experiences of others, through this project I conducted an examination (conceptually and practically) of my perceptions of and attitudes towards ethnic dress and their impact on my fashion design practice. Among the various findings of this study, one particularly interesting notion which emerged is that designers from Zambia held very nuanced views of how their national identities shaped their creative practice. Therefore, building on such insights, I’m presently interested in the perspectives

and lived experiences of other Zambian designers, particularly in relation to how they view and utilise heritage within their fashion practice.

As such, the primary aim of this study is to examine how contemporary designers in Zambia (and/or Zambian designers situated in the diaspora) make sense of or conceptualise heritage generally and in relation to their practice. Furthermore, this study investigates the utility and efficacy of heritage in their design process. In addition to these principal aims, this study is also interested in exploring how designers through their creative practice may be implicated in shaping wider cultural practices. Due to the focus on understanding the meaningfulness of heritage from the perspective of designers, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis has been chosen as the methodological approach of this research project. As such, Semi-structure interviews were conducted with 11 Fashion designers, and the data was analysed following the procedures outlined by Smith et al. (2009). The following chapters of this thesis (which are summarised below) provide further discussion on the theoretical framework adopted as well as details on the methods employed and the findings developed.

### **An overview of the thesis**

The following section provides an overview and short summary of each chapter of this thesis:

In chapter one, I present a review of the literature to explicate the theoretical framing of heritage adopted for this study. The literature drawn on includes the work of critical heritage theorists like Laura Jane Smith (2006), Rodney Harrison (2010), and David Lowenthal (1998). In addition to this discussion of the various ways that heritage has been theorised more generally, this chapter also includes a brief examination of heritage in the context of fashion design. For instance, drawing on examples from French, Turkish, and Russian designers, this section presents some perspectives on how heritage has been utilised and is conceptualised within different cultural and historical contexts. Finally, this chapter includes a brief discussion of African and Zambian fashion as a means of further contextualising this study.

In chapter two I present an outline of the methods used to answer the primary question. In addition to explaining the epistemological stance that frames this study, this chapter also includes a discussion of Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis and its specific features. In particular, I argue that

IPA is an appropriate method of examining the meaning-making of participants because it is an analytical approach that is attuned to exploring lived experiences. Additionally, a brief examination of IPA's theoretic underpinnings in phenomenological philosophy and hermeneutic theory highlights how the work of theorists like Husserl, Heidegger, and Gadamer, have shaped the methodology's stance and prescribed tools and practices as presented by authors like Smith et al. (2009) and Smith & Eatough (2012) is offered. Furthermore, this section includes an explanation of the data generation strategy and analytic process. Moreover, a reflective account of the pilot phase and the primary data generation stage of the study is presented. Finally, this chapter includes some reflections on conducting research during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

In chapter three I describe the analytic process and present the interpretive account of the meaning and role of heritage in Zambian fashion based on an examination of the lived experiences of the 11 designers interviewed. The findings are organised into five themes which provided insights into how the past is utilised and understood in the context of fashion. For instance, I explain how heritage ownership is negotiated by designers as well as how heritage value relates to cultural contexts. Furthermore, I discuss how designers view materials like chitenge which have been linked by theorists like Hansen (2019b) to Zambian cultural tradition.

In chapter four I discuss the wider implications of the findings beyond the sample group. In this section, I draw on the work of theorists like Bourdieu (1984), Craik (1994), and Entwistle (2000, 2015) and argue that heritage can be understood as an element of the social world that exerts a level of influence on the fashion and design practices of individuals from the Zambian context. Additionally, I propose that materials like chitenge are used to add meaning to the body and that their very materiality is embedded in the experience of heritage. Moreover, I build upon the notion of cultural memory (Miształ, 2003) and heritage as performance (Smith, 2006, 2010) to contend that Zambian fashion designers often play an important role in the performance and (re)production of cultural histories and identities. Lastly, in chapter five I provide a concluding summary of the research process and approach as well as the findings. In addition to an outline of the study's contribution to knowledge and limitations, a note on future research is included in this section

# **Chapter One:**

## Literature Review

## **Theorizing heritage**

When used in conjunction with modifiers such as 'British', 'world' or 'African', the term heritage is often referenced without explanation. While this may be understandable in light of the word's pervasive use in everyday speech and mass-media publications, it is essential to avoid the pitfall of presumption when attempting to discuss and examine it within a research context. As such, it is important to begin by presenting a critical interrogation of the term and to unpack some of the meanings and implications that have been discussed in seminal theory on the subject. While examining how heritage has been theorized will not answer the primary research question, doing so will aid in mapping out some of the vantage points that may be encountered over the course of this study. Moreover, conducting such an examination will also help to bring into view some of my pre-conceptions and biases regarding the concept. As explained further in chapter two, establishing such an awareness aligns with the methodological stance employed in this study as it fostered a more reflective attitude that has been carried through the various stages of the project. Finally, interrogating key terms like heritage will aid in clarifying what is meant when the word is used within the context of this study. Therefore, in addition to a discussion of heritage in a broad sense and as an industry, the following sections also explore its use within the context of fashion. Additionally, this chapter also includes a brief exposition on African and Zambian fashion to provide some contextualizing information.

### **Heritage as industry**

The term Heritage has been used to refer to a variety of objects, places, and experiences ranging from the monumental to the quotidian. From the natural landscapes of Yosemite national park and the temple ruins of Angkor Wat to the folk song of a nation or the personal legacies of a will, the term is a convenient catch-all that serves as a shorthand when referring to the multi-layered social implications of the past.

While the genesis of heritage practices arguably eludes precise dating (Harvey, 2001), the formation of the western heritage sector can be traced back as far as the 15<sup>th</sup> century based on evidence found in writings pertaining to heritage protection (Waterston & Watson, 2015). Through ratification and implementation

of a suite of national and international policies, charters, and treaties over the last 400 years, the sector has developed into an established field of practice and research. As early conceptions of heritage were heavily influenced by the ideologies of conservation and practical concerns on the best practice when dealing with it, early inquiries about it were conducted primarily from an operationally focused standpoint. Therefore, as the field of heritage studies developed between the 1960s and 1980s, much of the academic output was centred on the material traces of heritage and the practice of managing them. As such, discussions of what constituted heritage were largely limited to material concerns (Waterton & Watson, 2013). Moreover, discussions were targeted primarily toward industry practitioners. For instance, Tilden's book *Interpreting Our Heritage* (1959), serves as a manual focused on examining the role that heritage professionals play as interpreters and provides practical guidance to professionals on facilitating connections between visitors, natural sites, and man-made artefacts. This book is an early example of perspectives that foregrounded practitioners with only cursory attention (if any) paid to theorising heritage itself. Other notable examples of this focus on management and material traces include works by Moore (1994), Harrison (1994), Swarbrooke (1995), Hall and McArthur (1998), and Leask and Yeoman (1999). The lack of rigorous theorizing during this period can be attributed in part to the ubiquity of the term as well as the assumptions which have long underpinned western conceptions of heritage and shaped the development of the heritage industry. These assumptions, included in what Smith (2006) has called the 'Authorized heritage discourse', privilege materiality and expert knowledge while excluding the intangible and reducing non-experts to a position of passive consumers or armature. Moreover, these embedded assumptions not only dictated *what* was categorized as heritage but also *who* was qualified to interpret it. Furthermore, these tacitly assumed notions also limited the ontological and methodological approaches of its study. Viewed through an operational lens, heritage was merely a neutral resource to be managed, therefore the practical concerns of how best to achieve this task outweighed any concerns over theorization.

### **Heritage as representation**

A shift emerged as theorists began to question established notions within the sector about what qualified as heritage, as well as its taken-for-granted role in

society. Based in part on Foucault's (1972,1977) ideas about the constitution of knowledge, conceptions that went beyond 'objects' and their management to focus on the representational value of heritage were put forth. Furthermore, many of these critical examinations included views that challenged the broadly held presumption of the inherently positive nature of heritage and marked a paradigm shift from a predominantly positivist approach to a constructivist view. Moreover, this era was marked by a distinct split in the content and orientations of academic publications with some maintaining their operational and instructional focus while others pushed for more critical perspectives.

Some early notable examples of this critical turn include work by theorists like Lowenthal (1985, 1998), Wright (1985), Samuel (1994), and Hewison (1987). For instance, Robert Hewison, who is credited as the first to develop the term/concept of the 'heritage industry' itself (Robertson, 2012), was one of the early voices to offer a critical view of conventional heritage practices. Focusing on practices in Britain, he characterized the industry as a sector mainly involved in the wholesale commodification of the past. Moreover, Hewison questioned both what he viewed as the manufacture of heritage solely for commercial profit and the apparent push to replace actual industry with the heritage industry. Citing fear of national decline and uncertainty about the future as the primary reasons for this exploitation of culture, he also challenged the validity of interactions with the past that would result from a system which had "abandoned [a] critical faculty for understanding the past" and "turned history into heritage" (1987, p. 139). Echoing many of the views presented by Patrick Wright in his book titled *On living in an old country* (1985), Hewison's critique focused on the industry and its practitioners, while heritage itself was naturally implicated as a disingenuous product of purely commercial enterprise produced invariably at the expense of the 'real' past and wider culture. However, during this period other theorists offered counter-perspectives that attempted to reconcile its cultural and commercial aspects by calling into question the presumed value gap between authorized/professional and popular forms or communications of the past. For instance, Raphael Samuel, in his book *Theatres of memory* (1994), criticized the elitism and insularity of the academic/professional historiography community and their assumed monopoly on knowledge while championing the significance of what he called "Unofficial knowledge" (1994, p. 3). These unofficial forms of knowledge, (which are included in a range of social practices like folksongs, children's playful theatricals, and historical fiction), are populist engagements with

the past that fall under the banner of heritage and according to Samuel, provided a “more democratic” view of a nation’s culture (1994, p. 160). Interestingly, despite its pointed criticism of the academic world, Samuel's book is largely credited as a contributing factor to the increase of academic interest in and the broadening of scholarship on heritage (Robertson, 2012). As this study investigates engagements with the past outside of elitist academic spaces (in a fashion context), it adds to this area of discussion about unofficial knowledge by presenting the perspectives of designers who create commercial products that contribute to building the unfolding national story of Zambia.

### **Heritage as present centred**

In addition to the precedence and objectivity of ‘professional’ historians, the primacy of history itself and its seemingly diametrical relationship with heritage has also been problematized. For example, in his book titled *The heritage crusade and the spoils of history* (1998), Lowenthal argued primarily for the legitimacy of heritage by clarifying what he viewed as misplaced comparisons in which the ‘fact-based verity of history is held up as the only appropriate representation of the past. He posited that while its value is often contested by those who have characterised it as a-historical or just “bad-history” (1998, p. 160), what its critics fail to realize is that heritage and history share the same fate of being unable to accurately retrieve the ‘real’ past because both constructs rely on traces and fragments that have been filtered through multiple human minds. Furthermore, Lowenthal aptly pointed out that “neither enterprise is value-free” and that the only difference between history and heritage is that the former “aims to reduce bias,” while the latter “sanctions and strengthens it” (Lowenthal, 1998, p. 122). In addition to destabilizing the notion of the impartial historian, Lowenthal suggested that heritage functions primarily through its distortion of the past (1998). For example, when discussing the compression of time in heritage, he noted that:

“Collapsing the entire past into single frame is one common heritage aim, as just shown; stressing the likeness of the past and the present is another. The generalized past is set off as a legacy distinct from the present; coalescing past with present creates a living heritage that is relevant because it highlights ancestral traits and values felt to accord with our own” (1998, p. 139)

Because its aims lay not in untangling the past to make it more “comprehensible” but rather “more congenial” (Lowenthal, 1998, p. 168), the value of heritage lies not in strict adherence to presenting factual elements of the past but rather in its malleability for the needs and agendas of the present. Indeed, Lowenthal’s entire argument is established upon this view of the ‘present-centeredness’ of both history and heritage. While Lowenthal’s analysis did not fully delve into the implications of the economic aspects of heritage, his work was one of the early examinations which attempted to legitimate its significance in the social and political sphere by reframing many of the criticisms against it as its main functional elements. Without placing any real emphasis on the supposed distinctions between the commercial and cultural forms of heritage, or attempting to expunge the realities of its inconsistencies, Lowenthal sought rather to exonerate it by discussing the general linkages between these varied forms and how they were utilized in the social world. Building on Lowenthal’s focus on the present-centred aims of heritage, this study adds to this area of knowledge by presenting an analysis of the manner and purposes for which notions of the past (whether ‘real’ or imagined) are utilised by fashion designers who operate within a larger contemporary social context.

### **Challenging expert knowledge**

Following on from these early discussions, the concept that heritage is produced in and for the present remains a foundational idea when examining its uses and meanings in the social world. Whether it is in relation to supporting a collective identity, validating a right to rule, or establishing an individual’s sense of place and self, other theorists (Smith, 2006; Crouch, 2010; Harrison, 2010; and Graham et al., 2000) have also argued in favour of the ‘present-centeredness and amenability of heritage. For instance, Harrison (2010) has pointed to its use by diasporic communities in England in establishing a sense of their own ‘locality’ in the present by making connections to collective memories of their homeland. Moreover, the concept of ‘present-centeredness’ undercuts some of the essential stability that is implicitly attributed to heritage. For instance, if the site of its production is firmly fixed in and amenable to the demands of the present, then the prominent view that heritage value is only attributable to objects and sites is called into question. As Graham et al. (2000) have pointed out, if heritage is situated within a time and is formed in a specific context then “its meaning(s) can

be altered as texts are re-read in changing times, circumstances and constructs of space and scale.” (2000, p. 18). Thus, if the fixity of what constitutes heritage is called into question, then the centrality of expert knowledge is also contested because rather than being an intrinsic and constant quality that can only be ‘discovered’ or revealed by an expert, the negotiation of what is considered heritage is open to and undertaken by a wide scope of actants within a specific context and time. These actants include for example political entities, community members, and corporations. Additionally, the centrality of expert knowledge is further called into question when one considers the values that have been used as benchmarks when assessing heritage merit. For instance, pointing to sites like the Taj Mahal, Stonehenge, and Uluru, Otero-Pailos et al., (2010) have argued that the attribution of World Heritage status to these locations is a result, not of purely objective analysis, but of what Mitchell (2005, p. 366) has described as “widely shared subjective judgments”. Western discourse on heritage, specifically, has been underpinned by subjective judgments over three values: truth, beauty, and goodness (Otero-Pailos et al., 2010). As these values inevitably change over time in a society, the standards which are used to demarcate heritage ineluctably also undergo transformations even within the silos of the industry. Consequently, even though professional bodies and practitioners may present themselves as objective evaluators of the heritage merit that is supposedly inherent to the objects and locations they assess, their selections are actually based on a set of criteria that shift with the tides of time and wider culture. In addition to highlighting non-expert engagements with heritage, this study adds to this body of knowledge by examining and presenting some of the standards or subjective value systems which are used by Zambian designers to demarcate what they consider to be heritage. As discussed in chapters 3 and 4, these negotiations of what qualifies as heritage are highly nuanced and are not based on expert knowledge or fixed ideas about the past.

### **Heritage as pre-modern**

Moreover, in addition to challenging the objectivity of expert knowledge, the notion of passive consumers who simply receive the narratives presented to them by professionals has increasingly been contested. Though industry experts and academics have exerted a high level of influence and control in shaping heritage ideals and practices over the last 400 or so years, as pointed out by

Samuel (1994), lay members of the public are also involved in heritage production through contributions of unofficial knowledge and practices. Indeed, they have always been involved as Harvey (2001) has argued when challenging the assumption that heritage was a purely modern phenomenon. He has pointed out that heritage practices predate arbitrary dates (like 1882, the year the Ancient Monuments Protection Act was ratified in England) which have been cited by some as the genesis of the heritage practices in Europe. While Harvey acknowledges that it has “always developed and changed according to the contemporary social context of transforming power relationships and emerging nascent (and other) identities” (2001, p. 319), he rejects the notion that heritage can be reduced to a framing as a mere by-product of post-modern economics. This, he argues, is because heritage has existed as a part of cultural practices (specifically in the Western context) long before the establishment of modern academic or professional disciplines. Nevertheless, while it is important to acknowledge the contribution that lay members of society can and have made in shaping the heritage landscape, it would be disingenuous to overstate the current influence of non-expert voices in hegemonic institutions and regulated spaces like museums and international policy groups. Furthermore, it would be misleading to minimize the level of marginalization of narratives that do not align with the dominant conceptions of heritage by insinuating that a power imbalance does not exist between industry professionals and the wider public. In fact, the very term ‘the public’, which may appear to be a neutral referent to an entire society can and has been subsumed into the established discourse as a means of obfuscating and naturalizing the exclusion of some by insinuating that the heritage on display is complete and representative of a monolithic society and a univocal past (Robertson, 2012).

In summary, the representative turn in theory is important not only because it heralded a deviation from an operational focus in literature and thought to an orientation towards theorizing heritage itself. Moreover, this move from a positivist orientation to a constructivist stance was significant because it help to establish two foundational features of heritage: its present-centeredness and mutability. This acknowledgement of its dynamic nature has removed heritage from its static framing as a fixed product of the past and allows for an interrogation of both its changing manifestations and the shifting aims that underpin its contemporary uses. Additionally, problematizing the centrality of expert knowledge allows for an examination of unofficial accounts of heritage like

those found in fashion practice. Furthermore, an awareness of its unfixed and purposive nature allows for an examination of its meaning and role in a specific fashion design context. Finally, the framing of heritage as dynamic destabilizes some of the essentializing rhetoric that generally accompanies its use in the fashion industry and points to the existence of various narratives that may be reproduced through its use in fashion practice. An understanding of such narratives may help to further the interrogation of the central question of how heritage is conceptualized and used by practitioners from Zambia.

### **Heritage as discourse**

Due in part to the conservationist ideals which have dominated thought and practice throughout the development of the sector, tangible objects have enjoyed a privileged position as the focal point when assessing, interpreting, cataloguing, and engaging with heritage. However, their primacy and unproblematic categorization as heritage itself by experts has since been called into question (Smith, 2006; Harrison, 2010; Urry, 2003). Rather than their previously uncontested position as the very substance of heritage, objects have been subjected to critical readings which have called for a distinction between the concept and the material objects that are used to represent it. According to Smith, who has argued for the intangibility of heritage by framing it as a “cultural practice” (2006, p. 11); objects only serve as a tool for directing the gaze to the effects of heritage. This is because they are merely a means through which societies or communities reproduce elements of their own dominant discourse. A discourse as defined by Michel Foucault refers to ways of presenting knowledge on or talking about a subject and encompasses both language and practice (1970). In essence, it is a set of practices that “systematically form the object of which they speak” (1972, p. 49). As Hall (2001) has further explained, discourse “constructs a topic. It defines and produces objects of our knowledge. It governs the way in which a topic can be meaningfully talked and reasoned about.” (p. 72). Challenging the positivist notion of the existence of a ‘real’, external reality that is waiting to be discovered through observation, the concept of discourse suggests that our knowledge of reality is effectively produced and viewed through language and practice. The power of discourse is that it directs the gaze (or social way of seeing), dictating what can be ‘seen’ or ‘known’ about something.

Moreover, it works to shape practices that regulate conduct and behaviour because knowledge is commonly accepted as reality.

### **Heritage beyond objects**

As argued above, heritage itself is socially constructed through discourse. Although there may be multiple versions of heritage discourse based on the multiplicity of cultural understandings and approaches around the world, Smith (2006) has argued that it is Western 'Authorized Heritage Discourse' that has dominated contemporary conceptions. As such, it can be understood that the conception of heritage that has been produced and reproduced through heritage industry practices and the language of curation and conservation is largely Eurocentric (Wu & Hou, 2015). As a result of this Eurocentric leaning, (with its roots in the enlightenment age and obsession with the monumental), industry experts and practitioners have subjected heritage to their own professional gaze delimiting its scope through their focus on objects (Wu & Hou, 2015). Because of their materiality, objects can be used (often unquestioningly) to stand in as physical evidence which validates the commonly upheld discourse. Tim Edenson (2002) has pointed to the ubiquity of objects in everyday life as the reason for their efficacy to this end. Because of their pervasive nature, the physical presence of objects serves as seemingly common-sense proof of the social world, therefore aiding in simultaneously naturalizing and obscuring cultural meanings (Watson & Waterston, 2010). Moreover, in addition to reinforcement and concealment of dominant discourse, Smith has argued that the 'realness' or the position within an objective reality which objects occupy is the mechanism by which competing subjectivities and narratives "are rendered invisible or marginal, or simply less 'real'" (2006, p. 53). While the visual and material are problematized, it is important to note however that they still constitute part of one's engagement with heritage. Therefore, the dematerialization of heritage at a conceptual level is not a denial of the efficacy of objects, but rather an effort to decentre them and redirect the focus on unpacking the social meanings which produce and are reproduced through them. As such, instead of assessing them for their aesthetic value, the tangible qualities of objects can be used as a means of interrogating or uncovering the social discourses which undergird the value systems that are used to make distinctions about (and through) heritage. Furthermore, it could be argued that the conservationist proclivity of the heritage

sector does not stem purely from an aim to secure objects for future generations. Instead, this proclivity is underscored by the discursive aim to ensure that the hegemonic views of the present are passed down to future generations along with them. Building upon these views, Watson and Waterston (2010) have discussed the role of visibility and materiality in the construction of notions about nationhood and tradition in heritage tourism. For instance, their analysis of tourist brochures from Britain points to the constructive power of the visual in reproducing national and cultural myths through references to common visual signifiers which are evocative of a sense of timelessness and wealth. In the British context, these visual tropes include large stately homes, crumbling castles, and scenic country landscapes. Furthermore, Watson and Waterston (2010) argue that the images they reviewed aid not only in reproducing national narratives but also in reinforcing a singular view of heritage itself. A view which is limited to monumental artifacts and remnants of an aristocratic experience as well as an idyllic pastoral vision of rural life. Finally, the various perspectives about the discursive nature and role of heritage suggest that there is a dynamic interplay between its material and the immaterial aspects and speak to the simultaneity of its existence as both a tool and a practice. As Smith has noted:

“heritage becomes both a cultural tool and part of the wider process of creating and recreating meaning through reminiscing and remembering. Here the tension is identified between the material realities of heritage as a ‘thing to have’ and ‘as something that is done’; however, both modalities work to foster social memory. As ‘a thing to have’, it offers itself up as a specific cultural tool in rehearsing the authority of certain narratives. As ‘something that is done’ it offers the possibility of the negotiation of change and reworking of meaning.” (2006, p. 95).

This view of heritage is important because it helps to expand the scope of what can be considered heritage in a fashion context. Particularly in a field where the material and visual are both integral aspects of practice, shifting from a narrow focus on the tangible is an important step in expanding the discussion beyond mere description and cataloguing of objects. The view of heritage as an intangible practice or ‘something that is done’ allows for an examination of the activities, narratives, systems of thought, and meanings that are negotiated at the intersection of fashion and the past. While objects and visuals can be included in such an examination, they must be decentred from their primacy as heritage itself and viewed rather as tools that a designer may utilize as a means of materializing

particular narratives. As such, rather than unquestioningly accepting accounts that may point to certain visuals and materials as heritage itself, Smith's multimodal view of heritage as both tool and practice calls for an interrogation of how fashion design practice is involved in the reproduction and negotiation of cultural systems of meaning. As the analytic focus of this study is centred on the views of designers rather than the objects they make, it adds to this area of discussion by uncovering the narratives, ideas and practices which underpin and inform the objects designed in this context. Moreover, the findings of this study also point to ways in which the visual and material are involved in (re)producing communal and personal identity narratives.

### **Heritage, memory, and identity**

As conceptualizations of heritage have expanded to examinations of its discursive nature, theorists have turned their focus to its role and use in social life. Drawing on Stuart Hall's (1997) ideas of representation in language, Graham et. al, have argued that heritage is one of the "mechanisms by which meaning is produced and reproduced" (2000, p. 2). This representational quality coupled with its implicit link to the past makes heritage particularly amenable to use in identity building. Through it, narratives of a collective past can be (re)-constructed, transmitted, and even legitimated. For instance, by participating in activities like commemorative festivals, re-enactments, curating, and visiting national parks, individuals can transcend spatial and temporal boundaries and establish a connection to some form of social/cultural memory. According to Barbra Misztal, cultural memory consists of "people's memories constructed from the cultural forms and to cultural forms available for use by people to construct their relations to the past". Furthermore, it is "embodied in regularly repeated practices, commemorations, ceremonies, festivals and rites." (Misztal 2003, p. 13). As such, heritage can be viewed as a cultural form or mechanism in social remembering. For example, none of the people alive today in the United States of America have any personal recollections of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July in 1776, yet through annual Independence Day commemorations, individuals can connect to a shared history and identity which may engender a heightened sense of patriotic ardour and belonging.

## **Continuity and collective ownership**

Indeed, even when the timeline is limited to one's lifetime, it is not a forgone conclusion that the resultant feelings of continuity and membership produced by such experiences are based on continuity in a strictly historical sense (Smith, 2006). This occurs in part because social memory itself consists "not only [of] what people really remember through their own experience, [they] also incorporate the constructed past which is constitutive of the collectivity" (Miztal, 2003, p. 14). Moreover, emphasizing both its constructed nature and its use in reinforcing constructed narratives Hall (1999, p. 5) has argued that social memory is "highly selective" because it "highlights and foregrounds, imposes beginnings, middles, and ends on the random and contingent. Equally, it foreshortens, silences, disavows, forgets and elides many episodes which—from another perspective—could be the start of a different narrative". Therefore, strict continuity is often elusive because heritage itself is a result of this highly selective process where historical facts and folk lore often meld together in entangled mixtures which comingle with personal recollections and collective accounts. To those who advocate for a positivist approach to the past, this may appear to be its main weakness, however, it is this very a-historical nature that renders it most efficacious because "heritage the world over not only tolerates but thrives on and even requires historical error. Falsified legacies are integral to the exclusive purpose of group identity." (Lowenthal, 1998, p. 132). While this assertion might seem like a flippant espousal of intentional falsification and misrepresentation, it actually supports the view of present-centeredness and malleability of heritage by emphasizing the extent to which the socially situated concerns of the present often trump concerns over historical accuracy. Ultimately, with heritage, the past is leveraged in an effort "to negotiate new ways of being and expressing identity." (Smith, 2006, p. 4). Specifically, within the context of cultural groups and communities, heritage and other cultural forms are used to negotiate and communicate a cohesive group identity. Group identities are established on the basis of inclusion and exclusion. While members of the group are included based on shared characteristics, non-members are excluded because of a lack of such communally held features. Furthermore, "group identities must always be defined in relation to what they are not – in other words, in relation to non-members of the group." (Eriksen, 2010, p. 14). This means that group identities thrive off the boundary of 'in-out', 'ours-theirs' because the existence of an 'us' is predicated on the existence of 'them'. Thus, heritage is useful in strengthening group identities

to this end because (regardless of the form it takes), imbedded within any discussion of heritage is the question of ownership: *'Whose heritage is it? Theirs? Ours? Mine?'*. This feature of heritage means that not only can it be subsumed easily into narratives of 'insider vs. outsider' as a demarcation of inclusion, but it can also serve as a means for a group to reaffirm the cohesiveness of their identity by establishing linkages and continuity with a shared past. As explained further in chapters 3 and 4, the findings of this study contribute to this discussion on the role of heritage in the formation of collective identities and memory by presenting the various views designers have about how the past is owned and relates to their sense of belonging.

### **Primordality and authenticity**

By establishing a strong sense of continuity with a shared history, groups can reinforce implicit claims of primordality. According to Malesevic and Haugaard (2002) "primordality is often emphasized in groups which are formed along ethnic, national or other kinship lines" (p. 37). The claim of primordality is common to such forms of communal identity because through it a group's traits and characteristics can be presented as fixed and innate, often in spite of the relative brevity of the group's existence (Lowenthal, 1998). In addition to imputing this sense of historical, unbroken continuity and distinctiveness, heritage is often used to communicate a sense of cultural authenticity. Authenticity generally connotes the 'real' as opposed to the fake and while the concept has been problematized extensively in literature (in relation to heritage: Cohen, 1988; Bruner, 1994; Wang, 1999; Reisinger & Steiner, 2006), it still has uses and implications in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres. According to Charles Lindholm (2008), cultural authenticity is something that "gathers people together in collectives that are felt to be real, essential, and vital, providing participants with meaning, unity, and a surpassing sense of belonging" (p. 1). Moreover, such authenticity "can be sought internally [...] or externally, in the consumption of goods that symbolize the really real" (Lindholm, 2008, p. 1). Therefore, heritage with its implicit link to the notion of primordality can function as a symbol of the 'really real' and can in turn be leveraged in support of varying social, political, and economic aims. For instance, it can be utilized in defence of a group's political claims of geographical sovereignty or right to self-governance,

because claims of authenticity and primordality are often an essential part of nationalistic narratives and mythmaking (Barrington, 2006).

### **(re)Creating locality**

In addition to supporting claims of authenticity and primordality, heritage is used by groups and individuals as a means of establishing a sense of place and space. Building on Arjun Appadurai's (1996) concept of 'locality' in the context of globalization, Rodney Harrison (2010) has argued that "humans use heritage to [re]produce the local by rooting particular practices—which they use to help link them to a particular community and/or to a particular place—in the past" (2010, p. 234). Using examples like the Notting Hill Carnival in London, he has pointed out that "in diasporic communities, the tangible and intangible aspects of the past have a particularly strong appeal in helping to establish a sense of connection between dispersed communities in the present." (2010, p. 245). As community members engage in acts of remembering (as a group or as individuals), the resultant sense of locality as described by Appadurai is neither "scalar or spatial", but rather is a "complex phenomenological quality constituted by a series of links between the sense of social immediacy, the technologies of interactivity, and the relativity of contexts." (Appadurai, 1996, p. 178). Indeed, this production of locality through heritage is reminiscent of Benedict Anderson's (1983) concept of an imagined community where even though most members will never meet, they are still bound by the idea of shared attributes and identity. Though Anderson was primarily referring to nation-states, his idea can be applied to other types of communities. As such, heritage can be viewed as a mechanism through which the unifying ideals of the collective in an imagined community are envisaged and transmitted across space and through time. In addition to its utility in making connections in communities that have experienced spatial or contextual separation, heritage can also be instrumental when bridging the gaps of dissonance that exist where there is a void or rupture in the thread of communal memory. Graham et. al, have posited that as a process or a practice, heritage is particularly important for groups that have experienced some form of disconnection "from their past through migration or even by destruction-deliberate or accidental – in war" (2000, p. 19). This is because through heritage they can "recreate it [the past], or even 'recreate' what could or should have been there but never really was" (2000, p. 19). As these novel 'recreations' of heritage are

repeated, they become part of what Hobsbawm (1983) has described as 'invented tradition'. He suggests that these traditions are

“a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic, nature which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behaviour by the repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past. In fact, where possible, they normally attempt to establish continuity with a suitable historic past” (1983, p. 1).

As heritage itself is typically associated with such continuity, the notion can easily be employed in the construction of an invented tradition. Additionally, building on Wertsch's (2002) concept of 'Textual resources' or narratives that are developed and used in conjunction with cultural tools to help communities define themselves, Smith has argued that heritage can also be "identified as textual resources around which specific narratives are written and negotiated and thus become a cultural tool in remembering" (2006, p. 64). Therefore, through it, the past is leveraged to form narratives that recreate and extend communal localities to new spaces and aid in negotiating speculative re-imaginings of a group's histories. Furthermore, as with many other examples of heritage, these re-imaginings are not typically undergirded by a concern for the meticulous re-creation of the 'actual' past, but rather by the need of groups to legitimate and transmit their identity across space and time. Indeed, within the realm of communal identity factual veracity is often subordinate to the requirements of constructing a meaningful narrative because as Anderson has put it "communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity or genuineness, but in the style in which they are imagined." (1983, p. 6). As this study takes a view of heritage that acknowledges it's unfixed nature and involvement in the development of group identities, the findings add to this area of knowledge by presenting examples of how fashion designers who purport to belong to the Zambian ethnonational group negotiate motions of authenticity and primordality in their work and contribute to larger social process of (re)creating group histories (real or imagined) and a sense of the local.

### **Contestation and dissonance**

It is important to note that while it can be a tool in establishing connections and filling gaps, heritage can also be the source of fission and dissonance. In spite of its ubiquitous positioning as inherently positive, when the

past and its ownership are contested, heritage is often characterised by intense conflict as competing histories and claims are simultaneously propounded. One such form of negative heritage, which has been referred to as ‘difficult heritage’ (Logan & Reeves, 2009) includes the painful legacies left by things like war, slavery, genocide, and natural disasters (Sather-Wagstaff, 2011). Furthermore, dissonance can occur when certain accounts of the past are denied or omitted. Such exclusion and erasure of marginalised accounts of the past can easily occur depending on who has the power to disseminate knowledge because, as Hall aptly pointed out in his keynote speech at the national conference ‘*Whose Heritage?*’ in 1999, heritage

“inevitably reflects the governing assumptions of its time and context. It is always inflected by the power and authority of those who have colonised the past, whose versions of history matter. These assumptions and coordinates of power are inhabited as natural—given, timeless, true and inevitable” (1999, p. 6).

Thus, when certain members of a society don’t feel represented in a dominant narrative of the past, heritage can become a practice of resistance and re-negotiation as they try to establish a sense of belonging. Examples of such alternative or counter-hegemonic practices have been well documented in many multi-cultural societies like the UK as well as former settler colony states like Australia, New Zealand, and the USA. In such contexts, there has been increased debate over the representation and inclusion of Indigenous culture. Some notable examples include studies by Zimmerman (1998); Smith and Wobst (2005).

As mentioned before, any discussion of heritage implicitly involves a question of ownership. When such disputes of *who* and *what* is owned arise, they are often difficult to resolve because contrary to its essentializing nature, heritage is an ongoing, ‘messy’ process which takes place in a social world fraught with inconsistencies and uncertainty. Moreover, the waters are further muddied by other concomitant questions like who has the right to decide what heritage is and whether the past can or if it even should be owned in the first place. Consequently, in addition to contestation over ownership, there has been debate in the sector about the sustainability of an ever-expanding heritage ‘canon’. For instance, Harrison (2013) has contended that while there has been progress toward the adoption and acceptance of critical frameworks for understanding

heritage within professional bodies and institutions (for example, UNESCO adding intangible heritage to their register in 2008), there hasn't been an equally progressive shift in the practical approaches to its conservation and management. Therefore, he proposes that 'forgetting' should be included as part of a sustainable approach to heritage conservation and has advocated for periodic review of heritage lists and registers in light of the transforming models for conservation and the values of the present. Furthermore, Harrison also argued that forgetting is an essential and natural part of ensuring that collective memory is maintained because the act of selective remembering (which has been described as a fundamental part of the heritage process), implies forgetting.

In summary, the link between heritage, memory, and identity further illustrates the present-centred nature of heritage as well as some of the purposes it is leveraged to accomplish. In particular, there is a strong linkage between heritage and various practices of community and identity building. Moreover, the utility of heritage in identity-building brings into view the possible connection between fashion and the construction or reinforcement of communal identities. As one of the bounding features of this study is the Zambian ethnonational identity, it will be important to consider what relationship (if any) may exist between the creative work of participants and their own identities. Moreover, as strict adherence to reproducing an 'actual' past and to maintaining unbroken continuity are not features of heritage, it's important to approach this study with a broad view of the past as something which can be imagined and effectively created for particular purposes.

### **Heritage as performance**

In addition to theorising its implication at a wider societal level, perspectives that examine the impact of heritage at a smaller more individual scale have also emerged. Building largely on Non-representational theory, (which was developed by Nigel Thrift (1996, 2003, 2007), as a call to move the social sciences beyond representation in social theory), theoretical frameworks in heritage studies have been expanded to include inquiries into its affective dimension by critically analysing examples of its more quotidian engagements and experiences. Drawing on the concept of performativity and embodiment (from the dramaturgical perspective as put forth by Erving Goffman (1971) or Judith Butler's (1993) post-structural perspective), theorists have increasingly

sought to widen the discussion of the uses and impact of heritage by framing it as a practice through which the human and non-human are enacted. By choosing to define all heritage as performative practice theorists have attempted to propel the heritage discussion beyond the symbolic/meaning-making function of objects and events to focus on their affects and the effects that they have on people's experiences of heritage. Moreover, as a key term from this brand of theory, affect has been framed for instance as:

“a phenomenon or sensation that can affect how we feel, our wellbeing and so on. The affective can occur in things, in other than human life, within ourselves, and between us. We can affect other things, moments of our experience, being and becoming. Crucially, to affect can occur unintentionally, emergent from the energies between and among things. Hence, repetition and ritual, or performance, can bring affects that, in the way of performativity, can effect.” (Crouch, 2015, p. 181).

In this sense heritage is more than a process through which discourse is (re)produced, it is part of a continuously emergent performance of various narratives. For instance, Smith (2014) conducted a study to elucidate the reasons why people visit heritage sites. Analysing interview data collected at sites in the UK, USA, and Australia, she explored the emotional and affective aspects of visitor engagement and described heritage as part of individual and collective visitors' performances of various identity narratives. Additionally, in their book *'The tourists gaze 3.0'* John Urry and Jonas Larsen (2011) explored the performative nature of the act of 'seeing'. Drawing from Foucault's ideas about an epistemic field that is constructed and shapes what can be seen, they have challenged the neutrality of seeing in the tourist experience by pointing out the discursive nature of 'seeing' at/during heritage experiences. They have argued that this occurs because “people gaze upon the world through a particular filter of ideas, skills, desires, and expectations framed by social class, gender, nationality, age and education” (2011, p. 2). By emphasising how different gazes “depend upon practices and material relations”, their analysis moves beyond the visual and frames gazing as a performative act through which the world is organised and constructed rather than merely reflected (2011, pp. 14-15). Other notable examples include studies by Bagnall (2003), Zhu (2012). While this shift in academic debate to the non-representational or more-than representational has largely been taken up enthusiastically, some have acknowledged the challenges associated with trying to research and adequately communicate

findings using conventional methods. Indeed, Watson and Waterton summed up the methodological challenges of this new direction when they acknowledged that “the thorniest of difficulties tangled up herein lies with the challenge of figuring out how to access that which is deemed precognitive, unspeakable, a ‘becoming’ that exists somewhere before, in between and after feeling and thinking: affect and sensuous experience.” (2015, p. 30). Consequently, methodological discussion in the field has moved beyond the initial debate between qualitative and quantitative approaches to an interest in developing or adopting new methods. As such there has been a steady increase of research that either entirely forsakes or modifies the use of more established research approaches like the semi-structured interview, observation, or textual analysis (Watson & Waterston 2015). For notable examples of studies which employ the use of a range of experimental approaches and methodologies see research by Sheller and Urry (2006), Bryn (2013), Crouch (2010) and Staiff (2012). It is important to note that while there has been a considerable debate and upheaval over ontological and methodological views during the last 20-25 years, representation cannot be entirely dispensed with because as Watson and Waterton (2015) have argued, it is essential to understanding the cultural significance of heritage, an understanding which is critical when trying to grasp its role and performative potential in the affective arena. As Crouch notes, even when one operates from a performative standpoint, “representations of heritage, its sites and events, stories and performances continue to have purchase. They have affects that can adjust how we feel, and their power and their significance can be affected by us, individually and collectively, at the moment of our participation and beyond.” (2015, p. 188).

In conclusion, while this study is not primarily concerned with examining the affective dimensions of heritage in fashion design practice, what it does share in common with work from this perspective is an emphasis on the experiential. In essence, there is a shared import on what is *felt* to be meaningful and how such meaningfulness affects practice. Thus, rather than attempting to construct any grand theories which describe the meaningful role of heritage in Zambian society as a whole, this study aims to maintain a focus on the lived experiences of the specific individuals who participate in the study and present an interpretive account of how they view and utilise heritage.

## **Towards a definition**

As a result of its entrenched associations with the tangible and its ubiquity in culture, finding a succinct definition for heritage that can adequately sum up all its manifestations and modalities under the canopy of one theoretical framework continues to be a challenge. Indeed, as a simple definition remains elusive, it is not surprising that many academics in the field choose instead to focus their efforts on aligning their research within one or more of the three main theoretical orientations: the Material, Discursive, and Affective. While these theoretical leanings may appear to be at odds, all three examine different aspects of what constitutes our experience of and engagement with heritage (Waterton & Watson 2013). Though summing it up simply as a use of the past in the present, fails to fully represent any of the highly nuanced, contextually based elements that are involved in the process and practice of heritage, this definition is broad and sweeping enough to be applied easily across the board. Particularly when considering that most participants of this study are unlikely to be fully conversant with the academic theory and jargon in the field, it is best that a working definition be as accessible as possible. Therefore, this simple definition is a useful starting point because it makes up for what it may lack in complexity with clarity. Finally, modifying this statement based on the ideas presented by Smith (2006), as a working definition going forward, heritage is framed as a negotiation of the past in the present. As such, the primary research question can be framed as an examination of the various meanings and forms that these negotiations take in the work of Zambian fashion designers. Moreover the findings of this study can be viewed as a contribution to the critical heritage discussion that frames the past broadly as intangible.

## **Fashion and heritage**

Much like heritage, Fashion is a term used in relation to a multiplicity of concepts, practices, and things. While it is generally used in reference to prevalent clothing and dress styles, a number of theorizations of the term have been offered from a variety of perspectives. For instance, theorists from the sociological tradition have tended to conceptualize fashion as an immaterial system, while those from the anthropological tradition have tended to approach their studies in an empirical manner, conducting ethnographic research on practices and meanings of dress in specific contexts (Entwistle, 2015). Although

there isn't a complete consensus on its exact definition, some of the most widely accepted and influential conceptions of fashion are centred on its apparent relation to rapid change and western modernity. As Entwistle posits (in reference to the views of Bell, 1976; Finkelstein, 1991; Flügel, 1930; Laver, 1969, 1995; McDowell, 1992; Polhemus & Proctor, 1978; Rouse, 1989; Veblen, 1953; Wilson, 2007)

“ fashion is understood as a historically and geographically specific system for the production and organization of dress, emerging over the course of the fourteenth century in the European courts, particularly the French court of Louis XIV, and developing with the rise of mercantile capitalism”(2015, p. 44).

