

OUT



Project Report

Edited by

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London Borough of Waltham Forest
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The young people who have contributed their skills, creativity and enthusiasm for the project, and all the organisations who have supported us in one way or another. We wish that many more brands will join CUT, a call to action towards social change. Make the CUT.

ual: london college of fashion



StudioSmall



Lasercut +



Contents

Foreword	5
Executive summary	6
1. Introduction	11
1.1. The System of Knife Crime and Youth Violence	12
1.2. Fashion Activism and Social Change	17
1.3. The Power of Craftsmanship and Collaboration	19
1.4. Storytelling and Awareness Raising	20
1.5. The CUT Project	20
2. Methodology	23
2.1. Participatory Action Research	23
2.2. Data Collection Methods	24
2.3. Data Analysis	25
2.4. Project Participants	25
2.5. Ethical Considerations	25
3. Project development	27
3.1. The Communication Campaign	27
3.2. The Buttons Made out of Knives	32
3.3. The Bespoke Collection of Jeans	36
3.4. The Promo Film	39
4. Conclusions	41
4.1. Overall Outputs	42
4.2. Overall Outcomes	43
4.2.1. Amplifying the Meaning of Fashion	43
4.2.2. Learning about Materials and Valuing the Garments Made	44
4.2.3. Nurturing Diverse Competences	46
4.2.4. Motivations for Enabling Change in Others and in Oneself	47
4.3. Limitations	48
4.4. Recommendations for Future Work	50
5. References	53
6. Appendices	54

Foreword

“CUT demonstrates the power of culture, creativity and conversation to play a key part in tackling some of the most challenging issues facing society. Putting young people at the heart of the creative process has enabled them to influence the shape of the programme, leading to meaningful connections and lasting impacts. It has been a pleasure to work once again with colleagues from London College of Fashion and Catalyst in Communities, building on the practice and partnerships developed in 2019 when Waltham Forest was the first ever London Borough of Culture and developing a new relationship with Blackhorse Lane Ateliers. CUT has enabled a multidisciplinary team to come together to share their knowledge and respond to the experiences and aspirations of local young people, determined to revolutionise the narrative around knife crime and activate positive change”

Lorna Lee
Head of Culture & Heritage Services
London Borough of Waltham Forest

“CUT is an insightful and ambitious project that has highlighted fashion’s potential to stimulate social change in a community as well as bring individual benefit. With research showing the multiple factors inherent in knife crime, working across public agencies, community stakeholders and industry to bring about positive action is essential. Making fashion can bring a fresh perspective to a person’s outlook, tuning in to their natural creativity, whilst developing new skills that can lead to refreshed purpose and a different future. Working together, partners behind CUT have provided valuable action research that has tested the principles to inform the development of the next phase and embed its activities further in the Fashion District”.

Helen Lax
Director of Fashion District
London College of Fashion, UAL



Executive Summary

This report documents the ‘CUT’ project led by Dr Francesco Mazzarella (Research Fellow in Fashion and Design for Social Change at Centre for Sustainable Fashion, UAL) and assisted by Anna Schuster (LCF graduate and independent designer and researcher) in partnership with London College of Fashion (LCF) and London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF), and with funding from the Great Place scheme. CUT is a strategic design-led project connecting creatives across disciplines with the aim to illustrate to young people that they have a choice in shaping their lives to be more purposeful, through fashion, design, and making. The purpose of the project was to turn knives – the very weapons that can take a life – into something that could support a life. The assumption behind this project was that a knife is only dangerous in someone’s hand; up until that point, it is just a piece of metal. To shift this narrative, knives were transformed into buttons and rivets to make a bespoke collection of jeans, donated by Blackhorse Lane Ateliers, a local denim design and manufacturing business. The CUT team organised co-creation workshops and cultural conversations with young people from Waltham Forest to customise and make a collection of jeans, aimed at protecting young lives, through fashion activism and

awareness-raising. Participating in the project, the young people have gained agency and new skills that will likely have a lasting impact on their lives. Besides the jeans, as another output of the project, a film was produced to document the design and making process and the positive impacts the project will have on the young people, the wider community and fashion industry at large. At the end of this pilot project, a fundraising event – consisting of a panel debate, film screening, and pop-up exhibition of the jeans – will be organised. The funding raised through the auctioning of the collection of jeans will contribute to supporting a social enterprise with on-going activities focused on fashion to subvert the potent allure of knife crime.



Project Team

London College of Fashion

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Anna Schuster, CUT Project Coordinator

London Borough of Waltham Forest

Tyler McGill, Great Place Programme Manager
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Project Partners

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Annie Gurney, Blackhorse Lane Ateliers
Sean Paul, Sean Paul Designs
Matthew Benney
Brendan Howell
Robin Lockhart, Through Unity & Catalyst in Communities
David Betteridge

Figure (Left): Annie Gurney and Han Ates, respectively Production Manager and Founder of Blackhorse Lane Ateliers.
Figure (Right): The project CUT team
Photography: Adam Razvi.

Recommendations

For London College of Fashion

- Building on the experiences learned from this pilot project and the partnerships built so far, there is an opportunity to set up project briefs for LCF students (e.g. as part of a Collaborative Challenge or Better Lives unit) to design other aspects of the project (e.g. wider design range, communication strategy, business model for a social enterprise) and amplify its reach. For instance, LCF students can be involved in the design and delivery of the final event to gain first-hand experience in contemporary fashion PR in relation to a social design project.
- CUT can be used as a case study to articulate a UAL-level narrative of value in relation to place-making and inform the next round of Knowledge Exchange narratives at UAL;
- There is an opportunity to strengthen the collaboration between Centre for Sustainable Fashion and Design Against Crime, building on their complementary specialism, and scope and deliver a project – perhaps under the UAL Social Design Institute – using sustainable fashion to inform policy to design out crime and youth violence.

For London Borough of Waltham Forest

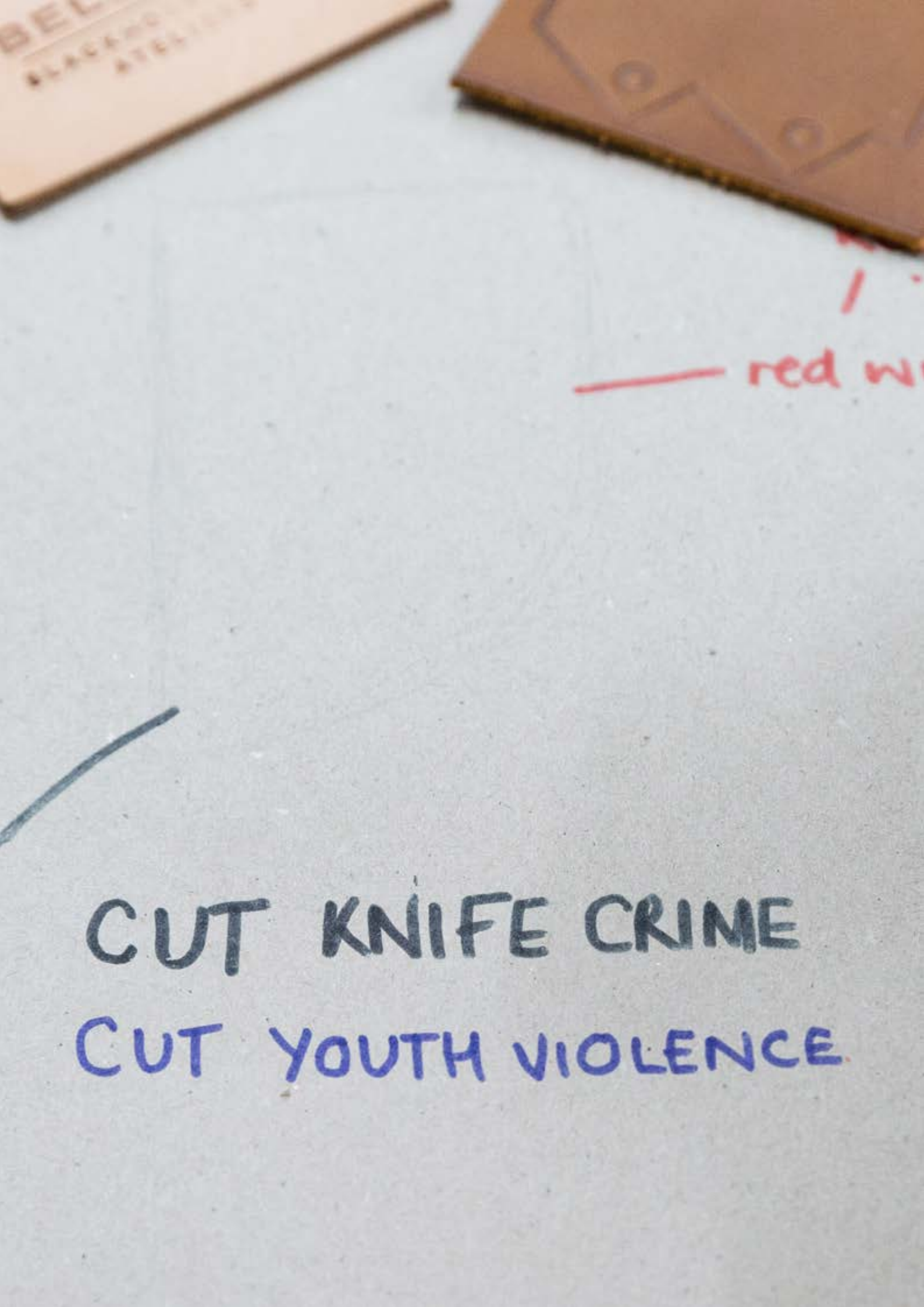
- Learning from this pilot project cutting across different Council services, LBWF could shape future policies and strategies that better support connectivity across different departments in order to take a holistic approach to tackling knife crime and youth violence, through art and design interventions;
- To continue collaborating with LCF and take joint actions to support the aspirations of local young people and help them pave their careers in fashion and the creative industries, strengthening existing partnerships with local businesses;
- To support the development of a communication strategy for CUT – celebrating the creative talent of the young people and the unique story of local businesses – and contribute to its growth as a wider communication campaign.

