

Sustainability and sustainable fashion are buzzwords in contemporary discourse about the fashion world, especially when it comes to critical approach to the fast fashion. Associated regulations are being introduced by Western governments – particularly the European Union (EU) – which stipulates that necessary changes must be implemented at all stages of the distribution chain by 2030. These regulations relate to (a) circular production conditions and recycling of materials, (b) the introduction of digital product passports (DPP), (c) the Green Deal, and (d) the need to eliminate harmful company practices across EU and in developing countries - these are practices that have a negative impact on respect for human rights and environment. EU laws and directives are intended to make positive changes that reduce the overproduction of textiles and garments, improve working conditions, and contribute to environmental sustainability. There is a risk that during adopting new technologies and norms I have mentioned, the RMG industry might end up pushing its female workers out of the labor market - they will again become dependent on their families or husbands. There may also be closures of many factories that do not conform to EU standards. So far, the industry has given uneducated and unskilled female workers empowerment and financial independence.

The main goal of my project will involve finding out (a) if sustainable fashion and the associated plans implemented in developed countries can be transported to the developing country context and (b) how this will affect local communities and those working in Bangladeshi factories. I would also like to find out if and to what extent the sustainable fashion and production discourse functions in Bangladeshi RMG industry. The goal I have described will be achieved by obtaining answers to the questions:

- What kinds of socio-cultural and economic changes are taking place in Bangladesh today?
- Are Western values around *sustainability* and *slow fashion* shared in Bangladesh? How are they practiced? How do social, cultural, and legal norms interact in such practices? And what are the manifestations of these norms?
- How do *sustainability* Bangladeshi RMG workers, factory owners, manufacturers, and activists understand sustainability?
- How is the Global North's discourse around sustainability and slow fashion performing among Bangladeshi factories and between workers on factory floors?
- Do principles related to green and "sustainable" living apply to practices in the everyday lives of Bangladeshi citizens?
- How did the Covid-19 pandemic influence the garment industry? What do workers' lives (both at home and at work) look like in our post-pandemic reality? How are the new closed-loop and recycling materials regulations introduced by Western countries affecting Bangladesh's textile and RMG industries? And what are the concomitant challenges and solutions?

Based on my preliminary research, organizational reports, the available literature, and material from social media, I have formulated two hypotheses (which will be tested via data collection during the qualitative research phase and final analysis): (a) Fashion brand practices related to sustainable fashion (e.g., clothing companies' concerns about both environmental impacts and working conditions in sewing rooms) are not reflected in reality. The discourses around sustainability and responsible fashion must be revised through an in-depth examination of the problems highlighted in the above questions, and (b) women working in RMG industry might be left behind when implementing EU's regulations and directives without proper adjustments to the local labor market, preparations, and training or education. This situation would represent a regression in social development, livelihoods, and equal access to jobs.

A holistic approach can be achieved through ethnographic research carried out in specific local contexts. An ethnographic methodology and methods will allow me to move beyond examining formal rules and regulations. I will be able to reconstruct complex pictures of the relevant practices – pictures that might lead to meaningful local interpretations of the issues I raised and their effects. Through the ethnographic approach, I will be able to reconstruct a local perspective on the industry and the problems workers face in their Ready Made Garment workplaces.

The planned project will help establish wider collaboration with scientists and organizations from Bangladesh developing joint educational activities on women's rights and labor rights (in Poland and Bangladesh), as well as the creation of joint scientific and popular science publications on the fast fashion industry, as well as everyday life in contemporary Bangladesh. Working together on the project will also help reclaim the Bangladeshi people's narrative about themselves and their country. The joint effort will help take a closer look at existing initiatives and support them locally on a daily basis, as well as internationally during long term cooperation. By analyzing the activities of women activists involved in improving working and daily living conditions, it will be possible to obtain a picture of the changes taking place in contemporary Bangladeshi society.