Moreover, although Entwistle does acknowledge differing views put forth by Barns & Eicher (1992) and Craik (1994), she argues against these in favour of what she describes as the “commonly accepted definition” (2015, p. 47). Thus, she goes on to assert that the key features of fashion (according to this widely accepted conception) are as follows: “it is a system of dress found in societies where social mobility is possible; it has its own particular relations of production and consumption, again found in a particular sort of society; it is characterized by a logic of regular and systemic change.”(2015, p. 44). Although this very narrow definition continues to be challenged due to its association with euro-modernity and cycles of rapid and constant change, it still remains widely influential as fashion itself is characterized by many as a system built entirely on newness and driven by fleeting trends (Jenss, 2016; Jansen & Craik, 2018; Dick, 2018; Jansen, 2020. Though rapid change and industrial systems of production are certainly part of its landscape, Fashion has the capacity to encompass a wide range of intersecting and seemingly competing concepts and systems. As such, fashion is not limited to false dichotomous ideologies which associate it solely with modernity while placing elements of the traditional or historical outside of its realm (Jansen & Craik, 2018; Jansen, 2020). For instance, the contemporary fashion design process generally involves both past and future-oriented considerations. In addition to adequately anticipating future directions of style and taste, designers are also tasked with balancing their forward-facing ideas with considerations about maintaining continuity with some aspect of the past. In a general sense, such considerations can be manifest in something as simple as making sure that a collection carries forward the visual language or story of the preceding season. In other instances, these considerations can be expanded

further to include highly contextual and calculated negotiations of some form of heritage. Though the term can be applied in a number of ways, within the context of the contemporary fashion design industry, it is most commonly used in reference to either brand or wider cultural/national histories and how these are then applied to areas like product design and marketing strategies. Regardless of its precise manifestation, heritage is certainly an important part of the current global fashion landscape because as Calanca and Capalbo (2018) point out, “in the hyper-competitive world of the 21<sup>st</sup>-century global economy, cultural contents, including the enhancement of historical heritage, are by now considered fundamental for the generation of value.” (2018, p. 9). While its operational role in generating value within a branding and marketing context across a range of industries has been extensively discussed within business/management literature (see Hakala et al., 2011), conversely, there is relatively less research examining the role of heritage in a design context which fully theorizes the concept.

As stated earlier, fashion and heritage share many attributes. For instance, much like heritage, fashion itself can be viewed as a discursive practice because it is “not used simply to indicate or refer to social and cultural positions; [it is also] used to construct and work out that social and cultural reality in the first place” (Barnard, 2002, p. 38). Furthermore, fashion and clothing “are signifying practices,” or “ways of generating meanings, which produce and reproduce those cultural groups along with their positions of relative power” (Barnard, 2002, p. 38). Moreover, fashion, like heritage has been examined extensively in terms of its role in the performance of identity, while its material traces have also been of interest within the sociological and anthropological fields. These multilateral examinations of fashion in academia are relatively recent perhaps because fashion was for a long time largely dismissed by the intellectual elite as low culture and thus regarded as merely a commodification of cultural aesthetics. Therefore, although both heritage and fashion have extensively been examined in relation to concepts like authenticity, identity, and belonging, unlike heritage, fashion has largely been spared from criticisms centred on its economic dimension. Nevertheless, there is a dynamic interplay of the symbolic, affective, and material at the confluence of heritage and fashion. Their symbiotic combination is productive of multi-layered and multivocal cultural forms through which identities, memory, and the subjectivities of social life are negotiated and navigated. For example, drawing on Smith’s (2006) application of the concept of textural resources, within the fashion context, heritage can be viewed as a tool in building narratives in design. Moreover, all three of its modalities can be engaged

with in this role as a textural resource. For instance, the visual and material can serve as inspiration during the product design and development phase, while the discursive elements of heritage can be utilized as a part of marketing strategies. Though it may be expedient at times to refer to its modalities as separate things, it is important to note however that engagements with heritage are entangled experiences and therefore it is quite difficult to separate physical manifestations from their discursive or affective implications. For instance, depending on one's theoretical vantage point or interests, a kilt can be simultaneously examined in terms of its visual qualities, its use and meaning within culture, or its everyday use by individuals in their performances of identity. As such, it is important to consider the nature and multi-layered implications of heritage within the context of fashion and clothing design. Furthermore, the work of fashion practitioners as they synthesize these two cultural forms (fashion and heritage) through design is also worthy of analysis. For instance, when examined from within a Foucauldian framework designing can be viewed as an activity that takes place within an epistemic field, and thus designers can be said to apply their own "scopic-regimes" (Metz, 1975, p. 82) or socially constructing gazes to various subjects within their work. For example, Johnson (2009) posits that architecture and design are discursive practices that are made up of rhetoric. Speaking on the power of theory as constructive rhetoric within design practice, He aptly points out that:

"Design is also an interdiction on behalf and in favour of some prospective functioning constitution. In both actions' architecture/ design, theory is the filter through which designing decisions are taken, i.e. the decisions are taken amongst competing alternatives and thus 'mediate' or resolve the situation, hence designing is a 'meditative' and because of its cyclical, interactive, trial and error processes, 'reflexive' process." (Johnson, 2009, p. 111).

Therefore, if designing involves the mediation of theory, it would be interesting to interrogate the various ideological filters and theoretical perspectives which in addition to design theory itself, underpin the creative practices which involve a consideration of heritage. For instance, is such practice filtered through or mediated by a conservationist, critical or marginalized narrative/ theory of heritage? Is it rooted in a deeply personal experience or identity? Finally, if heritage itself is framed as a type or set of theories that mediate the decision-making process in fashion design, it would be interesting to examine the extent

and manner in which it may or may not exert influence over the creative process within a specific context.

In summary, building on Barnard (2002) and Smith's (2006) characterization of heritage and fashion as meaning-making practices or mechanisms respectively, this study adds to this area of knowledge by illuminating some the ways in which such intersecting meaning-making practices are perceived and engaged with by Zambian fashion designers.

### **Brand heritage**

For some fashion brands, particularly those with histories spanning decades, house archives and museums are consulted for inspiration seasonally as part of a larger process of heritagization. French, Italian, and British luxury brands like Chanel, Dior, Missoni, and Burberry are good examples of brands that have built their business by developing a repertoire of recognizable house codes that are repeatedly referenced seasonally. In this context, the past is utilized not only as part of building a brand story but also as a "narration of quality" (Calanca & Capalbo, 2018, p. ix), where the perceived quality and value of products are linked to a 'long-established' craft practice (Calanca & Capalbo, 2018). While such brands may also be trading on the heritage value that is more generally related to their geographical origins, an individualized house identity and history are at the core of their strategy (Manlow, 2011). Indeed, the repetitive referencing of their past is calculated to help create a sense of brand distinctiveness in a highly competitive market. For example, Pistilli (2018) in her case study of the recent relaunch of three French brands (Christian Dior, Saint-Laurent Paris, and Balenciaga), used the term 'heritage-creativity interplay' to describe "a field of cultural production" in which "heritage is a work tool" or "medium by which it is possible to create and renew patterns by revisiting a brands legacy"(2018, pp. 77-80). Moreover, in this context, the head designer is typically venerated as the driving force behind a brand's success. For instance, emphasizing the role of designers as creative decision-makers within this field of interplay, Pistilli points out that the "fashion designer, with his visionary gaze oriented to the past, to previous generations, makes his era more vivid than it is for his contemporaries." (2018:93). Thus, within this model, the head designer is thrust into centre-stage and tasked with the complex balancing act of reworking house codes with their own creative vision in a manner which is perceived to be

innovative without completely divorcing their work from a brand's past. In this way, fashion houses can continue to function after the departure of a head designer, because their heritage remains a constant source of inspiration and a connective thread that links every successive era regardless of the person at the helm. In this context, signifiers of heritage can range from highly recognizable material codes such as the tweed, little black dresses, and large pearls at Chanel to more intangible elements like its production methods and location in a 'fashion capital' like Paris.

### **Nouveau heritage brands**

Even though the aforementioned model is common for European luxury brands, other brands without decades of history behind them have also sought to position themselves as 'heritage' brands by co-opting some of the symbolic elements utilized by their European counterparts as well as those found in wider culture into their marketing and brand-building strategies. Through the use of visual and linguistic signifiers, such brands aim to draw on the narratives (like that of authenticity, quality, and exclusivity) typically associated with storied fashion houses in order to add value to their brands. Additionally, signifiers which are indicative of temporal long-standing are also utilized in brand building. This 'recreation' of heritage can range from the use of visual tropes like stately homes in advertising campaigns as is the case with Ralph Lauren, to the wholesale invention of an origin story like the fictional tale about John Hollister Sr. founding the brand Hollister in 1922 when it was actually launched by parent company Abercrombie & Fitch in 2000. Although it would be erroneous to suggest that designer creativity and innovation are not present in this 'nouveau-heritage' model, it is fair to say that they typically aren't central to a brand's product design and promotional strategy. Instead creating an aura that is suggestive of the past is paramount. In contrast to storied houses which cultivate their heritage over time from a combination of elements of an imagined and 'actual' past, these brands essentially invent their heritage at their inception. In essence, reproducing generalized references to popular heritage narratives is the primary focus of creative effort in such companies.

If one imagines the 'heritage-creativity interplay' as a continuum with a measurable value, it can be argued that in the case of nouveau-heritage brands, the focus is skewed away from creativity (in the sense of originality/innovation),

and leans more towards reproduction and appropriation of recognizable signifiers. This does not mean that the work of designers at these 'nouveau-heritage' brands is completely devoid of creativity but rather that their creative process prioritizes different points than brands that are positioned as storied heritage brands. According to Ruppert-Stroescu and Hawley (2015), the creative process in fashion design can be described as a typology of "adaptive" and "leadership" (2015, p. 22), creativity. Arguing for a non-hierarchical approach, they explain that designers utilizing "adaptive creativity" focuses on making "products [which fit] within well-established paradigms" for a lower price point, while those operating from "Leadership-creativity" emphasize "divergent and experimental, and insight-based thinking with few restrictions and a heightened awareness of craft and technique" (2015, p. 22-23). This ultimately positions such creative practices as directional. As examples of brands on the adaptive end of the creativity continuum, nouveau-heritage brands draw from existing narratives and mythologies as part of their repertoire of 'well-established paradigms' and build greater brand equity by linkages to those mythologies. The brand Ralph Lauren is once again a good example of this as they have established their brand by associating it with the mythology of Americanness and elite European heritage (Manlow, 2011). The use of this strategy by RL and brands like it is due not only to the effectiveness of culturally based branding but also because cultural elements like heritage are already part of existing systems of meaning that can be easily interpolated and appropriated within an adaptive creative practice, instantly adding a sense of continuity or long-standing to a new brand. Conversely, within the leadership-creativity model (which is commonly practiced at storied houses), heritage acts as a stabilizing agent which grounds the more divergent and experimental flights of creative fancy in the stolid continuity of a brand's history.

It is important to note that the argument above is not presented as an indictment against nouveau-heritage brands, but rather as a means of describing their distinction from storied brands. Moreover, the notion that there are different creative strategies employed with regards to heritage in the two categories is not intended as value judgement in favour of one or the other. Instead, as Ruppert-Stroescu and Hawley (2015, p. 23) explain, "these two types of creativity are not hierarchical. One is not better than the other". What is important to note from these examples is the flexibility of heritage as it is used in differing creative practices and brand strategies to support the present-centred aims of fashion companies.

## Heritage beyond brands

While Storied-house and 'nouveau-heritage' brands are both prominent examples of the intersection of heritage and fashion, for some brands considerations about heritage are not centred on house histories or generalized heritage narratives. Instead, their work involves complex navigation through ethnonational identities and histories fraught with conflicting notions about tradition, modernity, authenticity, and memory. For instance, in a chapter of the book *Modern Fashion Traditions: Negotiating Tradition and Modernity through Fashion*, Özüdoğru (2018) argues that instead of "exploring and unpacking Ottoman heritage as an authentic source of inspiration for contemporary fashion," (p. 121) Turkish designers leverage Ottoman heritage in their designs as means of standing out in international markets while maintaining local relevance in a manner that reduces such heritage to "mere ornamentation of global *fashion* trends" (p. 121). Examining the work and discourse of four contemporary Turkish designers, this analysis frames the work of these designers as a form of self-orientalism in which the Euro-American image of an 'exotic' East is internalized and reified by people from the East (Dirlik, 1996). Furthermore, heritage in this case is viewed as a site of commodification where the economic hegemony of the West is enacted, and the dominance of European fashion capitals is reified. Interestingly, this indictment is reminiscent of earlier criticism that has been levelled against heritage, declaiming it as a mere commodification of the 'actual' past. This critique is unsurprising and certainly not unfounded in light of important debates within fashion studies about the prevailing Eurocentric ideologies which have influenced foundational theory and practice in the field. However, it is important to consider that this critique presupposes an 'authentic' heritage that is subsequently sullied or devalued by commodification. As pointed out earlier, though authenticity has become implicitly linked to it through prevailing discourse, in reality, heritage is hardly its paragon. Thus, it is somewhat naïve to uncritically conflate Ottoman heritage with authenticity. Moreover, the supposedly oppositional nature of authenticity (which is inherently good) and commodity (which contaminates the 'real') has been challenged by those who point out that authenticity itself has become a commodity (Waterton and Watson, 2015; Rabine, 2002; Sylvanus, 2007 ). Indeed, the very concept of a fake-authenticity brand has long been commonplace within the branding and marketing world. Additionally, though this analysis does acknowledge the positive potential of self-orientalism as a tool of empowerment, it does imply that there is a correct way to

engage with ottoman heritage in fashion. Such a view appears to have a basis in the conservationist perspective, is somewhat dismissive of non-expert engagements with heritage, and appears to discount the legitimate cultural work that designers do. Nevertheless, Özüdoğru's analysis does aptly point out that distinctive cultural and historical elements are often utilized in fashion design practices globally.

Another interesting example of the complex interplay of the national histories and fashion design is an examination of heritage in Soviet Fashion by Abramov and Papazian (2018). Tracing soviet design from its roots in folk-inspired design and the Avant-Garde during the 1920s to the adoption of Bildungsberger ideals between the 1950s and 1980, the authors argue that fashion design in the Soviet Union was inspired in part by limited state-sanctioned engagements with pre-revolutionary folk culture. Focusing on the Perm fashion house, Abramov and Papazian (2018) point out that fashion designers who created collections for the provincial regions of the USSR had relatively more creative freedom than those designing for international trade shows. They posit that this occurred primarily because the design process in Soviet fashion houses was heavily influenced by official state ideology and the subsequent need for this discourse to be reproduced at international trade events. Therefore, the use of Folk heritage in such instances was tightly controlled by the mandate of the state. In fact, only South Russian decorative and art heritage was part of the authorized pool of inspiration. Nevertheless, when creating collections for local runway shows designers could exercise a bit more creative flexibility by referencing other regional folk cultures Like Ural and Komi-Permian for inspiration. Interestingly of the two designers interviewed in this study, only one claimed to have a personal connection to the source of their alternative heritage inspiration. In this study, heritage is presented not only as a tool used by the state in their effort to present an alternative to Western fashion but it is also viewed as a means for soviet designers to innovate while working within strict ideological and material constraints. The use of heritage in soviet fashion is further illustrative of the discursive nature of heritage and how it can be co-opted in service of a political agenda. This is possible, because:

“It is one of the ways in which the nation slowly constructs for itself a sort of collective social memory. Just as individuals and families construct their identities in part by 'storying' the various random incidents and contingent turning points of their lives into a single, coherent, narrative, so nations

construct identities by Selectively binding their chosen high points and memorable achievements into an unfolding 'national story'." (Hall, 1999, p. 5).

In summary, as this study examines the role and meaning of heritage for brands that cannot be categorised as either storied or nouveau heritage brands its findings contributing to this area of knowledge by providing an analysis of how non-brand- based notions of heritage are conceptualised and engage with in fashion design practice. Moreover, the findings expand understandings of design practice from outside of the normative centres of fashion by presenting findings from a relatively under represented context like Zambia. As discussed further in chapters 3 and 4, heritage in the Zambian context has a strong relationship with personal and national narratives and identities.

### **Heritage and positionality**

Though each case mentioned in the discussion above is a unique example of heritage in fashion, both exemplify the nuance and complexity of fashion practices that engage with cultural and national pasts as part of their design process. What is apparent from such examples is that heritage is not merely a neutral source of inspiration, instead, its use is fraught with a range of competing and contested social-political meanings. Additionally, one important theme that features in both studies referenced above is that of positionality within the context of globalisation. In the Soviet case, it was manifest in the desire of the state to create fashion and clothing that was oppositional or distinct from the perceived excesses of western fashion. In the Turkish example, it was evidenced in the characterisation of self-orientalism. Though it was presented as a criticism, Özüdoğru did point out that such self-orientalism in design practice had the potential to be an empowering act through hybridization (2018). Nevertheless, in both cases heritage was used to establish a sense of place relative to other actants within the global fashion landscape. In essence, heritage can be leveraged as a means of establishing a distinctive design profile/imaginary that can be connected to a particular culture or geographic location. For example, Skov (2011), in her analysis of fashion and place-making in small European nations, has argued that in order to establish their locales as fashion centres, fashion designers in nations like Norway, Belgium and Iceland need to leverage their cultural distinctiveness through references to localized heritage and

tradition. Although Skov argues for a poly-centric fashion worldview, she still acknowledges that the old fashion capitals, Paris, London, Milan, New York, and Tokyo continue to “hold absolutely dominant positions in terms of both business and the imaginary” (2011, p. 153). Therefore, she suggests that designers from ‘smaller’ nations would benefit from adopting a self-exoticizing practice model. Like self-orientalism, self-exoticism is built on the idea of oppositionality, in which the exotic (anything typically non-western) is oppositional to the normative (western). Indeed, such dualistic notions (like ‘high vs. low’, fashion vs. anti-fashion, ‘fixed vs. changing’) populate the fashion theory landscape and serve as examples of the strong influence of Cartesian philosophy in western thought. What is interesting about Skov’s analysis is that by placing smaller European nations in the position of the self-exoticizing other (at least in creative terms), she further highlights the normative position that the dominant fashion cities and nations continue to occupy within the global fashion landscape. Furthermore, Skov’s analysis highlights the fact that the power which these centres have managed to exert over the ‘imaginary’ of fashion has been productive of the dualistic pairing of cultural heritage and modern cosmopolitan style. This dualist binary positions fashion which emerges from the capitals as a product of the perpetual present, while fashion from the margins is an authentic product of a distant past. Although theorists like Craik (1993), Nissen (2010), and Jensen & Craik, (2016) have convincingly argued against such totalizing binaries which have underscored fashion theory, the power of the binary in fashion has yet to diminish in practice. As such, heritage may be employed as part of place-making and negotiating positions. Although this may appear to be part of a pluralizing, democratic turn that authors Like Skov have advocated for, it must be acknowledged that such aims can only be accomplished within the framework of the dominant fashion capital because self-exoticizing practice is only possible when there are practices which occupy the space of the normative. As a result of its utility in representing group distinctiveness and the exotic, cultural heritage (particularly in its visual and material manifestation) can be utilized to attribute value to and carve out space (literally and conceptually) in the firmament of fashion for practices that originate outside of the normative hegemonic centre. While one can argue whether there has actually been any shift in the power dynamics which shape interactions and engagements within the global fashion landscape, it is apparent that heritage, particularly at an ethnonational level, continues to play an increasingly important role. It is certainly a prominent element in design practices from regions and communities that have historically

been placed on the periphery or excluded. Specifically, in the case of African fashion design, heritage features commonly in various discussions about this field. While there have been a number of interesting and important studies covering a range of concomitant issues like identity, ethnicity, post-coloniality, power, and politics of dress (see Hendrickson, 1986; Eicher, 1995; Hansen, 2000, 2004, 2013; Rabine, 2002, 2016; Rovine, 2004, 2008, 2009, 2015, 2018), there is still a dearth of research in this area considering the sheer size of the continent and the variety of cultural experiences and expressions from it. As such, it would be interesting to explore the various views that designers from a country like Zambia (which has an emerging fashion design industry in the contemporary sense and is relatively underrepresented in literature) have about heritage and to investigate how they negotiate and utilize those understandings in their design practice.

## **African Fashion**

As stated earlier, positionality is an important part of the global fashion landscape. Therefore, any discussion of heritage in fashion practices from a particular geographic and cultural setting must include some reference to and examination of that context's relative position in the wider fashion landscape. Consequently, as Zambian fashion exists within the larger context of African fashion and culture, it is essential to begin with a brief exposition of Africa and the position that cultural products from the region occupy. As a continent widely believed to be the first home of humankind, and currently home to over a billion inhabitants belonging to upwards of 1000 ethnolinguistic groups (Kröner et. al, 2020), Africa has been and is host to an extensive and diverse range of cultural practices and traditions. With the history of human habitation on the continent believed to span as far back as 200,000 years (Derricourt, 2011), it is fair to say that the region has seen the rise and fall of a multitude of practices and histories that stretch beyond the scope of contemporary historical records. As such, it is impossible to conclusively sum up or exhaustively cover all of its fashion practices within a single study. Moreover, while this may have been the case at the inception of modern humankind many millennia ago, presently, the region has no singular or definitive look/style (Eicher & Ross, 2010). With dress and adornment practices ranging from scarification and body painting to richly woven lengths of fabric wrapped around the body, African fashion culture spans

between extreme minimalism and maximalism (both in terms of style as well as in how much of the body's surface is covered)(Eicher & Ross, 2010). Indeed, even the materials and technologies used vary greatly, featuring an assortment of elements like chalk, leaves, bark, animal skins, beads, and hand-woven or industrially produced cloth. Influenced by migrations, ebbs, and flows of power, colonial expansions, religious movements, and trade, these practices continue to be in a process of transformation in tandem with the ever-changing social, political, and natural landscape of the continent.

### **The idea of Africa in fashion**

Although a comprehensive examination of the fashion practices of the entire continent is beyond the scope of this study, it is, however, possible to discuss and understand some of the overarching themes and experiences which are generally characteristic of the region and its Fashion practices. For instance, Identity, authenticity, and hybridity are just some of the themes that commonly feature in many discussions of African fashion. Furthermore, though it could be argued that the categorization of all the region's diverse practices under the singular banner of 'African Fashion' is unwise because this seemingly plays into some of the essentializing misapprehensions about the monolithic nature of the continent, I would argue that this broad category is useful in understanding some of the issues which affect even the most disparate case. Of course, it must be asserted that Africa is not a monolith and therefore its various cultures and countries cannot be treated as interchangeable. However, the benefits of beginning this study by looking first at the larger category of 'African Fashion' outweigh any possible drawbacks because forming an understanding of the wider issues that are likely to be involved in a specific African context can be an effective way of establishing the foundational framework from which country-specific issues can be comprehended.

Therefore, even before commencing an analysis of specific cases or phenomena at a localized level, it is important to note that the very term, 'African Fashion' isn't value-free. With it comes evocative baggage of essentializing ideas and visuals which are still very potent within the wider fashion imaginary. Indeed, much in the same way that eastern cultures have been utilized as the representation of the exotic within western signification systems, an 'idea of Africa' has also been developed within the fashion imaginary as visual and

material culture from the continent has been repackaged as a lexical 'other' in western fashion (For a discussion of Orientalism in fashion see Geczy (2013)). As Loughran points out in her analysis of European fashion, the 'idea of Africa' and its influence on fashion in Europe extends as far back as the colonial expansion during the 1800s (2009). Focusing on the twentieth century, she points to the work of designers like Madame Carven, Yves Saint Laurent, John Galiano, and Jean-Paul Gautier as well as African designers based in Europe like Lamine Kouyate and Seidnaly Alphadi as examples of the continued convergence of African and European fashion systems. While the nature of some of these creative engagements could certainly bear scrutiny in light of current debates about appropriation, what is most crucial to recognize is that they are all examples of the existence and utility of the generalized 'idea of Africa' in western contexts of practice. Moreover, they exemplify how fashion design itself has played a role (in addition to other messaging about the continent) in producing and reproducing a discourse that has shaped conceptions, not only of the continent but also delineations of what constitutes African fashion (visually, materially, and conceptually). While not the epicentre or primary source of such production, it can be argued that just as with the case of Orientalism, where cultural symbols/artifacts are divorced from their context and reassembled to form an orientalist myth, the western fashion industry has been instrumental in building the mythic construction of Africa. Much in the same way that Africa itself (at least conceptually) has come to be associated with, among other things, notions of backwardness and privation, fashion which is labelled as African similarly bears the weight of being viewed as static or trapped in an "ethnographic present' as opposed to the 'perpetual future' associated with Western fashion's continual rush to the next season." (Rovine, 2009). While it's important not to imply that African designers/creatives and people haven't had any agency or a part to play in the production of these notions, it still must be acknowledged that as with any discourse; the power of forming this 'idea of Africa' has laid disproportionately in the hands of those at the centre. Historically, in the realm of fashion, the centre has been located both metaphorically and literally outside of Africa. Additionally, though it can definitely be argued that there are multiple conceptions of African Fashion, it must also be acquiesced that there is certainly a dominant discourse that exerts more influence over the wider cultural imaginary. One of the foremost notions from this system of thought is the conflation of African fashions with fixed tradition and the primitive and their general positioning as antithetical to western

fashion outputs (Eicher & Ross, 2010). Indeed, African fashioning practices have long been perceived as static. As one commentator notes:

“While boubous, robes, raffia skirts, beadwork, and caftans fascinate Western observers, and may provide inspiration for Western fashion, in popular parlance they are not fashion in their own right. Instead, they are described by terms such as ‘costume,’ ‘dress,’ and ‘garb,’ words often modified by the overarching adjectives ‘traditional,’ ‘native,’ ‘indigenous,’ and ‘authentic.’ None of these terms carry implications of change over time, for traditional practices are generally conceived of as being changed rather than creating change.” (Rovine, 2004, pp.190-200).

These erroneous notions are arguably largely the result of the Eurocentric ideas and attitudes which have pervaded both popular and scientific thought historically, particularly during the colonial era. As Rovine (2010a) points out “dress was frequently used by Western observers to justify the classification of African cultures as primitive, a notion that reflected the Eurocentrism of the Colonial era” (p. 63). While many of these ideas have been challenged, they nevertheless remain quite influential. For instance, in a relatively recent article about the 2018 Lagos Fashion week Suzy Menkes, an influential fashion critic, offhandedly remarked that “building a fashion image for a continent that once saw clothes as tribal totems is challenging”. In addition to supporting prevailing notions about the recent advent of ‘fashion’ into African dress systems, this statement is indicative of a general lack of understanding of the complex transnational cultural networks and histories which inform and underpin contemporary African fashion practice.

One of the main reasons cited for such a limited view of African dress practices is the idea that fashion is inherently about, change and by some measures, extremely rapid change (Jansen, 2020). Therefore, African dress practices, with their presumed lack of change, cannot be classed as fashion. Pointing out that this view stems from the comparative lack of evidence and documentation, Eicher & Ross (2010) have argued that a lack of extant evidence does not necessarily equate to a lack of something’s actual existence. Moreover, they suggest that though not extensive, evidence of change in African fashion can be gleaned from archaeological records and written accounts. As an example, they point to the writing of a western observer’s account in the 19<sup>th</sup> century of the dress practices of young men in Congo in which the author relates his exasperation at their supposed improper use of western clothing. Eicher and

Ross point out that “such protestations indicate that African consumers of western style dress were creating new styles, adjusting and recombining new and existing forms to suit changing tastes” (2010, p. 63).

Finally, irrespective of its precise source, what is apparent is that there exists not only an idea of Africa that is utilized within fashion but also a somewhat limited notion of what fashion from the continent is supposed to be. Though the same can perhaps be said of any region and its material culture, what this means in the case of African fashion, is that there are certain discourses that influence not only perceptions about it but which also have the potential to shape the sartorial and aesthetic choices of its peoples and creatives professionals. In summary, while the continent’s cultural and creative practices do not exist as a monolith, an awareness of its collective positioning and associations is an essential part of beginning to understand specific contexts within Africa like Zambia. While this understanding doesn’t answer the main question of what heritage means to fashion designers from the region, it helps to bring forward some of the pre-understanding and biases that surround cultural practices and outputs from this region and which may have implications on views and uses of heritage.

### **Heritage in African fashion design**

Beyond the notion or ‘idea’ of African Fashion exists a diverse world of practices, objects, and histories. As with clothing styles in general, the work of African designers is not unified by a particular style and varies regionally. However, one common thread that broadly appears to characterize the work from the continent is the negotiation of local identities and histories within a wider global context. As Rovine(2010) points out “The work of many designers reflects the connections and in some cases the tensions, between indigenous styles of dress and the styles of dress that dominate the international fashion industry” (2010, p. 68). Furthermore, in reference to the differing approaches to this task of negotiation, Rovine (2010) goes on to argue that there are broadly two categories of African designers: Those who combine indigenous materials, garments, and styles with western styles and those who choose to make their allusions conceptual rather than overt by implicitly referencing the cultures and traditions that are associated with the continent. While this framework is not definitive of all designers or a clear indication of what one might expect when

looking at African design as a whole, it is nevertheless, a useful tool when seeking to generally understand the creative practices and strategies from the region.

Although African fashion might be viewed through its association with the traditional as static, in reality, rather than attempting to make strict reproductions or costumes, designers generally aim to innovatively transform and reinterpret indigenous aesthetics and culture. Nevertheless, a market for garments that have some level of prescribed features does exist. Often mislabelled as costume, such clothing is generally utilized in ceremonial or culturally significant contexts like weddings, initiation rites, and festivals. Though this category of clothing seemingly doesn't fit into the category of contemporary fashion design because it appears to be more aligned with the intention of reproducing something based on an established template, rather than that of designed innovation and transformation, it does in fact bear evidence of shifts in taste and style of local fashion practice. While strict reproductions do exist, many designers and tailors from the region produce styles of clothing that exist in the space between contemporary design and ceremonial clothing. This point is important to make because it is easy to misrepresent such garments as static costume as they are also often worn in ceremonial contexts. As such, rather than thinking in terms of a distinct dichotomy between ceremonial clothing and contemporary fashion, it is far more helpful to think in terms of a continuum with various garments and fashion practices bearing an orientation towards one end of the spectrum. Indeed, most of the designers profiled for this study simultaneously produce garments and collections which could be positioned at both ends of the spectrum. In other words, some designers create clothing that is used in ceremonial or culturally significant spaces while also producing RTW collections that lean more towards a 'design innovation' orientation.

### **Hybridity and heritage**

As mentioned earlier, according to Rovine (2010) such an innovation-based orientation can be achieved either through engagements with literal forms or with conceptual elements. Designs from the former category tend to be easily recognizable as 'African' because they include visual and material elements that are aesthetic markers of indigeneity when they are placed alongside other design elements. For instance, in her examination of South African Fashion labels,

Stoned Cherries, Strangelove, and Sun Goddess, Leora Faber (2010) points to their combination of European style tailoring and visual/material references with 'traditional' African dress as being productive of "hybridized identity options, in which African and cosmopolitan aesthetics are fused" (2010, p. 129). Interestingly, Faber argues that the elements which compose this fusion are themselves to be read not as natural or 'pure' when viewed separately but as hybrids themselves, which in turn is indicative of an ongoing process of transculturation (a phenomenon which occurs as cultures are shaped by convergence and flux of elements from different spheres (Faber, 2010)). In addition to her analysis of their collections, Faber also examines the role of hybridity in marketing and organizational strategies as these brands position themselves in local and international markets. Finally, although there is not an explicitly stated focus on heritage, the study does operationalize the term 'traditional' as denoting "practices and objects that look primarily to the past for inspiration" (Faber 2010, p. 161). Therefore, several examples of what can be considered hybrid heritage elements, like the use of Ishwe-shwe fabrics, Xhosa braiding, cow hide, and even crinoline, are cited in the article. Moreover, these elements are generally overt and recognizable references to South African (and African) cultures and histories.

### **Why Zambian designers?**

What Faber's study illustrates is that much of African Fashion design practice could in some ways be viewed as part of wider heritage practices in the region. This is because the work of these designers commonly features, either explicitly or implicitly, some level of negotiation not only of identities and culture but also of the past (distant, recent and even imagined) in and for the present purposes. Moreover, the past is negotiated from a combination of perspectives including the personal and communal. Although Faber's work offers key insights, it like many other such studies of contemporary African fashion focuses on analysing of creative outputs like collections and garments, without fully interrogating the experiences and views of the designers themselves. Moreover, although there are certainly a number of interesting studies which do centre their analytic focus on the perspectives of creative practitioners, considering the size of the continent and its extensive range of cultural practices and expressions, existing research is not exhaustive. As designers are generally some of the most

influential contributors to the clothing design process it would be interesting to examine their views on heritage as it relates to their practice. Therefore, this study aims to further this area of knowledge by assessing the role and meaning of heritage not through an analysis of creative outputs, but by focusing on the views and experiences of designers. As an African nation with an emerging Fashion design industry (in the contemporary sense), Zambia has been chosen as the context for this study. While there have been a few insightful studies and publications focusing mainly on fashioning practices (or engagements with fashion by a broad range of actants like consumers and merchants), there is relatively less research focusing specifically on the views and experiences of Zambian fashion designers. Furthermore, another reason why Zambia was selected as the context of this study is that it is my home country. Aside from the practical reasons that make it relatively convenient to study such a familiar context, as a Zambian woman, I would like to add my voice to ongoing discussions of my nation's cultural practices. Finally, in addition to contributing to various bodies of knowledge, including discussions on African fashion, I believe that conducting this study will be an opportunity to expand and transform my own knowledge and understanding of my country, my identity, and my design practice.

### **Zambia and its fashion practices**

In order to establish an understanding of the context within which the designers profiled in this study are presently located or hail from, it is important to briefly discuss the history of Zambia as well as provide a summative description of the nation's fashion practices. Zambia is a land-locked country situated in the south-central region of Africa. The nation shares borders with eight countries: Zimbabwe, Botswana, Namibia, Angola, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, and Mozambique. Before its time as an administered territory under the British South African company (BSAC) and subsequently the British crown, the region was home to many distinct polities controlling territories with somewhat fluid boundaries (Taylor, 2006; Williams et al., 2021). Because colonial administrators often paid little heed to such boundaries when making their demarcation, many ethnic groups in Zambia share linguistic and cultural ties with groups in neighbouring countries. During its time as a colonial protectorate, the region was known as Northern Rhodesia and was at one time part of a larger federation with Southern Rhodesia (present-day Zimbabwe) and Nyasaland

(present-day Malawi). Within a few years of gaining its independence in 1964 under the leadership of Kenneth Kaunda, the nation went from a multi-party system to one-party rule in 1972. The state was controlled by the UPND party until 1991 when Kaunda was replaced by Fredrick Chiluba after multi-party elections were held (Taylor, 2006). Presently, the country is home to over 17 million people with a slight majority living in sparsely populated rural areas. Additionally, there are over 70 ethnolinguistic groups/tribes, though the majority of the indigenous population belongs either to the Bemba, Tonga, Chewa, Lozi, or Nsenga ethnic groups (Williams et al., 2021). Due to this feature of being a multi-ethnic nation of relatively recent establishment, Zambia can be described as a 'Plural society'. Such countries are defined as "colonially created states with culturally heterogeneous populations" (Eriksen 2010, p. 19). Unlike other such states, Zambia has experienced relatively little upheaval from tensions that tend to arise within nations with multi-ethnic populations. This may be due in part to early efforts by leaders during the independence period to foster a unified national identity. For instance, the slogan 'One Zambia, one nation' was not only used as a rallying cry against colonial rule but also represented a call to reject ideologies of tribal/ethnic division. Furthermore, attempts to suppress division and create a unified national identity and culture during the nation's inception can be seen for instance in the choice to relabel the cultural artifacts from various ethnic groups under the singular heading of Zambian art at the Livingstone museum in the 1970s (Decourier, 2011). As a result of these and other such efforts, Zambian national identity has become somewhat of a 'supra-ethnicity' (Eriksen 2010) to which all other identities and affiliations have become subordinate. However, it is important to note that this has not resulted in the complete erasure or suppression of distinct ethnic identities and practices. Rather, it has contributed (in addition to colonial rule, trade, and migration) to the multi-vocal nature of contemporary Zambian identities and accounts in part for the difficulty of trying to succinctly describe its dress culture. For instance, in the book *Culture and Customs of Zambia*, the author argues that Zambia doesn't have one distinct traditional look, observing instead that while "the patterns, the colours, the textures, and the styles are quite recognizable as inspired by African tradition—there is little that is uniquely Zambian about it" (Taylor 2006, p. 89). Although this statement is somewhat erroneous, as it suggests a complete lack of regional distinctiveness in the entire nation's dress practices, what it does accurately communicate is the multivocality clearly evidenced in both the historic and contemporary fashion practices of the nation. **As this study is focused on**

examining the views of contemporary fashion designers from the nation, it contributes to knowledge about Zambian fashion practices by shedding light how notions of the nation's literal past and its ever emergent story may have impacted fashion design practice. Such knowledge in turn can provide a fuller picture of the region's dress practices in general.

### **Precolonial fashion practices in Zambia**

In the period before the colonial era, the different groups that occupied the region employed a variety of dress practices. According to Ruth Simbo (2010), most of these variances can be attributed to the fact that the area was settled through the migration of Bantu-speaking people from the north-west (specifically, the Lunda and Luba Kingdoms from the DRC) and Zulu-speaking groups from the south (Like the Ngoni from the area that is now South Africa) with each group bringing their own sartorial practices. In these societies, clothing had a range of social and political uses beyond the role of merely providing a practical covering for the body. Indeed, locally sourced materials like bark cloth, sisal, raffia thread, and animal skins were used to create garments for ceremonial purposes and everyday life. Bark cloth in particular is a material that enjoyed widespread use in Zambia despite its labour-intensive production process (Simbo, 2010). As trade routes expanded in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, materials like woven cloth and beads were assimilated into local dress practices. Furthermore, woven cloth quickly became a highly sought-after commodity and quickly replaced materials like bark-cloth (Simbo, 2010). Subsequently, the advent of colonial administration and rule helped to usher in further transformations in the dress of Zambian peoples. For instance, one category of clothing that was greatly transformed during this period was the ceremonial clothing and regalia of chiefs, headmen, and other leaders through whom the British maintained a form of indirect rule. One such transformation can be seen in the incorporation of a British admiral's suit into the royal attire of the Lozi Chief, an item that has become so emblematic of the Lozi chieftaincy that it is no longer considered to be foreign by the Lozi people (Simbo, 2010).

In summary, as a relatively young state made up of many distinct ethnolinguistic groups, Zambia is a nation with a highly multivocal culture that reflects the plurality of identities and cultural expressions that have (and are continually in the process of being) woven into the country's culture. Moreover,

the nation's contemporary fashion practices exemplify the hybridity and multivocality of the wider culture. As such, this study aims to examine what heritage means to fashion designers working in and from such a context and to explore what role (if any) it may play in their creative practice.

### **Contemporary fashion practices in Zambia**

As is common in most African countries, contemporary dress styles in Zambia feature a mixture of imported and local styles. Indeed, items like blue jeans and t-shirts enjoy just as much, if not more popularity (particularly in more urban areas) as items like chitenge suits and wrappers, which are generally associated with local traditional dress (Hansen, 2019). Moreover, even the styles which are labelled as 'traditional' exemplify a form of hybridity as put forth by Faber (2010) in that such garments often "consist of an assemble of both local and foreign styles" (Simbo, 2010, p. 546).

Having studied and written about various aspects of contemporary Zambian society and culture over the last three decades, Karen T. Hansen is one of the foremost theorists offering perspectives on the nation's contemporary fashion and dress practices. Focusing on the consumption, use, and meanings of dress, her studies have covered a variety of fascinating topics like the "process of re-commodification" of second-hand clothing as it is adapted into local systems of meaning and identity (1994, 1995, 2000, 2013). Hansen has also highlighted the role of second-hand clothing traders as cultural intermediaries who shape local dress culture by artfully curating their offerings and anticipating shifting tastes. Moreover, Hansen has also discussed the role of sewing machines and tailors in Zambia's urban development (2013). Furthermore, in addition to examining the role of urbanization and labour migration in shaping consumption habits and dress practices during the colonial period (2000b) and after it, Hansen's work has also addressed local views about female modesty in dress. While not exhaustive, Hansen's research is notable for providing a great deal of insight into the habits and attitudes that Zambians have towards clothing both presently and in the recent past. As such, one particularly relevant piece of contextual information that can be gathered from her work is that in addition to viewing Zambians generally as "clothing conscious for a long time", Hanse also points out that they are regionally known for experimenting with tailormade "African outfits" made of colourful printed fabrics (Hansen, 2006, p. 3). The type of fabric used to create

these outfits is commonly called *chitenge* in Zambia. Though the term primarily refers to the roller print and double-faced wax printed material, it can also be used in reference to various printed and dyed textiles which are widely and erroneously considered to be of African origin (Hansen, 2019). While not indigenous or unique to the region, chitenge has become an important part of the nation's dress practices and is inter-linked to its identity. As Hansen (2019) points out, outfits made of African print fabric were often referred to as "Zambia" in neighbouring countries during the mid-1990s. As a form of clothing Chitenge is either worn as a wrapper around the waist by women or constructed into garments. In addition to its use to create tailored garments chitenge fabric serves as multipurpose material in daily life. For instance, lengths of the fabric can be used as a sling, as a covering or mat for sitting on, and as a bundle for transporting goods (Hansen, 2019). While it is used by both men and women, the material enjoys a higher level of use in women's fashion. In particular, the two-piece chitenge suit is an outfit that, since the nation's independence, has come to be widely embraced as a national emblem of tradition (Hansen, 2013, 2019b). Pointing to its use in the Zambian coat of arms which was designed by Gabriel Ellison and features male and female figures, Hansen argues that the two-piece chitenge suit has become part of defining notions about feminine dress in the nation (2019). The two-piece chitenge outfit has transformed over time to reflect the changing social, economic and political landscape and scarcely resembles the one depicted in the coat of arms. Influenced by clothing styles from other parts of the continent like Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of Congo, chitenge outfit styles have reflected the various shifts in trade and migration (Hansen, 2000b). Moreover, these outfits, like the material they are constructed from, are not only an example of invented tradition (in that the origin of the chitenge can actually be traced back to Indonesia via European cloth merchants) they also represent the hybridity and ongoing transformation of contemporary southern African cultures. Though not of local origin, the importance of chitenge material in Zambia can be seen in the fact that it was produced locally from the late 1960s to the 1990s by parastatal firms Kafue Textiles and Mulungushi Textiles. However, due to the liberalization of the economy in the 1990s these and other local firms folded (Koyi, 2006). As a result, the majority of chitenge (indeed, most fabrics in the nation) has been sourced externally from nations like Japan, China, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (Hansen, 2000a, 2019). Despite the lack of a locally produce source, chitenge material remains an important part of Zambian dress culture, with many tailors producing "chitenge

outfits that continue to develop in new directions” (Hansen, 2019). However, this does not mean that chitenge is the only material used, but rather that it occupies a very prominent place in contemporary fashion practices, specifically in garments produced locally. Though this study is not focused on chitenge, the findings do contribute to discussions of the material’s import in Zambian culture by providing examples of how the fabric and its visual and material features are utilised and viewed in relation to heritage by designers

### **Zambian designers**

In addition to the tailoring market, an industry of designers has recently emerged in Zambia. Arguing for a progressive link between tailoring and design practices in the nation, Hansen refers to the local design scene as the “most recent twist in the ever-changing development of the organization of the tailors craft in Zambia.” (2013, p. 181). Having developed from the tailoring industry, the practices of contemporary Zambia Fashion designers share many similarities with those of tailors. For instance, both designers and tailors are often called upon to create custom garments for everyday and occasion wear. However, an important distinction is that Zambian designers differ from local tailors because their practice is underpinned by an explicit claim of /association with the unique creative vision an individual/team (i.e. a designer/designers). This distinctive ‘design vision’ is not only central to their marketing and communication strategy with their customers but also acts as a continuous thread which is apparent in successive collections and products they make. Tailors on the other hand, only produce clothing at the behest of their clients and do not aim to distinguish their practice or business as a produce of a ‘unique’ creative vision. Instead, they focus on building a reputation of craftsmanship in garment construction and an understanding of current trends in style. Therefore, while clients have an expectation that both tailors and designers will have a good level of technical craft/expertise in garment construction, designers have delineated themselves in Zambia by also purporting to provide clients with their ‘unique’ creative skill as well. This of course should not imply that tailors never make any creative/innovative decisions or additions to their clients request, but rather that they are generally not sought out for such services and mainly work to reproduce/ imitate popular styles and garments. Lastly, tailors in Zambia typically work alone to produce garments, while designer’s often hire or subcontract tailors to produce

their products. This is due in part to the relative lack of formal garment factories in this context. While the views of tailors would be interesting to explore in their own right as tailors do have a significant impact on fashion practice in the region, the primary aim of this study is to understand how Zambian designers conceptualise and utilise heritage. Therefore, in addition to explicitly purporting or appearing to engage with the notion of heritage in their work, the participants of this study have been purposively selected on the basis of structuring their practice and business around their 'unique' creative/ design vision.