For the Local Community

- Thanks to the funding that will be raised through the sale of the CUT jeans, we envisage an opportunity for establishing a social enterprise which could support on-going activities focused on fashion to tackle knife crime and youth violence;
- This will enable opportunities for young people to undertake work placements and apprenticeships in local fashion businesses and other creative industries, based on their specific skills and aspirations;
- We also recommend to scale up the pilot project CUT to other boroughs as well as across London and the UK, through a campaign driven by a collective of brands providing opportunities for young people to learn skills and gain employment in the fashion industry.



Figure: Dr Francesco Mazzarella and one of the participants in the co-creation workshop at Blackhorse Lane Ateliers.
Photography: Adam Razvi.



1. Introduction

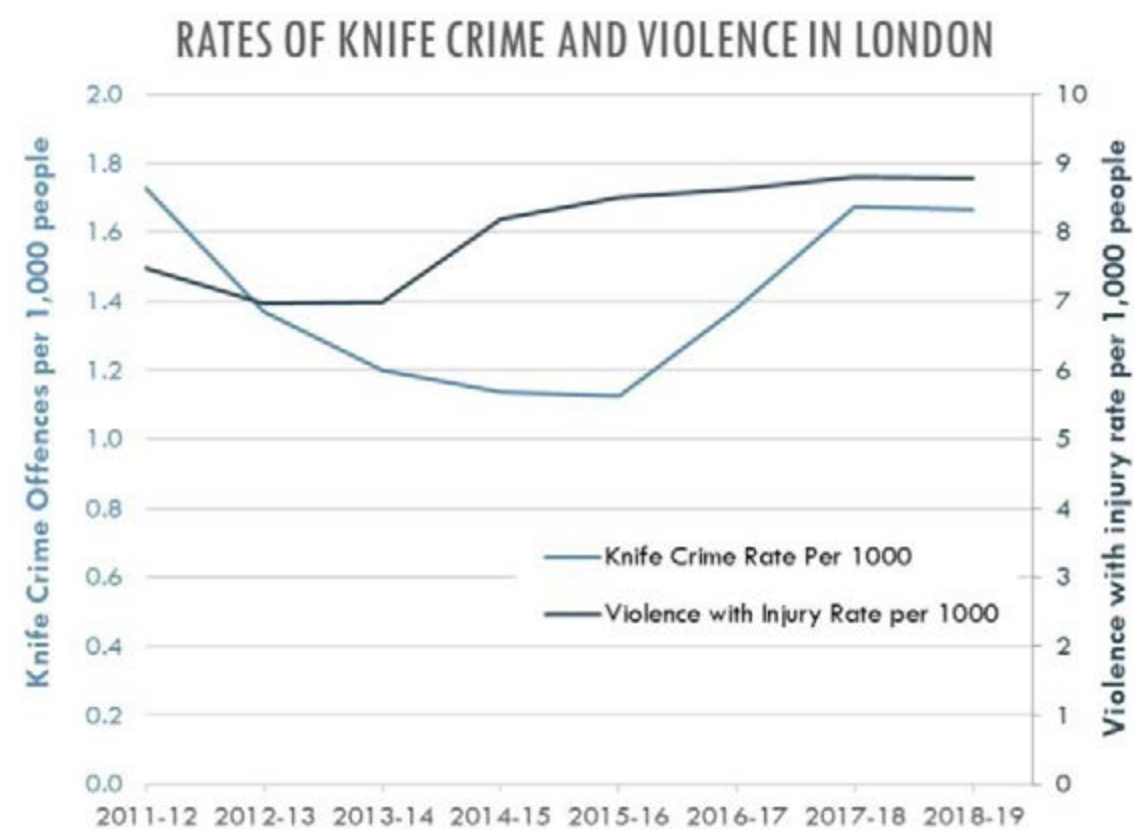
This report documents the CUT project led by Dr. Francesco Mazzarella and assisted by Anna Schuster in partnership with London College of Fashion (LCF) and London Borough of Waltham Forest (LBWF), funded by the Great Place scheme. CUT is a strategic design-led project connecting creatives across disciplines to create a knife crime awareness campaign in Waltham Forest and beyond.

Levels of serious violence between young people in London are stubbornly high. Knife offences involving people aged 10-17 have risen from 2,639 in 2013 to 4,562 in 2019 (Ministry of Justice, 2020). This is not a new story, and not much is changing to address this issue. The idea behind this project was to turn knives, the very weapons that can take a life, into something that could help nurture a life. A knife is only dangerous in someone's hand; up until that point, it is just a piece of metal. Through this project, we wanted to shift this narrative and change the perception of this object. The project ought to bring about awareness of the on-going threats many young people face because of knife crime, particularly in the borough of Waltham Forest, while also contributing to debunking some of the common stereotypes often exerted by the media. The overall aim of the project was to illustrate to young people that they have a choice in shaping their lives to be more purposeful through fashion, design, and making.

The following sections of the report provide an overview of the system of knife crime and youth violence to understand the current state of the art and the need for action research to tackle these issues. The report also presents the businesses and organisations participating in this project using fashion and making to activate positive change in Waltham Forest and beyond. After a brief description of the methods used to meet the aim and objectives of this action research the report explains the project development and the outputs produced. outcomes are discussed in terms of meanings, materials, competences, and motivations. The conclusive part of the report discusses the outcomes of this action research in terms of meanings, materials, competences, and motivations; finally, the limitations of this pilot project are outlined alongside recommendations for future work.

1.1. The System of Knife Crime and Youth Violence

As seen in the chart below, knife crime had its peak in 2017/2018 in London, and actions need to be taken to reduce the number of attacks and injuries (Abelscroft, 2019). Waltham Forest is one of the London boroughs extremely affected by rising levels of violence. Although tackling this issue has become a top priority for central and local government, youth crime is still on the rise. This creates momentum for artists and designers to disrupt this situation, using design activism and co-creation, to redesign the future of young people (Frater & Gamman, 2020).



Rates of knife crime and violence in London from 2011 to 2019.
Source: Violence Reduction Partnership, 2019.



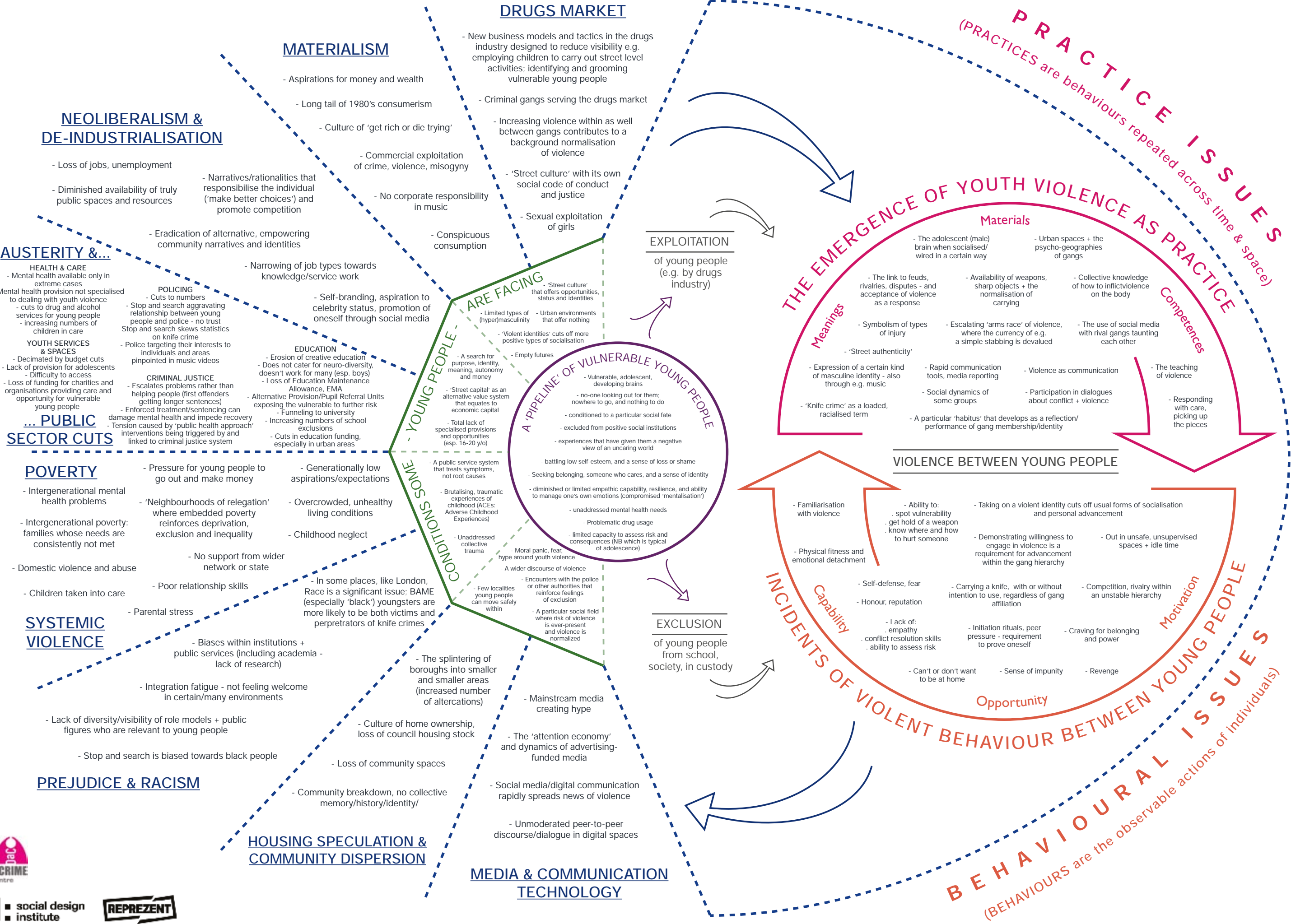
In order to better understand the root causes of knife crime, researchers Dr Jocelyn Bailey and Dr Fernando Carvalho from University of the Arts London (UAL) have mapped out the system of youth violence. Findings from their research show that young people, and their experiences, are at the heart of the issue. The systems map contextualises how changes of structures within the community and the dissociation of communal activities can negatively impact violence between young people and influence behavior change.

