

Untangling Fashion for Development

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Latin American cultural memories and historical narratives, embodied in traditional symbols, designs and fabrication techniques, have been leveraged by fashion enterprises seeking to address development issues. Through fashion, these enterprises have built a presence within the development space. Fashion for Development entrepreneurship models, ranging from one-for-one purchasing to sustainable artisanal workshops present a new approach to target persistent development problems. By providing consumers the ability to directly support frameworks that encourage social change, they are democratizing the capacity to make a difference. This paper questions dominant discourses associated with Fashion for Development and attempts to spotlight veiled narratives hidden behind overtly positive narratives and imagery. It employs an interdisciplinary approach to critically analyze and deconstruct online discourse and design adopted by three Fashion for Development enterprises: TOMS Shoes, the Faire Collection, and MARIO TESTINO FOR MATE. The article investigates the role of brands and their fashion products as mechanisms for the construction of identities, the perpetuation of discourses of power and privilege, and the deconstruction and deterritorialization of culture and history. The article highlights the need for further research to untangle impacts from the numerous processes and factors associated with Fashion for Development on both fashion and development theoretical approaches.

Biography:

Nadira Lamrad is a PhD Candidate at the Department of Asian and International Studies at City University Hong Kong. Mary Hanlon is a PhD Candidate in Sociology at the University of Edinburgh. They are also the co-Founders of SocialAlterations.com, an online learning hub for responsible fashion.