Building on the research of theorists like Hansen, this study sets out to contribute to knowledge about Zambian material culture by critically examining the attitudes and practices of designers in the nation's emerging fashion design scene. Though Hansen rejects what she refers to as the "worn out distinctions between traditional and modern dress as well as African and Western Clothing" (Hansen, 2019b, p. 12) Hansen's work suggests that contemporary Zambian fashion design practice features a complex interplay of multiple temporal and regional influences. Therefore, this study is concerned with interrogating the role and meaning of some of those influences (specifically relating to the past) from the perspective of designers. As argued earlier in this chapter, heritage can generally be described as a negotiation of the past in and for the present. Moreover, the brief discussion and examples of its use and role in various fashion practices around the world suggest that it may be an element that informs and shapes fashion design practice in a nation like Zambia (and for designers from the region). Therefore, the primary question interrogated in this project is the meaning and role (if any) of heritage in Zambian fashion design practice. Focusing on the perspectives and lived experiences of designers in/from Zambia, the study employs an Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis approach to examine this central question. A discussion of this methodology and the actual process of conducting this study can be found in the next chapter.

### **Chapter summary**

As set out earlier, this chapter includes a theoretical interrogation of the term heritage and details the particular framing chosen for this study. As such, within the context of this research project heritage is understood as negotiations of the past in and for present purposes. This conceptualization of the term means that heritage is intangible (Smith, 2006), a situated product of the present

(Graham et al., 2000), that emerges perpetually (Crouch, 2010). In addition to a broad discussion of heritage, this chapter also includes an examination of the term within the realm of fashion design. In this discussion, it has been argued that aside from the brand-based model in which actual and invented brand histories, codes, and objects are continually referenced in clothing production and marketing, there are other ways in which the past is engaged with and utilized in fashion design. These alternative models of heritage in fashion design often centre on communal, national, and personal histories and identities. Moreover, as illustrated by the examples from Turkish and Russian fashion, heritage can, among other things, be leveraged as a means of negotiating positions within the global fashion landscape (particularly for brands that originate outside of the normative centres of fashion). This study build on this area of knowledge by presenting an analysis of fashion design practices which like the Turkish and Russian cases fall outside of brand-based models of heritage use.

Furthermore, as this study focuses specifically on examining the role and meaning of heritage in Zambian fashion, this chapter includes a brief examination of African fashion generally and concerning heritage. This was done in order to provide information which helps to give readers a better understanding of the nation and how its cultural products are positioned and perceived relative to fashion from other regions. In particular, it has been contended that African fashion has historically (within theory and popular conceptions) been delimited to the realm of static, unfashionable grab. Moreover, it has been argued that the region's cultural expressions have often been appropriated within western fashion systems to denote the exotic other. As such, this study will explore the manner in which (if at all) such notions impact Zambian fashion. Furthermore, building on Faber's (2010) analysis, it has also been proposed that African fashion designers commonly engage with the past in their creative practice. Therefore, this study aims to expand this area of knowledge by examining the import (if any) of the past for contemporary Zambian designers. Finally, brief contextualizing information specifically about Zambia and its fashion practices has been presented to highlight the significance of certain materials and actors within this context. As contended above, Zambian fashion designers are a relatively new and growing subset of social actors who play an increasingly important role in shaping dress practices in and from the region. Therefore, this study is aimed at interrogating their perceptions of heritage in relation to their creative practice.

# **Chapter Two:**

## Methodological Approach

## **Methodological approach**

As stated in chapter one the primary research question of this project is as follows: How do fashion designers (in and from Zambia understand heritage within the context of their work. Secondly, how is heritage employed as a tool in their practice? As the primary research question deals with how individual design professionals make sense of or give meaning to heritage within their own fashion practice, I have chosen Interpretive phenomenological analysis (IPA) as the main method of interrogation in this project. Owing to its foundation in Phenomenology (which is essentially concerned with understanding the nature of experience), IPA is a methodology underpinned by a concern for the interpretation of context-specific, lived experiences (Smith et. al, 2009). Moreover, analysis in IPA is grounded in the accounts of participants, prioritising their voices over that of extant theory (Storey, 2007). Therefore, as one of the objectives of this project is to focus primarily on the perspectives that individuals have about their creative process rather than the tangible outcomes or artifacts of these processes, IPA is a useful means of achieving this aim. Nevertheless, tangible objects will be discussed as relevant to each participant's account of their lived experience. In addition to a description of its main features, the succeeding sections of this chapter outline the relevance of IPA in relation to the research question as well as my position as a researcher. Finally, this chapter also includes an account of the primary research process, from the pilot phase to the main interviews.

### **Epistemological stance**

In this section, I briefly describe my ontological and epistemological stance. Such an explication of my general views on knowledge and reality not only serves to position me as a researcher but will help to further illustrate the appropriateness of IPA as a method in relation to that position. This is because determining which "research tools to choose requires consideration of the research paradigms or approaches that guide or frame a study" (Lapan et. Al, 2012). As the primary investigator, my assumptions about the world and knowledge naturally constitute the underlying theoretical perspective which frames this study. Moreover, as Willig (2013) reminds us, explicitly stating one's

epistemological stance helps to clarify both the status and limitations of one's knowledge claims. Though it would be most accurate to describe myself as sitting somewhere between perspectives, with my positing altering at times, for the purpose of this research project the following is a description of the position that I've operated from as well as an outline of how that position has informed the choice of a methodological approach. Unlike those operating from the positivist/post-positivist tradition whose view is grounded in the realist assertion that a singular reality exists independent of the observer who employs reductionistic methods often based on a priori theories (Creswell, 2013), I align more with the constructivist (sometimes referred to as interpretivist or social constructivist) view which acknowledges the situated and emergent nature of social/cultural phenomena (Lapan et. al, 2012). In variance to the Objectivist view that meaning can exist apart from the human mind, those working from this perspective seek to "develop subjective meanings" of their world "directed towards certain objects or things. These meanings are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrow the meanings into a few categories or ideas." (Creswell, 2013, p. 24). Moreover, the aim of research conducted from this position relies "as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation" (Creswell, 2013, p. 25) as meanings do not inhere in objects or things, but are instead "constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting" (Crotty, 1998, p. 43). Furthermore, as this paradigm suggests that the social world cannot be examined independently from the human consciousness (Crotty, 1998), then it must also be acknowledged that researchers can never achieve true objectivity. Even if painstaking effort is made through strict adherence to study protocols designed to eliminate bias, such efforts ultimately fall short because even the most controlled experiments involve human researchers who implicitly operate from a particular vantage point. Indeed, as Maxwell (2005) aptly points out "any view is a view from some perspective, and therefore is shaped by the location (social and theoretical) and 'lens' of the observer" (p. 39). It should be noted that though post-positivists do in fact accept that complete objectivity is impossible, they nevertheless still hold to the realist ideal of an external/independent reality and call for a "modified objectivity" (Guba, 1990, p. 21) /critical approach in which the limitations of the human intellect are overcome by reliance on as many different sources as possible (Guba, 1990). Instead of trying to completely remove or mitigate against the human element of research, the constructivist paradigm recognizes that it is more feasible to seek to reduce bias where possible while

explicitly acknowledging how interpretation flows from one's "personal, cultural, and historical experiences" (Creswell, 2013, p. 25). The act of making own's position explicit in accounts of the research process is known as reflexivity. According to Creswell (2013), reflexivity involves not only laying out one's past experience with the phenomena under study but also detailing how such past experiences may shape one's interpretation. In addition to detailing the impact of one's pre-understanding specifically with regards to the phenomena, Willig (2013) has argued that reflexivity can also be conceptualised more broadly to include an acknowledgement of the impact that assumptions and positions at both an epistemological and personal level have in shaping the process of research and the production of knowledge. Taken as a whole the paradigm which frames this study can generally be described as Constructivist. Furthermore, drawing on Madill et al. (2000) and their proposition of a continuum for epistemologies which attempts to represent some of the nuances of perspectives that fall between the polar extremes of 'naïve' realism and 'radical' relativism, this study can be said more specifically to have been conducted from within a 'contextual' constructivist perspective. According to Jaeger & Rosnow (1988, pp. 66-67) Contextualism is founded on the assumption that "human acts or 'events' are active, dynamic and developmental moments of a continuously changing reality" and that "human activity does not develop in a social vacuum but is rigorously situated in a social historical and cultural milieu of meaning and relationship". Moreover, while contextual constructivism is underpinned by a relativist ontological perspective, it differs slightly from 'radical' forms of constructivism in that it doesn't focus primarily on language in the sense that language itself is constitutive of phenomena (an example of such a 'radical' methodology is Discourse analysis). Instead of simply concentrating on how words are used to form reality, in contextual constructivism, there is an emphasis on considering the whole situated context of human activity. As such, this study was conducted with an awareness that there could be multiple conceptions of heritage put forth by participants in light of their varied situated experiences. Furthermore, the aim was not to focus on the discursive construction of heritage generally but rather on how it is meaningful within the context/ 'cultural milieu' of each participant.

## Why IPA?

In addition to aligning with one's worldview, the choice of methods for a study must also be an appropriate means of addressing its main aims/central question. The primary aim of this study is to understand the meaning and role of heritage by prioritising and drawing from the perspectives shared by participants. As such, the method of inquiry chosen must have an orientation that reaches beyond a general description of heritage towards a detailed account and interpretation of its meaningfulness for each participant. Consequently, the final outcome of this study is not intended to be a straightforward descriptive report of what was said. Instead, analysis of the data ultimately involves an interpretative stage which, though sticking close to participant accounts, is still filtered through the researcher's subjectivity (indeed, the entire research process from the design of the study, to the selection of participants and generation of data and final reporting is implicitly shaped by it). Moreover, even if the stated aim was a descriptive account, in the constructivist paradigm any act of description involves a level of interpretation as even the simplest, seemingly unembellished description cannot be entirely value-free. This is because it implicitly entails selectivity, which according to Yin

“occurs because a descriptive procedure cannot fully cover all the possible actions that could have been observed at a field setting. Even video or audio recordings of social behaviour, while seemingly providing a comprehensive reach, have their basic parameters— where, when, and what to record— defined by the researcher.” (Yin, 2016, p. 17)

As such, it is essential that the means of investigation chosen for this study are also underpinned by a worldview that acknowledges the inextricability of subjectivity from any account of the social world and accepts that knowledge produced in research is constructed. Moreover, as the goal of this project is not to develop a representative explanatory theory about what heritage means for all Zambian designers but rather to gain an understanding of it in relation to the design practice of the specific individuals who participated, the approach chosen needs to accommodate a focus on the particular (i.e. specific cases in a specific context) and an emphasis on giving voice to participants. As a method founded upon the hermeneutic tradition of interpretation, and a phenomenological focus on lived experience, IPA is suitable not only in relation to my constructivist viewpoint but it is also an appropriate means of investigating the meaning-making

of designers. This is because IPA “endorses social constructionism's claim that sociocultural and historical processes are central to how we experience and understand our lives, including the stories we tell about these lives” (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 184). Moreover, as an approach that “sits at what might be called the light end of the social constructionist continuum maintaining that seeing the individual's lifeworld merely as a linguistic and discursive construction does not speak to the empirical realities of people's lived experiences and their sense of self.” (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 184), IPA is a useful means of moving beyond a discussion of the essence of heritage in general terms and as a constructed body of knowledge to its specific implications in the life and work of each participant. In summary, though a number of methodological approaches could have been chosen for this study, IPA has been chosen because of its congruence with the core philosophical assumptions which frame my view as a researcher: namely the constructed and contingent nature of meaning, social phenomena and reality. Furthermore, the focus in IPA research on interpretation, lived experience and the particular make it a highly suitable approach for exploring the meaning and utility of heritage in the context of Zambian fashion design by examining each participant's relatedness to it.

## **Phenomenology**

As the term itself suggests, Interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA) arose out of the larger philosophical field of phenomenology and naturally builds much of its foundational structure from it. In order to understand this framework, a brief exposition of phenomenology is needed. Owing to its genesis to German philosopher Edmund Husserl, Phenomenology was developed out of a concern with what the theorist viewed as the premature imposition of theory in studies by his fellows in the scientific community (Moran, 2005). He asserted that his contemporaries were forcing theory onto studies and formulating explanations without really letting the topics ‘speak’ for themselves. Arguing that “we can absolutely not rest content with 'mere words', i.e. with a merely symbolic understanding of words” and that “We must go back to the 'things themselves” (Husserl, 1900/2001, p. 7), his *phenomenological method* called for researchers to “set aside preconceptions and closely describe how phenomena appeared to human consciousness” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 175). The process of setting aside preconceptions or ‘bracketing’ was referred to as ‘Epoché’ by Husserl. He

posited that by “recognising and setting aside the taken-for-granted ways of seeing the world” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 175) researchers could get at the essence or the “invariant structure” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 178) of a phenomenon. Following on from Husserl, other theorists began to adopt and further expand the phenomenological approach. Some of its most notable, proponents were the philosophers Martin Heidegger, Maurice Merleau-Ponty, and Jean-Paul Sartre. While they agreed with Husserl on the need to develop better methods of researching phenomena, they were doubtful of “the extent to which we can actually set aside our perceptions.” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 176). Although each of them took differing approaches, as theorists concerned with the nature of human experience, they shared the belief that “our existence is intimately bound up with the world we find ourselves in [thus] we can never entirely step outside it to see things objectively as they are” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 176). This divergent view marked a shift by some from Husserl’s transcendental approach (phenomenology concerned primarily with describing the essence of phenomena and psychological processes) in favour of an existential approach (phenomenology concerned with the question of existence itself). In particular, Heidegger, a student of Husserl, expressed doubt about the “possibility of any knowledge outside of an interpretive stance” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 16). Moreover, he and other existential phenomenologists have argued that human beings are grounded in their lived world, that is “the world of things, people, relationships and language” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 16). In his seminal work, *Being and Time (1927/1967)*, Heidegger proposed that the subject, ‘*Dasein*’ (translated as there-being) is inextricably situated in the world. This concept of being-in-the-world highlights the context-bound nature of human experience and places an emphasis on the meaningfulness of the world as it is made to appear through consciousness. This concern with situated perspectives and meaning-making lent a hermeneutical component to Heidegger’s thinking in *Being and Time* and is why he is primarily attributed with introducing a hermeneutical lens to phenomenology (Smith et al., 2009) Indeed, both Merleau-Ponty (1962), with his focus on embodiment and proposition of the ‘*Body-subject*’ and Sartre (1943) with his focus on human relationships and their effect on experience, have also contributed to extending phenomenological thought “towards a more interpretive and worldly position with a focus on understanding the perspectival directedness of our involvement in the lived world.” (Smith et al., 2009). Despite their divergence from some of his original tenets, existential phenomenologists have taken forward some of the foundational concepts and

terms proposed by Husserl. For instance, 'life-world: a term that "refers to the world of concrete experience as it is lived by people." (Langdridge, 2007) continues to be a fundamental concept in all phenomenological inquiry. Additionally, when used in a phenomenological context, the term 'Intentionality' refers to Husserl's proposition that "consciousness is never some pure, abstract, disassembled state- it always inevitably connects us to the world we inhabit." (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 176) This idea that an individual's conscious experiences cannot be understood apart from the objects and people that make up their world is indeed one of the cornerstones of the existential perspective. Moreover, while researchers from the existential camp also practice bracketing, their acknowledgement of the inevitability of human bias means that a high level of reflexivity throughout the research process is encouraged in order to maintain an awareness of one's preconceptions (Smith et al., 2009). In summary, IPA is a methodological approach that is used to explore aspects of the lived experience and meaning-making of situated individuals. Additionally, this method advocates for the setting aside of preconceptions while allowing things to 'speak' for themselves. Consequently, IPA is a suitable approach to examining the conceptions of heritage that designers from a particular context and realm of lived experience have in a manner that isn't driven by theory confirmation or generalisation.

### **Hermeneutics**

In order to further contextualise the method's theoretical positioning, the following section is a short exposition on interpretation in IPA. As is a method that has emerged from the existential movement in phenomenology, IPA places an emphasis on foregrounding the voice of participants while accepting the inextricably subjective and situated nature of these accounts. Unlike Husserlian phenomenology which aims to transcend the particularities of contexts to arrive at a description of the invariant structure of a phenomenon, IPA embraces the "texture and qualities of an experience" with the aim of understanding "the sense [that individuals] make of their experience rather than the structure of the phenomenon itself" (Eatough & Smith, 2017, p. 195). This link to existential phenomenology can be seen in the following extract from Heidegger's *History of the concept of time* (1985, p. 217) where he posits that:

“It must be stated that the entity as an entity is ‘in itself’ and independent of any apprehension of it; yet, the being of the entity is found only in encounter and can be explained, made understandable, only from the phenomenal exhibition and interpretation of the structure of encounter.”(Quoted in Larkin et al., 2008)

This, in essence, means that IPA is focused not on discovering the phenomenon as an entity independent of apprehension, but instead on the ‘structure of the encounter’. In addition to this concern with situated experience, IPA researchers aim to understand or interpret the meaningfulness of these experiences as expressed by participants. Therefore, as the ‘interpretive’ in its name suggests, IPA also draws heavily from the philosophical tradition of Hermeneutics. In broad terms, Hermeneutics is a field of knowledge and practice that deals with understanding. Initially, this field was developed as an attempt to systematise the interpretation of biblical texts but was subsequently extended to deal with any kind of text. Presently, hermeneutics refers more generally to the theory of interpretation. Among the foremost theorists credited with developing this field are Friedrich Schleiermacher, Hans-Georg Gadamer, and Martin Heidegger. Other notable contributions have been made by theorists like Paul Ricoeur, Wilhelm Dilthey, and Jacques Derrida. According to Smith et al., the main concerns of hermeneutic theory are as follows: “what are the methods and purposes of interpretation? Is it possible to uncover the intentions or original meanings of an author? What is the relation between the context of a text’s production and the context of a text’s interpretation?” (2009, p. 22). In essence, IPA researchers apply such questions to the accounts of their participants in order to determine what they view as meaningful about the experiences in question. Indeed, though IPA is not primarily utilised to analyse extant literary texts, some hermeneutical concepts have been formative of the method. For example, the idea of fore conception/structure as put forth by Heidegger in *Being and Time* suggests interpretations are never free of pre-supposition. Thus, the individual receiving an account or analysing it unavoidably brings their pre-understandings and assumption even when faced with something novel (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, an analyst using IPA must remain cognizant of their inability to completely bracket off pre-conceptions as they are inevitably part of the process of forming new understandings. Additionally, Friedrich Schleiermacher’s (1998) early proposition that interpretation is about understanding a text, as well as its author, has been influential in sensitising IPA

researchers to the importance of analysing a participant's account in light of the wider context within which it was produced (Smith et al., 2009). Moreover, Gadamer's concept of the hermeneutic circle which deals with the relationship between the parts and the whole, has been described as a useful metaphor for understanding the cyclical nature of IPA (Smith et al., 2009) For instance, just as a passage of text in a book is understood within the context of the entire work and the meaning of a book rest on that of its composite passages, interpretation in IPA can occur at different levels and there is a cyclical relationship of meaning between the various parts of an account and the account in its situated wholeness. Finally, as stated earlier, one fundamental idea in phenomenology is that at the most basic level, humans are "constantly caught up, unselfconsciously, in the everyday flow of experience" and that it is only when "we become aware of what is happening [that] we have the beginnings of what can be described as 'an experience' as opposed to just experience" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 2). Moreover,

"When people are engaged with 'an experience' of something major in their lives, they begin to reflect on the significance of what is happening, and IPA research aims to engage with these reflections" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 3).

As a methodological tradition that places an emphasis on reflections, IPA not only allows participants to provide their own interpretation of their experiences, it also acknowledges that researchers themselves are making interpretations of these accounts in their analysis (King & Horrocks, 2010). As a result of these dual points of interpretation, IPA is said to involve a 'double hermeneutic' (Smith & Osborn, 2003). According to Smith et al., this means that

"the researcher is making sense of the participant, who is making sense of X. And this usefully illustrates the dual role of the researcher as both like and unlike the participant. In one sense the researcher is like the participant, is a human being drawing on everyday human resources in order to make sense of the world. On the other hand, the researcher is not the participant, She/He only has access to the participant's experience through what the participant reports about it and is also seeing this through the researcher's own experientially informed lens. So in that sense, the participant's meaning-making is first order, while that researcher's sense-making is second-order" (2009, pp. 35-36).

Moreover, whether first or second order, neither the participant's account nor the subsequent interpretation by the researcher can be said to direct reflections of a self-existent reality as they are contractions formed from a particular vantage point. In summary, IPA research aims to understand experience in the sense of its meaningfulness rather than its essential structure. Moreover, though researchers are expected to bracket off preconceptions, the fact that it is impossible to apprehend and understand the world without pre-conceptions means that reflexivity must also be employed to acknowledge inevitable biases. Furthermore, the IPA approach recognises that interpretation occurs both at the level where the participant is making sense of their world and again when that 'sense-making' is then interpreted by the researcher. In essence, when applied within this study, IPA is a useful method for investigating the meaningfulness of heritage to designers in a manner that accounts for and addresses the situated nature of both the participant and researcher.

### **A note on design and the IPA approach**

In addition to outlining how IPA aligns with both my general worldview and the aims set out for this study, I believe that it is also important to further demonstrate its appropriateness by briefly explaining how it relates to the disciplinary area (design) and the phenomenon (heritage) under investigation. As such, the following is a short explanation of my understanding of design and how this ultimately informs my choice to use IPA in this study.

Due to its development during the 1990s as part of a push to expand qualitative methods in the field of psychological research (Eatough & Smith, 2007), IPA has of course been used primarily within psychology. Indeed, much of the instructional literature is has been written by practitioners and researchers from that field. Typically, IPA has been employed in the study of "topics within health, social and clinical psychology where there is a need to discern how people perceive and understand significant events in their lives" (Smith & Eatough, 2007, pp. 35-36). Due to a mutual concern with mental processes, traditional IPA Shares some common ground with other disciplines like cognitive psychology and social cognition (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). However, according to Eatough and Smith (2007), it differs chiefly in its use of in-depth qualitative analysis as opposed to the quantitative methods typical of mainstream psychology. As such, the primary method of data collection employed in IPA is the Semi-structured interview. In addition to this other data gathering tools like

written journals have also been utilised (King & Horrocks 2010). Although psychology-focused studies (at least in terms of published work) still remain in the majority, IPA has also been used by researchers in other fields like Education and Business, to examine a range of topics. For instance, it has been used to examine the relationship between fashion and wellbeing (Smith & Yates 2018). Another example that is particularly relevant is a study conducted by Ania Sadkowska (2018) in which she took an Arts-informed IPA approach to investigate the experience of ageing among older men. Focusing particularly on their embodied fashion practice she utilised semi-structured interviews in her data generation. The arts-informed component consisted of a combination of making and writing during the analysis phase. According to Sadkowska, who identifies as both a fashion practitioner and researcher, “ ‘making’ [served] as a means of embodied, visual enquiry [and] became an analytical tool that afforded the advanced understandings of and insights into the study participants lived experiences, as compared to the standard text-based qualitative analysis” (Sadkowska, 2018, p. 406). Sadkowski’s study is a good example of the possibility of expanding the use of IPA beyond psychology and specifically its potential for investigating design-related subjects.

In order to better articulate why I believe that IPA is a useful method for understanding how designers make sense of heritage in the context of fashion design, it is important for me to summarily explain my views about design practice more generally. Thomas Wendt has argued that one of the fundamental differences between science and design is that the former is concerned with the present while the latter is oriented toward the future. In other words, Science analyses “what is” while design posits “what could be” (Wendt, 2015, p. 50). Moreover, while all humans can be said at some level to be capable of and involved in this kind of inventive thinking, Wendt (speaking from a phenomenological perspective), suggests that what delineates the work of professional designers is the fact that “*being* a designer” involves a “Special relationship and concern with materials” (Wendt, 2015, p. 52). Additionally, designers maintain a level of care for design and apply deep thought in a way that non-designers do not (Wendt, 2015). As such it can be understood that design involves the intensification and directed application of the basic human propensity to envisage future states. Of course, these states are not produced from thin air but rather are formulated in light of pre-existing states. Indeed, as the nexus of forethought and making

“design must go beyond an understanding of *what is* and extend itself towards future states of being- that is, how can we frame existing states to reveal opportunities for improvement? Deduction and induction mostly look toward the past and present, while abduction orients itself to the future, and is, therefore, an inherently individual and intuitive act- individual because the interpretive act fuels designer's conclusions, and intuitive because empirical evidence is not always in play.” (Wendt, 2015, p. 63).

In light of this framing of design as a hermeneutic act, the primary question of this study can be understood as an investigation of the meaning/nature of heritage to designers as they utilise it as an ‘assemblage of meaning’ or ‘text’ in their practice. Building on ideas put forth by Adrian Snodgrass and Richard Coyne (1992, 1997), Marcus Jahnke (2012) describes design practice as engaging “in active interpretation of situations to manifest new meanings in designed objects.” (p. 36). Moreover, he draws on Paul Ricoeur’s concept of the hermeneutic spiral arguing that it is a better metaphor (than Gadamer’s hermeneutic circle which was used by Coyne and Snodgrass) for describing the experience of designing. According to Jahnke (2012), unlike Gadamer’s concept, which stops short at the interpretation of existing works but cannot account for the emergence of new ones, Ricoeur’s spiral gives a better account of the poetic re-description and critical distancing which are required for the manifestation of new meanings/design outcomes. Thus, using Ricoeur’s lens, Jahnke calls for a shift of focus from artefacts and outcomes to practice when attempting to understand the nature of design in general. Furthermore, joining other theorists like Krippendorff (1989) in his view of design as sense-making, Jahnke (2012) posits that designers deal with ‘complex assemblages of meaning’ in each design exercise they undertake. In other words, the act of designing is one of re-interpreting multiple ‘texts’ (things with potential meaning) in order to produce new ‘texts.’ While fashion refers to the social phenomenon, fashion design is the intentional and interpretive practice of shaping and creating fashions from pre-existing sources of meaning (which can also be thought of as inspiration). In light of this framing of design as a hermeneutic act, the primary question of this study can be understood as an investigation of the meaning/nature of heritage to designers as they utilise it as an ‘assemblage of meaning’ or ‘text’ in their practice. In essence, the goal of this research is not to provide a general theory about heritage in Zambian fashion design but rather is an effort to provide insight into the views of

particular individuals. As discussed in the previous chapter heritage itself eludes a singular definition and can encompass an array of tangible and intangible things as well as embodied experiences. Therefore, it can be posited that even when dealing with participants located/from one country and engaged in a similar line of work, individual views and experiences of this phenomenon may be varied and nuanced. As a result, IPA, with its idiographic nature and analytical concern with understanding the sense-making of participants, is a suitable method for carrying out this study. Furthermore, as discussed in the previous chapter, heritage is a term that is often used without explanation or in a taken-for-granted manner. Therefore, as a methodological tradition established on the phenomenological concept of setting aside presumption while focusing on meaning (Smith et al., 2009), IPA is an appropriate means of interrogating the use and meaning of such a concept in a manner that avoids (at least on the part of the researcher) the assumptions that often characterise its use. Finally, as the primary research question deals with a concept that is difficult to observe directly, a method like IPA which relies primarily on the accounts of participants can be useful as a means of verifying and enriching observational data. In light of this, the secondary question of this study, which examines the practical ways in which heritage is used as a tool (or one could even say 'text') in design practice will be interrogated using both IPA and observational data from site visits and secondary information available on the internet.

### **Study scope and analysis in IPA**

As the previous sections have covered the philosophical underpinning of IPA, the following section outlines some of the practical implications of that framework as it relates to sampling and analytic strategies. According to Smith et al. (1995), IPA is idiographic. Unlike nonethnic studies which aim to understand phenomena at a macro scale and typically rely on statistical data, idiographic studies focus on individual cases (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Smith & Eatough, 2012). As such, the IPA sample sizes tend to be relatively small and can involve as little as a single case. Furthermore, IPA studies can be short-term or longitudinal. Rather than widely generalisable statements about an entire population or subset, IPA research is concerned with "understanding how particular experiential phenomena (an event, process or relationship) have been understood from the perspective of a particular people [or person] in a particular

context” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29). It should be noted, however, that this focus on the particular does not preclude the possibility of making general statements about a group of cases if a study happens to include an analysis of a number of individual accounts (Eatough & Smith, 2007). Furthermore, aside from scaling down the scope/size of a study and the level to which its findings can be extrapolated, the idiographic nature of IPA means that “there is a commitment to the particular in the sense of detail, and therefore the depth of analysis. As a consequence, analysis must be thorough and systematic” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 29). Because conducting such a detailed analysis of the transcript and data from each case can be quite time-consuming, according to Eatough and Smith (2007) it is essential for a researcher to decide whether they are interested in highlighting themes from individual cases or whether they want to speak more generally across a group of participants. Setting an analytical focus early on can help a researcher to save time and avoid being overwhelmed during the analysis phase (Eatough & Smith, 2007).

As the analytic focus of IPA is on the “participants’ attempts to make sense of their experience” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 78), interpretation in IPA arises primarily from their accounts. Although theory and pre-existing information can be acknowledged, they need to be ‘bracketed off and must not form the basis of analysis. In essence, analysis should not be conducted with the intention to confirm theory. Indeed, as Smith et al. have argued:

“IPA is concerned with the detailed examination of human lived experience. And it aims to conduct this examination in a way which as far as possible enables that experience to be expressed in its own terms, rather than according to predefined category systems. This is what makes IPA phenomenological and connects it to the core ideas unifying the phenomenological philosophers” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 32).

Moreover, in line with the foundational intent of phenomenology, even the type of questions that can be investigated using the method tend to eschew theory altogether focusing rather on examination of the phenomenon as it presents itself in context. However, building off Paul Ricoeur’s(1970) concept of a hermeneutics of empathy or suspicion, Smith et al., (2009) have suggested that while the researcher aims to step into the participants' shoes and understand their point of view, at the same time there is a need for them to stand beside the participant and examine their account from different vantage points. As such, it is

acceptable to consider outside sources during analysis as long as “the interpretation was inspired by, and arose from, attending to the participants' words, rather than being imported from outside.” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 90). Furthermore, similarly to most interview-based qualitative studies, the process of analysis in IPA begins with the transcription of interview recordings. The transcript is then subjected to an initial reading and re-reading during which notes are made (Storey, 2007). After making notes at the descriptive, linguistic, and conceptual levels, the researcher can then begin to identify emergent themes (Smith et al., 2009). Though they acknowledge that the initial phases of sorting through data may be overwhelming for some, Smith et al. (2009) explain that while identifying emergent themes data management tends to become easier. This is because during this phase the role of the analyst shifts as they simultaneously attempt

“to reduce the volume of detail (the transcript and the initial notes) whilst maintaining complexity, in terms of mapping the interrelationships, connections and patterns between exploratory notes. This involves an analytical shift to working primarily with the initial notes rather than the transcript itself.” (2009, p. 91).

The next step of the process involves searching for connections across the emergent themes. After this, researchers dealing with multiple accounts move on to the next case. In keeping with the idiographic nature of IPA, each case should be analysed on its own terms. Therefore, the findings from previous cases must be ‘bracketed-off’. Finally, when all cases have been analysed, researchers can then look for patterns across all the cases. (Smith et al., 2009). Though IPA researchers are encouraged to be reflexive, Smith et al. (2009, p. 90) caution that “It is important to remember that the analysis is primarily about the participant, not oneself.”

### **Sample size in IPA**

Because of their idiographic nature and subsequent concern with examining “particular phenomena in particular contexts, IPA studies are conducted on a small sample size” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49). While there are no prescriptive instructions, as a general rule, the more participants a study has, the more time one needs to allow for analysis. Some recommendations suggest that about 6-8 participants are a reasonable number for most post-graduate studies

(Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Eatough, 2012). While this number may appear small to some, it must be remembered that statistical generalisability is not the aim, but rather a detailed and systematic analysis. Moreover, as the objective is a detailed or 'thick' description "the issue is quality, not quantity and given the complexity of most human phenomena, IPA studies usually benefit from a concentrated focus on a small number of cases" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 51). Moreover, as Smith and Eatough (2012) have argued 6-8 participants is generally a large enough sample "to examine the similarities and differences between participants but not so many that one is snowed under by the amount of data generated"(2012, p. 445). Consequently, for the purpose of this project, I believe that the recommended 6-8 participants are a feasible target to aim for in light of the resources and time allotted. Additionally, though it may be common in some approaches to select a sample based on general demographic features like age or gender or socioeconomic status, sampling in IPA is purposive and focuses on the ability of the participants to "grant access to a particular perspective on the phenomena under study" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 49). Sample groups tend to be homogenous, in the sense that they are not randomised or representative, but are defined by factors relating to the subject matter and study aims (Smith & Eatough, 2012). Therefore, the participants of this study were selected based on their affiliation to the Zambian ethnonational identity and their role as creative professionals in a fashion practice which explicitly purports or appears to utilise heritage in their work.

### **Data generation: Semi-structured interviews**

Aside from sampling and analytic strategy, another integral feature of a study's design is its data generation tool. As the primary and often preferred method of data generation in IPA is the semi-structured interview, the following section outlines its features and reasons for its use in this study. Hailed as a staple in multiple fields of qualitative inquiry, the Semi-structured interview is favoured because of its utility in incorporating "both open-ended and more theoretically driven questions" (Galletta, 2013, p. 45). As stated earlier, the type of questions addressed in IPA tend to be open-ended and focused on lived experience and the meaning-making activity of participants (Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, the semi-structured interview is a suitable tool of interrogation in this study. Indeed, while more standardized tools like a questionnaire could have

been used to collect a data set that is more uniform, what multiple-choice, true or false or Likert scale questions would have failed to interrogate are the meanings that participants make (Josselson, 2013). Though it would be easy to generalise across a group using such tools, the resulting data would be “reductionistic” and diminish the complexity of each participant’s experience (Josselson 2013, p. 11). According to Willig (2013), it is preferable that data in qualitative research be as ‘naturalistic’ as possible. In other words, it is best to use data generation methods that minimise reduction at the point of generation. Although Semi-structured interviews cannot be said to be entirely free of some level of reduction, in that even transcripts and video recording are not equal to the real-time performance of the participant (Willig, 2013), they nevertheless are reasonably useful when creating “a comprehensive record of participants’ words” and “making sure that as little as possible is lost ‘in translation ’”(Willig, 2013, p. 16). Furthermore, while it has the limitation of being ineffective at producing standardised units of data (which are useful especially in quantitative studies), in IPA, the semi-structured interview is preferred in particular because it can provide “access to a reasonably rich and reflective level of personal account” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 46). Indeed, it must be remembered that as generalisation and macro-theory generation are not the aims of IPA research, it would be incongruous to use tools that are mainly designed with a concern for standardisation, reduction, and quantification. Furthermore, as the primary aim of this study is not to produce a representative summary, but rather a set of personal accounts of heritage in relation to fashion practice, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most suitable tool of interrogation.

Because of its open-ended nature and prioritisation of the voice of the participant, the semi-structured interview allows for the development of rapport between the participant and researcher thereby “giving participants space to think, speak and be heard.” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57). Furthermore, unlike a structured interview or questionnaire, it has the flexibility of combining the structure sufficient to “address specific dimensions of your research while also leaving space for study participants to offer new meanings to the topic of study.” (Galletta, 2013, p. 2). Additionally, as it is necessary for IPA researchers to “adopt a critical probing stance” (Smith & Eatough, 2012, p. 447) in which they are both empathetic and questioning, semi-structured interviews are suitable as they allow for an interaction which is led by the participant but guided by the researcher (Smith & Eatough, 2012). Moreover, though other methods like

participant observation and focus groups can also be used in certain cases, one-on-one interviews are preferred because they are comparatively easier to manage and keeping track of each participant's meaning is also easier (Smith et al., 2009). Additionally, because of the nature of the participant group in this study (design professionals), I anticipated that organising focus groups, diaries, or participant observations session with such a group would be a logistical challenge that could jeopardise my ability to generate sufficient field data. Indeed, as Willig (2013) has pointed out, one of the reasons that semi-structured interviews are favoured in multiple qualitative methodological traditions is the relative ease of organising them.

### **Semi-structured interviews as co-constructed**

While semi-structured interviews are employed to produce in-depth personal accounts that 'give voice' to participants, it is nevertheless true that the data generated from such interactions is not simply an unadulterated descriptive account (in other words, it is not pre-existent data that was merely collected or recorded during the interview). Instead, it must be acknowledged that such accounts are co-construction between the researcher and interview participant. As Josselson argues "the reflection that all interviews are co-constructed implies that the materials produced by the interviewee are influenced by the context of the interview and responses from the interviewer so that one cannot reify the interview material as 'the story; it is only 'a' story produced for the occasion of the interview." (2013, p. 9). Moreover, though the analytical focus and interview process of IPA is directed toward the participant's account, it is also important to note that the researcher still exerts a high level of influence in the interview situation. Not only is the interview taking place at their behest, but the choice of the participant and the choice of questions are all determined by the researcher. Furthermore, none of these choices are neutral, emerging from a vacuum, instead, they are the result not only of practical and methodological concerns, but also personal and epistemological considerations and assumptions (Creswell, 2013). Additionally, as both the researcher and the participant, are seen (in Heidegger's terms) as 'situated beings', inextricably bound to their context, the interview interaction can be viewed as a site of intersubjective production. Intersubjectivity, a term developed by Husserl refers to

“an overlap between our subjective worlds that enables communication and the sharing of meaning and understanding. The degree of agreement between subjects can also be used to denote more widely shared or common understandings. Without intersubjectivity, communication would be very challenging. However, intersubjectivity also indicates the partial nature of the overlap between conscious minds and that each subject’s subjectivity also means that there will be differences of understanding too, based on differing experiences, ways of thinking, and so on.” (Jeanes, 2019)

Therefore, in IPA, the semi-structured interview can be described as “the coming together of two subjectivities, and [thus] an adequate analysis and report of an interview must recognise that the content to which the interview refers is shaped by the intersubjective context.” (Josselson, 2013, p. 9).

In summary, Semi-structured interviews were chosen as the primary method of data generation because of their utility in producing detailed, personal accounts of participant views and experiences. Not only is this in line with the study’s objective of focusing on the ‘meaning-making of individual designers, but the open-ended nature of the semi-structured interview makes it amenable to the wider epistemological considerations that underpin the entire study. Namely the view of meaning as emergent and inextricably linked to the human mind. As Guba (1990) has pointed out in reference to the constructivist position, “if realities exist only in respondents’ minds, subjective interactions [like the semi-structured interview] seem to be the only way to access them.” ( p. 26). Thus the semi-structured interview was chosen as the primary tool for examining the subjective meaning(s) of heritage in Zambian Fashion design practice.

### **Why use a western approach?**

As this study is focused on understanding design practices from or relate to a non-western context, with references made in previous chapters to the some of ways in which cultural practices from African nations like Zambia have been impacted by the limiting regimes of knowledge rooted in colonial and Eurocentric views; it would be unsurprising if some readers wonder why this study employs a methodological approach that has its roots firmly in the canon of western philosophy. For instance, it can be argued that this study could have been undertaken using methods which align with non-Eurocentric philosophical

traditions like Ubuntu and Négritude or using postcolonial and decolonial theory. This would be done presumably to counter or subvert the unhelpful narratives and erroneous views about African peoples and cultures that have been perpetuated in academic and popular discourse. As such, I would like to add a brief explanation of my use of a method from the western canon of thought. This is done to deepen the reflexivity of my account by discussing how epistemological concerns and conditions at a personal and practical level have impacted the research project (Willig, 2013). In addition to the various reasons outlined earlier in this chapter about methodology's alignment with my epistemological stance and suitability in exploring the primary research question, I would argue that irrespective of its origin, IPA has utility in challenging essentialising assumptions about the context and people covered in this study because it is focused on centring the views of participants and attending to the nuance and complexity of their lived experience. As an analytic approach which prioritises the voice of participants over extant theory, IPA allows for the development of findings which are rooted in the meaning making of individuals whose works sit outside of the normative 'centres' of fashion production (both in terms of goods and thought). Although my chosen approach may not seem very radical to some, I feel that by presenting findings which are based on a close reading of participant's views about their work, this study contributes in a small way to countering the hegemonic ideas that have been formed without the inclusion of perspectives from the peoples and communities that are being discussed.