For instance, Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are traumatic circumstances that influence young people in their development stage, until the age of 17. This can be caused by violence or abuse at home or in the community, by the loss of a close family member, or an unstable environment and actions that contribute to

making a young person feel unsafe or unstable. Other reasons can be growing up close to people with mental problems, addictions, or within unstable households due to parents' separation. Growing up experiencing ACEs can harm the health and wellbeing of a young person, as well as their education and further employment and development (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2019).

Overall, the systems map depicts how a set of systemic social, cultural, and economic conditions – and their impacts on human beings, especially young people – has produced a contemporary form of violence, between young people, as a kind of social practice. This stresses the importance of including young people in schools, local activities, and community life across diverse age groups (Bailey & Carvalho, 2020).

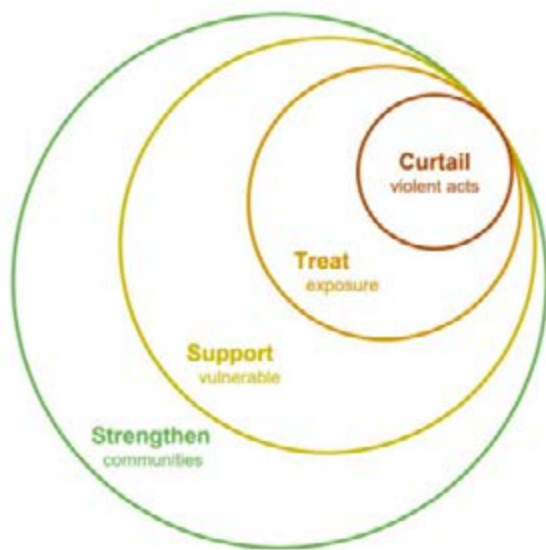
SYSTEMIC CONDITIONS



Given the complexity of the issues behind youth violence, reducing knife crime cannot be achieved by one organisation working alone. It is essential to work collaboratively to effectively prevent and tackle violence at its roots. With this in mind, the 'Violence Reduction Partnership' (VRP) team at London Borough of Waltham Forest adopts a holistic and public health approach to tackle violence, connects the Council, the police, youth workers and key partners to exchange experiences and find ways to reduce violence. As visualised in the following scheme, the work of VRP is structured under four domains to tackle violence and its causes; these are: curtail, treat, support, and strengthen.

VRP is supporting organisations based in Waltham Forest to strengthen the community and develop activities, spaces and opportunities for local young people. The purpose is to create a safe space for young people to grow their potential and cut causes of violent behaviour. Activities are not only developed 'for' but 'with' young people; for instance, the 'Opportunity Bank' aims at making it easier for young people to map up possibilities for work experiences within their community. Since the establishment of VRP in November 2018, several charities and organisations have developed initiatives and campaigns to tackle violence and achieved a 27% reduction in 2019 (Abelscroft, 2019).

THE VRP HAS FOUR DOMAINS TO TACKLE VIOLENCE AND ITS CAUSES



- **Curtail** violent acts at source, pursuing perpetrators and enforcing action
- **Treat** those who have been exposed to violence to control the spread
- **Support** those susceptible to violence due to their exposure to risk factors
- **Strengthen** community resilience through a universal approach

Each 'domain' has a working group made up of partnership representatives.

The four domains of VRP's work the Violence Reduction Partnership to tackle violence and its causes. Source: Violence Reduction Partnership, 2019.

1.2. Fashion Activism and Social Change

This project used fashion activism to raise people's awareness around knife crime, and give young people a voice and agency to contribute to social change. With this ambition in mind, the project involved staff from London College of Fashion, Centre for Sustainable Fashion and Blackhorse Lane Ateliers, contributing their expertise to this fashion activism initiative.

The CUT project was led by London College of Fashion (LCF), one of six Colleges of University of the Arts London (UAL). LCF has been a world-leader in fashion business, media and design, nurturing creative talent for over a century, offering courses in all things fashion. With a philosophy of open and inclusive education, students develop inventive, assertive ideas that challenge social and political agendas with the skills to put these ideas into practice. Through boundary-pushing research, LCF unites design, science, engineering and technology, to redefine fashion. The CUT project is aligned with LCF's commitment to community work, and leverages collaborations with industry, shaping a dynamic network to help young people gain fashion skills, jobs and develop new businesses. In light of LCF's move to its new campus in Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park in 2023, the CUT project also contributes to strengthening collaborations with organisations in East London, fostering economic regeneration and community engagement in the local area. Furthermore, in line with UAL's and LCF's place-making strategy, the CUT project demonstrated the civic role of the University, contributing to make Waltham Forest a place where people and fashion businesses can thrive.

The CUT project in particular was led by Centre for Sustainable Fashion (CSF), a UAL research, education, and knowledge exchange centre based at LCF. The project contributed to – environmental, economic, social and cultural – sustainability through research, and knowledge exchange with a local authority, industry partners and the local community. CUT embodies the 'Better Lives' agenda which is at the core of CSF's and LCF's work, using fashion to drive change, build a sustainable future, and improve the way we live. The project was driven by Dr Francesco Mazzarella, whose research explores ways in which design activism can be used to create counter-narratives towards sustainability in fashion. Design activism was defined by Fuad-Luke (2009, p. 27) as "design thinking, imagination and practice applied knowingly or unknowingly to create a counter-narrative aimed at generating and balancing positive social, institutional, environmental and/or economic change". In this case, building on von Busch (2012), a fashion-led intervention was activated by a

community of people who developed a collection with the purpose of addressing social injustice. In particular, fashion activism was used to challenge the status quo – widespread knife crime and young violence, as well as unsustainable fashion production and meaningless consumption – and activate social change.



Snapshots of the roundtable discussion with the young people at Blackhorse Lane Ateliers. Photography: Adam Razvi.



CUT is part of the 'Legacy of Making for Change: Waltham Forest' project, led by Francesco to build the legacy of the London Borough of Culture 2019. The project explored ways in which fashion activism can be used to listen and respond to locally experienced issues such as deprived youth, skills shortage, fashion manufacturing decline, and unemployment (Mazzarella, 2020). Through the initial 'Making for Change: Waltham Forest' project Francesco led a range of design-led activities, grounded in the themes of makers, fellows and radicals, engaging local schools, businesses, and residents, to develop and retain creative talent in Waltham Forest. Receiving follow-on funding from the Great Place scheme at LBWF, supported by Arts Council England and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Francesco was able to deliver the CUT project, putting arts, culture and heritage at the heart of the local community.

The idea of transforming knives into the hardware of jeans was conceived by Matthew Benney and Brendan Howell, two freelance creatives who approached Blackhorse Lane Ateliers to materialise their idea. Blackhorse Lane Ateliers is a denim design and manufacturing business located in the heart of Waltham Forest and known as London's only craft jeans maker. With 25 years of experience in the textile industry, Han Ates founded Blackhorse Lane Ateliers in 2016, and since then the manufacturing site is open to the local

community, universities, and people interested in learning about denim and its craft production process. In their atelier, they make ready-to-wear selvedge and organic raw denim jeans to reduce the environmental impact and offer a repair service of their products to support a long-lasting use phase. As a community-focused local business, Blackhorse Lane Ateliers is in a unique position to pioneer such a project, developing a limited collection of jeans using bespoke buttons and rivets made from knives sourced from London.

1.3. The Power of Craftsmanship and Collaboration

Denim is a perfect material to explore fabric manipulations and play with structures. Due to the long-lasting quality of denim, you can use different techniques to reuse and recycle the material. You can experiment with traditional methods like patchwork and weaving and develop unique pieces using craft techniques such as embroidery and cross-stitch. Laser technology can also be used for garment finishing and customisation. This is an innovative method to replace traditional processes with more environmentally friendly and efficient solutions.

As part of 'Making for Change: Waltham Forest', Blackhorse Lane Ateliers hosted a research residency led by Anna Schuster (an independent fashion designer and researcher, graduated from LCF). For her residency, Anna investigated sustainability issues related to denim, one of the most water-intensive materials used in fashion and focused on garment finishing processes. In fact, the production of a pair of jeans requires up to 7,000 liters of water (Levi Strauss & Co, 2015) and every year 1.7 million tons of chemicals are used to produce 2 billion pairs of jeans (Webber, 2018). The central themes of the residency were design, craftsmanship and technology. With this in mind, Anna explored and experimented with sustainable and efficient textile and garment finishing processes that would reduce water and chemical consumption, as well as manual labour and production

time. As part of the residency, Anna visited Jeanologia in Valencia, Spain, the world leader in sustainable and efficient finishing technologies for textiles and other industrial applications. Anna used laser technologies to understand their function and how they could be integrated into the design process to customise jeans and develop new UK denim wash aesthetics.

At the end of the residency, a meeting was organised between LCF, LBWF and Blackhorse Lane Ateliers to discuss opportunities for future projects to nurture the partnership established; this way the CUT project came to life. Francesco and Anna activated the necessary partnerships to make the project happen. Sean Paul was involved to design and prototype the buttons, Octagon Precision transformed the knives into buttons using water jet technology, LaserWorks engraved the surface of the buttons using laser technology, and Colour Graphics screen printed the inside pockets of the jeans. This way, through a new design and craft production process, we have shifted the perception of knives as something negative into something positive, and created a new narrative around it



Figures (Left): Blackhorse Lane Ateliers. Figures (Right): Anna Schuster showing an example of denim customisation. Photography: Adam Razvi.