Moreover, a more mundane/ circumstantial reason that I selected IPA is because it happened to be the most suitable approach I came across during the design of my study. It is entirely possible that I could have chosen a different method had circumstances like the timing of my project, location of my University, disciplinary leanings of my supervisors and colleagues etc. been different. This highlights the simple but important notion that research is shaped by a wide range of contextual factors. Finally it is important to note that no single philosophical tradition or its attendant methodological approaches is perfect/singularly suitable for pursuing a particular line of inquiry. Instead, there are many different ways that a research question can be explored. Indeed, I believe that it is through the application of a diversity of lenses and approaches that knowledge about the world is deepened and advanced.

## **Piloting the study**

According to Creswell, when a study is oriented toward subjective experiences and focuses on getting “as close to the participants being studied” it is essential to “conduct studies in the ‘field’, where the participants live and work” (2013, p. 20). Therefore, after the initial phase of gathering information on prior research and extant theory, it was important for me to enter the ‘field’ by conducting a pilot study. This section includes an outline of the process and some general reflections on the pilot phase.

While a review of prior research can aid in formulating tentative theories, deciding on methods, or further refining one’s research question, according to Maxwell (2005) pilot studies offer a means of moving beyond theoretical abstraction by testing and refining ideas, methods and theories on the basis of ‘real world’ data (that is, data drawn from actual participants in the field). In addition to aiding in refining a study’s overall design, a pilot phase is also useful in gaining insight into areas where extant theory may be erroneous or incomplete (which in turn may suggest novel lines of inquiry) (Maxwell, 2005). In practical terms, Pilot studies are also a useful means of further developing one’s skills in areas like interviewing and observation. During the pilot phase of this study I conducted 3 interviews in Zambia (2 of these were with designers while the other was with owners of a design goods store) and 3 in South Africa (2 of these were with designers, while the other was with a professor in the fashion design department of a local university). These experiences served as a means for me to review and reflect on the appropriateness of my overall study design as well as the effectiveness of specific tools like my interview questions and technique in relation to accomplishing the aims set out for the project.

## **Negotiating access**

Comparable to other qualitative research methodologies like the Case study, Grounded theory and narrative inquiry, IPA involves 3 main stages: the collection/co-construction and organization of data, followed by review and memoing, and finally a summative description of findings (Creswell, 2013). While the initial stage may seem straight forward it is often the most challenging as it involves several negotiations and decisions including “the steps of determining the participants to study, obtaining permission needed from several individuals and organizations, considering what types of information to collect from several

sources available to the research” (Creswell, 2012, pp. 140-141). As mentioned earlier, participants for this study were selected based on their ability to provide insight into the experience of using heritage in fashion practice within a specific setting. During the early stages of this project, Africa was chosen as that context. However, after conducting the pilot phase, I realised that satisfactorily answering my research questions on a continental scale was unfeasible in light of the limits of time and other resources. Additionally, I felt that it would be helpful for me both practically (in terms of reducing the financial and mental cost of travelling to conduct interviews) and conceptually (because as a Zambian, I may have certain social-cultural insights and experiences that could add depth to the research process) to investigate in a context that I was familiar with. As such, the context of this study has been narrowed down to focus on fashion produced by Zambians/in Zambia. In order to find suitable participants during the pilot phase I began by simply typing keywords like ‘African’, ‘heritage’ and ‘fashion’ into a search engine and sifting through the results (It should be noted that as I planned to conduct the first interviews in Zambia during my annual trip there, my search terms also included ‘Zambia’/ ‘Zambian’). Results ranged from direct links to brand websites to blog posts and articles about fashion shows. After collecting some potential leads, I conducted a search on each one individually. This process of searching for participants took quite some time as I had cast my net quite wide. In addition to reviewing the text and images from brand websites and online publications, I also searched on social media platforms like YouTube, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Instagram. These platforms (particularly Facebook and Instagram) were useful when following leads that I had found on blogs and in articles. This is because many of the brands I was looking at did not have stand-alone websites but had pages on at least one of these platforms. This may be due to their small size and the fact that these platforms are a relatively cheap and accessible means of connecting with and marketing directly to consumers. As I narrowed down my list to the most promising candidates, I sent emails requesting their participation. For cases where I could not find an email address, I sent a slightly adapted version of my participant request via direct message on their social media page. Additionally, I used the suggestion provided on these sites of similar pages and pages liked or viewed by followers in order to generate more leads. While social media was generally very helpful in searching for and gathering information, it did not always yield the best results as a method of initiating communication. I conjecture that aside from people being generally uninterested in participating, one possible explanation for the low number of

responses from social media DMs might have been due to the high volume of notifications, requests, and messages that people have to sift through. Additionally, most direct messaging systems on these sites automatically sort messages based on one's connection to the receiver (i.e. if you are not friends with or followed by someone then they have the ability to reject and delete your message even before reading its contents). Moreover, the general informality of social media might have had an adverse effect on how my claims of being an academic researcher were perceived. Of the designers that I contacted, I received positive responses from two designers and one from a store that sold Zambian design products.

After their initial agreement, I primarily communicated via WhatsApp to hash out the practical details with participants and answer any of their questions (this was at their behest as WhatsApp is one of the most popular and convenient means of communicating in the region). Following advice that the location for the interview to be comfortable for both the interviewee and the researcher, I suggested meeting at their studios/shops. As I did not anticipate that our discussion would cover anything of a personal nature, I thought that meeting in a work environment would probably not adversely affect their ability to speak openly. I hoped that being in the place where they conduct most of their design work would enrich our discussion. Additionally, I felt that as these locations were familiar to participants and relatively public spaces, they would most likely provide both the physical and psychological sense of comfort needed as a backdrop for a successful interview interaction (King and Horrocks, 2010). In all cases, participants agreed to this arrangement. Finally, I offered suggestions about the date, but I ultimately allowed them to pick the time and day that worked best for them.

### **Pilot interview schedule**

As Smith et al. have argued, "a qualitative research interview is often described as 'a conversation with a purpose'. This purpose is informed, implicitly at least, by a research question" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57). Consequently, the pilot interviews were conducted with the aim not only of exploring the research question, but also served as a means of field-testing my interview protocol and refining my ideas in light of the 'real' world conditions. In line with the phenomenological aim not to impose pre-existing theory onto studies and

Following Creswell's advice to "use open-ended questions without reference to the literature or theory unless otherwise indicated by a qualitative strategy of inquiry" (2013, p. 107), the initial interview schedule used in during the pilot stage included a variation of the following:

- How did you become a designer?
- How would you describe your business? (does it consist of RTW? Custom orders? One-Offs?)
- How would you describe your customer base?
- Can you take me through your design process?
- Do you feel that your design process involves any consideration of heritage? (If no, WHY? If yes, can you elaborate on what you mean by heritage? Can you point to some examples in your work?)

The first three questions are quite simple and may seem too general. However, they were posed with the intent of building a sense of rapport with participants and paving the way for me to ask more abstract questions. As Smith et. al. have argued,

"The most important thing at the beginning of the interview is to establish a rapport with the participant. They need to be comfortable with you, to know what you want and to trust you. Unless you succeed in establishing this rapport, you are unlikely to obtain good data from your participant" (2009, p. 64).

Additionally, due to their descriptive nature, these initial questions were posed as a means of giving the participants space to begin their narration of their experiences (Galletta, 2013). Moreover, they helped me to gain a better understanding of the participants and their context and in turn "facilitate the discussion of relevant topics...which would allow the research question to be answered subsequently, via analysis" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 58). While these questions provided a basic outline that was helpful particularly in initiating the dialogue, they were not strictly adhered to in light of developments during the interview process. Indeed, as Smith et al. have pointed out "Interviewing allows the researcher and participant to engage in a dialogue whereby initial questions

are modified in the light of participants' responses, and the investigator is able to enquire after any other interesting areas which arise" (2009, p. 57). In addition to field notes and photographs, audio recordings of the interviews were collected.

### **The interviews**

About a month after recruiting participants, I arrived in Lusaka and had my first interview with the owners of a shop called Lusaka Collective. Located behind the Long Acres food market in a property that used to house a fine art studio, the shop stocks a variety of locally produced and designed goods ranging from clothing and accessories to stationery and beauty products (see fig 2.1 & 2.2). Because I was using public transport that was untimed, I arrived a bit earlier than expected and took a walk around the neighbourhood for a few minutes to collect my thoughts. When I entered the shop, I was asked to wait as the participants had unexpectedly received a call from one of their service providers. During my wait, which lasted about half an hour, I had a look around the shop. My interview with the two owners lasted for about three-quarters of an hour and was quite relaxed. Though I had been aware of the likelihood that it would not directly contribute to answering my research question, I used this interview as an opportunity to gently ease myself into my role as an interviewer. Additionally, visiting the shop provided me with new leads. I discovered a few additional brands while browsing the shelves and my participants offered some contact details of people who they felt would be appropriate for the study.

My second interview was scheduled to take place a few days later. Though I had reached out to my participant for a confirmation of their address, I had not gotten a response back but decided to rely on the one listed on Google maps. Having arrived earlier than expected I took a walk around the neighbourhood. Returning about five minutes before our appointment I found that the gate was locked. A few minutes later someone arrived and opened the gate. I informed them of my situation but all they could tell me was that the person I was looking for was not there. As a last resort, I called the participant and though she did not answer she replied with a message informing me that she was at a family member's funeral. As she was still interested in participating, we rescheduled our meeting to the following week. Although I was slightly disappointed by this unfortunate disruption to my plans for the day, I decided to use the rest of the day to follow up on a lead.



*Figure 2.1 & 2.2 Lusaka Collective store, Lusaka, 2019*

Using information I gathered during my initial search I went looking for the studio of a designer that had not responded to my emails or messages via social media. Though I did not find them at their studio I did manage to get their phone number and contact them later that day. We set an appointment to meet the following week. As I had yet to finalise a date, time, and location for yet another participant, I spent the next few days trying to get in touch with them. Though we managed to fix a date and time, my request for a confirmation of their studio address went unanswered. Though the preceding narration may seem extensive, it was included in order to highlight the realities of conducting research in the ‘field’ and to provide a fuller account which helps to further contextualise the interview interactions.

### **Designer 1: Debbie Chu**

My next interview, with Deborah Chuma, designer of women’s wear brand Debbie Chu, took place during the following week. Debbie Chu is a brand that offers both custom design services and ready-to-wear garments that are available directly from their studio or at a local boutique. As mentioned earlier, we had to reschedule due to the passing of her grandfather. I arrived at her studio at

the agreed time but had to wait as she was working with one of her tailors on a custom order. My wait was extended further by the unexpected arrival of a customer for a fitting and design consultation. As the studio, (which doubled as a retail and workspace) was shared with another person who specialised in selling and upcycling vintage clothing, a number of people streamed in and out. During this time, I observed my participant as she worked, noting for instance how she negotiated with clients over her own design input and their practical and aesthetic requests. About an hour later her client left, and she suggested that we moved to another section of the building that would be quieter. This space was used as a retail space for yet another fashion business that seemed to be closed for the day. As we sat down, she began to tell me about what designing meant to her, then she stopped to ask me to clarify some points in the consent form and information sheet which I had handed to her upon my arrival. Following King and Horrocks's advice to “provide as much information as possible so that the participant is able to consider, and potentially negotiate, the terms of their involvement” (2010, p. 48), I refrained from asking any questions at this point



*Figure 2.3 Outside Debbie Chu, Lusaka, 2019*

and focused instead on explaining anything she was unsure about. While I tried to remain silent as she read through the information (my intention being that she would not feel rushed), she did periodically insert some of her views on cultural appropriation and the misattribution of origin between her questions. This process of negotiation took about fifteen minutes until she felt comfortable to begin. As planned, I started the interview by asking her about how she became a designer. Having repeatedly read advice expressing the view that in semi-structured interviewing “for the most part, the participant talks, and the interviewer listens” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 57) I made an effort not to interject too much besides periodically nodding or ‘mmm’-ing or saying ‘that’s interesting’ to encourage her to continue. While this strategy felt a bit risky, it did not hinder the flow of the interview at least in terms of my participant as she seemed very comfortable with sharing her thoughts in detail. While listening to her narration, I noted down salient statements, as I did not want to make the mistake of failing to hear or remember an important point. In addition to providing a reminder of issues to follow up on later during the interview (King & Horrocks, 2010), I took notes in hopes that they might help to jog my memory of the experience as I read them during the transcription and analysis stage. In trying to follow the participant’s lead, I waited for a discernible lull or pause in the flow of her narration to interject questions when I felt that she had alluded to a subject of interest or when I felt a clarification was necessary. Akin, to the first interview, Deborah suggested a few people who she felt would be useful for me to speak to and even gave me their contact details.

### **Interviews as situated action**

 Though I was satisfied with the overall experience of the interview, a note I made soon after says: “I could have been more critical and asked more questions”. This statement probably reflects my discomfort with my early experience of trying to respond to the real-time developing nature of the semi-structured interview process. Moreover, I also feel that I was quite surprised by how quickly the time passed. During my transcription of the audio recording of this interview about 3 months later, I reiterated my initial reflection where I felt that I had missed certain opportunities to interrogate the participant’s thoughts further in my attempt to allow her to speak freely. I also reflected on how I felt that

the events surrounding our interview may have had an impact on our exchange. An excerpt from that note reads as follows:

'I was just thinking about how the specific moment in time affects the interview. I know that this interview was conducted days after a bereavement in her family where she lost her grandfather. I wonder if this event had an effect on her responses and on the very content of her reflections and answers'

Indeed, I noticed that a considerable amount of Deborah's answers included some information about her family, particularly her grandparents. While I cannot be sure of the extent to which her responses would have differed in altered circumstances, I do feel that the recency of her loss had an impact on her responses during our interaction. This is because interviews are not conducted in a vacuum but are rather sites of co-production between 'situated beings' (the researcher and participant). Thus, it can be argued that the data produced in each interaction cannot be decontextualized/ understood independently of the particular moment in time and conditions surrounding the interview.

In addition to tempering my participant's responses and disclosures, I believe that my awareness of her loss may have impacted my behaviour. For instance, I feel that my reticence to interrogate or interrupt her may have partly resulted from my desire to be sensitive and empathetic. Though I was consciously trying to avoid any behaviour that would seem overly concerned or ingratiating, my ingrained propensity to react with sympathy in such a situation may have had an unconscious effect on my behaviour. This realisation echoes the point made by King and Horrocks that "researchers and the methods they use are entangled in the politics and practices of the social world" (2010, p. 126). Moreover, it highlights my view (indeed, one shared by other social constructionists) of the interview encounter as a situated co-construction between the researcher and participant. Once again, this supports the assumption that the knowledge produced during the interview is a product of the specific views, emotions, and meanings that each individual brings to the interaction. Unlike the positivist view of the researcher as an entirely objective, detached collector of pre-existing data, I concur with King and Horrocks in their argument that during the interview process, the researcher is "actively shaping and managing how the interaction will unfold" (2010, p. 134).

Additionally, this reflection on how sympathy for a participant may have impacted the interview is a small example of what Guba and Lincoln (2005) have described as the 'multiple selves' that researchers bring to their work. Of course, I brought along my 'researcher self' but I also employed other selves like my 'empathetic self' during the interview. Therefore, my reflections can be viewed as more than just confessions of my shortcomings as a developing researcher. Instead, they can be seen as representing my own tacit experience with and realisation of the fact that both the interviewer and interviewee are situated actors. Even with my conscious effort to critically distance myself and maintain a level of 'objectivity', it is still apparent that my personal, historical, and cultural identity all had implications on the outcome of the interaction. This is because "no human being can step outside of their humanity and view the world from no position at all" (Burr, 1995, p. 152). Consequently, it must be acknowledged that I as the researcher had an impact on the meanings that were constructed during this interview. Owning this aspect of research is an important part of maintaining reflexivity because as Josselson aptly points out "the reflective attitude becomes one of noticing what you *are* doing in the interaction, rather than trying to maintain the illusion that you are doing nothing at all." (2013, p. 27). While it would be easy to keep this report limited to dry facts about the interviews, maintaining a reflective attitude when recounting and reviewing each interaction is essential in ensuring that the entire study is presented in a manner that aligns with both the methodological stance and the constructivist framework that underpins it.

## **Designer 2: ChizÓ**

My next interview took place the following week when I spoke to Chisoma Lombe, the designer and founder of the womenswear label ChizÓ. Though the brand focuses on selling ready-to-wear garments Chisoma also offers custom design services and occasionally includes menswear pieces in her collections. Based in central Lusaka, her studio is located in a quiet neighbourhood that is host to a mixture of offices, and residential and commercial properties (see fig 2.4 & 2.5). When I arrived, I was informed by the receptionist that Chisoma had gone out to purchase fabric. As I sat waiting, I took in my surroundings making notes of anything interesting. As the space was open-plan (and relatively small), and all the members of staff could see me, I tried to be inconspicuous in my note-taking.

When Chisoma arrived about 30-40 mins later, she greeted me and began to give instructions to her team. She also gave me permission to look around and take photographs. As I was taking pictures of the clothing on the rack separating the work area from the entryway/waiting area, clients began to arrive. Once again, I tried to remain inconspicuous as I waited. In addition to clients, some of the people who walked in seemed to be visiting in a more social capacity. At one point she came to where I was standing behind the rack (in the work area) and introduced me to some of her staff and the intern, apologising for the wait. I made a point to communicate my appreciation of her situation and not to appear tired or unhappy at the prospect of standing behind the rack indefinitely. Indeed, I was genuinely thankful for the fact that she had agreed to meet me. Finally, about an hour later there was a lull in visitors, and she invited me to begin the interview. As we sat down, I began by going through the information sheet and explaining the consent forms. As I felt that there was a high likelihood of us being interrupted and therefore having less time for the interview, I decided to skip the first question (How did you become a designer?) on the schedule as it was perhaps the most open-ended and could take a lot of time for the participant to answer. Instead, I asked her about the design process of her ready-to-wear collections. I found this interview somewhat challenging, firstly because, unlike my previous interview, the participant kept her responses relatively brief. Though they were not monosyllabic, the brevity of her responses caught me off guard at first as I had to formulate follow-up questions quicker than expected and with less material to go off. Secondly, the nature of her response at times felt somewhat rehearsed and rather like the information one would find in a journalistic piece. This might account for the fact that I did ask a lot more for clarification in this instance. I also strayed almost entirely from the rest of the schedule and focused on taking notes and writing down questions as they occurred to me while she spoke. Unlike the previous interview where I sat back and mostly listened, in this situation I took more of an active role and posed more questions. Upon reflection, I speculate that though the participant was aware of the purpose of the interview, I may have failed to adequately communicate to her the particularities of a semi-structured interview, which (in addition to other factors competing for her attention during our interaction) resulted in some challenges in establishing rapport.



Figure 2.4 & 2.5 ChizÓ sign and studio, Lusaka, 2019

### Material probes

As I had anticipated the interview was cut short after about twelve and a half minutes as a friend had arrived to take her to lunch. She apologetically offered to continue after she returned, or at a later date if I wanted. Judging that I had not yet overstayed my welcome, I agreed to wait for her. I decided to stay not only because I had a few more questions but because I was not sure if I would be able to return due to my own tight schedule. As I sat waiting, I read through my notes reviewing the information that had emerged thus far. About an hour later, she returned, and we resumed the interview. In an attempt to keep it brief I only asked a few follow-up questions that I had formulated during the wait. Much like before her answers were to the point and I began to despair about whether the interview was going to yield much of interest in terms of analysis. Nevertheless, as the interview drew to a close, I decided to show the participant some textile samples that I had brought along as probes (see fig 2.6). Much to my surprise, she began to relate a story of her quest to find this very textile.

In addition to serving as a moment of reciprocity where I could share something useful with my participant, in many respects, I feel that this was a turning point in the interview. Though I had not posed any questions and merely offered her to have a look, the introduction of those samples elicited some unexpected information from my participant in a way that most of my verbally articulated questions had not managed to do. Though I had judged it as unnecessary in my first interview at Lusaka Collective and run out of time in my second one with Deborah, I had made a point to at least try to utilise the textiles this time round. The material, bark cloth, is a non-woven textile material that is

harvested from the Common wild Fig, also known as the *Mutuba* tree. Each piece of bark cloth is taken from one tree and produced by a series of pounding and boiling which stretches the material to its full size. Additionally, although such practices seem to have died out, the material used to be produced and utilised widely by the people groups of Zambia (Simbo, 2010). As such, I selected bark cloth because of its significance for me in my own practice-based explorations of the concept of heritage. Because it had been helpful in my own unpacking and creative investigation of the topic, I thought that it might be a useful tool in eliciting and facilitating a discussion in a way that words alone could not. When used in the context of an interview, the term probes generally refers to the follow-up questions that seek clarification of an earlier statement while prompts are questions that are phrased in a way that helps the interviewee understand the kind of response they are being asked for (King & Horrocks, 2010). While most of the probes referenced in literature on interviewing refer to verbal examples, researchers from various qualitative methodological traditions also use non-verbal probes and prompts in their research practice. For instance, visual ethnographers use photographs and video in their interviews and data gathering as reference points where the intersubjectivity between informants and researchers is negotiated (Pink, 2001). In addition to visuals, some researchers (McCracken, 1988; Woodward, 2020) have advocated for the use of a range of material probes as “these objects and places evoke important moments, people, places, things, and events in our informants’ lives.” (De Leon & Cohen, 2005, p. 201). For instance, Iltanen and Topo (2015, p. 180) describe sample garments as both “facilitators when discussing intimate and sensitive topics” as well as a means of enriching the verbal data in their interviews of designers who created clothing targeted at older consumers. Furthermore, much like prompts, artifacts can “also bring order to a semi-structured interview by keeping the informant focused on a topic and providing a trigger for memories that might otherwise remain buried or actively excluded.” (De Leon & Cohen 2005, p. 202). My use of bark cloth is a good example of this as it prompted a disclosure from my participant that I would not have even known to ask about and which the participant may not have regarded as relevant or even remembered at the time. In addition to my introduction of bark cloth as a material probe, both Chisoma and Deborah made use of material objects during our interview to clarify or illustrate their points. For instance, both designers used some of their garment samples as visual aids during their narrations of their design process, and specifically when articulating their approach to the selection and use of fabrics. According to De

Leon and Cohen, such uses of material probes selected by the participants can have a democratising effect on an interview's dynamic by allowing participants to exert some level of influence on the interaction thus creating an "environment of trust and equality" (2005, p. 202).

My experience with the use of material probes during these pilot interviews allowed me to see their potential to enrich the interview process in the next phase of data gathering. Moreover, it worked to further my understanding of the concept of co-construction as I reflect on the fact that the interview outcomes were shaped by certain choices which not only expanded but may have had a limiting effect on what was produced (i.e. my choice to show those samples to a particular participant and not another or to conduct the interview in their studios). Ultimately, I have realised that it cannot be taken for granted that all interviews even in the same study will be the same. Though this may seem like an obvious fact that I should have been aware of before heading to the field, I feel that at the beginning of my pilot experience I had a certain subconscious anxiety about the need for uniformity in my interviews. While my actions had been informed largely by literature written from an anti-positivistic framework, I still may have been affected by a biased popular understanding research as something that must be conducted under the



*Figure 2.6 Bark cloth samples from Barktex*

strictest controls in order to reduce variances. I have come to realise that rather than trying to mitigate against the differences that arise from our nature as situated actors, one of the opportunities that I have as a researcher, is that I can cast some light on how the various aspects of one's situatedness and contextual experience are negotiated and shape research outcomes.

### **Interviews in South Africa**

In addition to the aforementioned interviews, I also conducted pilot interviews with 2 designers during a short trip to South Africa. These interviews occurred about 3 months after the initial ones. Similarly to the earlier phase, participant requests were sent via email and on social media to designers whose work appeared or purported to have a connection to heritage. I initially got one positive response and arranged to meet with the participant at their studio. On the day of the interview, I arrived at the studio but found that it was empty. After waiting for 10 minutes I decided to inquire after my participant in the neighbouring studio (I was unable to contact my participant as they had not provided me with their phone number). Realising that it was unlikely that the meeting would go ahead as planned and hoping to make the most of the little time I had left in the country, I decided to ask the designer working in the neighbouring studio for an interview. The designer graciously agreed to meet me later that day. When I returned in the afternoon I ran into my original participant as he was arriving at his studio. Explaining that he had just returned from a trip abroad and forgotten our appointment, he offered to meet me that following day. These experiences along with others on my first trip highlighted the unpredictability of working in the field. While this can of course result in unfortunate circumstances, it also means that there is the possibility for opportunities to arise unexpectedly. Indeed, it also underscores the fact that the process of negotiating and finally gaining access does not simply end when a participant agrees to be part of a study. Though gaining a participant's assent may be an important milestone, it must be remembered that there are a lot more points along the way and even beyond the actual interview interaction (Maxwell, 2005). Moreover, while sampling was approached purposively, there were also occasions that involved an element of opportunistic or snowball sampling. As Holiday (2007) has pointed out, the uncertain nature of conducting qualitative research means that it is rarely a

question of “choice between opportunities, but how the available opportunities fulfil valid qualitative research criteria”(p. 79).

### **Reflections on interviewing designers**

Although each interview experience was quite different in terms of its content, a common element was the disruptions that occurred on each occasion. When setting up an interview it is easy to imagine that the process will be a straightforward exercise fitting neatly into the prescribed time limit and following the schedule. However, as I discovered, interviewing design professionals in their place of work generally involves some level of disruption ranging from the unexpected arrival of clients, phone calls with suppliers or discussions with staff. While some of these pauses were brief others lasted for an excess of 10 minutes, which is a considerable amount in the context of a 45-60-minute interview. I imagine that having the same conversation in a neutral location would have minimised these disruptions and led to the production of different interview interactions. Though having fewer disruptions would have improved the flow of the interaction, having the interviews in another location would have reduced the possibility of impromptu details. For instance, the participants would not have been able to retrieve a piece of fabric or point to a garment on a mannequin when illustrating a point and would have had to rely exclusively on words. Furthermore, I would not have been able to observe the participants as they interacted with staff or clients. Additionally, it must be acknowledged that though they may have distracted the participants somewhat, the pauses in the interview gave me opportunities to review what had been said and formulate questions. In this way, I would argue that though it does present challenges, interviewing design professionals in their place of work is beneficial as it allows for the impromptu inclusion of illustrative details. Though these details may not be useful in research with differing aims, I feel that they are relevant to this project as they add depth to a participant's narration. In summary, a researcher interviewing design professionals (and indeed any human participant) needs to be flexible and prepared for disruptions to occur. Not only during the interview but also before it even commences. As I have discovered, it is possible to turn up at the appointed time and find an empty studio or to have a meeting cancelled without notice. As individuals who are running their own businesses and managing their creative practice, the designers I spoke with all had concerns that took precedence over

my claim to their time. Moreover, they were generous in even accommodating me into their schedules in the first place. Thus, it was important for me to keep adapting, pivoting from seemingly negative circumstances, and finding opportunities to move my project forward.

Finally, in addition to practical challenges like failing to meet with participants or turning up to an empty studio, one internal challenge that I faced in all of these interactions was the conflict between my role as a researcher and other aspects of my identity. As the concept of multiple selves put forth by Guba Lincoln (2005) suggests, it cannot be ignored that I brought many aspects of my identity or self to interviews and that these 'selves' had the potential to impact the data produced. For instance, though being a designer meant that I had a level of practice-related experiential knowledge that was helpful in terms of my ability to understand and communicate with my participants, I had to be careful not to let the interview lapse into a peer-to-peer type of discussion (which is common in a networking or social context) where I just shared my opinions and uncritically accepted the participant's remarks. Though I had tried to mitigate this by drawing a "clear boundary" (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 58) early on, (for instance: by referring to myself as a research student in my emails and only mentioning my experience as a designer when asked directly), at times I still found myself having to remember to maintain the mental posture of a researcher, in the sense that I had to shelve any personal interest or opinions I had about their work and maintain a level of critical distance. Similarly, though my ethnonational identity was useful in both gaining access to and understanding my participants, I had to be vigilant of the risk of ingratiating myself based on a false sense of comradery with my participants, or of succumbing to the biases that came with our shared identity as Zambian women or as Africans.

## **Primary data generation phase**

When I reflected on the pilot phase, I felt that it had indeed been a good opportunity to test the effectiveness of my data generation tools by applying them in a 'real-world' context. In some instances, as with the material probes, I discovered tools that were useful in enriching the interview data as they helped to draw out "narratives, comments or experiences that would not have emerged otherwise" (Woodward, 2020, p. 37). On the other hand, I also felt that other elements like the interview schedule itself needed to be adjusted. For instance, I

planned on omitting the third question about the customer base as I did not feel that it was especially useful in eliciting responses that were relevant to the main research question. Moreover, considering time constraints and the unpredictability of an interview interaction, I thought that it would be best not to waste time posing a question that was unlikely to be fruitful in helping to address the study's main aim. Additionally, I planned to add a prompt to the question about the design process. As mentioned earlier, after conducting the pilot phase I felt that it would be more feasible to reduce the scope of the study from the entire African continent to focus on Zambian fashion. Therefore, the participants for the next phase of the data generation were recruited from a pool of designers situated in or from Zambia. Though I had planned to continue my research by taking a fieldwork trip to Zambia, due to the changing circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic, there were some alterations to my plan. As face-to-face meetings with human participants had been restricted the next phases of primary research interviews were conducted remotely either via telephone or video call. The next section includes a description of and some reflections on that process.

### **Remote research**

As a result of the travel and research restrictions imposed during the COVID-19 pandemic, the next phase of interviewing was all conducted remotely via audio or video call. Recruitment of participants occurred much in the same way as during the pilot phase: A search for potential participants was made by combing through articles and blog posts as well as social media and web pages. Then requests were sent via email and DMs on social media platforms. Interestingly, unlike the experience that I reported from the pilot phase, in which I received more responses to emails and none on social media, in this phase I received the most responses from social media DMs. Though I cannot be certain, I conjecture that the increase in replies and engagement on social media may have been a result of the ways in which the pandemic has transformed the manner in which people communicate and conduct business. As posited by Marr (2020) It is likely that as restrictions on travel and social contact increased, the digital transformation across various sectors like education and business has accelerated as organisations have had to increase their engagement in virtual spaces including social media. In addition to this, I feel that a change in my approach may also have contributed. Rather than relying on one site for each

brand, I increased the number of platforms I used for recruiting to include not only brand pages but also personal profiles of the associated designers on platforms like LinkedIn. I found that as most brands/businesses/creatives have a presence on multiple social media sites, there tends to be one or two that a prospective participant spends the most time on. Consequently, they are most likely to check and reply to messages in the inbox of that account. In particular I found LinkedIn and Facebook to be highly effective means of connecting directly to the designers I wished to speak to with.

### **Conducting semi-structured interviews remotely**

Although the primary tool of data generation in this phase was still the semi-structured interview, it is important to acknowledge the differences in conducting them without physical presence. Thus, the following section offers a brief discussion of conducting interviews remotely. For instance, one of the main differences between remote and in-person interviewing is that without physical presence “the interviewer is unable to collect potentially illuminating observational material about such things as the setting (local area, type of building, whether a lot of people are around, etc.) that may be illuminating” (Bryman, 2010, p. 485). Though this is most accurate in the case of telephone/ audio calls, the same can be said of video calls as the camera in such interactions is typically stationary and focused on a single angle: a view of the speaker. Thus, the range of visually observable information is drastically reduced (Cater, 2011). Additionally, conducting interviews remotely often limits the range of non-verbal cues that can be perceived during the interaction. This has the potential to lead to misunderstanding and a lack of rapport. While there certainly are limitations, some of the benefits of conducting remote interviews are associated with cost (Bryman 2010). This was particularly pertinent in my case as my participants are mostly located thousands of miles away from where I’m based. Originally, I had planned to travel from the UK to Zambia to spend about 3 months conducting interviews. Naturally, such a trip would have had a relatively high financial, physical and emotional cost. Moreover, I would have been limited to that specific window in time. Remote interviewing not only reduced the cost drastically, but it also meant that my time scale could be more flexible and adaptable to changing circumstances. Additionally, interviewing remotely meant that I had the opportunity to work with participants located virtually anywhere on the planet. For

instance, though one of my participants has a store and studio in Zambia, she also spends a large part of her time working from her studio in Nigeria. As she happened to be in Nigeria at that time of our interview, I would have failed to meet with her in person had I been in Zambia as planned. Another participant is located in Australia and it would have been impossible for me to interview her had I proceeded with my original plan of conducting fieldwork in person due to the high cost (financially and time-wise) of undertaking such a trip. Finally, moving from an in-person to a remote format meant that interviews could be scheduled more flexibly (i.e. outside of traditional working hours/days). Moreover, while remote interviews can be conducted in a number of ways (i.e. Asynchronously via email or synchronous chat), I felt that it was best to conduct them via audio/video call not only to maintain some features of the original study design but mainly because they were the best option for achieving my aim to co-produce a data set that was as 'naturalistic' as possible in light of restrictions. Additionally, unlike text-based formats, audio and video call interaction would still include some useful contextualising information like the tone of voice (and facial expressions with video). Furthermore, I (and the participants) would be able to ask for clarification immediately.

As remote interviewing (specifically via telephone) is typically used more in survey interviewing, there is not an extensive amount of literature on its use with semi-structured interviewing. However, there are some comparative studies (Sturges & Hanrahan, 2004; Vogl, 2013) which suggest for example that there is not a significant difference in quality and duration between semi-structured interviews conducted via telephone and those done in person. Furthermore, though methodological literature on the use of virtual communication technology in qualitative research is limited (Roberts et al., 2021), more recent studies suggest that qualitative interviews can be conducted successfully remotely via video conferencing tools (Glassmeyer & Dibbs, 2011; Deakin & Wakefield, 2014; Seitz, 2016; Lo Iacono, et al., 2016; Weller, 2017; Archibald et al., 2019). One study in particular (Krouwel et Al., 2019) offers a comparative analysis of the use of skype and in-person interviews suggesting that data produced remotely was of a similar length and quality to face-to-face interactions. Additionally, as the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic has been felt across many research disciplines, there is a relatively small but rising number of publications addressing the use of virtual communication platforms and tools in qualitative interviewing as a result of restrictions and the transforming nature of communication. For instance, some researchers have pointed to the utility of platforms like Zoom, and other video

calling tools in conducting qualitative interviews remotely (Adom et al., 2020; Dodds & Hess, 2021; Howlett, 2021), and offered some instructional recommendations (see Roberts et al., 2021).

Finally, although there are indeed limitations in the nature and amount of contextual and observational information that can be gathered with telephone and video calls, they are still compatible for use in an IPA study. This is because the primary analytical focus of IPA is on the views and experiences expressed by participants and thus the main form of data analysed in IPA research is the interview transcript as most studies employ interviews. Though contextual detail is used to enliven the research account and position the results, often it is not central to the analytic process in IPA. Indeed, the reality of conducting research during challenging times is that there are necessary alterations to plans which introduce different dimensions to one's research process. Though it may be natural to resist change while reifying one's original plans as the 'perfect' way to generate data, it is essential to remember that all research methodologies and tools have their limitations. Therefore, choosing mediums and tools for research isn't a matter of picking the perfect methods but rather of selecting the best tools in light of the research aims as well as epistemological and practical concerns. As such, I believe that conducting interviews remotely via telephone/video call was a suitable means of generating data as it allowed for the co-construction of in-depth participant accounts while also greatly reducing costs and widening the range of potential participants of the study. Finally, as Bryman has so aptly explained, even in 'normal' times "research is full of false starts, blind alleys, mistakes, and enforced changes to research plans" (2010, p. 48), and thus this study is no exception, but an example of the complex and ever-transforming process of inquiry and knowledge generation.

### **Revised interview schedule**

In the first round of remote interviews, I spoke with 6 designers with interviews lasting between 20-45 minutes. 5 of the interviews were conducted via telephone and 1 was via video call. The decision on whether to conduct the interviews via audio or video call was based on practical concerns like a participant's ability to use a platform as well as internet connectivity and cost. Though each interview interaction was highly insightful, I perceived that (aside from a few specific instances when circumstances beyond my control limited the

time which participants could give) some changes had to be made to my interview schedule and my general approach in order to facilitate the production of more in-depth accounts. In some senses I consider this phase to be a second pilot phase in which I trialled and adapted the plans and instruments, which I had prepared during the initial pilot with an expectation of being physically present in the 'field', to remote interviewing conditions. As the field had transformed into a virtual space mediated by technology it was important for me to shift my approach in a way that supported the overall aims of the study while acknowledging and adjusting to the differences between face-to-face and virtual interactions. After reviewing the interview and my notes from each interaction I made some changes to my interview protocol as well as adjustments to my technique as an interviewer. During the next phase, I spoke to 5 designers with interviews lasting approximately between 54-100 minutes. In this group, 2 interviews were conducted via telephone and 3 were via video call.

One of the alterations I made during the final phase of interviewing was the inclusion of a scripted statement on the nature of semi-structured interviews which I read to each participant before commencing. This was done in an effort to increase rapport by explicitly signalling to the participant my intention to listen and my openness to hearing their elaborations in full. As Josselson has explained, by restating the aims and defining the interview format I was signalling that I wanted the participants to feel free to "make a short story long, rather than a long story short" (2013, p. 64). Though I had always tried to communicate this at the point of recruitment through informal communications and the information sheet, I believe that including an explicit reminder at the beginning of each interaction helped to set the tone and gave an opportunity for participants to clear up any misunderstanding they had. Misunderstandings may have arisen due to the varied conceptions people generally have about the nature of interviews and because this may have been the first time that some of my participants had taken part in semi-structured research interviews. As such it was important for me to plainly reiterate and explain the unique features of such an interview process. Moreover, other factors which may have contributed to misunderstandings about the interview process are the expectations and associations that people have when using mediums like the telephone. As King and Horrocks (2010) have argued, the general social expectations that surround the use of telephone calls (and in some senses video calls, especially as video calls have become one of the main mediums for conducting formal tasks in most work and educational

contexts), is that the style of interaction conducted via this medium is typically more “task-focused” than in face-to-face interactions. Though it is important to point out that this feature is more a result of social expectation rather than any “inevitable consequence of the medium itself” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 83), it is still essential to consider the ways in which the medium may impact the interview process. Furthermore, in order to go beyond or mitigate against lapsing into the “task-focused” mode, there is a greater need for the researcher to “give strong cues to participants regarding the type of interaction that is anticipated” (King & Horrocks, 2010, p. 83). As such, I believe that the addition of my statement on semi-structured interviewing aided in orienting the interaction and building the sense of rapport necessary for an in-depth discussion. In addition to the inclusion of the opening statement, the interview protocol was modified as follows:

- Can you tell me about how you became a designer?
- Can you tell me about your brand?
  - Do you have an Ethos? (An underlining idea or philosophy behind your business)
  - What is your business model? ( Do you make RTW and/or Custom orders?)
  - How about your customers?
  
- What does heritage mean to you?
  - Why is that?
  - Can you tell me more about that?
  - Is it important to you?
  
- Is heritage a consideration in your design process?
  - How so?
  - Can you describe that?
  - Why?
  
- Can you describe your design process to me in detail?

These questions were used as a frame for starting off and directing the conversation, additionally, each interaction also featured unique questions which were made in response to statements put forth by participants or points that I felt were specifically relevant to each individual.

## The researcher's identity

While questions, with their power to direct and even overpower (Josselson, 2013), arguably exert the largest influence during an interview, other factors like the perceptions that participants have about the researcher's identity also shape the interaction. As Abell et al. (2006) have contended

“the identity of the interviewer should be as much a focus of study as that of the interviewee. It cannot be treated as a taken-for-granted assumption that the identity of the interviewer is unproblematic for the participant. Rather, it is the case that both interviewee and interviewer negotiate appropriate identities for themselves within an interview interaction” (p. 241).

Furthermore, Josselson has also pointed we as researchers “must recognize that participants are creating narratives *for us* and shaping them according to their assessments of who we are and how we are responding to them.” (Josselson, 2013, p. 12). For instance, a participant's knowledge of a researcher's shared membership to a group can not only impact their willingness to take part but may also shape the interview interaction as it can contribute to forming “a bond and ease the participant's fear of being judged or not understood” (Josselson, 2013, p. 32). Alternately, a participant can also assume that they can only share experiences that they perceive to have in common with a researcher (Song & Parker, 1995; Josselson, 2013). While the general advice in the literature on qualitative interviewing is to avoid self-disclosure at the start of an interview, it must be acknowledged however that in some cases certain aspects of a researcher's identity are easily discernible/discoverable. For example, most people's names, physical appearance or other biographical information is easily accessible on public platforms online. This is especially the case when communication between the participant and researcher has been initiated and conducted primarily via social media platforms where data ranging from basic biographical info to specific interests and employment histories are readily available.

## Naivety and silence

While the advice not to “lead off with self-disclosure” (Josselson, 2013, p. 32) is still applicable, a researcher needs to be aware of the possibility that their participant has already made some judgments on their identity and membership to a group even before the interview interaction takes place. Moreover, this may be the case whether the interview is done in person or remotely. For instance, there were many times during the interviews when a participant would allude to an object, concept or cultural practice without providing an explanation signalling that they assumed I must have had previous knowledge. Furthermore, there were also instances when participants made direct reference to their assumption of a shared identity through phrases like “you know, our ‘X’”. Such phrases illustrates the participant's prejudgment of my membership to her ethnonational group and her assumption about the things I was likely to know and understand as a result (I had not made any disclosure about being Zambian, but she may have assumed it based on my name or other biographical data on my social media pages as I used Facebook to recruit and communicate with her).

Although it was somewhat beneficial to have participants feel a sense of shared identity/group membership, be that based on gender, ethnonational or racial identity, it was nevertheless important to maintain a level of critical distance as a researcher and not allow a shared identity to led to an uncritical or ingratiating attitude. This is generally the aim in most forms of qualitative inquiry but is especially pertinent in IPA where the researcher must bracket off their pre-understandings (both theoretical and personal) during the interview and analysis (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). While preconceptions on the part of the participant (and indeed the researcher) cannot be completely mitigated, one strategy of dealing with them during an interview is to always assume a position of ‘naivety’. According to Willig, naivety involves the researcher adopting a posture of ignorance that encourages “the interviewee to ‘state the obvious and thus to give voice to otherwise implicit assumptions and expectations” (2008, p. 25). Moreover, this strategy facilitates the production of in-depth accounts as it exposes the obvious to “reveal the ‘strange ‘in the familiar” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 69). Thus, I used naivety in such instances as opportunities to hear more from the participants, by requesting elaboration even when I was familiar with what they were referring to. For example, in response to the participant statements which implied that they had assumed that our shared ethnonational identity meant that I naturally understood thier sentiment, I often did not agree with but

instead asked for further description/elaboration of things or concepts to clarify their meaning. In essence, I tried to signal that rather than defaulting to assumptions and generalisations, I was keenly interested in understanding what the things there were referring to meant to each participant specifically.

In addition to naivety, another strategy commonly cited in the literature is that of silence. As much of the instructional advice on semi-structured interviewing encourages listening and allowing the participant's voice to take precedence in the interaction, researchers also employ silence to further encourage elaboration by getting out of the way as much as possible (Josselson, 2013). As Smith et al. (2009, p. 67) point out, though silence in regular conversations usually signals an opening for the other party to share their views, in semi-structured interviewing "these silences have to be waited out a little longer [as] participants often pick up the topic again". This is because maintaining silence helps to "signal that you are waiting for more detail" (2009, p. 67). Furthermore, silence gives space for reflection and thought during the interview. Indeed, throughout each phase of interviewing I found that when handled appropriately, moments of silence had a positive impact on the production of rich participant accounts. However, it is still worth mentioning that during the remote phase, particularly in the case of telephone interviews, silences at times took on a slightly different aspect. Rather than moments that invited further explanation and depth, in some instances, they were moments in which it increased confusion or anxiety. Most notably, participants sometimes expressed anxiety about giving the correct answer or being clear/understood. While it can be argued that the general nature of interview interactions (i.e.: speaking to a relative stranger about yourself) may typically cause such anxiety in some participants in any study, I conjecture that beyond this such apprehensions may have been further exasperated due to the lack of non-verbal information like an encouraging smile, nod or other more subtle bodily means of communication. On one occasion, for example, though I had judged that the participant may have had more to add, she seemed to be made slightly unsure by my silence. In response, I tried to reassure her that my silence was just a normal part of the interview but such confusion after silence occurred a few more times during the interview.

Additionally, technical features of each medium, like the possibility (and actual occurrence) of a dropped connection or stalled video feed due to poor network connection, may have resulted in confusion or anxiety developing during moments of silence. As such though the advice to leave room for silence and not succumb to the temptation to fill them or rush to the next question is still valid, it is

also essential (especially in remote interviewing using audio-only calls) to consider the range of ways in which silences can be misconstrued and plan ahead how to handle and mitigate against confusion. Though silence may be a useful part of an interviewer's technique, it is still important to be mindful of the fact that even when offered a description of the semi-structured process and warned of the potential of moments of silence, participants are most likely unfamiliar with research processes/strategies and their aims. As such, they may be more likely to default to their typical manner of handling/operating in a discussion or interview and this may make silence a confusing or uncomfortable thing. Once again this point is not made to invalidate the efficacy of silence, but rather to stress that it is impossible for a researcher to exert full control over how their words/lack of words may be perceived. This is due in part because the intersubjective space is one where there is potential for a lack of mutual understanding. Finally, no interview (regardless of the medium), can be said to give the full picture or true story and thus a more feasible aim is to provide a snapshot of a participant's meaning-making (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Smith et al., 2009). Therefore, while remote interviewing had some limitations in terms of observational data and with respect to the infeasibility of using material probes, it nevertheless provided an opportunity to explore the meaningfulness of heritage for Zambian fashion designers as well as the role it may have as a tool in their design practice by giving them space to share their views and lived-experience.

## **Chapter summary**

In summary, this study was conceived, designed and conducted from within the contextual constructivist framework. Thus, there is an emphasis on exploring phenomena and meaning-making in a manner that acknowledges both the inextricably situated nature of humans and the ever-emergent nature of knowledge about the world. Moreover, as the aims of this study are centred on examining the meaningfulness and use of heritage for specific individuals, an IPA approach was utilised as it is a methodology in which the main objectives are first to "understand their participants' world and to describe 'what it is like'" Larkin et al. (2008, p. 104), and secondly to develop a more overtly interpretative analysis, which positions the initial 'description' in relation to a wider social, cultural, and perhaps even theoretical, context. Furthermore, the primary method of data generation employed was the semi-structured interview, due to restrictions

relating to the Covid-19 pandemic, most of these interviews were conducted remotely, via telephone and video call. Finally, in addition to a brief description of participants, the analysis of transcripts generated from this phase along with a discussion of the findings is presented in the next chapter.

# **Chapter Three:**

The Analytic Process  
and the Findings

## The analytic process and the findings

Analysis in IPA has been described as an immersive process because the aim is to step into the participant's shoes as much as possible (Smith & Eatough, 2012). Furthermore, as Smith et Al. aptly state, the analytic phase can be understood as a process of “moving from the particular to the shared, and from the descriptive to the interpretive”(2009, p. 79). Indeed, this is reflected in the move from data generation, which is focused on attending to an individual's lived experience, to systematic analysis which allows for a consideration of how each individual account sits in relation to the sample group as a whole. As with many other qualitative approaches, analysis in IPA involves a shift of focus from raw data to synthesis through some form of cumulative and integrative coding (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). As such, what sets it apart is not highly distinctive steps or features, but rather what Larkin et al. describe as its “ clearly declared phenomenological emphasis on the experiential claims and concerns of the persons taking part in the study” (2006, p. 104). Thus, instead of being understood as a wildly distinctive method, it can be viewed as more of a “stance’ or perspective from which to approach the task of qualitative data analysis” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 104). The previous chapter outlined how this ‘stance’ was applied during the phase of data generation and how it underpinned the study design in general, the following chapter describes how it was applied during the task of analysis. Additionally, the findings are presented along with a brief description of the participants, which is aimed at further contextualising the interpretive accounts.

The following sections outline the process of analysis by providing a brief description and examples of the strategies and steps taken to produce the findings. As mentioned in the methodology chapter a total of 15 interviews were conducted with designers. Of the 4 interviews conducted during the pilot phase, only 2 were used in the analysis phase as the other two were interviews of designers who fall outside of the sampling criteria (they are from a South African context). Additionally, though the 2 pilot interviews conducted in Zambia were included in the analytical account, the primary focus of the findings is on the 11 interviews conducted remotely. The designers interviewed in that stage are listed below (all participants consented to the use of their name and are listed in order of when they were interviewed. For a short profile of each brand see appendix C):

Table 3.1 Designers and brands

Designer/Creative director	Brand	Based in
Banji Chona	Nkanda (Jewellery)	Zambia
Kasanga Tambo	Afro Retro Fashion (Clothing and accessories)	Zambia
Tendai Lwenje	Lwenje (Clothing)	Zambia
Ruth Mooto	My Perfect Stitch (Clothing and accessories)	Zambia
Faith kabenda	Fay Designs (Clothing)	Zambia
Elizabeth Fundafunda	Chitenge-Liza (Jewellery)	Zambia
Mwenge kapumpa	Lace Designs (Clothing)	Zambia/Nigeria
Kasubika Chola	Ihintu (Clothing and accessories)	United kingdom
Nankhonde van den Broek	Khonde (Accessories)	Zambia/Italy
Harriet Banda-Zwaan	Bantu Fashion (Clothing)	Australia
Kasonde Nankhole	Kasslita's Designs (Clothing)	Zambia

Though IPA is a fairly flexible approach without any dogmatically prescribed process (Smith & Eatough, 2012), It was still important for me as a researcher new to this method to consult some foundational instructional material from which to refer. While there are quite a large number of studies that utilise the method, there are relatively few instructional texts which provide a detailed account of the possible approaches. Therefore, though it was not the only source consulted, I primarily referred to the method put forth by smith et al. (2009) in *Interpretive phenomenological analysis, Theory, Method and Research*, as it currently offers the most accessible (for those new to the method) and detailed set of guidelines. As such, the analytic process used can be summarised as follows: an initial reading and re-reading of each account, initial noting, development of emergent themes, search for connections across themes in each case and finally a search for connections across cases.

### **A note on the researcher's past and position: a reflexive account**

As Creswell & Creswell (2018) have contended, reflexivity involves explicitly reporting how one's past experiences may shape the interpretation of data. Past experiences include not only one's involvement with the phenomenon or participants under study but also extend to involvement in the "setting, past educational or work experiences, or culture, ethnicity, race, SES, or other demographics that tie the researchers directly to the study." (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 184). Furthermore, while the researcher is not the centre of the study, the 'double hermeneutic' (Smith & Osborn, 2003) of IPA means that the researcher is the instrument of interpretation. Moreover, though bracketing one's preconceptions and understandings is an important aim during the entire IPA process, it is still acknowledged that such an aim is only partially achievable. Therefore, as Smith et al. (2009, p. 25) have argued this "connects bracketing with reflexive practices" as the interpretive account is inevitably made from a particular vantage point. In qualitative research reflexive practices often involve presenting a clear account of the researcher's position/past as a means of further contextualising the interpretive account. As such, before commencing on the analytic interpretive account the following is a very brief note on my past and how it relates to the phenomenon, context and people under study.

As mentioned earlier in the literature review chapter, I am a black, Zambian woman. I was born in Zambia but left in 1991 when I was a year old. Over the course of my life, I returned and stayed between 1996 – 1998 and again between 2001-2002. In addition to this time in Zambia, my family and I have lived in Swaziland, South Africa, the United States of America and we are currently based in the United Arab Emirates. Although I have spent most of my life living elsewhere in the world, I've maintained what I feel is a strong connection to Zambia in part through frequent visits and communication with my family members. Furthermore, I have studied fashion both in the UK (at BA level) and Finland (at MA level) and I'm currently completing this research for an award in Communication design (PhD) in the UK. Though I still identify myself as a fashion practitioner (i.e. a designer), during my MA studies, I developed an affinity for research and began to question my own motivations and attitudes as a practitioner. In particular, I became interested in the relationship between cultural identities and design. This study was born out of this place as I began to redirect the focus of my inquiry from myself to others. I offer this information, not as a way of centring myself in the analytic account but rather as a means of

communicating my position to the reader. As Larkin et al. have aptly put it, in IPA “we must inevitably accept a third-person view of a ‘first-person’ account.”(2006, p. 110). Furthermore, as Gallagher & Zahavi (2007) have argued, “there is no pure third-person perspective, just as there is no view from nowhere.”(p. 40). Thus, it is important to give the reader some relevant information regarding the vantage point of that third-person account. In addition to this and other comments on my past experiences, reflexivity was employed throughout the research process through notes and memos in which I reflected on the developments of the study. This was done to embed reflexive thinking (Creswell, 2016) throughout the research process, and move beyond the mere acknowledgement of my position to an active engagement with how that very position may have been shaping the unfolding study. Moreover, these reflexive notes also helped to document moments when some of my preconceptions or horizons of understanding were brought to light as I engaged in the research process (Frechette et al., 2020). Horizons of understanding are a concept expounded upon by Gadamer (2004) in his book *Truth and Method*, in which he further develops the notion of fore-conceptions. In essence, horizons of understanding are in a continuous state of transformation as one encounters new phenomena. To illustrate this point I have included a small excerpt from my reflective diary:

Had my second interview this year and really thought about my relationship with materials, particularly bark cloth. I recall one participant sharing their experience of working with chitenge and how that material has a constraining effect on their design process. Its physical properties dictate in a sense the things that she felt that she could make, particularly in an RTW context. I felt a similar thing, or at least I felt that I could relate to that in some ways....the use of bark cloth in my reflective explorations has often felt uncomfortable and challenged me because in a very deep sense I felt lead by the material. It forced me to respond to it, to design with it in mind rather than remaining in the background as a tool, it resists and steps forward, demands that I rethink things....it demands that I set aside my own expectations of the typical/desirable outcome.

As the excerpt shows, my understanding of materials was broadened through my interaction with participants. As I reflected on their stories, I was reminded of my own practice and found myself able to articulate a shift in my understanding of materials. Specifically, how fabric is not simply manipulated by a designer but has the power through its materiality to direct and shape the design process. As such,

this is just one example of the many times during the entire study when I as the researcher experienced a transformation in my horizon of understanding as I was made aware of my preconceptions through my interactions with participants. Such moments of reflection are important to note because as Horrigan-Kelly et al. (2016, p. 5) explain, reflexivity plays a central role in IPA, and particularly during the interview phase as it involves “bringing to the fore experiences and knowledge that may block appropriate exploration with a study participant or facilitate a deeper exploration”. Finally, while it is important to present a note on my situated position and the progressive transformation of my understanding for the sake of contextualising my interpretive account, it must be stressed that I prioritised the participant’s account in my interpretation. As the excerpt below from *Being and Time* illustrates, the interpretative approach in IPA is based on Heidegger’s call to give precedence to the new entity over any preconceptions. In other words, it is grounded in the text and not based on imported theory or prior experience. As Heidegger(1962/1927, p. 195) argues:

“Our first, last, and constant task in interpreting is never to allow our...fore-conceptions to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions, but rather to make the scientific theme secure by working out the fore structures in terms of the things themselves.” (Quoted in Smith et. al, 2009).

Interpretation inevitably entails the use of a reference point, as we can only assess things in relation to other things. Thus the aim is not to adopt an objective stance pretending to be looking at the phenomenon from no position at all, but rather to stay “focused on the phenomenon being studied while both reigning in and reflexively interrogating [our] own understandings” (Finlay, 2008, p. 29)

## **The analytic process**

Unlike most forms of quantitative data analysis where there is an effort made to preserve all of the data, analysis in IPA shares a feature common to other qualitative methods of inquiry in that it involves what Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe as ‘winnowing’ of the data. Drawing on the work of Guest et al. (2012) they suggest that this is a process where a researcher chooses to focus on “some of the data” while “disregarding other parts of it” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 192). This is done as the richness of textual and image data generally

means that it is unfeasible to use all of it in a study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In IPA this process of 'winnowing' occurs during the initial noting, formulation of emergent themes, and subsequent organising of themes within and across cases.

### **Reading and re-reading**

The first step involves reading and re-reading of the transcript which should have the effect of the researcher feeling more "wrapped up' in the data"(Smith & Eatough, 2012, p. 450). In addition to notes that were made during this re-reading, the subsequent step involves a more detailed phase of annotation. The aim of this process is to try "to make sense of what is important in the participant's experience (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Drawing on the adaptable model put forth by Smith et al.(2009) the transcript was placed in a table with two other columns; one for emergent themes and the other for exploratory notes and comments (see appendix D for an example). These annotations were produced through a line-by-line reading of the text attending to 3 analytical categories. Such a detailed approach is important not only because the analytical account must come from within the text (Smith et al., 2009) but also "because most people are used to reading and summarising complex information often in very short periods of time". Therefore, "this part of the process is about slowing down our habitual propensity for 'quick and dirty' reduction and synopsis" and attending to the actual words of the participants (Smith et al., 2009:82). Moreover, such a thorough approach is in line with the methodological aim of immersion (Smith & Eatough, 2012).

### **Noting and commenting**

Though, there are no hard and fast rules about what to make note of (Smith & Osborn, 2008), as mentioned earlier annotations were generally grouped into these 3 analytic categories: Descriptive, Linguistic and conceptual. Descriptive notes are made to highlight the objects, people or events which relate to the participants thinking and experience. In other words, they are meant to focus on "thinking of the experience in relation to the things that make up their [the participant's] world" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 84). Linguistic notes attend to specific language use in the account. This could include repetition of words or

phrases, metaphors, pronouns, laughter, and tone. These elements highlight “the ways in which contents and meaning were presented” by the participants (Smith et al., 2009, p.88). Finally, Conceptual comments allow the researcher to move away from explicit claims to their overarching understandings. The aim is to Look for things that matter to the participants. While this category of notes is interpretive in nature, the annotations are not yet themes as they are not directed towards “finding answers or pinning down understandings;” but rather on “opening up of a range of personal meanings” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 89). Multiple rounds of annotation were conducted with the aim of “understanding the person-in-context, and exploring a person’s relatedness to, or involvement in, the world.” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 110). In this study the aim was specifically, to understand each participant's relatedness to heritage generally and within their fashion design practice. Once again, the findings from this exercise are not meant to represent the essence of heritage but instead are directed towards an understanding of “‘what it means’ for the participants to have made these claims”, in this case about heritage, “and to have expressed these feelings and concerns in this particular situation” (Larkin et al., 2006, p. 104). As explained in the previous chapter, IPA is underpinned by an existential-phenomenological framework in which humans are situated, actors. Thus both the researcher and participant are viewed as persons-in-context and their sense-making is seen as apprehensions of a phenomenon from their situated position.

### **The hermeneutic circle**

Though the entire process of analysis in IPA can be said to involve the hermeneutic circle, the concept became the most salient for me during the annotation phase. As stated in the methodology chapter, the hermeneutic circle is a concept described by Gadamer (2004, p. 294) as the “ontological structure of understanding”, whereby the parts of a thing are understood in relation to the whole and the whole in relation to its parts. As I made my line-by-line reading and notes, I could perceive this ontological concept in action as certain sections of a transcript would enliven or redirect my interpretation of an entire account. Additionally, my understanding of some sections was altered or deepened during subsequent readings in light of the whole account. For instance, in one account the participant made a comment early on about how design was both intuitive and nurtured. Though I made an initial descriptive note of this, upon completing a

round of annotation I returned to this section on design with a fuller sense of its meaningfulness as subsequent sections of the transcript had also included a discussion of things in similar terms of being inborn or actively encouraged/learned. This of course is just one small example of the constant shifting back and forth between part and whole which takes place generally in the process of understanding and particularly throughout the analytical process in interpretive phenomenological inquiry (Frechette et al., 2020).

### **Emergent themes**

Once the annotation phase was complete a set of corresponding themes were developed and added to the relevant column in the table. Although themes are used as the main unit of analysis in other qualitative research approaches, what makes them different in IPA is that they centre on capturing lived experience rather than addressing broad theoretical perspectives (Smith & Osborn, 2008). Though themes are based or grounded in the text, during this step it is possible to refer to extant theory as long as the “connection between the participant’s own words and the researcher’s interpretation is not lost.” (Smith & Eatough, 2012, p. 450). Although bracketing is practised throughout the various stages of the process, as Larkin et al. have pointed out IPA is unique from other approaches like grounded theory in that it allows for interpretation “informed by direct engagement with existing theoretical constructs” (2006, p. 104). The key is that themes are not made in order to fit into a predetermined theory or abstraction, but that (where appropriate) any engagement with extant theory is in response to ideas which emerge from the text. In a typical IPA study, the body of extant theory referenced is generally from the field of psychology, however, in this study, it may be from fields like Design, Fashion Studies, Heritage studies, and Sociology.

Following the initial noting of emergent themes, the themes from each account were then organised into separate tables and another process of ‘winnowing’ was conducted by “establishing connections between the preliminary themes and clustering them appropriately” (Smith & Eatough, 2012, p. 452). It is important to note that this was done focusing on one case at a time. Some themes were dropped based on their relevance to the overall scope and aims of the study (Smith et al., 2009) or lack a strong evidentiary basis (Smith & Eatough, 2012). Additionally, the remaining themes were organised and further developed

into superordinate themes using Smith et al.'s recommendation to employ the analytic strategies of abstraction, subsumption, contextualisation, numeration, function, and polarization (2009, pp. 96-99). The following is a short description of these strategies. Abstraction involves joining similar themes to form one superordinate theme. Subsumption involves grouping themes under one theme which becomes superordinate. Additionally, Polarization involves searching for oppositional relationships between themes. Contextualization is a means of developing a theme by paying attention to narrative elements such as culture and time. Numeration simply involves attending to the frequency of a certain theme. Though useful, Smith et al. caution against an "over-emphasis of this as frequency doesn't always equate to importance" (2009, p. 98). Lastly, function focuses on the specific role that a theme may play within the account. Finally, as Smith & Eatough aptly state "the final superordinate themes are the outcome of an iterative process in which [the researcher] has moved back and forth between the various analytic stages ensuring that the integrity of what the participant(s) said has been preserved as far as possible" (2012, p. 455).

In addition to the themes, the tables for each case include page numbers of occurrence and key quotes. I also made a brief interpretive summary of each account highlighting the themes and relationships which were most notable (see appendix D for an example). This step of writing out and elaborating on my sense-making was a helpful means of furthering my understanding of each account as a whole. In other words, it allowed me to reflect on how each superordinate theme fit together within each person's life world. As Smith & Osborn (2008) explain, "analysis is expanded during the writing phase" (p. 49). Once this step of compiling and refining superordinate themes within each case was complete, I moved to making connections across the entire group of cases (Smith et al., 2009; Smith & Eatough, 2012). The table below lists the superordinate themes for the group. The final group themes were selected based on their significance and recurrence across the group. Following Smith et al.'s (2009) guidance for working with larger sample groups (of more than 6 participants), I measured recurrence by their presence in at least half of the accounts. Each theme is expounded upon with references from the transcripts in the following section

Table 3.2 Superordinate themes

Superordinate themes	Present in half the sample?
<b>Ownership</b>	YES
Dissonance	NO
Expression of self	NO
<b>(Dis)Connect</b>	YES
Origin	NO
<b>Opposites</b>	YES
Fusion	NO
<b>Function(objects of ceremony)</b>	YES
Inheriting	NO
Fashion as art	NO
Modifying pre-existence	NO
<b>Material</b>	YES
Time(temporal)	NO
Reconciling	NO

## Final group themes

This section includes a write-up of each theme where I elaborate on my interpretive account. As the decision was made earlier to direct the analytic focus on a group level, this account will not include a breakdown of each case separately but will instead include relevant examples from different cases which best illustrate and support each theme. As part of the assessment of rigor in an interpretive phenomenological study involves an evaluation of the degree to which the analytic account stays “true to the text”, engages “in consensual validation”, and allows “the readers to participate in the validation process by presenting texts associated with the interpretations made by the researcher”

(Benner 2008, p. 463), transcript excerpts are included in order to present sufficiently detailed data. This in turn supports the aim of giving a thick description that can “transport the reader to the setting” and give the discussion and interpretation “an element of shared experience” (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 200). Though the move from the “particular to the shared” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 79) may seem in variance with the fundamental idiographic nature of IPA, it must be recognised that “even where the analysis is primarily at the group level, what makes the analysis IPA is the fact that the group level themes are illustrated with particular examples taken from individuals” (Smith et al., 2009, p. 106). The primary aim of this study was to examine the meaning and role (both generally and in relation to their fashion practice) of heritage for fashion designers in and from Zambia. As such, the following themes are interpretive answers to this line of inquiry based on the views and lived experiences of the participants included in the study. Once again, they are not a conclusive answer about what heritage means to all Zambians or even all Zambian fashion designers. Furthermore, due to the situated nature of both the researcher and participants, the themes presented are not positioned as revealing of any pure/inner experience. Rather, as Larkin et al. point out the findings are simply an acknowledgement “that the only way to find the subject is as a ‘person-in-context’.”(2006, p. 110). As the objective of this chapter is to present an interpretative account centred on the participants, in which the themes ‘emerge’ from their views, the sections below will not include any direct reference to or discussion of the findings in light of extant theory. Instead, that will be included in the next chapter. Also, please note that in the transcript extracts ‘P’ is used to indicate the participant and ‘I’ refers to the interviewer. The words of the participants are also presented in brown to make the distinction clear.

### **A note on the use of images**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, further details about the designers and images of their work can be found in appendix c. As such, the following sections on expounding on the themes will not include any images of the garments and objects being discussed in the themes. Although this may seem counter intuitive, considering the nature of the topic under study, i.e. fashion design practice, I would argue that a lack of images in the findings section aligns not only with the view of heritage that underpins this study but also supports my

intent of focusing the readers attention on the meaning making of participants. As explained in chapter 1, heritage is essentially intangible and emergent (Smith, 2006), thus any material objects related to it are not substantive of it. Wu & Hou (2015) have pointed out that the primacy of objects in heritage practice and discourse is based in part on the prevalence of Eurocentric ideas which privilege the material and monumental. Although, the material and visual certainly form part of our engagements with heritage (Watson and Waterston 2010), theorists have problematised them due to their ability to render marginal or competing subjectivities seemingly less real (Smith, 2006). In light of this I decided to focus the analysis on the meaning making of participants about their work rather than attempting to interpret or deduce meaning via an analysis of the objects they design. Excluding images of material object from the following sections (and indeed, much of the thesis as a whole) emphasises the import of this decision to decentre objects in this examination of heritage and encourages the reader to lean into the participant's accounts of the various concepts, narratives and experiences which inform and are materialised through their design practice.

## **Ownership**

As I developed a list of final themes, one concept that seemed to have significance for all participants was that of ownership. Although there were different accounts of it, ownership appeared to have strong implications on each participant's understanding of and relationship to heritage. While some people expressed ownership in communal terms by mainly using the possessive pronouns 'our', or the first person plural 'we', others expressed it in individually personal terms primarily through the possessive 'my'. Additionally, there were also instances when ownership was expressed through the possessive 'theirs'. As such, it can be understood that in addition to being something that is actively taken up at a communal and personal level, there are instances when heritage is treated with a sense of ambivalence and implicitly disowned. Moreover, though the possessive language of 'our', 'we' and 'my' may appear to imply a straightforward and simple relatedness to heritage, they actually reveal complex and highly individualised negotiations of what it means to be connected to a group identity and culture. Furthermore, this theme encapsulates the idea that heritage involves possession at some level; it doesn't exist in a sense unless it is owned by someone. The first example is an extract taken from my interview with

Faith of Fay's Designs. In it she is responding to my question of what heritage means to her:

Ah, you know like inheriting- like in fashion ..... Cause when you think about, in Zambia **we've got**-I'm sure you're from Zambia and you get what I'm trying to talk about- if **we think** about um, **we've got** a traditional outfit in Zambia which **we call** a musisi.

This extract illustrates the deeply communal sense in which ownership is understood by this participant. Though she does refer to intangible forms of heritage in other sections of her account, there is a focus here on tangible objects in relation to fashion, namely, the Musisi. Additionally, the 'we' that she is referring to is the Zambian 'we'. It seems that anyone within the Zambian ethnonationality is a natural co-possessor of the material heritage she refers to. This is seen in the way that she tries to include me and implies that by being a Zambian I would *get what she was trying to talk about*. In essence, for this participant heritage ownership is negotiated at a national level and membership in the Zambian national group entails a natural and shared understanding of the co-possessed. An example of this presumed shared knowledge is further illustrated when she states:

**Everywhere** you go if you meet a Zambian there and you ask them about a Musisi, they will explain it's a traditional outfit worn by Lozis. And **everyone** in our country Zambia **we are like embracing** it because it's like- it stands out from many traditional gear that **we have** in Zambia. That one stands out, because it's wore mainly by women. Of course, **we've got** a Ziziba for men,

In this extract, there is a definite emphasis on how every Zambian anywhere you go would be able to tell you about the garment and its provenance. In other words, this suggests that just as ownership of the object is shared communally at a national level, knowledge about it is also naturally shared by all members of the group. Interestingly, the quote above also marks Faith's acknowledgment of the fact that the Musisi is part of the cultural practice of a specific group within Zambia, the Lozi people. Nevertheless, ownership of it is still extended to the entire nation as the garment has in her words been *embraced* by all Zambians. This implies that just as some things can be embraced, some can also be rejected or simply not included in the canon of co-possessed objects and

knowledge. This idea is further exemplified when she elaborates more on her own relationship with the Musisi. Faith goes on to say:

If you have travelled for those fashion shows we used to have before COVID, I normally used to go with a musisi because a musisi ah, you know **I'm not Lozi but I embrace it** so much and **I love it** because its outstanding. It's outstanding, because when you are wearing musisi it's a traditional which is worn by so many, **whether you're ah in that tribe Lozi or not, people embrace it** and for me, **that's my heritage** I really, really appreciate it too much.

Once again, she emphasises that the Musisi is a garment that she and other Zambians have embraced as their own. In this way, objects and knowledge from specific groups within the nation can be embraced or subsumed into communal possession at a national level. Moreover, as the word's connotation suggests, embracing involves a whole-hearted, open-handed acceptance or *owning*. This owning occurs according to Faith because of the garment's *outstanding* quality as it is noticeably different. As she explains:

Because it's there, it's there in your face/ because when you are wearing a musisi **anyone will ask you 'what traditional outfit is this one?'**

Thus, it can be understood that her owning is tied to the Musisi's visibility, to the way it elicits a reaction even from uninitiated non-members, and the way it is unquestionable traditional. In addition to these specific extracts, Faith's entire account contains more examples of her conception of heritage in terms of ownership. That heritage involves not only objects but knowledge that is co-possessed at a national level as a natural consequence of group membership. What she considers to be heritage is also dependent on which elements of regional culture are accepted into the group of nationally co-owned things. Aside from Faith's account, there was also another case in which the use of 'our' and 'we' stood out. Unlike Faith, who went on to describe how heritage related to her work, Kasanga of Afro Retro Fashion said that he didn't think his design work for this RTW line had any consideration for heritage. His view was based on his understanding of ownership. As he states:

P: Oh yeah, heritage is very important, but apparently, which is also a disadvantage. As a Zambian designer, **we don't own our own fabric.**

I: Hmm!

P: Like you see, like **having a fabric made in Zambia**, a fabric which stands for Zambia, no.

I: Mm

P: So, basically, **we as**, as a fashion designer,

I: Mm

P: From my own understanding **people here in Zambia** consider chitenge as an African thing.

This extract illustrates that for Kasanga shared ownership is indeed important. Like Faith, he places a focus on communal ownership at a national level. Furthermore, the co-possession of a material object like fabric is key. According to Kasanga for a fabric to be considered as co-possessed by all Zambians, it must be *made in Zambia* and stand for the nation in some way. This emphasis on a material being produced in the country suggests that the origin of an object matters. According to him, it must be from within its literal physical boundaries, in a sense, it must be *of the land*. In this way, regardless of a fabric's apparent links with the nation's dress culture, if it is not directly of the land or made of what bounds the nation and gives it its distinctiveness, then it has no authentic connection to the land and its people. Therefore, such an object cannot be owned. For Kasanga, the connection between an object and a nation goes beyond the aesthetic level and is not simply a matter of popular use. Unlike Faith, he doesn't see heritage as something you can own by merely embracing something. Nor is it based on an object's capacity to visually evoke tradition. Moreover, the stipulation that it must *stand for Zambia* suggests that it should represent the nation and its singular features in some way and that it should be unique. As his specific reference to *chitenge as an African* thing shows, the material which features in many of his designs is not heritage as it lacks an authentic and unique connection to the land of Zambia and its people. Furthermore, there is a clear indication that *African things* are not necessarily owned as heritage by some designers, especially when heritage is negotiated/owned primarily at a national level. Once again, the emphasis is on an object's ability to exemplify the distinctiveness of the nation (in this case Zambia's distinctiveness from other African nations). Thus, even in stating that Zambian designers lack such an object Kasanga highlights his view of the importance of communal ownership at a national level.

In addition to the use of 'we' and 'our', the theme of ownership was also

communicated through the use of the third-person possessive pronoun 'their'. As the following excerpts from Tendai, designer of Lwenje show, there may be instances when the ownership of heritage isn't personal or communal. As she states in response to the question about whether her design process has any consideration of heritage:

P: So it does, not much, but there is **a bit of involvement** of culture in my process. Because if I'm making an outfit for someone and say **their** heritage or culture **doesn't allow** certain things, so I would have to take that into consideration.

I: right

P: or say if someone's tribe or tradition says that **this has to be portrayed in their outfit** or what not I would have to take that into consideration. **But these days it's not as strict**. People are more open to other ideas.

In this excerpt, there is a clear indication that the bit of heritage involved in her design process belongs to other people. It's not 'our' or 'my', it's 'theirs'. Though it is not clear if this 'their' operates at an individual or communal level it is apparent that the designer herself isn't included in this group. Even minimising it as *not much but a bit* highlights her reluctance to connect her creative practice to heritage. By labelling it as 'theirs' she is distancing herself from it. Indeed, as any consideration for heritage is only made upon request from a client, it is the client who initiates and effectively owns this part of her design process. Further reading of her account suggests that her lack of personal ownership stems from her view of heritage as traditional, as *strict*:

I: Uhm I suppose my next question for you then going off of that is I guess, how would you describe heritage for you, for yourself? Like how would you describe that?

P: Uhm, the general idea that I have of that is history and culture

I: Mmhm

P: of a group of people or say a country. If I'm not mistaken.

I: Mm

P: yeah but **I'm not very traditional**

As her words illustrate, there is a link between how she sees herself and her lack of ownership of heritage. Her view of heritage as strict or inflexible can be perceived in her use of *doesn't allow* and *has to be portrayed*. Both phrases are suggestive of intransigence or rigidity as they are contrasted by the statement that *people are open to more ideas* these days. In essence, the small bit of heritage is her client's as she cannot own what she perceives as the rigidity and backward focus of heritage. Thus, it can be understood that achieving a sense of ownership also involves how an individual perceives themselves and whether they see heritage as something compatible with that conception. Moreover, the dynamics of some fashion design practices in Zambia lend themselves more to the collaborative style, in which the client has a considerable amount of input and power to direct the creative process. Thus, in such instances, there may be occasions when a designer's personal inclinations and vision become secondary.

In summary, while heritage was discussed in terms of ownership across all accounts, there was a considerable amount of variance in the specific ways in which such ownership was negotiated by each participant. Though it wouldn't be possible to collate a representative and conclusive list of necessary conditions for a sense of ownership to be achieved, what can be gathered from this group of accounts is that ownership can be viewed from different levels, the personal, the ethnic/tribal, continental, and even racial level, with the most popular being the national level. Moreover, these levels of ownership can at times be espoused simultaneously in various combinations. For, instance one can claim ownership at both a national (Zambia) and personal (family) level. Additionally, ownership involves an alignment with one's personal view of self and can be rejected if heritage is perceived to be incompatible with that view. Interestingly, the perceived features of heritage which make it compatible for one individual may also be the basis upon which it is rejected by another. It is also notable that ownership was often made in reference to objects and knowledge of them. Though this doesn't mean that objects were central in accounts of heritage more generally, it does suggest that they have importance for many designers as things to own, specifically concerning fashion. Lastly, as there is a range of selection criteria employed by individuals to determine which things (tangible and intangible), are accepted into the communal or personal canon, heritage is not simply possessed on the basis of inherent quality but actually has to be accepted or embraced as such.

## (Dis)Connect

In addition to ownership, another theme that was relevant in many of the accounts was that of (dis)connection. This theme speaks of the importance of connection and the circumstances which can contribute to a sense of lack or disconnect. The word connection connotes a bond between two entities, and for some participants the bond expressed was one between themselves and a nation. In other instances, it was a bond between a group's members across time. The first example of the theme of (dis)connect is taken from the words of Kasubika, the designer of the clothing and accessories brand Ihintu. Her account was selected as it contains a very enlightening articulation of the disconnect that can exist in relation to heritage. In response to my question about what heritage means to her she speaks about being born in Zambia but growing up in Britain and about how that has shaped her view of heritage:

P: then I **think heritage for me is mainly about family**. I don't think of Zambia as my mother land and **I go here and I go there and I know about the history or anything**. I can only talk about myself and my family

I: Mm

P: and my link to my family

From this excerpt, it is apparent that heritage is something that is closely *linked* to her family. Indeed, her words suggest that the link is not to Zambia as it is not a place she really knows. As such, it can be understood that for Kasubika knowing is part of connecting. The 'knowing' she refers to can be read not only as a knowing about something by learning facts (as in its history), but it's also an experiential kind of knowing hinted at in the words *I go here and I go there* as this implies personally and physically, being in a place/location. Further on Kasubika expounds on this by giving an example of her aunty sharing stories to her about her youth in Zambia. She then says:

Yeah, I think for me **it's just stories** cause there are no pictures or anything. Or just, yeah, it's just **a link with my family and their stories** cause that's kind of **the only way that I could get my heritage**.

Once again, the emphasis is on her family and their stories of being in Zambia. Therefore, her 'knowing' is centred on their words about the nation. It's interesting that she laments that it was the *only way*, suggesting that there may be other

ways of knowing, not just *through* someone else's verbal depictions and recollections. Her words directly after this throw some light on what these other ways of knowing could be:

Whereas people who were still let's say **in the country that they were born in**, it would be like let's **go here and see** like where your nana went to school or something. Or **let's go here and see**, this was once my best friends grandmothers home and we did this in the backyard or whatever **but I think for me it is just the stories I hear about** when my mum or my cousins or aunty were young.

Being in a place, specifically the place you were born is important to Kasubika as it allows one to *go and see for* themselves. This direct personal experience of going and witnessing, or seeing is missing when one only hears about a place. Stories are indirect experiences that are limited to words alone. They are a form of knowing that is lacking in comparison with the experiential knowledge of being in a place and engaging with it directly through your senses. Thus, all Kasubika has are words and the recollections of her family members. Therefore her connection to Zambia and her heritage is not direct but through her family. And thus her family become central to her expression of heritage as they provide her primary connection to it. This limited, proxy form of knowing, of connecting leads to a sense of lack and incompleteness.

P: Um yeah. I guess there is kind of **a slight disconnect with me** because **I'm not really in the place that my family came from**. So like I do have to like **vicariously learn about my heritage** just through like stories and stuff.

I: Mm, Mm

(Silence 2 seconds)

P: that was a bit sad (laughs)

As the words, *I'm not really in the place* further indicate, there is importance attributed to personally and physically *being in* the nation she and her family are from. As she has grown up in and lives in Britain, she lacks the ability to connect fully with the place she is from and as a result she expresses a failure to fully connect to her heritage. Her family members' memories only allow her to 'be' there in Zambia partially as she lacks her own adequate experience. *Being in* provides a fuller form of knowing and connecting than 'hearing of' alone.

Moreover, being from is not in and of itself enough to establish a full connection, as it must be coupled with being in. It is also worth noting that Kasubika doesn't seem to substitute her indirect connection with the place and nation she comes from to a connection with the land she is presently in. Though she may be physically in Britain, she can never be *from* there. Thus, spending a significant portion of one's developmental years and life in a place is not always tantamount to having a sense of connection to its culture or heritage. The sadness she expresses about this shows that the lack of connection can be felt deeply, and is not something treated with indifference or reconciled easily. It is akin to a sense of loss. A loss of personal experience, of the fullest kind of knowing. The effect of this partial disconnection is further expanded upon later when she says, in response to a question about whether her design practice has any consideration for heritage. She begins by saying:

P: Uh, yes and No

I: Hmm

After explaining the 'yes' part of the answer Kasubika later gives her reason for the 'no' part by making a reference to her sense of disconnect in relation to her work.

....a lot of my designs deal with, **reflect home** and **what I know** and what **I've grown up seeing**. Um, or they try and reflect. **That's my no part of my answer** because **everything is kind of a-** I wouldn't say **watered down-** but it's an **extremely mixed reflection of heritage and culture**

As the excerpt suggests the lack of a direct experiential knowing of one's place of origin, the place where your family comes from, can result in a sense of dilution, or a weakened connection to one's heritage. While Kasubika's connection to her family is strong it is counterbalanced by this weakened connection to Zambia. Additionally, her account suggests that heritage is something that she negotiates at both a personal and national level. Therefore, engaging with heritage in design practice becomes a mirror of this state of partial disconnect.

In addition to Kasubika's account, another participant also shares their views on connecting. However, rather than conceptualising heritage as something one connects to, their understanding frames it as something which is connected through. As Faith, the designer of Fay's Designs, states in response to a question on what heritage means to her:

It's been there for years and **they want to be attached to the, like history of our ancestors**. You know, so it's um, for me it means like um inheriting of **what our ancestors used to do**.

As this extract suggests, attachment is something sought and achieved by connecting to what one's ancestors used to do, to the past state and practices of one's group members. Being attached is an active, continuous state, not just a momentary occurrence. Heritage can be understood as the means of achieving this continuous connectedness. The necessity of keeping this attachment active and unbroken is illustrated later on in the text. Speaking broadly of material and intangible things, she remarks:

So everything is passed on starting from that musisi wear, to food, to drinks, so it has to be **passed on from generation to generation** so that it doesn't **die a natural death**.

The phrase from *generation to generation* indicates that not only does heritage connect those in the present to those in the past (ancestors), it's also a connection forward to those in the future (proceeding generations). Thus heritage can be thought of as a continuous thread providing a connection of a people group through time. Moreover, the urgency of maintaining this connection is shown in the phrase *die a natural death*. This reference to death which is made a few more times in the text underscores the serious consequence of a broken connection. As something which can *die*, heritage can be thought of as akin to a living thing that requires some form of sustenance to stay alive (in this case the continuous passing down of what is believed to be past practice). Additionally, the idea that the connection can be killed through a figurative form of negligence, highlights the undesirable nature of a severed connection and the sense of loss that can carry for the entire community. Therefore, the breaking, loss or death of the connective cord of heritage must and can be avoided:

Maybe if you phase out that, **the tradition dies**, but if you **keep on insisting, this is our** traditional food, this is our traditional wear, **it will run through generations to generation**.

According to Faith disconnect can be avoided through vigilant and dogged practices of passing down. Which in the context of her fashion practice involves the continued use and promotion of objects like the Musis and materials like Chitenge.

In summary, the extracts from these two participants fittingly illustrate the

important relationship between heritage and the concept of (dis)connection. Whether the connection is to or through, the main idea that both of these accounts share with others in the sample group is that connection bears real consequences. When achieved it can provide a bridge for a people group through time or for an individual to a nation. However, a lack of connection can result in a fragmentation and the weakening of ties. Moreover, the connection of heritage can be established and maintained in a number of ways. For instance, through bodily presence, continued cultural practice and storytelling. Lastly, though there may be a range of factors involved, an important thing to highlight is the role of 'knowing' in the formation of connections. In particular, the difference between direct and indirect experiencing/knowing and how this plays an important part in the extent to which links to and through heritage are established.

### Opposites

Another theme that was found across a large number of accounts was that of opposites. This concept was primarily expressed in constructions that placed either heritage itself or its perceived attributes in direct contrast to something else. These oppositional constructions revealed some of the value structures upon which heritage was assessed. Additionally, these constructions also shed some light on how some participants viewed themselves. The first example of this theme is taken from the account of Tendai, designer of Lwenje. In this excerpt she is responding to the question of what heritage means to her:

P: **I'm more of a modern designer.** I gravitate more to **modern** aspects of design

I: Mm

P: Yeah, but for me, **heritage is history**, traditions, culture of **a group of people or country**

I: Okay, no, thank you, this is so interesting. Uhm just as you were speaking I wanted to pick your brain then. How would you define modern design like you mentioned?