1.4. Storytelling and Awareness Raising

Besides the fashion design and making element of the project, we also wanted to build a campaign to raise people's awareness around knife crime issues. For a successful campaign to address a young audience, the project's authenticity needs to involve young people (Stanley, 2017). As a source of inspiration, we referenced the (RED) campaign (<https://www.red.org>) which partners with iconic brands that contribute profits from the sale of (RED)-branded products and experiences to the Global Fund to fight AIDS (offering prevention, treatment, counseling, HIV testing, and care services to those affected) and more recently also the COVID-19 pandemic. With this in mind, we facilitated a series of co-creation workshops and cultural conversations with the young people to co-design the brand name, logo, and build elements of a communication campaign. Based on the ideas of the young people, design agency Studio Small developed the brand identity of CUT, including logo and symbols to be engraved on the buttons, and a design to be screen printed inside the pockets of the jeans. This was conceived as a positive message about opportunities available for young people in the fashion and creative industries. Furthermore, to amplify the story of CUT, David Betteridge directed and produced a promo-film film to document the project. This will be used as part of a communication campaign created as a call to action for other fashion brands, investors, and policy-makers to join CUT and activate social change.

1.5 The CUT Project

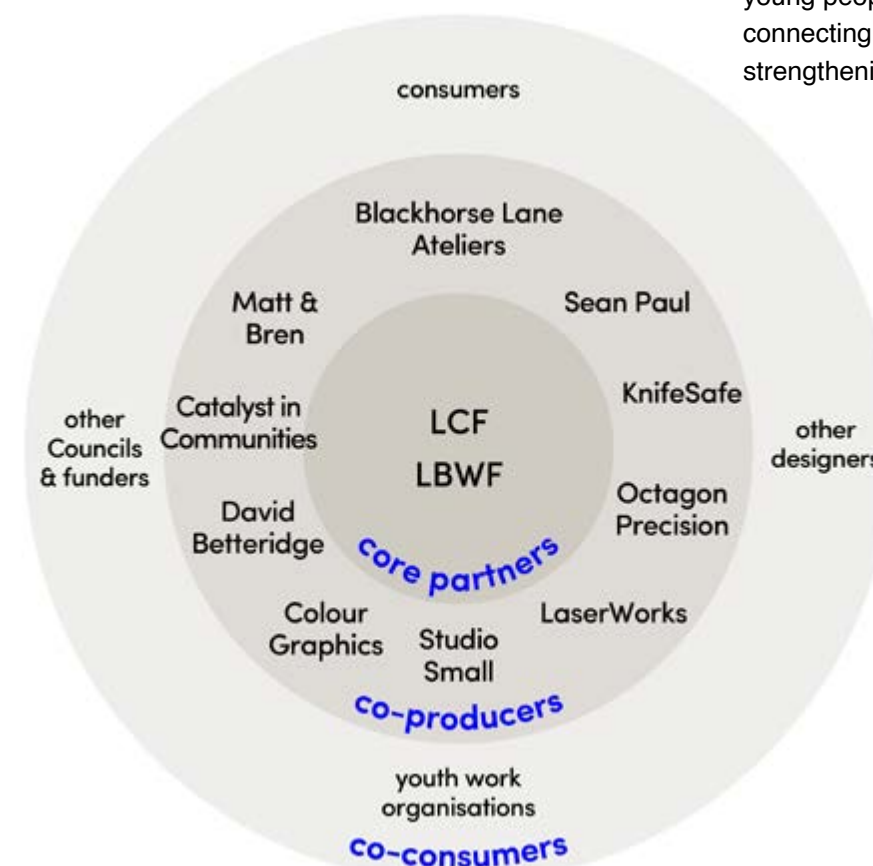
The aim of the CUT project was to illustrate to young people that they have a choice in shaping their lives to be more purposeful through fashion, design, and making. To meet this aim, the following objectives were set out:

- To conduct cultural conversations with local young people and other stakeholders to develop a communication strategy and knife awareness campaign.
- To facilitate a series of co-creation workshops with local young people to customise a collection of jeans whilst gaining design, making, and entrepreneurial skills.
- To document and evaluate the positive changes the project will likely activate in people's lives.

As a lead researcher and project manager, Francesco activated the necessary partnerships to make the project happen, as illustrated in the stakeholders' map illustrated below.

With the help of the Metropolitan Police, we established a partnership with KnifeSafe, a company whose mission is to disarm the streets of the UK, by providing venues (such as tourist attractions, night time economy venues, and government institutions) with bins where knives can be safely disposed of. The standard procedure is to collect the knives and send them to a recycling facility where knives are melted down into metal sheets. However, for this project we hacked this process, and we managed to secure the knives before they are recycled in order to transform them into customised fashion items, thanks to the design and making skills of craftsman Sean Paul, other manufacturers (Octagon Precision, LaserWorks, Colour Graphics) and most importantly Blackhorse Lane Ateliers, which produced 150 pairs of jeans in their factory using bespoke buttons and rivets.

Another key element of the project was to involve local young people in the project's concept development and to provide them with opportunities for learning new skills and make a positive impact on their community. For this purpose, we partnered with Robin Lockhart from charities Through Unity and Catalyst in Communities. As a youth worker and resident of Waltham Forest himself, Robin shared with us invaluable knowledge about the borough and the systemic issues around youth violence, and provided us with access to the young people who are at the core of the project. This way, we involved the young people in initiatives happening in their borough, connecting them with local designers and makers, and strengthening a sense of community and place.



Map of stakeholders involved in the CUT project



2. Methodology

This chapter provides an overview of the methodology adopted for the project. It outlines the overall research strategy, and the methods adopted for data collection and analysis in order to address the aim and objectives of the project.

2.1. Participatory Action Research

The main purpose of the project was to empower local young people, by giving them the skills, voice and agency to contribute to social change and sustainability. The research also sought to develop fresh insights in relation to the emerging field of design activism, exploring the potential for fashion and making to subvert the potent allure of knife crime and redesign youth futures. With this in mind, the project involved an in-depth investigation of qualitative data collected from a purposively selected group of young people participating in the research, using Participatory Action Research (PAR) as a research strategy (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2003). A collaboration between the project team and the participants was created to explore systemic issues triggering youth violence within a specific research context (i.e. Waltham Forest) and enable the development of a social design intervention, to address the very same issues. To enable the project to be conducted from an insider's point of view, with first-hand understanding of the participant's day-to-day realities and their diverse social worlds, the project team paid particular attention to establishing inclusive relationships with the young people involved and gathered rich insights and direct knowledge of their experiences. Furthermore, collective making and collaboration with creatives across disciplines informed the research process and influenced the design outcomes (Raymond, 2013).

Roundtable discussion with the young people.
Photography: Adam Razvi.

2.2. Data Collection Methods

Multiple methods were used throughout the project to collect qualitative data and address the project aim and objectives:

- Literature was reviewed to explore the multiple factors inherent in knife crime and understand the systemic social, cultural and economic conditions that produce a contemporary form of youth violence as a kind of social practice. Furthermore, desk research was conducted to gather information about existing similar projects in Waltham Forest and beyond, and identify potential partners for the collection of knives, production of the buttons, jeans, and so on.
- The secondary research was complemented by unstructured interviews (Robson, 2002) with members of the Design Against Crime research centre at UAL, members of LBWF (e.g. Violence Reduction Partnership, and Connecting Communities teams), the metropolitan police, and local organisations working with young people to prevent knife crime (e.g. Project Zero WF, thinkFOUNDATION, Catalyst in Communities, Steel Warriors, etc.) or involved in awareness campaigns (e.g. Cooper Collective). These initial consultations – captured in the form of field notes – contributed to developing an informed perspective on the subject of the project to guide the research.
- To start the participatory action research, a roundtable discussion (Crabtree & William, 1992) was organised as an informal forum for the project team to present the overall aim of the project and enable dialogue with the participants to gather meaningful insights and individual interpretations of life stories to ensure the project was relevant to them (Roberts, 2002). This ‘cultural conversation’ allowed the young people to meet the project team, share their experiences and diverse perspectives to then inform the generation of ideas for the customisation of the buttons and jeans. In this session, Han Ates and Annie Gurney from Blackhorse Lane Ateliers gave an overview of denim and its material properties, and facilitated a collective discussion around the impacts of jeans production on the environment and the importance of making sustainable design decisions. The young people had also the opportunity to observe the whole process of producing jeans and gain insights into the management of a small business, the importance of branding, storytelling, and networking to shape relationships with suppliers, clients and the local community.
- A co-creation workshop was then conducted as an act of collective creativity applied and shared by people participating in the project, as stated by Sanders and Stappers (2008). During the workshop at Blackhorse Lane Ateliers, the design facilitators used a set of tools to encourage the participants to generate ideas for bespoke garments and develop a communication campaign.
- Prototypes were made by Sean Paul to experiment with diverse processes to upcycle the metal from the collected knives. Since this is not a standard industrialised production, Sean adopted a trial and error process, which required time and specialist know-how, as well as sustainability considerations for replicating the process for commercial purposes. After initial prototypes using laser cutting, in the end, water jet was deemed the most suitable process for transforming the knives into buttons, and their surface was engraved through laser technology. Another element of the prototyping process involved the development of the denim range, considering different options for customising the jeans by embedding the ethos of the CUT project and doing it in commercially viable ways. Since the jeans were to be produced in a limited edition to be auctioned, it was essential to keep the design unisex, simple, and straightforward, reflecting the aesthetic of Blackhorse Lane Ateliers and attracting a broad target customer group.
- Questionnaires were conducted to gather anonymous feedback from the project participants and gain insights on how to improve the subsequent steps of the participatory action research. In particular, a questionnaire was filled by the young people at the initial session, and an online survey was filled at the end to evaluate the overall project. The questionnaire and survey allowed gathering of information in relatively simple and quick ways; to counter the relative lack of in-depth answers, the responses were complemented by collective discussion with the whole group of young people, led by the project team.

2.3. Data Analysis

Over the course of the research project, large amounts of qualitative data were collected, in various formats, such as text, post-it notes, audio recordings, filmed footage, and photographs. The data was thematically analysed, through a manual and iterative process, to synthesise data in relation to codes, make comparisons between identified themes and draw conclusions from the findings (Miles and Huberman, 1994). In the thematic analysis, some themes were deduced a priori from the literature (e.g. meanings, motivations, materials, and competencies, as identified in the systems map developed by Bailey and Carvalho, 2020), whilst other codes emerged from the data through an inductive process (Sadler, 1981).