P: Okay, for me **modern design** is taking aspects of **different cultures from everywhere**, all around the world. **Not just restricted to your own country**

In Tendai's words, there is the initial contrast between the historicity of heritage and other *modern aspects of design*. Although it can be read in a temporal way as in the past of heritage and the present/future of other design elements, it is also taken further as she explains that contrast in terms of the restriction and freedom. According to her, modern design can be inspired by a mix of things from different cultures *everywhere*. Conversely, heritage limits one to a much smaller pool of inspiration within the bounds of their own country. Thus, it is clear in this oppositional pair that heritage with its restrictive nature is not as desirable as the boundless freedom afforded by a modern approach to designing. Furthermore, for this designer, the undesirability of heritage is compounded by the fact that she identifies with what she perceives as the futurist, multiplicity of modern design. As a designer who doesn't want to be hemmed in by a single country and its cultural past, heritage is out of place in her creative practice. By framing heritage in terms of its oppositional quality, she is able to articulate her own distance from it and her ambivalence to its presence in her design practice. Other such oppositional constructions are present further on in this account. For instance, later on in response to a probing question on the meaning of African design (as she had referred to herself as on the fence between African and Western design), she says:

P: Okay, um, the basic, the first thing that comes to mind **if you ask anyone**, or basically, just anyone of African design, **you'd think of bold colour, bold prints, a lot of tradition and culture and heritage and all that**. For me, **I'm not really into strictly that**. I'm not really a traditionalist, **I'm not** really a cultural person or designer. I rarely, rarely think of that unless the client asks me to. Um, sorry, your question was what is African design,

I: Mm

P: Um, So when I think of African design **I think of just vibrant, bold**, what else? I think those are the two things that come to mind, vibrant and bold fashion. Um, I think that's it.

As the excerpt illustrates, there is a strong link between what Tendai categorizes as African design and heritage. In addition to the more abstract things like culture and tradition, she perceives it in association with *bold print and bold colour*. In essence, bold print and colour can be understood as visual signifiers of heritage in design. Once again she distances her work from the limitations of heritage by

stating that she is not *strictly* into that. Moreover, the phrase *if you ask anyone* suggests that what she says is common knowledge, that it's not just her opinion but a fact accepted by all. When asked to clarify what western design means to her, she states:

P: If we talk about western design now, we'd say maybe, **not modern but modern**. I don't know if you get what I mean. (signs slightly) Like **not minimalist but minimalist**. Not modern but modern. I'm trying to find the words. Um, **it's more of thinking in the future**

I: Hmm

P: and if you think of Covid and what not and how it's affected fashion

I: Mm

P: So people are **now thinking of how it would be in the future** that we would be wearing minimal or more relaxed clothing. So if you think of western design now, **moving** towards that but western design overall, I would say, **I would give a minimalistic or futuristic** response. But on that one, I'm not 100 percent, but that's just what I'm getting through everything like media or experience or all that about western design.

Just as African design is connected to heritage, Western design is connected to modern design. In this way, the earlier contrasting construction is continued. The minimalism and modernness of Western (modern) design are set directly against the bold print/colour and tradition of African(heritage) design. Moreover, the temporal dimension of the contrast is furthered by the repeated reference to the futuristic leaning of western design. It is interesting that she describes herself as located somewhere in between these two types of design as this suggests that they exist on opposite ends of a spectrum. Her experience of being 'caught in the middle' of these two poles, between heritage and modern design, indicates a certain tension. Because, while she clearly identifies more with modern design and professes to *rarely* think about heritage, the market she operates within demands that she have some dealings with it. This is because her business is primarily centred on custom orders and one-offs. As a result, her clients exercise a large role in directing and shaping the outcomes of her practice. Therefore, It can be understood that there is a certain level of frustration involved in having to create from a place that feels limiting and is in direct contrast to how one sees themselves and their design vision.

In addition to this, the theme of opposites was also exemplified in Kasubika's account. When speaking about how she became a designer she refers to her early years saying:

Like fashion has always been like a big thing in my life just **in terms of like heritage and culture**. The kind of **juxtaposition of coming to England**, like quite young, and still like knowing-I came to England when I was five- but still like knowing how people dressed I guess in the '90s at that point. **It was still like traditional. It was still like chitenge fabrics, wax print fabrics. It really was like colourful** and obviously being young that's all you know, like a **lot of colour and a lot of celebrations** cause everything is good when you are younger. You are always like exposed to the best of life. And **then coming here, is quite like grey** -no offence to England- (laughs). It was **very like minimal** and just that culture shock of like 'Oh! Then **how does one celebrate? How does one express themselves if everything is quite cold and a bit dark?**' and um, I think at the back of my mind I always had the thought of how do you express yourself?

This extract illustrates the contrast between *coming to England* and how she remembered things in the place she had left. Kasubika even speaks of it using the term *juxtaposition* indicating her awareness of the perceived stark contrast between where she was and where she had come from. The clothing and atmosphere in Zambia (as she remembers it) were a combination of the *traditional*, of *print* and *colour*, while the clothing and general atmosphere of England were quite grey, minimal, cold, and dark. As her concept of celebration, and self are linked to her recollections, her move in which she discovers England to be the opposite of those things, is shocking. It also causes her to seek new ways of expressing herself. As such, it can be understood that the printed fabrics and colours of her early years in Zambia were intimately linked to how she viewed and expressed herself. Moreover, being removed from an atmosphere where she was *exposed to the best in life* and transplanted to one which seemed cold and sparse resulted in a sense of dissonance. Additionally, the opposition between where she was from and where she had moved to mirrors her experience of being out of place. As she shares further on:

So I always had to find **my own way of expression** because, there was no one to represent me, so I'm like 'okay great!' So **now I'm in a new**

**country that is not as colourful or as bright as I remember clothing to be.**

The need to find her own means of expression was ultimately rooted in the contrast between how she remembered clothing to be and the dress culture in the new country she had moved to. Once again the link between her view of self and her past in Zambia is highlighted in this excerpt. The quest for new ways of expression becomes part of her fashion practice as she goes on to explain in response to a request for a description of her design process:

So from the 3 collections I've made, the first one was a **representation of mixed cultures** so my kind of **Zambian heritage, mixed with living in Britain, I don't want to say my British heritage because I have none (laughs)**. Like living in Britain and like British culture primarily through dress and how people dress and so what influences I took from Zambia were **wrap, being very loose and unstructured, and juxtaposed to England and being very structured like Edwardian stuff**. Like corsets and things-Elizabethan! Sorry, and corsets and stuff like that and then modernising it by using jeans.

As this excerpt suggests, the question of how to express self is carried into her fashion practice as the elements of where she is from (her heritage) and where she has grown up are placed together. Once again, Kasubika uses the term juxtaposed implying a dissimilitude between the two categories. The material manifestation of this oppositional contrast is seen in the use of both the loose and unstructured shape of the wrap and the structure found in corsets. Thus, in this instance, Kasubika's fashion practice can be seen as a materialisation of her continuous negotiations between her sense of who she was and where she is. In summary, the theme of opposites shows how heritage is often understood and experienced in direct contrast to something else. Often the features of this contrast are enumerated in either temporal or visual terms. What is interesting to note, specifically from the two accounts above, is the varied perceptions of heritage and its relative value. For instance, though both participants describe heritage in terms of bright colour and print and contrasted these features with something else which is described as minimal, there is a difference in how each designer views themselves in relation to it. While Tendai appears to feel that heritage is oppositional to how she sees herself and her work as a designer, Kasubika seems to express more of a positive connection to it and her unfolding

concept and expression of self. Moreover, these oppositional views of heritage in relation to self also appear to have an impact on the aesthetic choices which designers make in their work. While some designers simultaneously utilise the visual and tangible signifiers of heritage and those from its oppositional pair as an evocative tool in their work, others show more of a reluctance to do so. This may be due in part to the perceived incompatibility of heritage with their design vision, or it may be due to the perceived limitation that working with heritage can entail.

## Function

In addition to Ownership, (Dis)connection and Opposites, the fourth theme which had relevance within the majority of participant accounts was that of Function. In one sense this theme refers to the way in which the heritage value of particular objects and materials was understood in relation to their function within specific cultural practices or contexts. In this way, cultural events were central to how heritage was engaged with by designers in their fashion practice. Additionally, beyond its literal meaning which denotes purpose or something's role in accomplishing a particular end, the word function was chosen based on its unique use within common speech in Zambia, where it is generally used to refer to social events themselves (as in: "I'm going to a function on Tuesday"). In this way, the nature of certain functions(or events) in Zambian culture correlates to the perceived functional quality of particular materials and things. The following extract from Mwenge, the designer and founder of Lace Designs, illustrates the prominence of social events in her view of heritage in relation to fashion. In response to a question on whether her practice involved any consideration for heritage she states:

P: Ummm, so uhm it **depends on the occasion.**

I: Mmhm

P: it depends **on where, on what I'm creating those outfits for.** Uh, so when I said yes, I'm speaking from a cultural point of view in my design process. So let's say for instance like I mentioned before, **traditional events**, like let's say Chilanga-mulilo, okay, you know what that is right? Obviously! (laughs)

I: No could you describe Chilanga-mulilo, in case I'm not exactly sure, could you describe that?

P: okay, okay, so a Chilanga-mulilo is a **traditional event**

I: Mmhm

P: mostly by the Bemba people of Zambia. and this is an event where the woman's family cooks and takes the food to the man's family to show them basically what they will be eating in their home. What the relatives should expect to eat in their home when they visit, that's the food that the woman will be cooking for her husband and all.

What is apparent from this extract is that for Mwenge, heritage is something she thinks of in relation to events that have a strong association with tradition and communal cultural practice. Her specific example of the Chilanga-mulilo helps to highlight the idea that social events, with their particular meanings, dimensions and features, are what direct the creative process in her engagements with heritage. Rather than a focus on clothing objects, materials, or production processes, her creative task is directed towards the *where* and *what* of the event. This suggests that for Mwenge, the materials she may use are not necessarily what she connects with as heritage but rather the context of their use. Further on in her account, she clarifies this point by contrasting the design process for such a *traditional event* with that of a garment designed for a party:

P: Yeah, going back to your question so when I'm doing my design process, for example, for a chilanga-mulilo, yes, **I won't make some things too, revealing, too sexy, you know, it should be moderate.**

I: Mm

P: Because **this is a place where they are**, people, there are **mothers**, there are **fathers**, there are **grandparents**. It should be modest.

I: Mmm

P: okay. Then **there's the other part**. When somebody wants to go to let's say to **a party**,

I: Mmhm

P: they want to show **some skin, some back, some leg**

I: Mm

P: so during my-I consider both

From this excerpt, Mwenge points out that the cultural and traditional nature of certain events places specific requirements and constraints on her creative process. In this case, these considerations are mainly focused on cultural conceptions of modesty and respectability which are tied to notions about marriage and domesticity. Therefore, the garments are produced in response to and for their intended function in the event of communicating particular cultural values. Moreover, as with many other commemorative events, the Chilanga-mulilo has by virtue of repeated and widespread observance a number of conventions that define it, both practically and in terms of significance. In contrast, a party, which is also a social gathering of a group of people, lacks the same cultural significance and specificity of practice. Thus the clothing designed for such an occasion does not serve a purpose linked to heritage. Interestingly, though it is not clear how she views heritage in relation to herself, Mwenge does purport to deal with both categories (heritage and non-cultural) of considerations based on the request of her clients. Thus, it can be understood that many Zambian designers who create one-offs with and for their clients have to possess adaptability and knowledge of context, as sensitivity to context is key. Rather than any particular material objects or features, heritage seems to centre on the cultural conventions and practices of an event which in turn informs the design process. Another example of the significance of cultural functions is found in the account of Kasonde of Kasslita's Designs. Expressing herself in very similar terms to those used by Mwenge, Kasonde respond to the question of whether her creative process involves a consideration of heritage by saying:

P: Uhm to some extent it does. Like I've said the process is **determined by every client** that comes to us.

I: Mm

P: Cause- and also the design process will be **determined by what event the client is attending**

I: Mm

P: there are times maybe the client, they are doing their **birthday dinner** or something like that. They want **something sexy**, uh they want **leg to show**, they want **a mini dress**

This extract illustrates once again the point that in many instances the client and their requirements have a determining role in what is produced. Furthermore,

there is an emphasis on events as socio-cultural spaces which can dictate to some extent the kinds of things one designs. Interestingly, as with the first example from Mwenge, a generic social event (birthday dinner) is used to represent a non-cultural event in which one may design clothing which is deemed as sexy or more revealing. In contrast to this, Kasonde also uses the Chilanga-mulilo as an example of an occasion that involves heritage stating:

..... also if a client comes and says also they want to do a **traditional Chilanga-mulilo dress**, the design process will be **determined by the Chilanga-mulilo they are attending**. What is **acceptable for a woman** attending a Chilanga-mulilo dressed as a bride. **What can she wear, what can she not wear**. Cause if it's a woman who's going to attend a Chilanga-mulilo and says **'I want this sexy dress'**, and I'm like **'are you sure you want to go for a Chilanga-mulilo wearing that dress?'**.

As an event, the Chilanga-mulilo has its own set of conventions and practices. As exemplified by the phrases *acceptable for women* and *what can she* or *what can she not wear*, the social conventions highlighted by this participant in relation to fashion centre on modesty. Furthermore, the gravity of these concerns is reflected in the way she purports to caution or question a client's desire to break from that convention by wearing something deemed as sexy. It is worth noting that though this is not the case in all instances when functions were referenced, in these and other accounts there was a clear relationship between events that held significance as heritage and fashioning practices that focused on the modesty of women. While the seeming emphasis on women and their fashion practices may simply be a result of the fact that nearly all the participants interviewed deal primarily in womenswear, it is interesting to note how heritage in fashion practice can be understood as the manifestation of social conventions and histories in bodily dress. Moreover, designers can be seen as playing an important role in creatively interpreting and materialising such ideas. In addition to the two accounts above which enumerate some of the ways in which heritage can impact part of one's design process, there were other accounts which while declaiming its connection to their work, still associated heritage with social events or functions. For instance, though he generally doesn't view his RTW line as associated with heritage, Kasanga of Afro Retro Fashion remarks that:

P: So, so, yeah there are **some of our outfits** which preserve **our heritage** when you talk about like at **kitchen parties**, and **African-**

**different parties.** Some of those outfits like when you get an order for making a musisi,

I: Mm-Hm

P: Yeah, stuff like that. So (he breaks off to speak to someone in the background), So we consider those as- **I can consider those as heritage when it comes to our side.**

In this excerpt, the link is drawn again between garments and their use in specific cultural events. Kasanga specifically mentions Kitchen parties which are the Zambian equivalent of a bridal shower, (These events tend to have deep significance as social spaces within which cultural knowledge is exchanged between older and younger women, and they are almost exclusively attended by women). This echoes the sentiments expressed by others that heritage value in the Zambian fashion context is often rooted in communal cultural practices. Further on in this discussion, I questioned Kasanga on this point to clarify that I was understanding his meaning by summarising and checking for his corroboration:

I: Mmmmm! That's interesting, that's very interesting! So you-Am I right in saying that you consider, those specific ah- cause those garments you named they are for specific ceremonies or events, you know -.You consider those to be heritage and not necessarily the work that you do? Like your RTW garments I mean.

P: **Yes, yes, Yeah! Yeah, you are right.** Then the other thing is that (he breaks off to speak to someone in the background) **the other thing is, ah** (breaks off again) **the other things I can say maybe is when you get orders for independence**

In addition to confirming the accuracy of my understanding of his narration, this extract also adds a noteworthy extension of the concept of a cultural function or event. Because according to Kasanga, it is not only events that are associated with life-millstones like marriage as the case is with the Kitchen party and the Chilanga-mulilo. A broader range of less personal commemorative events like national independence celebrations may be included in the category of functions that have heritage value and in turn, inform design decisions within a Zambian context.

In summary, heritage within the context of fashion design practice in

Zambia is largely related to social events. Therefore, part of a designer's role is to discern and creatively translate the conventions and expectations associated with each social function their clients request garments for. In this way, their design process can be said to be shaped by heritage. Indeed, even in accounts where specific garments, objects, or tangible things were referenced by participants, there was also in most cases a reference made to the use of such items in some social-cultural context. In other words, it can be understood that there isn't necessarily a specific garment, tangible feature or material which in and of itself represents heritage across the board, instead the heritage value of such objects is established as they are designed and utilized for a specific function. Moreover, this value is reinforced ultimately through their use in context. The veracity of this claim can be seen in the fact that for many, including all three of the designers mentioned in this section, similar types of materials were used when designing garments for use within both cultural and non-cultural contexts. Moreover, though some specific garments were mentioned (i.e. the Musis), there was no indication that designing for cultural events involved strict reproduction of any silhouettes or garments. Thus, it can be understood that social function takes precedence over any inherent quality of material objects with regard to heritage value in Zambian fashion practice.

### **Material and materiality**

As this study centres on examining the meaning and role of heritage for designers in the field of fashion, it is unsurprising that the views shared during the interviews generally featured some discussion of materials and materiality. As there was a good deal of variance in the specific experiences and perspectives expressed, coming up with a theme that succinctly communicated an interpretation in relation to heritage was somewhat challenging. Nevertheless, as any exploration of the role that heritage plays as a practical tool in one's design process will inevitably involve some level of discussion on materials and their qualities, I believe that it is important to include a section that highlights some of the more interesting and thought-provoking findings related to this area. As such, this section is not aimed at positing that materials and materiality as central to engagements with heritage by designers, but instead points to some of the enlightening experiences which communicated with nuance and depth, the various forms of relatedness between heritage, material and fashion practice.

The following sections are divided into a discussion of specific objects like African print fabric and then of the material qualities of such objects.

## Material

The first point of discussion is the fabric commonly referred to as chitenge or African print within Zambia. As mentioned in the literature review chapter, chitenge is a term used to refer to both a range of printed fabrics that are considered to be of African origin and to a wrapper worn around the waist (Hansen 2019). As a material object which was highly referenced across all accounts, chitenge stands out as an item with significance within Zambian fashion practice. Although there wasn't a complete consensus as to its relatedness to heritage, most of the participants explicitly referred to chitenge as their heritage, while some remained ambivalent or decried any connection to it. As argued earlier, this may be due to the varied personal criteria which designers have for determining ownership. Notwithstanding, the fact that the fabric has been used ( and in most cases, frequently)by nearly all the participants suggests that even beyond any explicit links to conceptions of heritage, the material has some significance for designers in and from this context. As such, the following extracts are aimed at exploring perceptions and experiences of chitenge as these in many cases related broadly to perceptions of heritage. The first excerpt is from Kasonde, designer and founder of Kasslita's Designs. In response to a request for her to tell me more about a specific capsule collection, she says:

P: okay I'm trying to remember, that was 2019 April. Uhm, going for Fashion Without Borders was for me more or less **showing what Zambia is made of** and I think I did **a whole chitenge collection**

I: Mm

P: Just trying **to show Namibians what** Zambian **materials we have available** as designers and **how we modernise it**. Mostly we **grew up with chitenge being worn just as a wrapper** at home,

I: Mmhm

P: or if it is made into a dress that's for grandma and mum, for their church outfits or for maybe **kitchen party or maybe something** but that Fashion Without Borders collection was to do with **how do you wear**

**your chitenge in a modern way as a young person?** How do you make this **chitenge more like- local traditional materials be worn** when you are going for work, when you are going for a funky event? How do you make this more flowy, dress with a high slit, with an infinity touch on the top? **And make it modern and nice, so it was more of how do you make that heritage piece be modern and accepted that young people can buy it and accept it and wear it.** And wear it for a long period of time. Because mostly **when I do chitenge pieces you find that you just wear it once and pack it.** But how do you make it more fun? More wearable? And wearing it for a long period of time. So that's the aspect that I was trying to take with the Fashion Without Borders collection.

It is clear from the way Kasonde begins by stating that she created the entire collection out of chitenge with the aim of *showing what Zambia is made of*, that she associates the material with the country. In essence, that the material is partly constitutive of the nation's culture. Moreover, though the fabric may at times be referred to as African print by her and others, the fact that this collection was specifically designed for a showcase event in a neighbouring southern African country further suggests that she sees the cultural link with chitenge primarily at a national rather than a more pan-African level. This is exemplified by the phrase *to show Namibians what Zambian materials we have available*. In a sense, this means that chitenge is *Zambian*, implying that there is something about the fabric and the way in which it is used in the country which connects it uniquely to Zambian culture. Additionally, Kasonde goes on to describe how the material is commonly associated with domesticity (*just a wrapper at home*) and with older women (*grandma and mum*). This suggests that in her view chitenge is seen as old-fashioned and relegated to use within a limited range of contexts, which arguably have strong conventions around modesty (*church, kitchen parties*). This is further supported by the questions on which she centred the collection. For instance, her questions about how one can make chitenge more modern, fun, wearable and palatable for younger consumers suggest that the material has negative associations with the past and older generations which render it somewhat unfashionable or unrelatable. Moreover, linking the material to *local tradition* and *heritage*, indicates that there may be a dissonance between how younger Zambians view heritage in relation to their personal identities and how they view it in terms of the general wider culture. As illustrated by the phrase *pieces you find that you just wear it once and pack it*, it's one thing to espouse

something's importance, but that doesn't necessarily translate to it having any personal significance in one's life or to one personally *accepting/owning it*. As Kasonde had indicated her view of a link existing between Zambian culture and chitenge, further on in the interview I asked for clarification and expansion on this point:

I: ....you mentioned that chitenge is, I guess a Zambian material or a part of local tradition? you mentioned that-

P: yeah

I: I just wanted to pick your brain then. How- or what makes chitenge part of local tradition or a local material?

P: uhm, what makes it part of our tradition? Cause I think in some sense I would even say sometimes that **as Zambia we don't really have our kind of dress code you'd point out in a crowd as Zambian.**

I: Mm

P: but because the **chitenge has been- in the traditional sense, when a woman grows up we are told 'no, you start wearing a chitenge because you are now a young lady. You are supposed to cover up and wear a chitenge'**

I: Hm

P: **we've seen** chitenge before- it's been there **for many years**. To be worn maybe **at home**. I remember maybe an incidence when **my sister went to-is it Mozambique- and people would call the chitenge a Zambian**. I'm like why would they call it a Zambian?

I: Mmmm

P: but because **Zambians wear chitenges almost everywhere** they go (laughs slightly)

I: Mmmm

P: As a wrapper. And they wear it **as a wrapper**.

I: Mm

P: so I think it's something that probably **our women, our grandmothers embraced**. Although it was prior to independence, at independence or

after, **but it is just something you've seen**. I've never really looked at the history of why we wear chitenges

Kasonde's response to my question begins with an acknowledgment of the lack of a distinctive outfit/garment in Zambia. The phrase *have our kind of dress code* also indicates that ownership at a national level is an important part of how she conceptualises traditional materials. Moreover, the phrase *point out in a crowd* implies that something has to be fairly distinctive or unique in order to have value as a traditional or heritage item. Though her acknowledgement of a lack of such an item suggests that chitenge may fail in some ways to meet the criteria for ownership, she goes on to explain its significance for Zambians beyond this. By relating the fabrics to a Zambian woman's path into maturity and adulthood, she illustrates the deep connection that chitenge has to the cultural practices of Zambians. From the phrase *you start wearing a chitenge because now you are a young lady and cover up and wear a chitenge*, it is clear that the chitenge serves as an object through which cultural ideals and conventions pertaining to womanhood are enacted on the body. In a sense, they are not only displayed but also substantiated and owned through the repetition of clothing the body in the fabric. The words *we are told* and *traditional sense*, also indicate that this practice is the shared experience of women throughout the nation.

Additionally, Kasonde further expounds on this point by offering an anecdote about her sister's experience in a neighbouring country. She shares about her surprise upon learning that because Zambians wear it everywhere, in Mozambique the chitenge has acquired the name '*Zambian*'. This shows not only the salience of the link between the material and the nation's culture but further illustrates how the chitenge through bodily fashioning practice has become intimately and uniquely connected to Zambians and their identity and heritage. Through its ubiquitous use as a wrapper on Zambian bodies, the fabric is transformed from a material into a clothing object which has become Zambian in the eyes of non-members/people from other countries. Therefore, in some senses chitenge fulfils the criteria of ownership relating to uniqueness which Kasonde had communicated earlier. Furthermore, the phrase *our women, our grandmothers embraced* suggests that chitenge has been owned or accepted by some as part of the communal cultural possession of the nation and specifically of its women. Finally, in stating that *we've seen chitenge* and again *it's just something you've seen*, Kasonde reinforces the power of experiencing directly through sight and how this is a way in which the heritage value of the fabric has

been communicated and naturalised as a feature of Zambia's culture. In essence, the more one sees and experiences, the more salient the connection between an object and a culture becomes. This echoes the point made earlier about 'seeing' being one of the fuller forms of knowing, and how it can contribute to a fuller or stronger connection to heritage.

In addition to this account, another participant also expounded on the Chitenge and its relatedness to her conceptions of Zambian culture and heritage. In response to a question on whether she felt that her design process involved any consideration of heritage Kasubika initially answers both yes and no. She then goes on to explain the yes part of her answer:

P: Yes because uhm, to put it simply one of the skirts I made **when put on it like properly reflects chitenge. Just like a wrap skirt. Basically just a piece of cloth, a piece of chitenge**

I: Mmhm

P: and then **you put it on you**. And one of the skirts I made is an extremely western, an extremely modern looking skirt **or like chitenge drapes looking skirt**. Uh and that is something that is **part of my heritage**, part of my culture mainly. Yeah, that's something that links with my family. **My mum wears chitenges all the time either just wrapping on a dress or wrapping on a skirt** chilling at home. Uh, **wrapping my baby cousins in** when she is carrying them around there is- a lot of my just fashion, **a lot of my designs deal with, reflect home and what I know and what I've grown up seeing.**

From the excerpt above it is apparent that the chitenge as a fabric and as a clothing object has a strong link to how this participant views the role of heritage in her practice. In particular, she repeatedly references the action of wrapping the fabric onto one's body or wrapping other bodies in it. The shape or drape of the chitenge on the body is translated into her designs as a reflection of what she has seen her family members (specifically her mum) wear. Though Kasubika's current design work for her brand Ihintu doesn't actually feature the use of chitenge fabric, it is clear from her narration that she has drawn inspiration from the material's visual qualities as a clothing object. Even though the designers work in different ways, Kasubika's experiences mirror Kasonde's as they both centre on how chitenge has been owned and transformed into cultural heritage through the fashioning practices of Zambian women. Moreover, as illustrated by

the phrase *I've grown up seeing*, the link between the personal experience of seeing and the transmission of heritage value also mirrors Kasonde's account of seeing.

Another account of chitenge which further supports the notion that it is closely linked to how many designers engage with heritage in their work is seen in the following excerpt from Faith of Fay's Designs. She begins her account of how heritage factors into her design process by saying:

**P: Yes, yes it does.** Um, I will tell you something, because for me when I'm doing my dresses because **in Zambia we've got a fabric called chitenge**, that chitenge, **we use it as a versatile piece of fabric**. We use it when **wrapping your body**, when **wrapping your children in the back**, sometimes when you've gone for a funeral you **use it as a bed sheet to cover yourself**, you use it like **in so many ways**, like versatile. And that **chitenge fabric, I always carry it on my designs**. Every time, when I'm doing designs **the chitenge always has to be there**, because **it's like our signature clothing**. Like a signature **piece of cloth we always want to use, because that's our identity**. Where **people will identify you that this person is coming from Zambia, look at the- they are using chitenge. The moment they see you wrapping the chitenge on the waist, they will know that this person is coming from Zambia.**

Faith's words immediately point to her sense of communal ownership of chitenge by referring to it as something *we've got, we use we always want to use*.

Furthermore, she also describes it in terms of its use as a piece of cloth wrapped around the body as well as a tool for carrying and covering. In this way, Faith echoes the sentiments expressed in the accounts above which highlight the idea that fabric's cultural value is conceptualised in terms of its use on the body and as a tool. Moreover, the position that the material occupies as a distinctive feature of Zambian culture is supported by her claim that Zambians are instantly recognizable by non-members based on how they use chitenge. As the statement *they see you wrapping the chitenge on the waist, they will know that this person is coming from Zambia* suggests, the distinctive feature which aides in its recognisability is not attributed to any inherent tangible qualities of the fabric, but instead inheres from the way in which the chitenge is worn on the body. In essence, the specific and characteristic ways in which Zambians wear or fashion chitenge are an important part of what lends heritage value and cultural significance to the material. Indeed, Faith's commitment to *always carry it on her*

designs is rooted in this fact. In Summary, as illustrated by the accounts above, for many designers the heritage value of chitenge lies not in the material's tangible features, but rather in the significant role that it continues to play in the lives of Zambian people (particularly women). Through its ubiquitous use in everyday life, the fabric, as it acts in combination with the body, has become decidedly joined to the nation's identity and culture. This point relates back to the theme of function as it exemplifies how the function of an object (in the sense of use as a tool) takes precedence over its material qualities when determining its heritage value.

### **Materiality**

As argued in the section above, there is a clear link between the heritage value placed on chitenge by designers and the fabric's perceived links with the body and cultural practice. Though this suggests that the inherent tangible qualities of chitenge are not the primary source of its heritage value, it does not mean that these qualities are inconsequential in the design process as a whole. As such, I believe that it is important to share some examples of accounts that highlighted the ways in which the material qualities of the fabric impacted the design process as such examples provide a fuller picture of the experiences expressed and my interpretive account. The first extract is taken from Mwenge's account. In response to a question for clarification on what makes chitenge associated with Africa or Zambia, she first explains her view of how it represents the diversity of the continent:

P: in our culture, in our food, in our, in our you know, in everything. So I think it's just a representation of Africa, like the **different prints the different colours** and the **different patterns on the chitenge. You know, some, some will have pots, some will have chickens, some will have brooms.**

I: Mm

P: and it's just a representation of Africa, of Zambia. As a continent and as a country. So yeah, if **you look at the print**, it's like **it tells a story**. If you **look at chitenge** it usually **tells a story, you interpret it** usually, and that also helps a lot in the design process. Like oh **what should come out, what should I make out of this?** You know

I: Mm

P: Uhm the **ones with the pots**, usually, they will use those at you know at all these **traditional events** because **it's representing** you know these all these **Chilanga-mulilo**. Maybe the chitenges that have **pots for maybe the ladies that are cooking**, or the ones that have **brooms for the people that are-** you know.

In this excerpt, there is an indication that the various colours and prints found in chitenge fabrics are visually representative of cultural elements in Africa and Zambia. Furthermore, the specific combination of these visual elements on a particular piece of cloth is viewed as a narrative element in material stories which are open for interpretation during the design process. The question *what should come out, what should I make out of this* suggests that the design process can be partly led or shaped by one's interpretation of a fabric's visual story. Mwenge's specific example of using chitenges with pot or broom motifs for outfits designed for *traditional events* like the Chilanga-mulilo also emphasises the need for designers to be mindful of context and function as they select materials to use. For instance, it can be understood that the pot and broom motifs were selected because they visually communicate the notions of domesticity and respectability which are associated with the Chilanga-mulilo. This point further supports the idea that it is essential for designers in this context to be conversant with the various cultural events and their conventions in order to successfully serve their clients. Moreover, there is the noteworthy notion that designers can be seen as translators who work in response to the narrative elements of fabrics to produce garments. In addition to these views about visual elements like pattern and print, Mwenge's account also contains another instance when she describes the impact of the materiality of chitenge on her design process. For instance, when asked to describe her design process she begins by talking about her RTW line:

P: Yeah. Okay so firstly, with my RTW, the **first thing I always consider**, which was my biggest challenge, even when I was starting was **sizing**.

I: Mm!

P: ah, sizing is **the most difficult** because people have-**chitenge first of all-** I deal with a lot of chitenge. First of all it is **fabric that does not stretch**.

I: Mmhm

P: so I needed to **consider the fact that it doesn't stretch**. And that's why **I stick to the most simple and comfortable outfit's** that I can get. **Shift dresses, my little skirts**, like very- I try and be very comfortable, **I don't try to do avant-garde**. like a bit too OTT, a bit too over the top when it comes to the RTW.

This extract shows that since Mwenge chooses to make most of her RTW collection from chitenge, she has to be mindful of its material qualities when designing. Citing the fabric's inability to stretch and the need for standardised sizing in RTW, she explains that she has to limit her designs to *simple and comfortable outfits*. The salience of these considerations is seen in the phrase *first thing I always consider* and *I stick to* as they express the priority which these concerns take before any other design decisions. Unlike her custom-made garments which are designed partly in response to the functional requirements stipulated by her clients, Mwenge's RTW collections are designed seemingly without any restrictions. However, even without the imposition of a client brief, the material qualities of the fabric she chooses to use have an impact on the silhouettes and types of garments she feels she can create. In this way, it can be understood that for practitioners who work with materials like chitenge, their design process is partly informed or shaped in response to the tangible, inherent qualities of the fabric.

In summary, though the material qualities of chitenge fabric are not central to its heritage value, they do play a role in shaping and directing the design process. As exemplified in Mwenge's account, these material qualities can include patterns, motifs, colour and tactile elements like malleability. In essence, in addition to thinking about the context of use (function), Zambian designers can also be seen as translators who consider not only practical concerns or personal matters of taste but must also creatively combine the narrative elements of fabrics to communicate cultural stories and ideals. Moreover, though some designers who work with a material like a chitenge may not attribute heritage value to it, the materiality of the fabric can still have an impact on their design process. An example of this is present in Elizabeth's account because though she doesn't explicitly claim that the material is her heritage, she still uses the material frequently in her RTW collections. For instance, explaining the design process of her jewellery brand Chitenge-Liza, she remarks:

P: Okay Usually **I start with fabric** and think then **I pick a colour** and think if **that design would work with this colour**. And then sometimes it

has to be for the most part **that pattern on the fabric. You find that certain patterns look better with certain designs**, so for me it starts from the fabric, **so whatever the fabric inspires me to make is the start**

Further on she also says:

P: Uhm it's just what draws to me. Uhm whatever attracts me the most. **So if it's vibrant, the texture of the material also.** Yeah. So even like **the type of fabric**, whether it's like that really, whether it's **soft, soft cotton or that harder chitenge material, it also defines what sort of necklaces I make from them.**

From these two extracts, it is apparent that fabrics play an important role as a jumping-off point in Elizabeth's design process. From her description of how she ideates her necklace shapes in response to material qualities of the fabrics like colour, texture, pliability and pattern, it can be understood that fabrics themselves have a large impact on the objects produced. As the phrase *defines what sort of necklaces I make* suggests, designers like Elizabeth often work in response to the tangible qualities of fabrics like chitenge, as they partly direct or shape the creative process. In a very simple sense, using a fabric like chitenge as one's starting point elicits the question 'what can I make with this?'. This point is important to mention because as chitenge is a very popular fabric in Zambian, irrespective of its perceived heritage value, its very materiality has an impact on much of the fashion design practice from this context.

Additionally, due to the chitenge's associations with heritage and its general cultural significance, the fabric's most distinctive features like its vast range of colours, patterns and motifs have also been abstracted by some designers as proxy forms of the material even its absence. The emphasis in such cases is not to replicate the material but rather to reproduce its connective capacity. One example of this is the account given by Harriet, designer and founder of Bantu. In response to a question about how she became a designer she says:

P:....So that came about, **I went to Zambia 4 years ago**, then I was expecting my 3<sup>rd</sup> child and I was like I would like to go into fashion because **Australian fashion is more laid back.** It's a lot of **safe colours.** A lot of colours are **black grey and blue**

I: Mm

P: **they don't do a lot of bold colours like we do. We are very out there.** So I wanted, when I was starting to use print, **print wasn't that popular**

I: Ah

P: there weren't that many designers using print at this scale.

Later on, in this narration she also remarks:

P: so with fashion, I still want to **have that connection of Africa with the colours, the prints,** and with my next collection I'm working on for this year, I want a bit of, I just want to do it in a bit different way.

This point is continued in her response to what heritage means to her:

P: Uh it's just the core of everything. Uhm you know **anything I do for myself with heritage just reminds me of Zambia.** In so many ways, the happiness. And that's the other thing with **using so many different colours of clothing.**

Harriet's perception of Australian fashion as more *laid back* and featuring more *safe colours* is contrasted to her view of *Zambian* fashion which features more *bold colours* and is generally more presentable( though not explicitly referenced in these excerpts, the point on presentability is a strong theme throughout her account). From her use of the phrases *they don't* and *we are* it is apparent that she considers herself as part of the *Zambian we*. Moreover, she implies that there is a distinct and natural connection between *Zambian culture* (or even *Zambian being*) and the use of bold colours and print. Furthermore, Harriet reinforces this idea of a perceived link by stating that she maintains a connection to Africa in her work through her use of colours and prints. This further highlights the point made earlier about how heritage can be a means of connecting to things like a communal culture or place. It is worth noting that Harriet indicates that her sense of membership and heritage ownership operates simultaneously at the personal, national, continental and even racial level. As such, throughout her account, she sometimes switched back and forth in her expressions. Therefore, when considered in their entirety, It can be understood from her statements that she sees her use of different bold colours and print as something which connects her and her work to Zambia and Africa. As she cites her experience of *Zambian fashion practice* as the basis of this conception, it can be argued that *chitenge*, with its cultural significance and ubiquity, informs this concept of connection at

some level. Thus, it can be posited that visual/material elements like print and bold colour can be used as abstract representations of chitenge and any cultural value and significance the fabric may hold for a designer. In this way, the material qualities of chitenge can be said to have an impact even on design practices that do not use the fabric directly. This highlights the notion that when coupled with heritage value and cultural significance, materials have the potential to shape and direct design processes.

In summary, while tangible objects may not inherently through their material qualities be central when determining heritage value in Zambian fashion, it is apparent that they do play a formative role in design processes. For instance, as argued above, the heritage value and cultural significance of chitenge fabric come from the fabric's use in the everyday fashioning and cultural practices of Zambian women. Nevertheless, this section also featured examples of how tangible qualities of the fabric like colour, pattern, and pliability can play both a direct and indirect role in steering design processes and therefore shaping design outcomes.

### **Chapter summary**

As set out earlier in this chapter, the aim of presenting these themes was to give an interpretive account of what meaning and role heritage has for fashion designers from the Zambian context. As alluded to throughout each interpretive description of the themes, heritage, as it is experienced and made sense of by participants, is a multifaceted concept. Although its various facets have been presented here separately for the sake of clarity, it is nevertheless true that each facet/theme was interlinked and experienced simultaneously by participants. While there was a good deal of nuance across accounts, the themes of Ownership, Opposites, (Dis)connect, Function, and Material and materiality were all present in the majority of the participants' accounts of their lived experiences. Therefore, in summary, heritage in the context of Zambian fashion design practice can be understood as something which requires ownership. Moreover, ownership can be experienced at different levels and is generally determined by a set of criteria set out by an individual. Finally, ownership is something that can be disavowed if heritage is perceived to be incongruous with a person's view of themselves or their work. In addition to ownership, heritage is something that was expressed in terms of opposites. By presenting it in contrast to something else,

individuals reveal their understandings of its perceived constitutive elements as well as its value and relatedness to their work and selves. Furthermore, Heritage can be understood in terms of connection. It can be seen as a means of forming links to and through. Aside from this, heritage also relates to function as the heritage value placed on garments and objects is often understood in terms of their use in culturally significant contexts. Moreover, though material objects are not in and of themselves central to heritage, through their use in everyday fashioning practices, they can acquire both cultural significance and heritage value. Additionally, through their materiality fabrics and other objects have the potential to play a formative role in design processes.

Therefore, drawing on the definition set out in the Literature review chapter of heritage generally being understood as a negotiation of the past in and for the present (Smith, 2006), the themes expounded upon above highlight some of how the past is negotiated as well as some of the present-centred purposes which the past is leveraged to accomplish within this context. Furthermore, these themes describe how such negotiations are experienced and made sense of by participants in relation to their design practice. In essence, the themes set out some of the ways in which the past is owned, connected to and through, materialised, utilised, and imagined. Additionally, the themes support the notion posited in the literature review chapter that heritage is not limited to material objects or monuments but can encompass a range of intangible, tangible, embodied experiences and things. This is shown for instance in the way that the heritage value placed on chitenge was related to the experience of wearing it and seeing it worn rather than inhering from the material itself. Moreover, as explained in the Methodology chapter, if design itself is a hermeneutic act of poetic re-description in which 'complex assemblages of meaning' or 'texts' are re-interpreted to form new 'texts'(Jahnke, 2012), then the themes above can also be read as descriptions of some of those 'texts' and how they were used by participants in their practice of poetic re-description. While these 'texts' included more conventional elements like fabrics, colour and silhouette, they were also comprised of more intangible 'assemblages of meaning' like communal cultural conventions around modesty and domesticity as well as personal histories and family traditions. Therefore, it can be understood that the participants were making sense of various tangible and intangible 'texts', which were part of their situated experience, through their design practice. As Jahnke argues, "situatedness is in no way an obstacle to finding new meaning[or new designs]; in fact, quite the opposite—it is a prerequisite."(2012, p. 37). Due to the idiographic

nature of IPA, the themes developed and discussed in this chapter arose from a close reading of participant accounts. Therefore, it must be remembered that they are not to be read as representative statements on the essential nature of heritage for all Zambians or even for all Zambian designers. While this lack of generalizability may seem to limit the meaningfulness of the study's findings, Eatough and Smith offer this helpful view of generalizability and IPA by stating:

“It is also possible to think in terms of theoretical rather than empirical generalizability. In this case, the reader makes links between the findings of an IPA study, his/her own personal and professional experience and the claims in the extant literature. The power of the IPA study is judged by the light it sheds within this broader context.” (2007, p. 42).

As such, in order to demonstrate how the findings of this study shed light on issues within a broader context, the next chapter includes a discussion of the themes in relation to extant theory.

# **Chapter Four:**

Theoretical Implications  
of the Findings

## Theoretical implications of the findings

The previous chapter was an explanation of the analytic process and how the phenomenological stance and hermeneutic approach of IPA were applied to develop the findings presented. This chapter aims to place those findings within the wider context of the literature from fields like Heritage Studies, Fashion Studies and Design in order to show how this study has relevance more generally. While the purposive nature of the sample and the idiographic nature of IPA preclude any claims of representativeness or generalizability in the traditional sense, it can still be argued that the findings have relevance beyond the limits of the small pool of participants. As Haug (1987, p. 44) has posited, the fact that “a given experience is possible,[means] it is also subject to universalisation”. Drawing on this and Kippax et al. (1988), Willig extends this argument by pointing out that

“ even though we do not know who or how many people share a particular experience, once we have identified it through qualitative research, we do know that it is available within a culture or society. If we assume that our participants ‘experiences are at least partially socially constituted’, we can agree with Kippax and co-workers (1988, p. 25) claim that ‘each individual mode of appropriation of the social . . . is potentially generalisable’ ” (Willig, 2008, p. 17)

Thus, as the participants in this study are viewed as inextricably situated within their social context with their experiences also inhering from that situatedness, we can apply Willig’s argument and assume that the findings of the study are ‘potentially generalisable’ to some extent. Therefore, this chapter is intended to expound upon some of the ways in which the experiences highlighted in the findings may corollate to theory beyond the limited context of the study. In other words, in this chapter, I propose some ways in which the sense-making of participants can be used to speak back to the areas of theory that make wider claims about society and culture. As IPA is an inductive approach in which themes emerge from the text/data set, in addition to a discussion that addresses some of the theories presented in the literature review, this chapter also includes texts which were selected in response to the concepts and understandings which emerged from the interpretation of the data. To aid in maintaining a level of clarity, the discussion is organised in sections corresponding to some of the

themes presented in the previous chapter. However, there may be some level of overlap considering that the themes discuss various aspects of the same thing: the meaning and role of heritage in Zambian fashion practice. Additionally, excerpts from the participants are presented in brown for clarity.

### **Material, materiality and the body**

One concept which emerged in the interpretive account under the theme of Material and materiality was that within the Zambian context, the heritage value associated with the fabric chitenge is closely related to how it is worn on the bodies of Zambian women in everyday life as well as in the form of garments designed for culturally significant events. In particular, the act of wrapping the material around the waist held close associations with cultural values around female modesty, maturity and identity for many of the participants. Indeed, some of them even pointed to this practice of wearing the chitenge around the waist as a unique feature of Zambian culture which they had seen their mothers and grandmothers practice and which was acknowledged as uniquely Zambian even in neighbouring countries. In essence, their accounts placed a high level of import on bodily adornment with regard to heritage. This emphasis on the body as a site that acts in tandem with a material object like a chitenge to produce heritage significance is emblematic of theory around the notion of embodiment in fashion. According to Negrin, proponents of such notions within fashion theory aim to “demonstrate how the adoption of particular a form of attire is not just about the creation of a certain ‘look’, but it is [also] a way of being-in-the-world, which transcends the visual.” (2016, p. 122). Moreover, as this concept builds on Merleau-Ponty’s (1962, 1964) notion of the body as the active medium of existence and experience, fashion theorists who draw on this position have argued that “body adornment is experienced by its wearers not just as a visual phenomenon, but also as a haptic experience.” (Negrin, 2016, p. 122).

Therefore, drawing on these views it can then be argued that the salience of chitenge (as fabric and clothing object) in relation to heritage is not merely a result of its visual attributes as an object, but is rather a consequence of the haptic experience of wrapping it on the body as part of the wearer’s means of being-in-the-world. In this way, the views expressed by participants are an indication of the importance of bodily knowledge/experience and the act of adornment when discussing heritage in relation to fashion. This notion is also

supported by Smith's (2006, p. 47) framing of heritage in general as experience, in which she argues that it has to be "experienced for it to be heritage and that, moreover", *it is* the experience. In this way, materials like the Chitenge become part of the embodied experience of heritage as they are used in everyday dress practice and during specific celebrations and rites of passage.

Additionally, this conception of material as formative in the experience of heritage is also reflective of Crouch's notion of heritage as relational. According to this view "our personal and collective heritage components are worked, and maybe worked out, through our relationality with the material world, each other and so on" (2015, p. 188). In the case of chitenge and clothing made out of the fabric, the body is intimately involved in this process of working out one's relation to the social and material world. Furthermore, drawing from Merleau-Ponty's stance on embodiment, Entwistle (2000) has theorised dress as situated bodily practice contending that:

"dress does not merely serve to protect our modesty, and does not simply reflect a natural body or, for that matter, a given identity: [instead] it *embellishes* the body, the materials commonly used adding a whole array of meanings to the body that would otherwise not be there." (2000, p. 324).

In this way, chitenge can be seen as an embellishment or extension which adds various meanings to the bodies it is used to adorn. An example of this can be read in the words of one participant as they remarked "**When a woman grows up we are told 'no, you start wearing a chitenge because you are now a young lady'**". This excerpt expresses some of the meanings that chitenge is used to convey within the Zambian context, namely, the cultural and gendered notions around maturity, modesty and domesticity. Through the act and haptic experience of wrapping the material around one's body or wearing it in the form of sewn garments, the body acquires a whole new array of meanings. As Hansen, a noted theorist on Zambian culture has pointed out "because *chitenge* identifies both a fabric and a dress practice, the agentive medium of the fabric and dress practice merge when women wear it (Hansen, 2019b, p. 4). Moreover, Hansen also posits that the fabric's "quality contributes to the sensuous experience of wearing *chitenge* and the embodied materiality of *chitenge* dress practice" (Hansen, 2019b, p. 5). In this way, chitenge is not only worn for visual

effect but its materiality plays an active role in the experience of dressing the body and of locating oneself within a given context.

### **Designers as interpreters**

Moreover, the use of chitenge in the Zambian context is an example of the wider potency of fashion and its materiality in sense-making. As Jenss et al. (2019) have pointed out, fashion generally

“combines material, bodily, sensual, symbolic and cognitive dimensions. It is a prime example of how human beings simultaneously make and make meaning with things, both mentally and physically. Fashion and clothing are, for example, forceful agents in the articulation of historical ideas or social concepts, such as hierarchy collectively, and individuality, gender, age, race, time, and place, as such, act upon body and mind in a material and virtual manner. That is, fashion is not only a product of symbolic meaning-making but in its materiality affects us on a deeper level” (2019, p. 7).

Indeed, this view of the materiality of clothing as deeply affecting and as a part of meaning-making reflects the sentiments expressed by many of the participants about how chitenge can serve as a means of negotiating and articulating one’s position in the world (for instance, the experience of transitioning into womanhood). Furthermore, Entwistle also echoes the view of fashion when she contends that dress is “always located spatially and temporally” or, in other words, a means of orienting oneself or body to the established norms of a particular situation (2000, p. 335). Consequently, as a practice that provides the material objects used to adorn the body, fashion design also requires an understanding at some level of the established norms of a given setting. An example of this can be seen in one participant’s comments:

**“If you look at chitenge it usually tells a story, you interpret it usually, and that also helps a lot in the design process... Maybe the chitenges that have pots for maybe the ladies that are cooking, or the ones that have brooms for the people that are- you know”**

As the excerpt indicates, designers need to have a level of cognizance of their clients' temporal and spatial situatedness. As the act of interpretation requires a reference point, the designer in the example above implicitly references their own understanding of the narratives and meanings linked to materials and motifs as well as the meaning which correspond to the specific social contexts and identities which they are called upon to design for. In essence, they need to have an awareness of the various meaning which materials like chitenge can have when worn on the body and within a particular context. Moreover, like their clients who orient themselves via the situated practice of dressing the body, designers can also be understood as similarly orienting their practice towards 'established norms' as the garments they create are often intended for use within specific contexts. This supports Jahnke's (2012) notion of design itself as a situated practice in which the situatedness of the designer is not an encumbrance but a prerequisite to a good outcome. In other words, the efficacy of Zambian fashion design practice depends in part on how well designers orient their practice towards specific contexts through their interpretation of corresponding norms.

Though the specificity of use contexts varies depending in part on the stipulations of clients, in the case of Zambian fashion practice, some events appear to hold widely accepted cultural significance and heritage value. These events and spaces come with a set of constraining (yet unfixed) requirements in terms of dress, and in turn, result in a level of constraint in terms of the design process. This was exemplified most clearly in the creative negotiations which designers described when they were designing garments for specific events like the Chilanga-mulilo and Kitchen parties. Some participants even drew a comparison between garments designed for a Chilanga-mulilo and the more 'sexy' clothing made for neutral events like birthday dinners. This highlighted some of the practical implications of designing for situated actors who use clothing objects as means of being-in-the-world. In essence, as the meaningfulness of objects and techniques used to adorn the body are inextricably linked to the temporal and spatial location of the body itself, then it is impossible to fully discuss such meaningfulness without addressing the social contexts within which such clothing is worn. As such, fashion designers operating in this context are interpreters not only of meanings that are connoted by material objects employed in self-fashioning but also of the intangible 'assemblages of meaning' (Jahnke, 2012) associated with the various cultural events and spaces in their context. As the term implies, these intangible assemblages are a

conglomeration of cultural and contextual meanings (including heritage value) that centre on social practice and identity.

### **Habitus and structuring influences**

In addition to arguing that bodily adornment is a means of orienting oneself in the world, Entwistle (2000) goes on to posit, that the situated practice of dressing the body is not to be seen merely as the enactment of oppressive Knowledge/power upon the passive body as suggested by Foucault's (1972, 1977) concept of discourse. As discussed earlier in the literature review chapter, discourse refers to practice and language which constructs knowledge. In effect, discourse determines what can be seen and known as 'true' about something, while also shaping practice and conduct. However, citing Bourdieu's (1984, 1989, 1994) concept of Habitus which is "situated beyond the dualism of the subjects and the object, of activity and passivity, of means and end, of determinism and freedom" ((Bourdieu, 2000, p. 262) quoted in Rocamora (2016)), Entwistle contends that habitus provides a link between the individual and the social when thinking through embodiment in a manner which can account for the particularities of practice (Entwistle, 2015). Habitus, according to Craik "refers to specialised techniques and ingrained knowledges which enable people to negotiate the different departments of existence." (1994, p. 4). Additionally, Craik also explains that "fashion constitutes the arrangement of clothes and the adornment of the body to display certain body techniques and to highlight relations between the body and its social habitus. [Moreover] the body is not a given, but actively constructed through how it is used and projected." (Craik, 1994, p. 9). An example of how the body is constructed through use can be seen in Barron's (2007) discussion of how celebrity status and the body can be leveraged as a means of exerting influence over other social actors and building a fashion brand.

Furthermore, as a part and product of the active and relational construction of the body, adornment is "a negotiation between the individual and the social world" (Entwistle, 2000, p. 341) which acknowledges both the "structuring influence of the social world" and the "agency of individuals to make choices as to what to wear" (Entwistle, 2000, p. 342). As Negrin explains, "individuals do not passively internalize cultural systems of meaning, which are imposed upon them from the outside. Rather there is an active process of

mediation between the two [social and individual] in which each is modified by the other” (Negrin, 2016, p. 119). An example of this process of mediation is evident in Barron’s (2020) examination of how autobiographical and reflective writing within a modest fashion style guide can be a means of communicating the points of disconnection and acts of resistance that can be experienced by an individual operating within a particular cultural habitus. In this particular example the social influences which construct the body centre on notions of female modesty from a religious and cultural perspective. Within the Zambian context, the heritage value associated with material objects/cultural events and the subsequent formative influence which these have on practice (both in self-fashioning and in design) can be seen as examples and manifestations of Bourdieu’s notion of structuring influence. Additionally, much like individuals engaged in dressing the body, designers who create garments for and from a specific habitus can also be said to be following a similar pattern of creatively negotiating between the structuring influences of the social context (theirs and that of their clients) and their individual stylistic and aesthetic preferences, as each designer has the agency to determine the nature and extent to which the structuring influences of the social world plays out on their creative process. Consequently, If notions of heritage (which, as argued in the previous chapter, are associated with cultural practices centring on personal, gendered, racialized and group identities) are read as some of the structuring influences from the social world that impact practice, then the resistance expressed by some designers when they distanced their own practice from concerns around heritage, choosing instead to be positioned as modern or urban designers is a strong example of the possibility of exercising agency in the face of social influence.

Therefore, though the concept of discourse has played an important part in the framing of thought in critical heritage studies as outlined in chapter one, it doesn’t appear to have as much utility when employed in an effort to theorise the nuances of lived experience. Additionally, while discourse can certainly be applied to the study of how the body acquires certain meanings in the context of fashion, it is not the most helpful way to frame heritage within the context of fashion design practice, as it does not fully account for resistance or modification in the application of cultural systems of meaning within an individual’s agenda. As Entwistle aptly explains, this is because the notion as put forth by Foucault lacks “sensitivity to issues of practice” and “cannot describe dress as it is lived and experienced by individuals.” (2015, pp. 23-24). Thus, the concept of discourse fails to account for the actual lived experience of self-fashioning and design

practices related to heritage. In this way, Entwistle's (2000) leveraging of habitus is more helpful when attempting to explicate the meaning-making and interpretative account presented in the previous chapter, as it can be extended to explain the particularities expressed by individuals in their narrations of the situated practice of fashion design in relation to heritage. This is because the idea of habitus with its acknowledgement of both the social and individual can account for the spectrum of nuanced engagements ranging from active use and ownership to ambivalence or disownment expressed by participants. Additionally, the notion that heritage can be creatively engaged with and modified in fashion design practice is supported by Smith's (2006) argument that heritage as experience is "not static or 'frozen in time' as the conservation ethic tends to demand, but rather [is] a process that while it [passes] on established values and meanings [is] also creating new meanings and values" (p. 48). This is an important point to note because it highlights the fact that designers from the Zambian context often engage with heritage in their work with the aim of not only reproducing cultural meaning but also of creatively adding their voice to it. For some designers, this may mean adding material elements which they think are trending to elements with heritage associations, or combining elements that are viewed as oppositional. In essence, fashion designers from this context exercise a level of creative agency in their engagements with heritage in their design process, the diversity of which reflects and manifests a range of nuanced understandings and relationships with the concept.

### **Delinking heritage from objects**

Though her use of the term 'dress' has since been problematised as a means of avoiding the "temporality and change implying word 'fashion' or 'mode' in relation to non-Western (and nonurban) contexts" (Jenss, 2016, p. 5), which reinforces the commonly presumed link between euro-modernity and fashion (Jenss, 2016), Entwistle's theorising of bodily adornment helps to foreground the importance of the body in any phenomenological discussion of heritage in fashion, as all fashion design is ultimately conducted with the intention of adorning the body in some way. Furthermore, as "all human experience comes out of our bodily experience" (Entwistle, 2015, p. 29) the body is central when considering the heritage value associated with materials like chitenge. This is because when viewed on its own chitenge is merely a fabric that though

distinguished from other materials by its particular features, is just one category among many which can be used to create clothing. Though it has a potential for meaningfulness this can only be fully actualised through use/application within a specific context because “structures [like heritage value and its connected meanings] are reproduced only through the embodied actions of individuals” (Entwistle, 2015, p. 36). Therefore, as argued earlier, it is in its use as an embellishment of the body, that the Chitenge is animated with a range of cultural meanings, including those linked with heritage value. Such meaningfulness can be reinforced through repeated use, as suggested by participant accounts, which point to the ubiquitous (and somewhat long-standing) use of chitenge in everyday dress practices of Zambian women. As Hansen has explained “chitenge dress practice demonstrates an additional dimension of fashion namely its individuality and efficacy that play out in the performative quality of embodied dress practice. Here the materiality of the fabric and the body play together.” (Hansen, 2019, p. 146). This point is also supported by Hansen’s (2019) account of chitenge as uniquely associated with notions of femininity and modesty in the nation. Though materials and their methods of production can in some instances be said to be tangible forms of heritage in and of themselves, the findings of this study suggest that while objects may play an important role in the materialization and embodiment of cultural values, they are not actually constitutive of them in this context.

### **Chitenge as hybrid heritage**

In addition to the notion that objects are not constitutive of heritage, the interpretive account of material and materiality offered in the previous chapter is an example of how heritage value can exist within contexts which do not feature materials which have a lengthy history of local production or claims of indigeneity as chitenge (like most other materials currently used in Zambian fashion practice) is not indigenous to Zambia and is mainly imported. As explained in chapter one, the origins of chitenge (also commonly referred to as African print) can be traced to Indonesia as Javanese batik techniques were co-opted and introduced into the African market by European traders in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Sylvanus, 2007). As an object which has associated heritage value, yet lacks the authenticity linked to indigeneity, chitenge can be viewed as a form of what De Jong (2009) describes as hybrid heritage. Such forms exemplify, in particular, the mixing and cultural

dynamism of postcolonial contexts. Moreover, as a rejection of the rigid, 'purist' conception of cultural authenticity which presumes a singular and neatly bounded point of origin, the notion of hybrid heritage actually embraces 'impurity' as constitutive of heritage. This point counters the notion held by some (see Akinwumi, 2008) that chitenge's (and other materials which fall under the broad category of African fabric) connection to African culture is purely a fiction deployed by textile manufacturers and distributors to dupe African consumers. Based in part on a limited and almost essentialist view of authenticity as inhering from the explicit use of local forms as sources of design inspiration, this position fails to account for the reality that cultural practices in Africa (and elsewhere for that matter) are and have always been the product of multidirectional flows of ideas, materials and people. A particularly pertinent example of a material and fashion practice characterised by such multidirectional flows is Kanga fabric. Highlighting the role that women have played in the heritagization process of the material, Boswell (2006) contends that Kanga fabric (a printed material which has cultural significance primarily in fashion practices from East Africa) is a form of tangible and intangible heritage in Zanzibar. Furthermore, she argues that kanga exemplifies the island's "creolised culture", including its "oral history, sense of aesthetics, concept of beauty and material culture" (Boswell, 2006, p. 441). Boswell's use of the term creolised draws from Long's (2000) conceptualisation of the term in relation to heritage and refers to the multiple cultural influences which have shaped Kanga fabric and its associated fashioning practices in Zanzibarian culture. In this way, like chitenge, kanga fabric can also be described as hybrid heritage. As such, both materials are an example of what Long describes as "the multifarious local, national and global aspects that comprise" creolised heritage which is "intimately linked with contestations about the past and therefore has a distinct socio-political value" (2000, p. 320). As contestation is considered to be a constitutive feature of heritage in general, with Smith explaining that "all heritage is dissonant and controversial" (2011, p. 70), then it would be unhelpful to completely discount the cultural significance of objects like chitenge because they have links to problematic histories and systems.

Therefore, while it certainly should be acknowledged that there are social and political power dynamics at play, I still believe that it would be unhelpful to disregard the agency of African designers and consumers as they interact with materials like the Chitenge. In other words, despite the valid contestation which surrounds the textile, designers actively negotiate their relationality to it, as they work out their own sense of African-ness (and in this case Zambian-ness). Of

course, this framing does not absolve chitenge of its links (both historical and present-day) to imperialism but rather aims at presenting a view of its function in Zambian culture beyond the enactment of marginalisation or oppression. Consequently, as a hybrid form of heritage, the material's heritage value is not based on its origin or location of production but on its function within Zambian culture. Drawing from Sylvanus' (2007) analysis of African-wax print fabric, it can be argued that the authenticity of a material like chitenge should not be based on its origin but rather on its use, and in particular, "the process of integration and valorisation that underlies its use" (2007, p. 212). This framing of authenticity beyond purist notions of origin allows for genuine cultural significance and heritage value to be attributed to objects which are not indigenous to a particular culture or region. Therefore, the heritage value in fashion can be delinked from objects in the sense that heritage value is not primarily centred in objects themselves (their material properties, locations of production, or actual origin), but inheres instead from their use on the body in cultural practices. In other words, though textiles (like chitenge) through their materiality play a role in the haptic experience of adornment in relation to heritage, they are not constitutive of heritage itself.

### **Heritage beyond the chitenge?**

Aside from accounting for the significance of non-indigenous cultural products like chitenge, the arguments presented above its hybridity and import in the situated practice of dressing the body also help to explicate the ongoing transformation of chitenge into a symbol of national tradition for Zambians (Hansen, 2013, 2019b) in a manner that does not uncritically reify the material as tradition or heritage in and of itself. Moreover, extending Hansen's (2019b, p. 4) argument that the "materiality of the fabric and the sensuality of the experience of wearing it are central to how consumers evaluate *chitenge* fabric in terms of quality and how they appraise it for its design and price", the findings of this study also suggest that the materiality and embodied experience of chitenge are part of the fabric's association with the experience and practice of heritage. Nevertheless, while the findings strongly point to a link between chitenge and heritage, it must also be noted that not all designers shared this view. Such resistance of what appears to be a popular view is reflective once again of the notion of habitus as it exemplifies the agency exercised by designers who don't

attribute heritage value to chitenge. Additionally, it must also be acknowledged that while arguing for the cultural and heritage significance of a material object like the Chitenge there is always a tension that exists because ultimately heritage is not fixed or located in objects (Smith, 2006) so there is a very real possibility that attitudes towards the material will shift in time as cultural practices evolve and develop. As Hansen has contended,

“What Zambians describe as their dress tradition [or indeed their dress heritage] is not a static mould but an evolving set of practices in which different influences with various backgrounds are affecting one another, making it subject to variation over time and resistance among some segments of consumers” (Hansen, 2000, p. 265).

Therefore, just as the fashioning practices associated with its use are a result of an ever-changing set of influences, the heritage value of chitenge must also be thought of as mutable and subject to shifts in taste and practice. Put simply, there have been a number of dress practices that preceded the advent of woven materials like chitenge in the region (Simbo, 2010). As these practices and their associated objects have generally been elided from the current cultural canon, imaginary and memory, it can be conjectured that chitenge could also meet the same fate under the right conditions. This idea is supported by the notion that heritage is not only a question of remembering, but also involves forgetting. As argued in chapter one, forgetting is a fundamental part of maintaining cultural memory (Harrison 2013), therefore as Zambian dress culture is in a continual state of evolution, it can be assumed that at some point in the future chitenge (which is arguably emblematic of that very process of cultural evolution) could also become one of the many dis-remembered elements from the region’s cultural past. Though the conservationist ethic, with its emphasis on managing and ‘preserving’ things for future generations, makes such a statement seem almost sacrilege, as explained above, forgetting is a constitutive element of heritage practice.

In summary, the association of chitenge with heritage and tradition in the Zambian context centres on situated cultural and bodily practices of adornment. Resultantly, through their use of the material, many Zambian fashion designers (especially those working in the country) can be seen as part of a wider cohort of African designers who have “played a major role in giving” African print

fabric/chitenge “importance at a different level in the twenty-first century (Gott et al., 2017, p. 49). Additionally, these designers can be viewed as bricoleurs who engage in a “reflective conversation with the situation at hand” (Louridas, 1999) and creatively interpret and negotiate both socially constituted structuring influences like heritage (including its associated objects and cultural ‘texts’) with their design visions and the requests of their clients. Characterizing Fashion design itself as a form of bricolage, Barnard (2002) has described the concept as something which employs “references to the past; [it] involve[s] looking to the materials and styles used in the past.” (2002, p. 180). Moreover, bricolage “implies the creation of new meanings from the materials and styles of the past” (Barnard, 2002, p. 180). In this way, fashion designers from Zambia who employ heritage (which is framed in this study as a negotiation of the past in the present) along with a mix of other influences in their work are a strong example of the notion of the bricoleur. Furthermore, it has been argued in the sections above that fashion designers from this context need, among other technical competencies, to have an understanding of the spatial and temporal situatedness of their clients. This point is supported by Lonergan et al., who draw on Bourdieu’s (1984) notion of field, which is a “structured space of positions” and “power relations” (Bourdieu, 1993a, pp. 72-73) and frame fashion as a field which “demands unique cultural competencies of its members if they are to participate” (2018, p. 2068). Finally, the concept of habitus and structuring influences as employed by Entwistle (2000, 2015) offers a way of thinking through heritage in a manner that accounts for its varying influence on fashion design practice as it is an element of the social world that can exert influence yet is still within the remit of personal agency. While the findings in the previous chapter and the discussion above centred on the experiences of designers, some of the overarching concepts may be applicable when understanding the attitudes which consumers from the region may have in relation to heritage in their fashioning practice (as the work of designers is dialectically linked to the fashioning practices of consumers and because designers themselves also engage in self-fashioning). As such, building on this study, an in-depth examination of heritage centring on bodily dress in Zambia would be an interesting area for further study.

## Heritage and use context

Another concept which emerged in the interpretive account under the theme of Function was the idea that designers from the region commonly view heritage in their practice as a question 'where and what?'. This means that the heritage value of some of the garments they create is closely linked to the context of their use. As argued above, the various cultural meanings and heritage value associated with materials and garments do not inhere in clothing objects themselves but are instead the result of the practice of adorning the body. Therefore, the import of clothing in relation to heritage value transcends the visual and is tied to the haptic experience of the clothed body (Negrin, 2016). Furthermore, beyond the experience of use on the body, use context is also an important part of assessing the associated heritage value of clothing objects designed within the Zambian context. This is because "fashion [in general] relates to particular codes of behaviour and rules of ceremony and place." (Craik, 1994, p. 10). As one participant pointed out in response to a question of whether their design process involved any consideration of heritage:

**"It depends on where, on what I'm creating those outfits for. Uh, so when I said yes, I'm speaking from a cultural point of view in my design process. So let's say for instance like I mentioned before, traditional events, like let's say Chilanga-mulilo"**

As the excerpt illustrates, the context of use is not only part of directing the design process but is also a determining factor when considering the heritage value of garments. The Chilanga-mulilo, which was also referenced in other accounts, is an event where food is cooked by a woman's family and presented to her prospective in-laws to exhibit the dishes which will be served in the marital home during periods of stability as well as hardship. Though it originated in the cultural practice of the Bemba people, it has become a common fixture across the nation in wedding celebrations (Mulauzi et al., 2014). Drawing on Myszal's (2003) notion of cultural memory which, as explained in chapter one, consists of cultural forms that are "embodied in regularly repeated practices, commemorations, ceremonies, festivals and rites." (Mistral, 2003, p. 13), the Chilanga-mulilo can be viewed as a cultural form as it is one of the many communal cultural events in Zambia where histories and identities are performed and remembered. As Smith points out "performance[s] of heritage...are acts through which social and cultural values and narratives are re/constructed,

remembered (and forgotten), negotiated embraced or rejected.” (Smith, 2011, p. 70). Consequently, as a cultural form through which the past is negotiated and performed for present purposes, the Chilanga-mulilo and other such events are examples of use contexts with heritage value. Moreover, beyond their significance as cultural forms through which cultural memory is reproduced and embodied, in Zambian culture events like the Chilanga-mulilo are also spaces where dress plays an important role. For example, Hansen, speaking specifically about Kitchen parties (which are similar to bridal showers), has explained: “there are drums, dance, food and drink, and above all, bodies dressed to be viewed.” (2003, p. 302). Thus, as bodily adornment and display are a prominent part of such culturally significant events in Zambia, then the clothing objects designed for them are an important aspect of the overall experience, practice and performance of heritage in such contexts. However, though they have salience as the objects which are used to orient oneself within a given context, it must be remembered that such garments are not heritage itself. This point is reflected by Smith (2006) as she draws on an example of an indigenous ethnic group in Australia and their use of culturally significant sites for embodied performances of remembering. Contending that “it was the use of these sites that made them heritage, not the mere fact of their existence.”, she echoes an argument propounded by many other theorists (Urry, 2003, Harrison, 2010; Watson & Waterston, 2010) that heritage is essentially intangible. Extending their argument to this study, it is not the mere fact of existence of particular materials and garments which makes them heritage but their use in communal cultural practices. While it should be acknowledged that other elements of material culture are part of communal performances of histories and identities, it has also been posited that the “special power of clothing [to this end] derives from the ability of the dressed body to mediate both individual and collective identities and desires” (Hansen, 2003, p. 303).

As such, clothing objects with associated heritage value can be viewed as examples of Samuels (1994) notion of ‘theatres of memory’ or things through which individuals and communities engage in the act of remembering. As posited in the previous section, the practical implication of use context in terms of design relates to the various constraints and requirements which come with the task of creatively materialising the different meanings, memories, imaginaries and norms which are reproduced through various cultural practices. In addition to this, the importance of use context in relation to heritage value in the Zambian fashion context is an essential part of understanding why some designers purported

using the same materials to make garments while holding seemingly conflicting views of their heritage value (as was the case with chitenge fabric), as this may have been a question of use context for some. For instance, though most of the participants made some level of reference to chitenge as heritage and cited this as a strong motivation for their use of it in their design practice, one designer declaimed any heritage connection to the fabric, plainly stating that though he was highly inspired by the material and used it throughout his work, he still felt that from his **“own understanding people here in Zambia consider chitenge as an African thing”** and not a unique element of Zambian heritage. Therefore, he characterised his use of the fabric in his RTW collection as more of an aesthetic choice. In fact, he felt that his design work, in general, was not connected to heritage. However, despite this firm denial, he made an exception to this by indicating that he associated heritage with the garments he made for specific events remarking: **“Yeah there are some of our outfits which preserve our heritage when you talk about like at kitchen parties and African-different parties”**. This example supports the argument that while material objects do have a level of importance as they are used in adornment, heritage in fashion from this region (at least at a communal level) is best considered as inhering from use contexts. The importance of the body is also included in such an understanding as garments are naturally worn on the body as means of being-in-the world in these culturally significant spaces and contexts. Furthermore, by exemplifying how heritage value can be decoupled from the tangible, the excerpt above helps to show how a designer from this context can use the same category of materials for generic events like birthday parties as well as cultural events like Kitchen parties and the Chilanga-mulilo (a practice which is common in the fashion design and tailoring of Zambia).

Moreover, if use context is important when determining the communal heritage value of garments, it can also be argued that designers who do not use materials like chitenge, which have a clear and strong link to the nation's contemporary culture and tradition, can also create garments with a measure of heritage value depending in part upon the intended use context. Additionally, the emphasis on use context as the foundation of heritage value provides a frame of understanding designers who create clothing intended for use in cultural contexts while professing no personal connection to the heritage meaning and value which the garments are worn to perform and embody (this point also relates to the notion of ownership which as argued in the previous chapter involves the negotiation of a range of criteria). This means that in the Zambian context,

designers and brands do not exercise absolute control over whether their work is perceived as having heritage value; ultimately this power is shared by their clients and other actants in the wider social world. This is because as the situated actors who use clothing as a means of orienting themselves in their world (Entwistle, 2000), clients make the ultimate decision about the 'what and where' of the garments, they buy or commission. This point is echo's an argument made by critical heritage theorists in relation to conventional sites and spaces of heritage that are professionally managed. Pointing out that visitors to such spaces should not be viewed as passive spectators or receptors of the "intended heritage messages" but instead as actants who interact with such sites in ways that are "both mindful and active in the meanings constructed" (Smith, 2011, p. 70). Similarly, consumers in the Zambian context do not passively receive all of the meanings and intentions which designers attribute to the garments they design, instead, it can be argued that they also have the capacity to adapt, modify, or even reject the designer's intended meanings. This is a simple but important point as it destabilises any presumption that designers exercise absolute control over the heritage value attributed to their creations. Finally, the excerpts above also highlight the nuanced and individualised views of heritage in fashion design which go against some of the totalising narratives present in popular communication as well as the 'authorised heritage discourse' (Smith, 2006), particularly those which mistakenly simplify heritage to the objects which part of the how it experienced.

### **The everyday as use context**

Just as geographic sites only gain heritage value through use during the embodied experiences and performances of remembering, clothing objects like those designed by the participants of this study, gained heritage value through use within performances of identity at communal cultural events. The importance of use contexts was emphasised in relation to significant events and spaces like the kitchen party and the Chilanga-mulilo, as these were events for which clients typically called upon the services of the designers interviewed. Nevertheless, there was also a strong import placed on the everyday practices as these are also a means through which communal histories and identities can be performed. For instance, the claim made in many participant accounts that the act of wrapping chitenge fabric around the waist is a common part of everyday life for

Zambian women is echoed in Hansen's descriptive account as she explains that Zambian women commonly "wrapped lengths of chitenge cloth on top of a skirt or dress when working around the house or in the field, travelling by public transportation or shopping in the public markets" (2000, p. 263). Drawing on the notion put forth by De Certeau (1998, 2011) of everyday life as established practices that offers the possibility of creativity, Buckley and Clark have posited that "this articulation of the everyday also recognizes the possibility of reinvention and resistance as the fashion system is refused, re-cycled and re-defined from within the realm of the everyday" (2018, p. 3). Therefore, as an almost ritualised practice of self-fashioning, the daily act of wrapping one's waist in a material like a chitenge can also be viewed as an instance when the everyday is a significant use context in relation to heritage. Thus, in addition to communal cultural events, the everyday can also be considered an important use context in the formation of heritage value in Zambian fashion practice as it is a space where established practices can be engaged with creatively to (re)produce and perform cultural identities and histories. However, as most of the designers interviewed tend to create (in addition to RTW collections) clothing specifically for or which is ultimately worn during culturally significant occasions, it is unsurprising that when questioned specifically about the role and meaning of heritage in their design process, the notion of use context was often expressed in reference to such events.

### **Heritage and locality**

Although use context is indeed important, it must be acknowledged that the argument made above about it with regards to its centrality when considering the heritage value of clothing design by practitioners from the Zambian context, is made in relation to communal forms of heritage (specifically at an ethnonational level, as this was the most pervasive view among the participants). Additionally, it must also be owned that there was a notable difference between designers who work and mainly sell their designs within Zambia and those who are working and selling their products outside of the country. For example, Kasubika and Harriet who are based in the UK and Australia respectively didn't place as strong an emphasis on use context in their narrations of the meaning and role of heritage in their work, instead, their accounts centred more on connection (as in personally connecting to a communal cultural identity through their design practice itself).

Therefore, It can be argued that as they are located outside of Zambia, it is highly likely that their clientele is not exclusively or mainly Zambian (as is the case with most of the other designers). As neither designer expressed any intent to cater solely to Zambians, choosing to focus instead on creating more inclusive clothing (in terms of size, body types and skin tones), their designs are not created with a highly specified client in mind nor are they as likely to be commissioned for specific cultural events. Therefore, it is unsurprising that their understandings of heritage in relation to their work were primarily about their connectedness. In particular, both of their accounts referenced personal memories of Zambia (or lack thereof) as well as personal family histories which influenced their design process. For instance, Harriet remarked: “Uhm you know anything I do for myself with heritage just **reminds me of Zambia**”. Further on she continues: “so all that growing up in a household where my parents made sure that we dressed very responsibly.... **It comes from the house I grew in**, that my parents established in us.”. Similarly, Kasubica also stated: “So now I’m in a new country that is not as colourful or as bright **as I remember clothing to be**”. Continuing along these lines, she also said “Uh and that is something that is **part of my heritage**, part of my culture mainly. Yeah, that’s something that **links with my family**. My mum wears chitenges all the time either just wrapping on a dress or wrapping on a skirt **chilling at home.**” Each designer goes on to connect the points referenced above to their design practice in some way. Arguably, these are memories and meanings which relate to their own sense-making of their heritage but may not have any relevance to the majority of the customers who purchase their clothing in the UK and Australia. While these two accounts seem to sit in variance with the previous assertion that use context is important when assessing heritage value in Zambian fashion, they do actually reinforce the notion that heritage can generally be thought of as a situated practice that is shaped by its specific location in space and time (Graham et al., 2000). This is simply because established norms and cultural conventions differ from place to place. As situated actors engaging in the equally situated practice of design (Jahnke, 2012), fashion designers who may identify with the Zambian ethnonational identity but live and work elsewhere in the world are likely to be orienting themselves and their practice towards differing concerns and norms as their context differs from that of their counterparts located in Zambia. Moreover, their clients, who engage in the situated practice of adorning the body, may also have a different range of ‘structuring influences’ which impact the meanings which garments carry and how they are employed as means of being-in-the-world. A similar argument has been posited by Edoh

(2016, p. 259) in reference to the wax-print fabrics produced primarily for African consumers by the Dutch firm Vlisco, stating that “the geographical locations of the design studio and the market and their attendant histories inform designers’ and users’ practical engagements” with the material. Therefore, the argument still stands that use context in a broad sense is central when determining the wider heritage value of clothing objects. In essence, the findings of this study suggest that use context (in the sense of spaces and places where histories and identities are performed), is a notion that is extremely important when considering fashion design practices that occur in Zambia and are primarily aimed toward the local market. Conversely, in design practices that occur outside of the country and are aimed toward a broader market, then notions of heritage may be more closely related to the designers themselves as they make connections through their practice to their communal and personal histories and identities. Moreover, such design practice can be framed as an example of the production of the ‘Local’, which drawing on Appadurai’s (1996) notion of Locality, refers “not so much the place where you live but the space to which you feel connected and through which you feel connected to others.” (Harrison 2010, p. 243). In this way, the design practice of individuals who engage with heritage as part of their creative process while located outside of the literal spatial boundaries of their country of origin (or indeed whatever community they feel connected to) can be seen as a means of establishing or maintaining connections “both to their homeland and to the new places in which they settle.” (Harrison, 2010, p. 245). Harriet and Kasubika exemplify this because instead of focusing on the use contexts of their creations, they connect heritage in their practice more closely to its function as a means through which they produce their sense of the ‘local’. As Harrison has pointed out:

“For migrant, dislocated or diasporic community, heritage provides a powerful language of place and community around which individuals and groups can mobilise a series of technologies for producing the local, even if that locality is not based in real space” (Harrison, 2010, p. 245).

However, this is not meant to imply that designers located in Zambia do not also make such personal connections through heritage or utilise it in the production of the local, but rather that in the accounts gathered, the import was placed primarily on use context of the objects designed. Additionally, the claims above are not meant to imply that designers working in Zambia all create exclusively for the local market. Indeed as a means of expressing her global intentions, one

participant went as far as to say that she wanted her clothing to be worn in Antarctica. Nevertheless, the point being argued is that her spatial and temporal situatedness do ultimately impact her meaning-making process and her design decisions. This argument is also reflected in Suchman's (2011) characterisation of design as a practice contingent on geographic and historical situatedness. As such, a comparative analysis of the nuances between designers who are creating clothing within Zambia and those who identify with the ethnonationality while working in other parts of the world may be an interesting subject for further study.

Finally, the importance of use context in understanding heritage in relation to Zambian fashion design is stressed as a means of highlighting the basic idea that it is not useful to categorize all Zambian fashion design practices or their products as heritage simply because it's labelled as Zambian. Though this point may seem overly simplistic and a bit like stating the obvious, I believe that it is an important point to make as it counters the essentialising notions which tend to be applied to fashion from Africa and often lead to the misreading and mislabelling of design practices from the region. Moreover, the point is made to counter popular notions of heritage tied to monumental objects and officially recognised sites and practices as these often obscure the actual nuance and complexity of experiences and views held by practitioners and consumers from the region. Therefore, as argued earlier, in addition to the notion of use context, another helpful way of framing heritage in Zambian fashion design is as a means of orienting oneself in the world. Through the creative recombination of tangible and intangible texts of meaning fashion designers located in the diaspora are able to (re)produce the local for themselves and others, while practitioners located within Zambia produce clothing worn as a means of adding new meanings to the body in spaces where identities and histories are rehearsed, performed and refigured.

### **No prefigured forms**

While the emphasis placed on culturally significant use contexts in the preceding sections may seem to imply that designers are merely reproducing strictly prescribed costumes that correspond to specific cultural practices and contexts, in reality, this is not the case. With the exception of a small number of specific garments like the Musis and Ziziba which are worn primarily by the Lozi people of Zambia, most garments designed for and worn in contexts with heritage value are a creative amalgamation of various sources of inspiration without a

fixed reference point. This is due in part to the fact that cultural and fashioning practices in Zambia are in a state of continuous transformation (Hansen, 2000), as well as the fact that there currently aren't many widely available historical resources that would serve as a template. As one participant shared when describing her process of designing garments for culturally significant contexts:

“You know that’s actually a challenge because uhm **there’s really not much online that would give you proper information** or this is exactly what say a typical bemba outfit would be or a typical, yeah. There is really not much, like in terms of their outfits, their colours online.”

Indeed, the terms traditional or cultural are generally implicit of long historical standing, and particularly when applied to dress practice they connote authentic practice which has supposedly “been handed down from a past and remains free from the influence of modern civilization” (Baizerman et al., 2015, p. 100). However, it must be remembered that as the product of a plural society and post-colonial nation of relatively recent inception, Zambian culture as it is known today is a reflection of the various forces of social, political and economic disruption and fluctuation which have preceded and followed the nation’s establishment in 1964. Thus, despite the essentialist implications that notions of national culture carry, Zambian culture is not a fixed and clearly bounded entity. Therefore, the work of designers who create clothing with heritage value (which is commonly characterised as traditional and by implication fixed), must also be viewed as a product of multifarious influences unbounded by a singular spatial, temporal or cultural origin. As argued earlier, such design products are examples of the use or creation of hybrid heritage (De Jong, 2009). This means that even when designers draw on a variety of seemingly inauthentic and non-indigenous sources in their creative process, the objects they create have no less cultural significance or heritage value as their hybridity is constitutive of that very value (De Jong, 2009). As explained earlier with regards to chitenge, literal claims of indigeneity are not essential for a sense of authenticity and heritage value to be expressed in the context of cultural practice. Instead, this is closely linked to the use/function of the object.

## Collaborative (re)creation

Aside from a lack of fixity in terms of the forms and materials that are used to connote tradition and heritage, it should be noted here that within the Zambian context, it is common place (especially in the case of custom orders) for clients to bring images and references to their consultations with designers, thereby adding their own input to the garments which are produced. As one designer noted in response to a request of a description of her creative process:

“uhm it’s different cause with clients, how we work now is that people would come with already **downloaded pictures from the internet like on WhatsApp**, on how they would want their pieces done. But what we do is that when a client approaches me I’m like okay, so what do you have in mind, what do you want done? **Then after they show us the pictures of what they want done, we will do through the process of how is it going to work here in Zambia**”

As the extract illustrates, clients often exercise a level of creative agency in determining both the design outcome and in deciding which visual and material elements are drawn upon and symbolically linked to notions of heritage. Though the quote above is just one example of a range of highly nuanced designer-client relationships in the Zambian fashion landscape, this point is important to make as it destabilizes the notion that designers are the sole arbiters of the material elements which are used in the creation of heritage associated fashion in Zambia. Moreover, the excerpt exemplifies the idea expressed in other accounts that accuracy (in terms of historic, geographic or cultural attribution) is not often part of the equation when gathering inspiration, because as expressed in the earlier quote, it appears that accurate information is often hard to come by on the resources widely available through internet searches. Additionally, as none of the participants I spoke with made any reference to visiting museums or examining other official archival sources, it can be assumed that such activities are not commonly part of informing design ideation processes in this context. As these design practices do not appear to be informed heavily by official or authorised versions of the past, it can be said that they are examples of what Samuel (1994) referred to as unofficial forms of knowledge. As explained in chapter one, such forms are populist engagements with the past which provided a “more democratic” view of a nation’s culture (1994, p. 160). In addition to framing it as unofficial or hybrid heritage practice, another way of framing heritage-associated

clothing design practices which are done even when exact histories may be unclear or unknown is using Graham et al.'s notion of heritage as a practice through which individuals who have experienced major disruption or disconnection "from their past" actually "recreate it, or even 'recreate' what could or should have been there but never really was" (2000, p. 19). As the nation is in large part a product of colonial expansion, it can be argued that fashion designers in Zambia who combine various sources of inspiration to re-envision or recreate clothing objects which are used in culturally significant contexts play a part in the formation of what Hobsbawm (1983) has described as "invented tradition". Consisting of a set of ritual or symbolic practices that by repetition "automatically implies continuity with the past" (1983, p. 1), such traditions are part of the formation of a unified national culture in Zambia. This point further supports the notion presented in the literature review that heritage, in general, is unfixed, being shaped and transformed by the needs and forces of the present rather than any strict adherence to historical accuracy in the positivist sense (Smith, 2006; Crouch, 2010; Harrison, 2010; and Graham et al., 2000). The present-centeredness of heritage means that it is not a product of the past but emerges in the present as people leverage the past (actual or imagined) for various ends. Additionally, as the meanings of heritage are contextually dependent, they "can be altered as texts are re-read in changing times, circumstances and constructs of space and scale." (Graham et al., 2000, p. 18). Thus, as the objects through which heritage is materialised, embodied and experienced, the garments designed by the participants of this study can be viewed as examples of the alterations and re-readings of the past which have been developed in response to changing circumstances and times in the Zambian context. In essence, it can be argued that such garments are an example of how the past is utilised as a means of negotiating "new ways of being and expressing identity" in Zambia (Smith, 2006, p. 4). To summarise, Zambian fashion designers can be said to utilise the past, even in the absence of actual historical records and documentation to collaboratively (with their clients) create or 'recreate' clothing objects which are employed in the expression of significant histories, identities and cultural values.