2.4. Project Participants

Due to the qualitative nature of this participatory action research seeking in-depth engagement with participants to gather rich insights on the systemic issues inherent to youth violence and develop a social design intervention to tackle these issues, the project team focused on a small sample size. Adopting a purposive sample strategy, the participants were selected as they met specific criteria: being aged between 18 and 27, living in Waltham Forest or close by, having diverse backgrounds, being affected by, or feeling strongly about people who carry knives, and having a story to tell, through fashion and design. Having these criteria in mind, youth worker Robin Lockhart helped us recruit participants amongst his network of members of charities Catalyst in Communities and Through Unity. In the end, seven young people aged between 18 and 27 (2 guys and 5 girls) accepted to participate in the project. The young people live in or near Waltham Forest and have diverse cultural backgrounds (European, African, and Caribbean). The participants were involved in projects organised during the London Borough of Culture 2019 but the majority of them had neither undertaken fashion design or making activities based in the borough nor had been involved in projects in collaboration with fashion design and manufacturing businesses before. Although the small size of the sample, this group of participants was deemed suitable to engage in a project delivered during the COVID-19 pandemic, following government guidelines in terms of social distancing.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

To conduct this participatory action research project, it was essential to follow ethical considerations to protect the participants and their personal data. The project followed the standards and codes of conduct defined by the Research Ethics Sub-Committee at UAL. An ethical clearance checklist and risk assessment forms were compiled by the lead researcher and validated by the University. The young people were provided with an information pack containing details about the project's purpose and delivery of related activities, as well as information about their right to withdraw their contribution to the project at any time. At the first session, all the participants filled and signed an informed consent form, agreeing to take part in the project and for their contributions to be recorded – via text, audio, photographs and film – for inclusion in this report, and any research outputs (i.e. 3 minutes promo film, social media, website, and future publications) for the purpose of promoting the project.



One of the young people participating in the project. Photography: Adam Razvi.



3. Project Development

The CUT project aimed at illustrating to young people that they have a choice in shaping their lives to be more purposeful through fashion, design, and making. For this purpose, the project team engaged a group of young people from Waltham Forest and involved multiple stakeholders to design and produce buttons and rivets (made out of knives), a bespoke collection of jeans, a short film, and a communication campaign. This chapter reports on the development of each element of the project.

3.1. The Communication Campaign

The development of the communication campaign was a part of the co-design workshop facilitated with the young people at Blackhorse Lane Ateliers. Based on a first proposal and the young people's feedback, Studio Small designed the brand identity for the pilot project, including a name, visual logo, and a communication strategy. We attempted a participatory branding activity with the young people to make sure that the project name was resonant and meaningful to them and that they could feel co-ownership of the project and its identity. In the end, we collectively decided to call the project CUT, a simple, short and catchy word to represent the cut from knife, cuts of fabrics, but critically also the cuts in government support to prevent knife crime. We also explored the idea of using CUT as an acronym to explain the project more in depth in other communication materials. With this in mind, the young people suggested the following options:

CUT

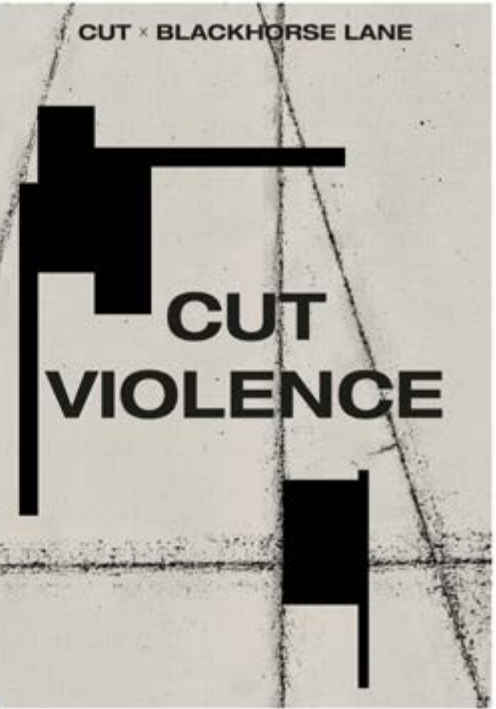
- CUT: Creative Undiscovered Talents
- CUT: Change Unify Transform
- CUT: Cutting-Edge Unisex Trousers
- CUT: Community United Together

Based on a first proposal and the young people's feedback, Studio Small designed a brand identity for the pilot project, including a name, visual logo, and a communication strategy.



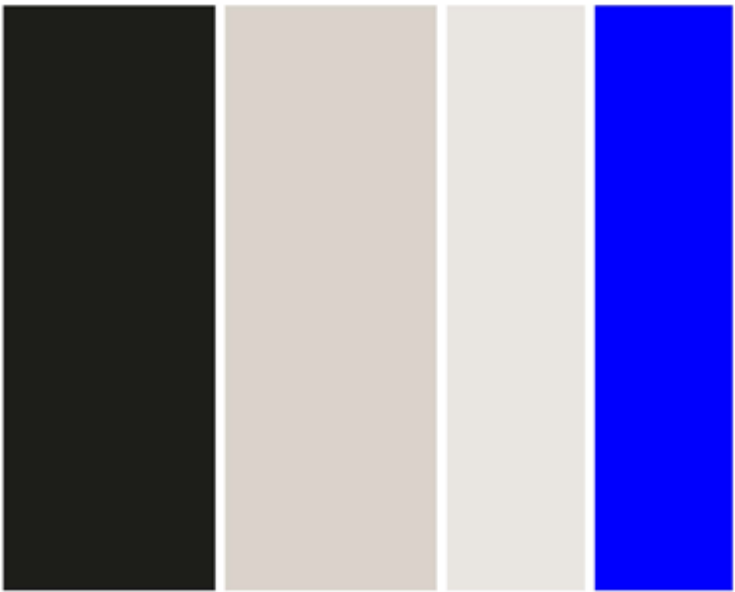
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CUT
YOUTH
VIOLENCE

CUT
KNIFE
CRIME





For the young people, symbols (such as wing and heart, stylised knives, forget-me-not flowers) as a communication tool played an essential role as a communication tool.



Studio Small drew inspiration from those ideas and developed a clean and simple heart symbol designed in a style similar to the CUT logo.



Studio Small also developed some ideas of how the CUT identity could be used by other designers to develop customised fashion items as part of the campaign, as illustrated in the Figures below.

CUT x MHL,
CUT x Paul Smith
CUT x RÆBURN
CUT x Supreme



Beyond the timeframe of this pilot project, a final launch event will be delivered at UAL in 2021 (as part of LCF Better Lives series) to present the project to the public. It will consist of a panel discussion (in collaboration with the Design Against Crime research centre at UAL), film screening, pop-up exhibition (showcasing the project development process and the collection of jeans customised in collaboration with the young people), and charity auction (to sell a number of the jeans that have been produced). Press, designers, brands, fashion industry stewards, and the public will be invited at the event in order to attract as much attention as possible on the opportunity to join the network activated through project CUT and create their own fashion activism products contributing to growing the campaign locally, nationally and beyond.

3.2. The Button Made out of Knives

Knives have been the core of the project. This project contributed to shifting the common negative perception of knives as something that can take a life into something that can help nurture a life: bespoke elements of a design range aimed at raising awareness around knife crime. The first step in this process implied sourcing the knives. Thanks to the help of the Metropolitan Police, we managed to receive 270 knives from KnifeSafe, an organisation that collects knives in boxes to make public places and venues safer and securely disposes of them, by crushing the metal. They then sell the recycled metal in order to raise money to support anti-knife crime charities.

Generally, stainless steel knives are an alloy of steel, carbon & chromium which have been hardened to retain its edge sharpness. The hardness of the blade presented a challenge when trying to rework the knife using traditional workshop techniques such as cutting with a hacksaw, machining using milling techniques and grinding. The knives could have been heat treated to remove the hardness but this would have meant removing the handles and keeping only the blade, and this would have added an additional manufacturing process and increased the cost of the buttons.

The criteria which we used for selecting a suitable process for manufacturing the buttons are listed below:

- Being capable of cutting the knife as it is (no heat treating or removal of handles);
- Being cost effective;
- Providing a clean cut without large burrs to minimise post processing;
- Being capable of cutting holes for the needle and thread to pass;
- One process to cut the button shape and the holes.



The initial thought was to use laser cutting as this process is quick and is widely used in industry to cut a multitude of materials including stainless steel. However, after trialing laser cutting, we concluded that this process:

- Is fast;
- Not flexible – the laser does not like the change in dimension of the knife as it thins out towards the knife edge;
- Very expensive to set up with regards to positioning each knife for the laser to cut;
- The cut pieces have a heat affected zone characterised by a brown blue edge;
- Does require minimal post processing to remove slight burrs and support tag;
- Does not like reflective surfaces.

In general industrial applications, laser cutting is used to cut large sheets of material of uniform thickness. Because of the cost involved in setting up each knife, we decided that it was unsuitable for our requirements.



The second trial conducted was using water jet cutting. In this process, water is mixed with fragments of garnet and, under high pressure, it is used to cut most materials, including ceramics, wood, stainless steel, porcelain. Through trialing water jet cutting, we were able to conclude that this process:

- Is slower
- Is highly accurate
- Is flexible and can cut materials of varying thickness;
- Involves cold cutting and does not create a heat affected zone;
- It does require minimal post processing to clean up edges and support tag
- Is cheaper due to the set up cost of positioning each blade.

Based on these results, water jet cutting was deemed the best process for our requirements. The Figures below show the buttons cut through water jet from stainless steel knives. They were cut as an air-fix arrangement to prevent them from getting lost, as they are suspended over a water tank during cutting.

Through this process, the blades of the knives were cut into the metal hardware required for each pair of jeans, as follows:

- 1 x 17 mm diameter waistband buttons;
- 4 x 14 mm diameter buttons for the fly;
- 6 x washers for the rivets.

At the co-design workshop, we invited the young people to customise the surface of the buttons, using some templates we provided. The following rules were set out for the brief:

- To remain within the outline of the shape;
- To consider that there are four holes in the centre of the shape;
- To not make the button too small as it has to be gripped in order to use it.