## Lack and loss in the creative process

In addition to the creative flexibility that is afforded by the absence of strict historical templates to follow when designing for culturally significant contexts, it must also be acknowledged that such absence can also lead to a sense of lack and a problem of determining the bounds of what is appropriate for use in spaces relating to heritage. For example, one designer remarked:

“you know we actually have a rich culture **although we don't have the traditional wear, we don't have the national dress. So there's a, there's a bit of confusion** there because people now can even do a function and just have Nigerian attire. You know what I mean? Nigerians have a national dress, but we don't have a national dress.”

She continues further on by saying “So we just, so for instance even the function on Saturday they just said wear chitenge traditional.” In addition to echoing sentiments of cultural loss described by Rabine (2002) in her analysis of Kenyan fashion and the ‘unfinished quest for a national outfit’ in that country, this excerpt illustrates how the lack of specificity and reference points in terms of traditional wear (a term often used to refer to clothing worn among other things as part of heritage experiences and practice), can cause a sense of confusion and discomfort as it stems from a professed lack of a communally owned dress (the possession of which is perceived to be important). Interestingly, the participant mentions that this was resolved somewhat by asking people to wear garments made of chitenge which is described as traditional. In addition to supporting the argument earlier about how chitenge has become associated with notions of heritage and tradition in Zambia, the example above also highlights the fact that designers in Zambia are often called upon to creatively fill perceived gaps and reconnect fissures that have formed in part as a result of the colonial legacy in the nation. However varied the approaches to filling these pierced gaps may be, they all exemplify the notion that heritage is emergent (Crouch, 2010). As such it can be posited that Zambian designers who engage in the ongoing practice of (re)creating and negotiating ideas of the past through the clothing objects they make are part of the wider process of shaping a national culture that is not prefigured and is in its own continual process of emergence.

## Heritage beyond brands

As posited in the literature review chapter, heritage in relation to fashion design practice exists beyond the realm of storied European luxury brands (which are arguably the most prevalent example in popular conceptions and discussions of heritage in fashion) and 'nouveau' heritage brands which are often established with a manufactured origin story. Although both of these models are examples of how the past is mobilised in fashion, in this study heritage has been framed more comprehensively as negotiations of the past in and for present purposes. This essentially means that heritage can encompass a range of things, practices and experiences. Consequently, the findings of this study are an example of this broader and more inclusive account of heritage in fashion because rather than being centred primarily in brands themselves, with designers drawing from house "archives, ateliers, *savoir-faire*, values and imaginaries" (Pistilli, 2018, p. 76), the participants in this study generally expressed a view of heritage in relation to their creative work as something which centred more on bodily fashioning practices as well as communal and personal histories. Though Pistilli's framing of fashion heritage as a field (drawing also on Bourdieu, 1984) does present it in a similar light to what was argued earlier in this chapter (i.e. heritage as a structuring influence), describing it as including not only objects but also "a historically established set of social processes, cultural practices, and imaginaries" (2018, p. 79), her understanding differs mainly in its focus on individual brands and the innovative reimagining of their histories and codes by each subsequent designer. Although this model of a strategic interplay between heritage and creativity as presented by Pistilli (2018) in her analysis of three French fashion labels still has relevance and validity as one way of framing heritage for brands like those she describes it should not be read in a totalising manner as the only possible way in which heritage is operationalised in fashion design the world over. As Craik has aptly pointed out, "while western elite designer fashion constitutes one system, it is by no means exclusive nor does it determine all other systems" (1994, p. 5). The findings of support this notion as they provide an account that is divergent from the 'western elite designer' presented by Pistilli (2018). In essence, the findings align with the idea that it is generally unhelpful to superimpose a singular model or understanding of heritage onto fashion brands that are based in a very different cultural and historical context. As Pistilli's (2018) article specifically references French brands, with the title of the article even including the phrase 'the French case', it can be assumed that her contribution is not meant to make

totalising claims which ignore the nuance of contexts around the world. Nevertheless, as there has been a long and documented history of fashion practices from Europe being framed as normative and central (both in popular culture and academic theory (See Rovine, 2009; Nissen, 2010; Jense, 2016; Jansen & Craik, 2018), I feel that it is important to emphasise a differing take on heritage in fashion as this will contribute to the growing body of literature which theorises it's meaning and role in design and fashioning practices more broadly (this, of course, can also contribute to the delinking of fashion more generally from Eurocentrism). Some notable examples of recent contributions to this body of knowledge include for instance a publication by Tran (2020) that offers an enlightening exposition on the heritagization of the *áo dài* (a tunic worn by women) in Vietnam, linking it to “historical and cultural values which are honoured as heritage” in that nation (2020, p. 10). Additionally, Morsiani (2020) presents an examination of the brand Kiyana Wraps based in London contending that head wraps are a means of performing various aspects of identity in transcultural spaces. She argues that through “the materiality of the headwrap, young diasporic women maintain a strong connection with past experiences” (2020, p. 22). While each study is focused on different contexts and aspects of fashion practice, they both offer examples of heritage in fashion practice which are closely linked to communal cultural practices of remembering and identity building. Similarly to such examples, this study is aimed at providing a nuanced account of heritage which avoids some of the presumptions that the term carries when it is used in reference to fashion practices that are from or related to a global south context. As Jansen and Craik have argued:

“when non-Western designers are using their cultural heritage as a source of inspiration, it is considered ‘traditional,’ whereas when Western fashion designers incorporate their cultural heritage, it is categorized as ‘fashionable.’ In the same way, when non-Western fashion designers incorporate Western fashion aesthetics, it is often perceived as westernization and a loss of local culture, whereas when Western fashion designers turn to non-Western cultures for inspiration, it is seen as innovative and fashionable.” (2018, p. 3).

In what may seem to be somewhat of a paradox, the continued efficacy of such reductionist views was exemplified in some of the participant responses which explicitly linked design elements perceived as western with modernity and innovation while relegating elements linked to African culture and heritage as

static and unfashionable. Nevertheless, by providing an analysis based on a close and detailed interpretation of the views of designers who are working in the so-called margins (as in, outside of the Western centres both literally and figuratively), this study is aimed at destabilising notions of heritage which are based on a narrow and totalising view which relegates heritage in non-western fashion systems to the realm of static and un-fashionable garb. Additionally, by emphasising the importance of bodily dress practice and use context, this study helps to expand notions of heritage in fashion beyond the limits of tangible objects and aligns with the critical stance on heritage adopted within the wider field of heritage studies. Additionally, the notion that 'experts' are the only capable interpreters of heritage value is destabilised as designers work (often in collaboration with their clients) to shape and materialized histories and cultural systems of meaning (see Smith (2006), Crouch (2010), Harrison (2010), and Graham et al. (2000)). Lastly, the findings of this study also build on established theory around bodily dress as they illustrate through the example of the Chitenge, how a material, through use on the body can not only add meaning to it (the body) but also become inscribed with heritage value and cultural significance within a community.

### **Chapter summary**

In Summary, Heritage as theorised by Smith (2006, p. 13) is the social and cultural practice of "meaning and identity-making". Similarly, fashion has also been framed as "ways of generating meanings, which produce and reproduce those cultural groups along with their positions of relative power" (Barnard, 2002, p. 38). As both heritage and fashion are involved in meaning-making this study set out to examine how they coalesce within the design and cultural practices of Zambia by investigating the meaning and role of heritage from the perspective of fashion designers in within the context of their work. As discussed in this and the previous chapter, heritage in Zambian fashion is a negotiation of the past in the present that centres on cultural practice as well as communal and personal histories and identities. As such, designers from this context can be seen as bricoleurs who engage in the act of creatively (re)interpreting and recombining a range of cultural norms, values, and 'texts' from the past (historical, imagined or contested) with their creative vision and voice to (re)produce meanings. As heritage itself is not fixed or located in objects, the outcomes of such design

endeavours are varied, reflecting the emergent and multi-vocal nature of Zambian culture itself.

While the findings were developed and discussed in a manner that emphasises similarities across the entire sample, it is still important to acknowledge that they also pointed to a high level of nuance which is to be expected when analysing lived experiences. This is because even when participants are from similar cultural backgrounds or geographic locations they are ultimately human beings who have unique experiences and operate from a particular position within their social milieux. Therefore, it is worth noting that uses and understandings of heritage in relation to fashion are not one-dimensional as each individual exercises a level of agency in their negotiations of the past in and for present purposes. For some designers such purposes can include creating a link to the communities and identities they feel connected to; in order to establish a sense of self and belonging. For others, the past may be engaged with through design as a means of providing their clients with garments through which they can orient themselves and their bodies to the norms of their context. For others still, heritage is means of (re)imaging and (re)constructing their ethnonational culture and identity. Unsurprisingly, how these aims are accomplished in practical terms varies and cannot be reduced to any prescriptive formula or design activity. In a very basic sense, the question of what heritage in Zambian fashion means or *is* depends on who you ask. This is because each individual has their own nuanced relatedness to and understanding of the concept. As a result, it is not enough to just say for instance that chitenge material is heritage and assume that every time it is used in Zambian fashion it is seen as such by designers or their clients. Instead, it is much more helpful to look beyond an object's 'thingness' and consider how such a material is used to "construct ways of understanding and [how it makes] the present meaningful" (Smith, 2011, p. 70). In addition to this, the heritage value of clothing objects designed by those operating from the Zambian social milieu should be assessed by attending to their meaningfulness as they are employed in the situated practice of dressing the body, rather than merely emphasising their visual or material qualities. As Louridas contends, "designed artefacts are not only beautiful and useful things, they are also meaningful things" (1999, p. 529). Moreover, it must also be noted that conceptions of such meaningfulness are not fixed nor are they always shared by designers and their customers. In essence, as something emergent, or in a continual state of becoming, heritage in Zambian fashion design is best understood as both a tool and practice (Smith, 2006),

through which the structuring influences of the social world are modified, adapted and even resistance at an individual level.

Finally, to summarise the preceding discussion of the wider theoretical implications of this study's findings, it has been argued that by employing various materials and techniques, designers from the Zambian context creatively negotiate the past (imagined, historical, communal and personal) in and for the present purposes of connecting to and constructing communal identities and histories, as well as extending the meaningfulness of the bodies they are called upon to design for. Furthermore drawing on Craik's (1994) and Entwistle's (2000, 20015) application of habitus in the context of fashion, these designers can be described as creating clothing objects that "positively constructs an identity rather than disguising a 'natural' body or 'real' identity." (Craik, 1994, p. 4). Lastly, as set out at the beginning of this chapter, the findings from the previous chapter have been brought into dialogue with extant theory from the fields of heritage, fashion and design studies in order to outline some of their wider implications. While I still maintain that the idiographic nature of the study's sample prevents any direct claims to representativeness, I instead adopt Eatough and Smith's (2007) notion of theoretic rather than empirical generalisability as it is a helpful way of framing the study's significance within the broader context of practice and theory.

# **Chapter Five:**

Concluding Thoughts and  
Proposals for the Future

## **Concluding thoughts and proposals for the future**

As the final section of this thesis, this chapter is intended to provide a concluding summary of the research process, the findings and their relevance to theory, and the study's contribution to knowledge.

### **Theoretical framework**

This research project was conducted to examine the meaning and role of heritage in Zambian fashion design practice (this included both design practice conducted in Zambia and by individuals who identified with the ethnonationality). Based on the review of extant literature as detailed in chapter one, and on the work of Smith (2006) in particular, heritage has been conceptualised in this study as negotiations of the past in and for present purposes. Firstly, this attribute of present-centredness disrupts the narrow notion that heritage is limited to objects literally produced in the past as well as the idea that only experts (professional historians, archaeologists, curators, conservation experts etc.) are capable of discerning and arbitrating its value (Otero-Pailos et al., 2010). Consequently, the critical framing adopted for this study positions heritage as fundamentally intangible. Additionally, it acknowledges that heritage includes and is manifest in a range of practices, experiences and things which can be engaged with and shaped by a variety of social actants, (see Smith (2006), Watson and Waterston (2015)), including designers. Moreover, the present-centred model allows for a broader conceptualisation that goes beyond the bounded but popular view that confines heritage to the realm of monumental artefacts and histories. As such, populist engagements with the past like those manifest in various forms of fashion practice can be characterised as heritage. Lastly, as something which emerges in and is mobilised for present-centred aims, heritage is not static but shaped by its specific location in space and time (Graham et al., 2000). In essence, based on this conceptualisation of heritage, the primary objective of this study was to investigate the contextually dependent dimensions of negotiations of the past within contemporary Zambian fashion design by attending to how these negotiations are understood and shape practice.

## Methods

Additionally, though fashion is generally linked to tangible practices of adorning the body, this study was not limited to a focus on a particular predetermined set of material objects or visual elements which have been prescribed as heritage by 'experts'. Instead, the focus was directed toward understanding how heritage is made sense of and utilised by specific individuals in their particular context. In other words, this study was oriented towards examining unofficial accounts of heritage from the perspective of designers who were engaging with it from various positions of situatedness. Therefore, it was essential to examine the central question of this study using methods that are attuned to the distinctiveness of a given setting and oriented towards understanding meaning-making at an individual level. Additionally, the approach chosen had to be congruent with my broader epistemological stance. As outlined in the methodological account presented in chapter two, the stance I was aligned with during this study was the constructivist view which frames knowledge as the product of the situated activity of meaning-making, (Creswell, 2013) and proposes that any examination of the social world cannot be conducted separately from the human mind (Crotty, 1988). Consequently, an Interpretative phenomenological analysis approach was adopted for this study. As a methodological stance that acknowledges the centrality of "sociocultural and historical processes" (Eatough & Smith, 2008, p. 184) in the mechanisms of sense-making and the establishment of one's sense of self, IPA is consistent with my epistemological position that knowledge is not the product of accurately apprehending a fixed external reality, but rather is an emergent and contingent co-production (Lapan et. al, 2012). Furthermore, owing to its basis in phenomenological philosophy, and in particular, to views from the existential strand of theory like that proposed by Heidegger (1927/1967, 1985) and Merleau-Ponty (1962), IPA acknowledges the inextricably bounded nature of existence and consequently embraces the varied "texture and qualities" (Eatough and Smith, 2017, p. 195) of such situated experience. As both heritage and design have been framed in this study as situated (see Jahnke, 2012 for a discussion of design as situated practice), IPA is an appropriate method of understanding the nuanced perceptions which arise at their confluence in the context of Zambian fashion practice. Moreover, as a result of its directedness towards the distinctive features of a given setting, IPA is inherently idiographic in nature. This means that it is an analytic approach that focuses on the particular with the aim of

providing a detailed interpretive account of people's lived experiences (Smith et al., 2009). As such, IPA was employed as a means of achieving my overarching objective of centring the voice of participants as far as possible as well as the specific aim of understating their unique accounts of heritage. It is important to note that due to IPA's orientation towards the sense-making of participants (Smith et al., 2009), the aim of this study was not to conclusively establish the essential nature of heritage for all Zambians or even all Zambian fashion designers. Instead, the primary objective was to attend to and present an interpretive account of its meaningfulness for the individuals who participated in this study. Furthermore, owing to its foundation in hermeneutic theory, including Schleiermacher's (1998) proposition that it is important to consider both the text and the interpreter, IPA has been characterised as involving a 'double hermeneutic' (Smith and Osborn, 2003), with the researcher described as "making sense of the participant, who is making sense of X" (Smith et al., 2009, p. 35). This recognition of the inherently situated nature of a researcher and their interpretive account of the phenomena under study further aligns with my epistemological view of knowledge as constructed and contingent. Nevertheless, as the interpretive account must ultimately emerge from the data, an effort was made to reduce bias through bracketing, which involves setting aside one's preconceptions during a study (King & Horrocks, 2010). Moreover, in addition to some of my biographic details, specific aspects of the data gathering and analytic process were presented throughout the thesis in order to engage in reflexivity (Creswell, 2013; Willig, 2013). Lastly, due to IPA's emphasis on providing an account that emerges from a close and detailed reading of the data, sample groups are purposive and tend to be small, with some studies having a single case design (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Smith & Eatough, 2012). Therefore, a purposive sample of 11 designers was interviewed for this study. Because of their utility in producing sufficiently rich and reflective accounts (Galletta, 2013) Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the participants as the primary data generating source. Following this, the interview data was transcribed and analysed using the methods outlined by Smith et al., (2009). As detailed in the methodological account presented in chapter two, the specific steps of analysis were employed with the aim of eschewing a priori theory while prioritising the participants' sense-making. In summary, an IPA approach was employed in this research project not only because of its appropriateness for examining the phenomena under study but also because of the method's alignment with my

broader views about knowledge and my intention to centre the voices of the participants.

## **Findings**

As explained in the detailed outline of the analytic process presented in chapter three, the findings of this study were organised under five thematic headings which emerged (Smith & Osborn, 2008) from an interpretive account of the meaningfulness and practical utility of heritage for the designers interviewed. The five themes were: Ownership, (Dis)connect, Opposites, Function, and finally Material and materiality. To summarise, under the theme of Ownership it has been argued that within the context of this study heritage is viewed by designers as something which is owned at various levels. In addition to communal ownership at an ethnonational level, participants also expressed it at a continental, personal and even racial level. Furthermore, the high level of nuance purported about the criteria for determining ownership (particularly at communal levels) indicates that the notion of what is owned is not standardised but based on a highly individualised set of requirements including, for instance, location of production, distinctiveness, and apparent longstanding. Moreover, the findings also suggest that heritage can also be disowned by some designers if it is deemed to be incongruent with their view of themselves as well as their conceptions of fashion and design practice.

Following on from this, under the theme of (Dis)connect it has been proposed that heritage is conceptualised by Zambian designers as a means of connecting to communities and places in order to establish a sense of belonging and of self. Additionally, heritage was viewed as a means of establishing and maintaining an 'unbroken' link between members of a people group through time. The maintenance of such links appears to be a strong motivating factor for some practical design decisions. For instance, two designers accounted for their consistent use of chitenge fabric in their creations as part of their effort to materialise and maintain unbroken links to generations in the past and future. In addition to this, the findings also evince that a perceived lack of sufficient experiential knowledge can contribute to a sense of dissonance or disconnect for some designers as they see their connectedness to particular communities, identities and cultural histories as indirect/diluted. This indicates that the connections made through engagements with heritage in fashion practice are

complex and involve the personal histories and experiences of designers.

Along with the themes of Ownership and (Dis)connection, under the theme of Opposites it has also been contended that within the Zambian fashion context, heritage is often understood in oppositional terms. For instance, one designer expressed a view which framed heritage in fashion as static and limiting to their creative process. Conversely, they contrasted heritage with modern fashion design which was associated with the future, broader creative possibility, and innovation. Through such contrasting constructions, designers revealed their notions of and relatedness to heritage and its associated design elements. Interestingly, the findings suggest that for some designers, the oppositional pairing of heritage with a binary counterpart can become a literal source of inspiration, informing, and shaping their aesthetic choices. However, for others, such pairings are presented to explicate their understanding of the limiting nature of heritage in the context of design. In addition to this, it has also been posited under the theme of Function that heritage is understood by designers as something which is closely linked to the use context of the garments they create. Indeed, culturally significant events like the Chilanga-Mulilo and kitchen parties were frequently referenced as heritage-related contexts for which designers were called upon to create clothing objects. Some designers described their approaches in such situations as processes of creatively interpreting the social norms of specific settings where histories and identities are performed, while also combining such considerations with their artistic vision and their client's stipulations. As such, it has been argued that the heritage value associated with clothing and material objects in Zambian fashion practice often inheres from their use in culturally significant practices and contexts.

Following on from these points, it has also been argued under the theme of Material and materiality that in the context of this study, the heritage value of chitenge fabric was based not on the textile's tangible qualities, but rather on its use on the body in everyday fashioning practices. However, while objects are not constitutive of heritage itself, the findings also suggest that the material qualities of fabrics like chitenge can play a direct or indirect role in steering the design process as both aesthetic and practical choices are made in consideration of material's tangible qualities like malleability and colour. Lastly, the findings indicate that there is a particularly strong link between chitenge and female-gendered identities in Zambian culture.

## Theoretical implications

Building on this presentation of the key themes, a discussion of some of the wider theoretical implications of the findings was put forth in chapter four. Drawing on Entwistle's (2000, 2015) notion of dress as the situated practice of embellishing the body with meaning, it has been argued that chitenge is a fabric that adds particular meanings to Zambian bodies. Additionally, it has been posited that the bodily experience of wearing a chitenge or sewn garments made out of the fabric becomes part of the heritage experience as described by Smith (2006). In this way, though the tangible materiality of the textile is not heritage in and of itself, it does have significance as a part of the lived and bodily experience of heritage in Zambian fashion practice. Furthermore, building on Craik's (1994) and Entwistle's (2000, 2015) leveraging of Bourdieu's (1984) concept of habitus, it has been argued that heritage can be framed as a structuring influence from the social world that shapes the design process. Moreover, designers from this context do not "passively internalise cultural systems of meaning" (Negrin, 2016, p. 119). Instead, they can exercise a level of agency by deciding how and the extent to which a structuring influence like heritage plays out in their design practice. This point counters the notion that all fashion design from this context is heritage-related as well as the notion that it would be possible to make categorical claims purely by attending to the tangible features of design outputs. In addition to this, it has been contended that through their creative engagements with heritage and its associated objects and design elements, Zambian designers orient their practice towards the norms of their context. In this way, they can be viewed as bricoleurs (Barnard, 2002) who combine various elements including those from the past (historic, unofficial, or imagined) to form new meanings. Drawing on Myszal's (2003) notion of cultural memory and Smith's (2006, 2011) conceptualisation of heritage as performance, it has been posited that the heritage value associated with certain garments in Zambian fashion practice is based on their use in contexts where identities and histories are performed. In this way, it can be argued that through their practice designers often engage in the (re)production of cultural memory. Furthermore, the findings also suggest that for designers situated outside of the country, heritage can be a means of personally connecting to a sense of locality as described by Harrison (2010). This means that their design practice can be framed as a 'space' through which their sense of connection to communities, places and pasts is negotiated, experienced, and materialised.

It has also been proposed that Zambian designers do not merely reproduce garments following strict templates, instead, they draw on inspiration from a variety of sources (including an imagined past) to (re)create items that bridge the gaps of dissonance caused by the fragmentation of their links to the 'past' (Graham et al., 2000). Such fragmentation can occur, for instance, as the result of a lack of extant records or practice and can lead to a sense of perceived lack and dissonance. Finally, it has been contended that the study's findings are an example of heritage in fashion that is not based on brands themselves. Unlike the brand-based model (see Pistilli, 2018) which is most common when referring to European luxury brands, the lived experiences and views expressed by the participants of this study point to communal and personal identities and histories as the primary source of heritage value in fashion design practice from the Zambian context. While the brand-based model is valid for some settings, it cannot be applied to every context. Similarly, though this study's findings may be helpful as a starting point for understanding heritage in other social settings, they are not presented as the only model. In essence, this study not only exemplifies the need for applying a broad understanding of heritage as intangible and present-centred but also shows the importance of attending to context when attempting to understand its meaningfulness for particular individuals.

In conclusion, though their generalisability (in the traditional sense) is limited by the idiographic nature of the IPA approach, this study's findings do have relevance within wider bodies of knowledge about Zambian and African fashion practices because instead of merely presenting an analysis of design outputs, the findings offer an interpretive account of how designers themselves perceive the meaningfulness and utility of heritage in relation to their creative practice. Furthermore, as fashion itself is characterised as "global and diverse in its development, occurrences, and dimensions" (Lillethun et al., 2012) this study adds an account of such diversity by detailing some of the context-specific nuances of design and fashioning practices from Zambia. Additionally, as the interpretive account is generated from a stance that acknowledges the situatedness of both the participants and the researcher, the account of heritage presented builds on and adds to critical conceptions of the phenomena as something which emerges and is contingent upon place and time. Moreover, the findings also contribute to critical heritage theory by going beyond the authorised accounts put forth by experts and hegemonic institutions and engaging with and centring populist or unofficial accounts. By framing heritage as a structuring influence (Entwistle, 2000, 2015) that can be engaged with in a variety of ways

through fashion design practice, this study also adds to the larger body of accounts that recognise the plurality of experiences and engagements with heritage beyond national monuments and the limits of official archives. Moreover, the knowledge produced in this account of the meaningfulness and utility of heritage adds to understandings of Zambian culture and its development. Most notably, the findings destabilise the notions that heritage in Zambian fashion is purely object-based by offering examples of how the intangible elements of communal and personal histories and cultural norms are understood and materialised by designers. In addition to this, the study expands the body of knowledge about the process of heritagization of chitenge fabric by explaining how the material is used and viewed by designers as a tool for adding various cultural systems of meaning to the body.

Finally, in addition to the aforementioned contributions to various bodies of knowledge, this study has also added to my own knowledge and understanding as a design practitioner. As Attia and Edge have contended, at its most effective, qualitative research “requires both the kind of humility that acknowledges that the researcher always has a particular standpoint, and the kind of openness that is prepared to risk having that stand point changed.” (2017, p. 34). In this sense my standpoint as a fashion designer has shifted as a result of engaging in this research project. Indeed, the process of critically engaging in an examination of how other Zambian fashion designers view and utilise heritage in their work, has allowed me to develop a critical framework for understanding and interrogating my own inclinations as a practitioner. In other words, examining how other people made sense of their lived experiences allowed me to reflect more deeply on my own. Additionally, I believe that the knowledge generated from this study (in particular, the notion that heritage in Zambian fashion inheres from use on the body and in context) can be used to shape the continued development of my design and research practice into approaches through which I can actively negotiate my own relatedness to the communities, histories, and identities I feel connected to. In essence, engaging in this research process over the last three years has challenged me to rethink my approach to design. Where I once felt a need to conform to techniques, practices and attitudes which are implicitly oriented towards one system of fashion (the western brand-based model), I now see the possibility of using my design practice to explore the plurality of what fashion is and can be. As such, I aim to build on this project by conducting further research through design.

## **Limitations**

While this study's findings offer some thought-provoking insights aimed at answering the central question, it must be conceded that the generation of observational data as originally planned was not possible due to COVID-19 travel restrictions. As such, further investigation of this topic which includes such data could be undertaken in order to build upon and expand the knowledge generated from the verbal accounts provided by participants. Moreover, though the findings of this study were based on a close reading of the views of fashion designers, they do in fact suggest that in the Zambian fashion context heritage is largely a communal practice that involves a range of actants including but not limited to designers. As heritage value in Zambian fashion is closely linked to communal events and commemorations, clients, and the wider communities within which they are situated are also part of shaping heritage. Therefore, while this study was aimed at understanding heritage from the perspective of designers, there is still further research that can be conducted to understand the lived experiences of Zambian consumers who adorn their bodies as a means of orienting themselves in the world. Such information will help to provide a fuller picture of heritage in Zambian fashion. Additionally, the idiographic nature of IPA means that this study has a relatively small sample. Further studies could be conducted with a larger group of participants. Lastly, further studies could be conducted with other groups of creative practitioners like tailors who form a large part of the local clothing industry in Zambia.

# Appendix

## Appendix A: Participant request



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE

Dear

My name is Nkumbu Mutambo and I'm a doctoral student at Northumbria University in the Design department. I am conducting a research project entitled: *Heritage in Contemporary Zambian Fashion Design Practice*, and I kindly request your participation. The main aim for the study is to understand the role that heritage plays in the fashion design process within a Zambian context. As such, the study involves an interview of creative professionals as well as an optional observation of their design process.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you may withdraw at any point. If you would like to participate in the study, please read the information sheet and express your interest by emailing me at this address:

**[nkumbu.mutambo@northumbria.ac.uk](mailto:nkumbu.mutambo@northumbria.ac.uk)**

Your participation in this study will contribute to expanding knowledge about contemporary Zambian fashion design practice and widening the discussion around nation, identity, and materiality in a post-colonial context.

Thanks for your time and consideration,

Sincerely,

Nkumbu Mutambo, M.A., Doctoral Candidate, Northumbria University.

## Appendix B: Consent form sample



### CONSENT FORM

**Project Title: *Heritage in Contemporary Zambian Fashion Design***

Principal Investigator: Nkumbu Mutambo

*please tick or initial  
where applicable*

- I have carefully read and understood the Participant Information Sheet.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and discuss this study and I have received satisfactory answers.
- I understand I am free to withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason for withdrawing, and without prejudice.
- I agree to take part in this study.
- I also consent to the retention of this data under the condition that any subsequent use also be restricted to research projects that have gained ethical approval from Northumbria University.
- I consent to my data NOT being anonymized and understand that personally identifiable data may be used in future.

I understand I am free to request anonymity at any time, without having to give a reason, and without prejudice.

Signature of participant..... Date.....  (NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS).....
Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor .....
Signature of researcher..... Date.....  (NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS).....



Project title: *Heritage in Contemporary Zambian Fashion*

Principal Investigator: Nkumbu Mutambo

I hereby confirm that I give consent for the following recordings to be made:

Recording	Purpose	Consent
Photographs	To visually represent the Context and activities of designers	
Video	To capture actions in the design process. To capture interview data	
Audio Recordings	To capture interview data	

Clause A: I understand that other individuals may be exposed to the recording(s) and be asked to provide ratings/judgments. The outcome of such ratings/judgments will not be conveyed to me. My name or other personal information will never be associated with the recording(s).

Tick or initial the box to indicate your consent to Clause A

Clause B: I understand that the recording(s) may also be used for teaching/research purposes and may be presented to students/researchers in an educational/research context. My name or other personal information will never be associated with the recording(s).

Tick or initial the box to indicate your consent to Clause B

Clause C: I understand that the recording(s) may be published in an appropriate journal/textbook or on an appropriate Northumbria University webpage, **which would automatically mean that the recordings would potentially be available worldwide**. My name or other personal information will never be associated with the recording(s). I understand that I have the right to withdraw consent at any time prior

to publication, but that once the recording(s) are in the public domain there may be no opportunity for the effective withdrawal of consent

Tick or initial the box to indicate your consent to Clause C

Signature of participant..... Date.....

Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor

..... Date.....

Signature of researcher..... Date.....

Clause D: I also consent to the retention of this data under the condition that any subsequent use also be restricted to research projects that have gained ethical approval from Northumbria University.

Tick or initial the box to indicate your consent to Clause D

Signature of participant..... Date.....

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS).....

Signature of Parent / Guardian in the case of a minor

.....

Signature of researcher..... Date.....

(NAME IN BLOCK LETTERS).....

## Appendix C: Participant profile

The following section includes a brief description of each brand and participant interviewed in this study.

### *Banji Chona of Nkanda*

Nkanda is a jewellery brand Founded by Banji Chona. The brand offers a range of items like earrings, necklaces and bracelets made from ethically source materials from Zambia like glass beads and copper. Nkanda can be purchased in Lusaka at Lusaka Collective.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/shopnkanda/>

## **Kasanga Tambo of Afro-Retro Fashion**

Afro-Retro Fashion is a clothing Label that deals mainly in menswear but also sells unisex pieces. Founded by Kasanga Tambo, the brand is sold mainly via postings on Facebook. Offering a range of casual and sportswear-inspired RTW garments, Afro-Retro Fashion also offers custom design and tailoring services.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/AfroRetroFashion/>

## *Tendai Lwenje of Lwenje*

Lwenje is a clothing brand that primarily provides costume design and tailoring services. Founded by Tendai Lwenje, who often creates garments for a range of occasions like weddings, Kitchen parties and Chilanga-mulilos, the brand is popular among celebrities and socialites.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/LWENJE01/>

### ***Ruth Mooto of My Perfect Stitch***

My Perfect Stitch is a lifestyle brand that offers clothing, accessories, and home goods. Founded by Ruth Mooto, the label has both RTW offering as well as custom design services. My Perfect Stich can be purchased directly by contacting the brand via email or Whatsapp.



Source: <https://www.myperfectstitch.co.zm/>

<https://www.facebook.com/myperfectstitch/>

## ***Faith Kabenda of Fay Designs***

Fay Designs is a womenswear label founded in 2003 by Faith Kabenda. The brand specialises “in both Afrocentric and Western tailor-made clothing”. Though the brand does sell RTW garments, it is focused mainly on custom orders. Fay Designs also offers textile printing services and design and garment production training courses. Aside from the brand’s store in Lusaka, Fay Designs can be purchased on their website.



Source: <https://fay-designs.com/about-us/>

<https://www.facebook.com/fay2007>

### *Elizabeth Fundafunda of Chitenge-Liza*

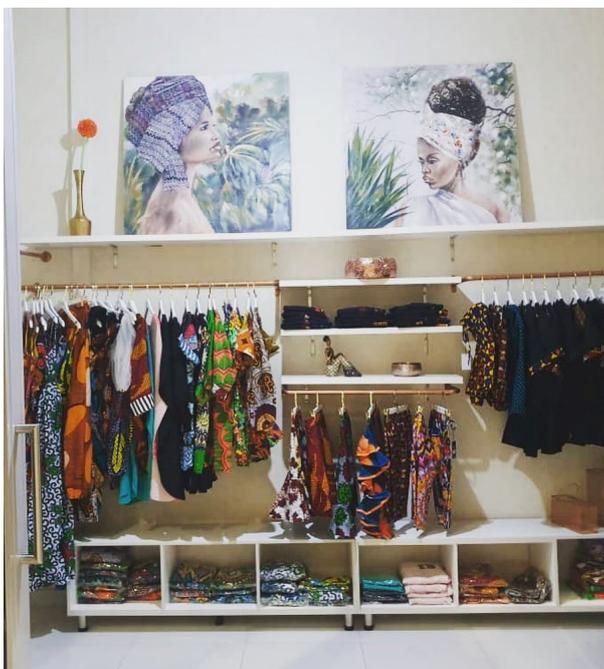
Chitenge-Liza is a jewellery line founded by Elizabeth Fundafunda. Most of the pieces are made from soft textiles like chitenge and can be purchased directly from the designer via posting made on Facebook. Additionally, Elizabeth also takes custom orders.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/chitengeliza/>

## **Mwenge Kapumpa of Lace Designs**

Lace Designs is a womenswear RTW brand founded by Mwenge kapumpa. The brand is produced in Zambia and Nigeria. In addition to its seasonal lines, the brand also offers custom design and tailoring services. Lace Designs can be purchased in the brand flagship store in Lusaka.



Source: <https://www.facebook.com/lacebymwenge/> & [https://www.instagram.com/lace\\_by\\_mwengz/?hl=en](https://www.instagram.com/lace_by_mwengz/?hl=en)

### *Kasubika Chola of Ihintu*

Ihintu is an ethical womenswear clothing and accessories brand based in the UK. Founded by sisters Kasubika and Musonda Chola with the aim “to create pieces that complement a multiplicity of figures”. The brand is produced from recycled materials and features a range of RTW garments. Ihintu can be purchased from their website.



Source: <https://www.ihintu.com/shop>

### *Nakhonde van den Broek of Khonde Zambia*

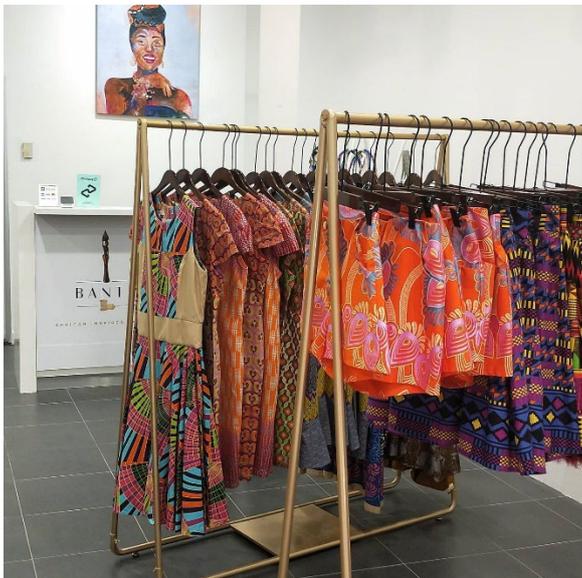
Khonde Zambia is a leather goods accessory line found in 2010 in Zambia by Nankhonde van den Broek. Though production and sourcing were originally done locally, in 2015 it was moved to Italy. According to the brand website, the bags, wallets and clutches are designed in Zambia and made in Italy. Additionally, one of the brand's core values is "Heritage: Identity, tradition, culture". Aside from the company's website, Khonde can be purchased in Zambia at Lusaka Collective.



Source: <https://khondezambia.com/> & <https://www.facebook.com/khondezambia>

### *Harriet Banda-Zwaan of Bantu*

Bantu is a womenswear clothing RTW brand produced in Perth, Australia. According to the website, the brand's tagline is "Bringing to Perth what it never had". Moreover, the brand prides itself on being "handcrafted" locally. The brand is size inclusive and produces seasonal ranges of everyday and occasion wear. In addition to the RTW line, the Bantu does offer custom design and tailoring services. Along with the company website, Bantu can be purchased at its flagship boutique in Perth.



Source: <https://www.bantu.com.au/about/> & <https://www.facebook.com/bantuaus/>

### ***Kasonde Nankhole of Kasslita's Designs***

Kasslita's Designs is a womenswear clothing label founded by Kasonde Nankhole. The brand mainly offers custom design and tailoring services but also retails RTW garments. In addition to her stand-alone collections, Kasonde has recently been collaborating on collections and custom pieces with fellow Zambian designer Kabaso of Nkanda Yatu. Garments can be purchased by contacting the designer.



Source: [https://www.facebook.com/Kasslitas-Designs-1452542451631742/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/Kasslitas-Designs-1452542451631742/?ref=page_internal)

## Appendix D: Emergent theme Sample

Themes	Page	Key word
<b>Contrast/ opposites</b> Remembered vs. present	2,3,3,11	-Really colourful. A lot of colour.... Quite like grey - Then how does one celebrate? How does one express themselves if everything is quite cold and a bit dark?
<b>Expressions of self</b> Fitting in-the inner self Ill-fitting- the body Lack or representation	2,3,4,5,10,12,13	-So I always had to find my own way of expression because, there was no one to represent me,
<b>Disconnect</b> Diluted mix-heritage and self Experiential vs. indirect knowing Stories Linked through family	6,7,8,9,10,11	-whatever but I think for me it is just the stories I hear about when my mum or my cousins or aunty were young. -. I guess there is kind of a slight disconnect with me because I'm not really in the place that my family came from -That's my no part of my answer because everything is kind of a- I wouldn't say watered down- but it's an extremely mixed reflection of heritage and culture
<b>Origin</b> Biological-body Geographical	9,10,16,17	
<b>Material</b> Chitenge(form and embodied) Chitenge as traditional	7,8,11	-Like where so you come from?
<b>My-personal</b>	7,8,9	-My mum wears chitenges all the time either just wrapping on a dress or wrapping on a skirt chilling at home -because I am trying to make a chitenge skirt out of structured pattern and chitenge is not structured at all.  -My heritage, part of my culture mainly -I can only talk about myself and my family

Reflections:

You are from there but don't know what it's like, You have only heard about it in stories from your family.

Stories from your family fill the place of personal memories. This implies that heritage is in part about being in a place literally and experiencing it first-hand. There is an experiential knowing that is missed out on when you live in another country. **Heritage is lived in, through and experientially formed/known.** Moving to another country limits that knowing to learn from stories told by others. There is also a **disconnect** in that she didn't learn it in the expected settings like school but had to seek out the information herself. Heritage is about a difficulty to connect even in her current context as it is not part of the norm. There is missing information, missing experience. It exposes the disconnect she has experientially in terms of a lack of direct experience as in **she is linked to her heritage through her family and their stories.** Her use of **dilution watered down and mix** signals that there is a combination of the heritage of her family's origin and the culture in her present context. Dilution implies that there may have been an undiluted heritage/connection to her origin. She speaks in terms of her heritage expression and self as being mixed. There is a parallel between her experience of being black, African British and a mix of western and her black African culture. **Origin** is discussed in literal terms denoting the biological lineage of family and then in terms of geographical location. As in my ancestry and Zambia. **Chitenge** is spoken of as heritage. She describes it as informing the way she cuts and drapes the fabric. In her sensibility about the body. Chitenge is not just the fabric but the manner in which it is worn is important or used is important. It's not about the visual aesthetic of the print but what the fabric becomes in combination with the body. Unlike the other statements about only hearing stories, in her reference to chitenge she speaks of seeing her family members wearing it. In their day-to-day life at present. She speaks only for herself and her family, not for other Zambians. She uses **mostly my** and doesn't often speak in a collective sense. Her sense of heritage is mediated through her family. She isn't directly connected to it or Zambia. It is only because she was born there and that her parents are Zambian. This perhaps is part of the disconnect.

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### **Image Sources**

- Figure 2.1 Author's own (2019)
- Figure 2.2 Author's own (2019)
- Figure 2.3 Author's own (2019)
- Figure 2.4 Author's own (2019)
- Figure 2.5 Author's own (2019)
- Figure 2.6 Author's own (2019)