The young people developed many creative ideas, as shown in the Figures below.

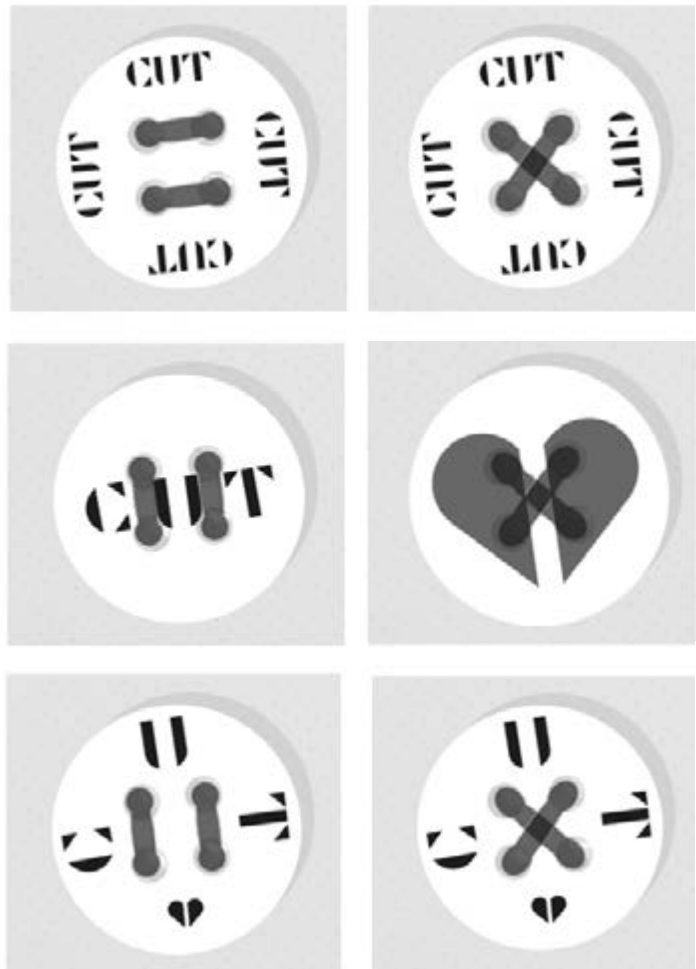
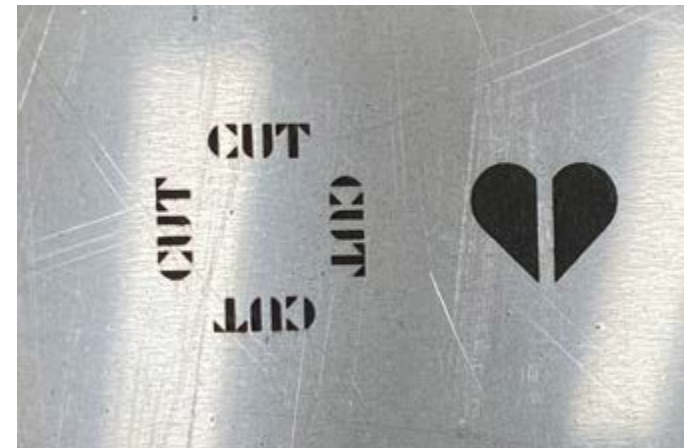


Figure (Left): Co-Design Workshops. Photography: Aran Knowles.
Figure (Right Top): Laser Cut Sample.. Photography: Sean Paul



Water Jet Cutting at Octagon Presicions.
Photography: Aran Knowles.

Finally, design agency Studio Small synthesised all these ideas into a professional proposal for commercially customising the buttons of the CUT jeans. After several iterations, the project team decided to have the CUT logo engraved on the waistband button, and a heart symbol engraved on the second button of the fly. After the design was approved by the young people, Studio Small created the vector file which company LaserWorks used to engrave the surface of the buttons, as shown in the Figures below.



The CUT Buttons.
Photography: David Betteridge.

3.2. The Bespoke Collection of Jeans

Blackhorse Lane Ateliers specialise in hand-making denim jeans of the selvedge and organic raw variety. For the project, they donated the production time and materials for 150 pairs of jeans but also gave the possibility for the young people to get a tour of the ateliers to gain insights into the design and production process. At the co-creation workshop, the young people were asked to develop creative ideas for customising the jeans. The initial ideas were to have stonewashed jeans with ripped details and distressed surfaces. After explaining the making process, the group decided to focus on a raw and straightforward style, a traditional five-pocket unisex jeans. This timeless style was chosen to suit a wider target customer group, who would wear it for longer, and also its production was deemed to be more environmentally friendly. Instead of customising the surface of the jeans through laser treatments, cuts or coloured thread stitches, we decided to screen print a message on the inside pocket of the jeans, to inform the customer about the powerful story behind the project. This idea was deemed in line with Blackhorse Lane Ateliers's products whose inside pockets currently show care instructions.

During the co-design workshop, the young people wrote little poems about knife crime. Based on these ideas, communication designers Matt & Bren wrote a simple messaging for the inside pocket, and Studio Small finalised the graphic design, including the CUT logo and the heart symbol, as shown in the Figure below.

Based on these ideas, communication designers Matt & Bren wrote a simple messaging for the inside pocket, and Studio Small finalised the graphic design, including the CUT logo and the heart symbol, as shown in the Figure below.

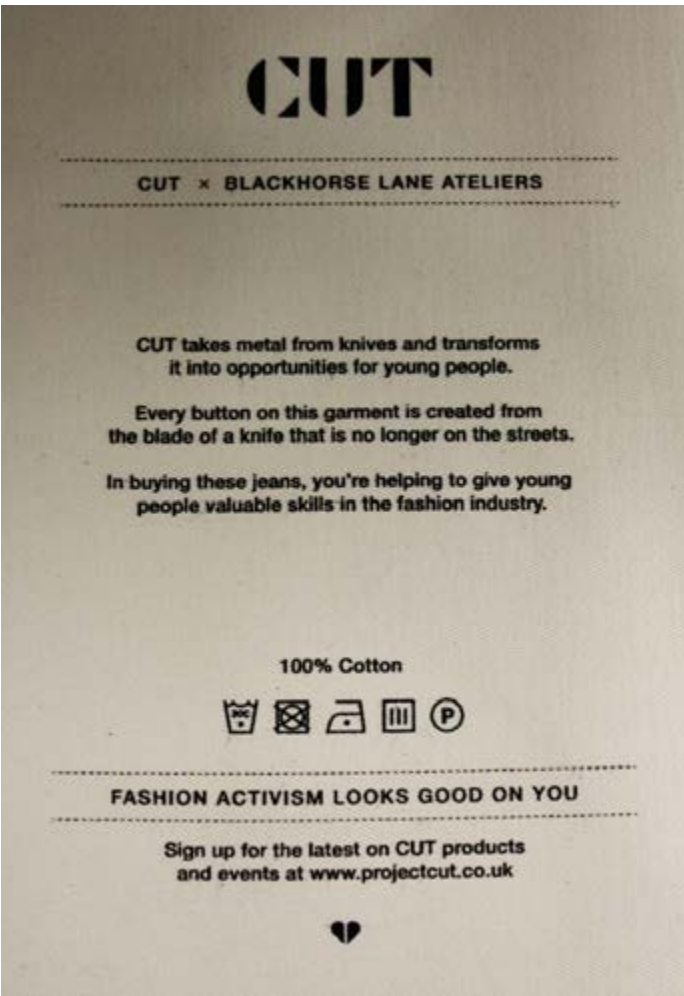


Artwork for inside pocket of CUT jeans designed by Studio Small.

A pair of jeans to
wear day to day,
to remember lives
that have been
taken away

Put down the knives,
let's save some lives.

Is it worth 25
to life
for a knife



Finally, this design was screen printed on the pockets by Colour Graphics, as shown in the photos.



Screen Printing Process at Colour Graphics.
Photography: Aran Knowles.

In view of future developments of the project, we considered approaching London-based young artists of the likes of Akala and Stormzy to create some poems or spoken word, either to be screen printed in future garments or used in communications materials or as guests for a public engagement event, harnessing the power of rap music to engage young people and a wider audience to join this campaign.



3.3. The Promo Film

Throughout the project, a promo film was produced by David Betteridge (assisted by Aran Knowles) to document the diverse stages of development and making: <https://youtu.be/4gtJc53CXsM>

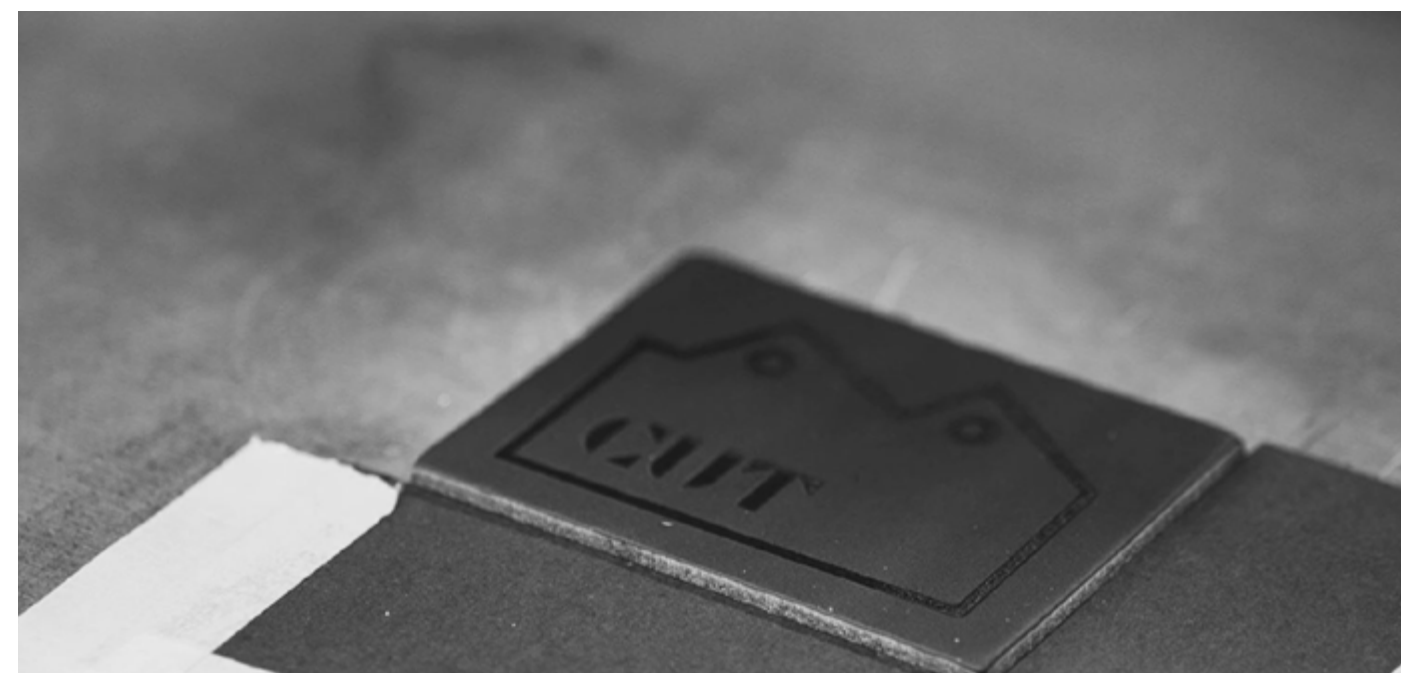
It captures the young people's aspirations for engaging in such a design intervention within their local community to raise people's awareness whilst gaining agency and new skills. Moreover, it shows the transformation of the knives into buttons, the screen printing process to customise the inside pockets, and the manufacturing of the jeans. It also includes interviews with key stakeholders (Francesco Mazzearella, Han Ates, and Robin Lockhart) discussing how collaboration across disciplines (fashion, metalwork, filming, youth-work) can contribute to creating great places to live, work, and do business, as well as how design can be used to shape better lives and contribute to sustainability. The film was conceived as a promo of this pilot project, but also as a call to action for other brands to join the campaign and activate social change.

The film was conceived to reach the following audiences:

- Potential customers to understand the product and the concept behind CUT;
- Fashion brands to get involved in future collaborations (using the CUT buttons on their garments or creating new accessories using the metal of knives);
- Students and academics to explore opportunities for further research projects in this field;
- Policymakers (e.g. local and central government) to further support youth-led and/or design-led activities to tackle knife crime issues.

The promo film will be shown at a final event and uploaded on digital communication channels (i.e. the website www.projectcut.co.uk – when built – as well as those of the project partners, social media, and YouTube) to promote the project as widely as possible and contribute to its sustainability over time.

Figure (Left): Aran Knowles filming during the Fashion Roundtable.
Photography: Adam Razvi.
Figures (Right): Screenshots of the short film.
Filming: David Betteridge.



4. Conclusions

The CUT project demonstrates how design operates within a cultural context and provides room for relational engagements and strategic experimentation. This report documented how the CUT project team engaged, through fashion and making, local youth in Waltham Forest to customise jeans, donated by Blackhorse Lane Ateliers. For the project to be activated, LCF brokered a partnership with local government, fashion businesses and charity Catalyst in Communities to design and make clothing against knife crime as the foci. A crucial part of the project was the facilitation of co-creation workshops and cultural conversations with local young people to design ideas for jean customisation as well as new messaging to prevent knife crime, at the same time as providing opportunities for the youth to learn new design, making and entrepreneurial skills. As a result of the project, the jeans were customised with buttons and rivets cut from knives that ultimately intend to operate as part of a design range to protect young lives, through fashion activism and awareness raising. As another output, throughout the project, a film was produced to capture the positive changes the project activated in their lives. As a next step, a fundraising event – consisting of a panel debate and pop-up exhibition of the collection of jeans customised by the young people – will be organised. The funding raised will contribute to supporting a social enterprise with on-going activities focused on fashion to tackle knife crime.

The project evidenced how fashion can be used as a tool to bring people together, and explore diverse areas. Fashion is not only about one specific aspect, but is interdisciplinary and connects people with diverse

interests. Designing an item is not only about its aesthetics, but it implies finding a common language and shaping a manifesto that is mirrored within the garment. Furthermore, it resulted that, in a collaborative project such as CUT, things not always go as planned, but it is crucial to let mistakes happen, learn from them and build resilience. Throughout the project development, the interdependencies between each element of the making process – and their relative stakeholders – became evident; therefore, building trust was necessary to sustain the relationships between the different nodes of the system.

Overall, the project was a strategic design initiative connected to Centre for Sustainable Fashion, UAL and it offers a generalisable framework that can apply meaningful techniques across different settings linked to diverse subject foci. Such an initiative sought to work locally to map the drivers and barriers for knife crime, co-creating knowledge as well as products with young people and youth-workers, to make a difference in local communities, and to increase relational networks. The potential focus of such a design activist project as well as its creative network, skills and techniques are numerous and scalable and offer opportunities for incremental application of knowledge from local data. Building on the experience of the young people, new skills, relationships and opportunities will be generated. The project also contributed to demonstrating that adopting a public health approach was needed to give youth agency, and to produce social change in order to subvert the potent allure of knife crime.

Figure (Left): Threads at Blackhorse Lane Ateliers. Photography
Figure (Right): One of the young people participating in the project. Photography: Adam Razvi.



4.1. Overall Outputs

The outputs developed throughout the project are the following:

Participants:

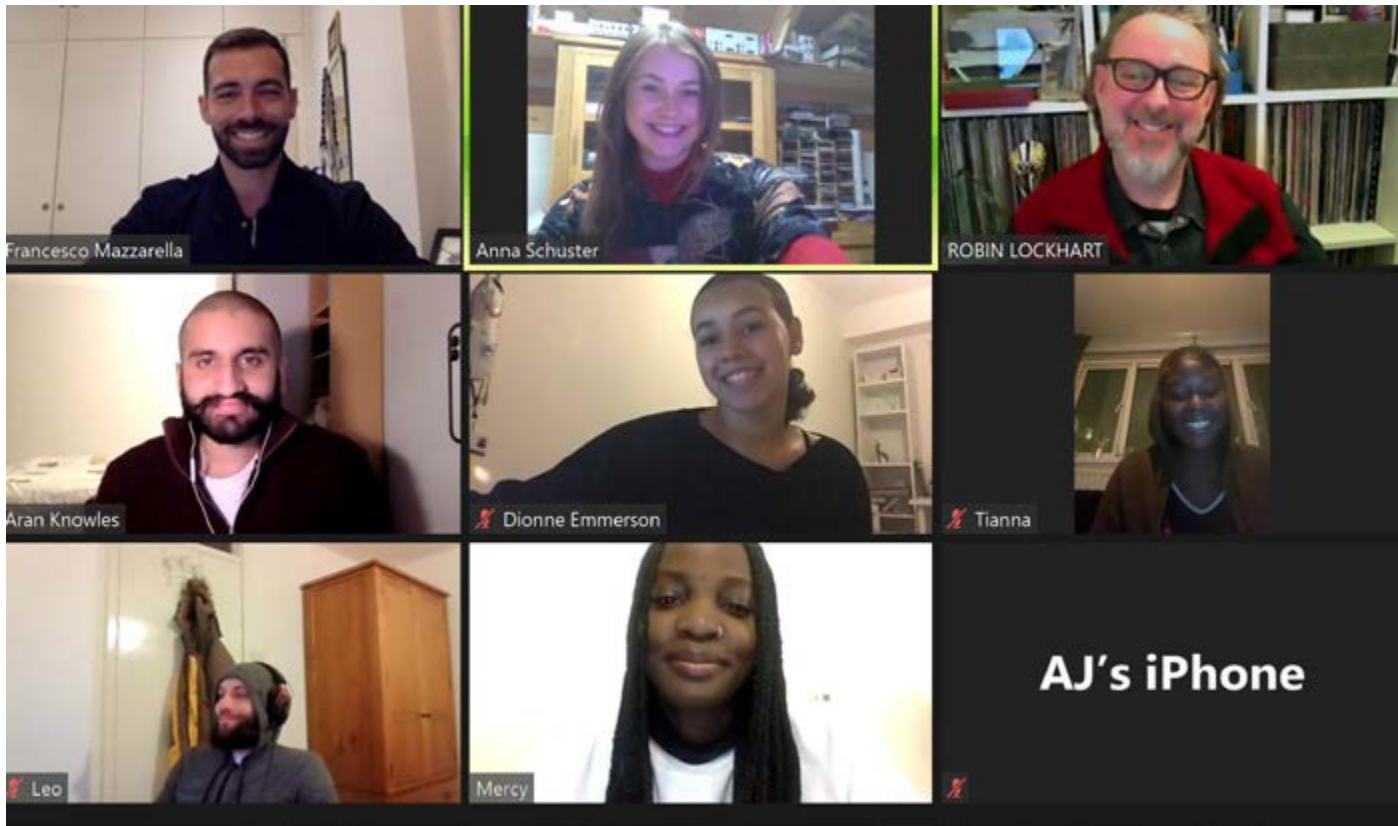
- 9 people across industry and academia constituted the project team;
- 7 young people participated in the project's activities;
- 66 BA students in Fashion PR & Branding from LCF worked on a knowledge exchange brief related to CUT;
- A network of 13 stakeholders and partners was created to support the delivery of the project.

Design Outputs:

- 270 knives donated by KnifeSafe were turned by Octagon Precision into 790 buttons and 900 rivets;
- 150 pockets were screen printed by Colour Graphics following a design developed by Studio Small building on the ideas from the young people;
- 150 pairs of bespoke jeans were produced by Blackhorse Lane Ateliers;
- A short film was produced by David Betteridge, with input also from Aran Knowles;
- A brand identity was developed by Studio Small.

Research Outputs:

- 1 project report;
- 1 presentation of the outcomes of the project at a strategic meeting with LBWF and LCF;
- 1 project brief and educational resources for LCF students;
- Inclusion of the project in the 'Redesign Youth Futures' website <https://www.arts.ac.uk/research/research-centres/design-against-crime/redesign-youth-futures> and 'Beyond Knife Crime' report edited by Alison Frater and Lorraine Gamman, and to be presented at a policy event in Parliament in January 2021;
- Further presentations and publications in academic and non-academic outlets will be delivered in the future.



Online: Final Fashion Roundtable.
Photography: Anna Schuster.

4.2. Overall Outcomes

The results of the thematic analysis of the data collected through a pre-project and post-project evaluation questionnaire (filled in anonymously by each participant, followed by collective discussion) and through participant observations allowed for the outcomes of the project to emerge. These outcomes were clustered into four key themes, deduced from the systems map of youth violence (Section 1.1): meanings of fashion, materials knowledge, competencies developed, and motivations for change. Overall, the project contributed to demonstrating how fashion can be used to prevent the social practice of youth violence. The following sections discuss these outcomes in further detail.

4.2.1. Amplifying the Meaning of Fashion

Throughout the project, it emerged that fashion is seen by the young people as a form of self-expression and identity. However, participating in the project, the young people amplified their perception of fashion, shifting their focus from aesthetics to ethics and using fashion as a tool for social change. The project also contributed to raising the young people's awareness of sustainability and encouraging more mindful fashion consumption behaviours, buying clothes that contribute to make a difference instead of just to express their own identity. Throughout the conversations, it became clear to the young people that it is essential to look beyond a brand's logo and be critical about how clothes are made, considering issues of environmental, social and economic sustainability. The participants acknowledged that visiting a factory and seeing all the processes needed to manufacture a garment contributed to a mindset shift away from fast fashion, and will influence the way they will take care of their own clothes and how they will make decisions when buying new ones in the future. For instance, they showed an interest in buying second-hand clothes, making customised clothes by themselves or repairing them.

„A project like this is bringing purpose and meaning into the fashion industry and it's changing the way we look at it. [...] It is changing our perspective on it, so the association is not just: oh I'm spending my money to look good. I'm spending my money on something that has got a meaning behind it and it's impactful, and me wearing this is going to impact somebody else's life just by wearing a garment; I think this is amazing“ [Participant 1].

The project shed a light on the fact that young people are often accused of being involved in knife crime. We often

miss the chance to give them a choice and the possibility to tell their own stories. Instead, CUT contributed to giving young people a voice and catalysing their creative skills and actions towards making a positive impact on the local community.

“Stories are powerful. Everything has got a story behind it, including clothing and other things people do. I feel that a powerful story can change lives and people's narratives, so it's important to have a powerful story and a positive one as well“ [Participant 2].

The research project also demonstrated the value of fashion as a social practice. The collective act of creativity and making contributed to bringing people together and building a sense of connection to the local community. By creating a comfortable space in which the young people could develop ideas, they also felt safe to openly share their concerns around knife crime, and discuss things they are passionate about, as well as their feelings, perceptions, needs and aspirations. As an outcome, the young people showed to have developed an activist mindset, as they felt empowered to raise other people's awareness and activate them to use their potential to prevent knife crime.

One of the young people participating in the project.
Photography: Adam Razvi.





4.2.2. Learning about Materials and Valuing the Garments Made

Denim is a material that can be found in everyone's wardrobe. However, the initial cultural conversation evidenced a general lack of knowledge about the material, the way in which jeans are made, and the impacts they have on the environment.

Instead, visiting Blackhorse Lane Ateliers, the participants gained insights into the origin of denim, the material properties, the whole process of jeans manufacturing and the environmental impacts of finishing processes. The young people also understood the importance of taking care of clothes to expand their use life, and the impact design decisions have throughout the life cycle of jeans. Consequently, this new knowledge was crucial for the young people to develop meaningful ideas in relation to the aesthetic and customisation of the CUT jeans.

Participating in the project, the young people also started to appreciate denim as a long-lasting material, and the emotional connection that the wearer develops with jeans throughout the use phase. With this in mind, the project contributed to embedding emotional value in the CUT jeans, which are designed to be worn as an act of remembrance of the people victim of knife crime, and the potential of fashion activism to shift the common narrative around youth violence.

„When we do something with our hands and our heart, we are connected to ourselves. And that's a very nice place to be. Today, doing this workshop, I felt that I was connected to you guys. I think that's very powerful, and I feel that this project will create that connectivity“ [Stakeholder 1].

Besides denim, another core material used in this project was the metal of the knives. Participating in the project, the young people learned about different techniques (laser cutting and water jet) which can be used to upcycle the metal of knives into bespoke buttons and rivets. This process of transformation materialises a shift in the perception of knives as something negative towards something that can positively support a life, that is a design range aimed at raising awareness around youth violence. In this regard, the 'Knife Angel' (a statue made by British Ironworks from disposed knives) was also discussed to show how powerful art and design can be to shift the potent allure of knife crimes.



(Left): Two of the young people analyzing the jeans. Photography: Adam Razvi.

„Transforming a knife into something positive and purposeful is the most powerful aspect of the project. Any compassionate human being will resonate with it. It's a beautiful thing“ [Participant 3].

Through the collective act of designing and making, the young people felt empowered to use their creativity to raise people's awareness around knife crime, and to use the power of fashion activism to do so. Based on feedback collected, not all of the participants want to pursue a career in fashion, but all of them acknowledged to have learned something useful which will likely support their own personal and professional lives.

(Right) Last step of the production: Button attached onto the denim jeans. Photography: David Betteridge.

4.2.3. Nurturing Diverse Competences

All the young people demonstrated a great curiosity to take part in the project and catalyse their proactivity towards social innovation and entrepreneurship. The young people expressed their interest in getting involved in positive social design projects like this that challenge the social conditions inherent in youth violence and promote positive actions to prevent knife crime and not focus only on knife crime. In this regard, the project demonstrated the need to create experiences that give to young people a positive perspective and support their own interests and aspirations. A project like CUT does not force people to fit in but allows them to express themselves and form a collective identity grounded on shared values.

It was hard to define a priori the skillset needed to contribute to a project like CUT, which could develop in diverse directions. However, at the end of the project, the young people expressed that they felt overall more creative, even in the way they dress up every day. In this regard, we acknowledge that creativity needs time to be developed, and it is difficult to measure the impact this pilot project had on the young people's creativity within the limited time available for writing this report.

The project shed a light on the interests of the young people and contributed to nurture their talent. Throughout the conversations with the young people participating in the project, it emerged that they are interested in drawing, textile and fashion design, making, customisation, photography, filming, blogging, and training other young people – all interests relevant to bring a project like CUT to life. Therefore, it was natural for the young people to contribute their own diverse skills to the project. With this in mind, it resulted that the project has a great potential to attract many more young people in the future and grow in its scope by tapping into the youth's interests and hobbies and turning them into a professional venture. Overall, CUT gives opportunities for young people to nurture their skills and offers a platform to take responsibility and use such skills in service to society.

„This project can inspire people to come up with their own projects; it can inspire people to change their perception of the world and how they view young people“ [Participant 4].

Throughout the project, the young people also developed soft skills, such as self-confidence, teamwork and networking. Based on feedback received, the participants enjoyed the process of turning an initial idea into something something physical. However, they

expressed that they would have loved to develop a wider range of products and to be more integrated in the making phase. Some participants also expressed their willingness to learn how to make their own clothes instead of purchasing ready-made garments, how to repair their clothes and use them for longer as well as to customise their garments. Due to the restrictions imposed by COVID-19, the involvement of the young people in collective physical activities had to be limited, but in view of future potential iterations of the project, we recommend that the act of experimentation with the materials and the making processes should play a bigger role. In this regard, we envisage that facilitating workshops for the young people to repair their own jeans or customise their garments could contribute to strengthening the emotional connection with clothes, enhancing the making skills and building a feeling of togetherness.

Production process at Blackhorse Lane Ateliers
Photography: David Betteridge.



4.2.4. Motivations for Enabling Change in Others and in Oneself

Since the beginning of the project, we wanted to understand the young people's aspirations, so that we could tailor the activities to suit their interests. Not all the young people were interested in fashion, but they were motivated to take part in a project that connects people from various backgrounds and with diverse skills, so that each of them could focus on the aspect that they like the most and develop their own ideas. Some participants expressed their interest in pursuing a career in the creative sector, and the project offered them an opportunity to gain valuable insights into various industries like fashion, communication design, and film. Overall, the young people were rather open-minded and curious, and participated in the project driven by a willingness to learn and experience something new (beyond their consolidated interests), to collaborate with their peers, to enable change in others as well as to undertake a process of change in themselves.

„I wanna have an impact on my community, create change for the next generation who has not had much luck. We need to be good role models“ [Participant 5].

Findings from the project revealed that youth violence can be triggered by a lack of belonging and some negative group dynamics. To avoid this, it is vital to unlock opportunities for young people, and give them a chance

to feel united and create a common identity by doing good for their environment. This can be achieved through acts of collective creativity. All the participants stated that they have already been engaged in youth work activities, and want to further impact their local community positively. The project also highlighted the true nature of collaboration and the importance of relying on each other and building resilience; in fact, the performance of each member was crucial for the success of the overall project.

“A chain is only as strong as its weakest link” [Stakeholder 2].

The young people expressed to have participated in the CUT project also with the intention to change people's perceptions of things, and create new narratives.

„I want to change the perspective of one thing to another, see something in a new way. A knife could be a massive deal for you: it could be a protection, but like in the message conveyed through the jeans, it is up to a person to interpret it“ [Participant 6].

One of the young people talking about their motivations for participating in the project.
Photography: Adam Razvi.





4.3. Limitations

The project contributed to connecting multiple stakeholders across disciplines and allowed a positive test run for on-going activities to impact young people and the community positively. The participatory action research allowed gathering a variety of insights to inform its further development into a wider campaign. Nevertheless, several limitations were experienced throughout the delivery of the project.

With the help of Robin Lockhart and the network of Catalyst in Communities and Through Unity, we could recruit participants online during the lockdown to participate in the workshops at available time slots. However, we acknowledge the difficulty in building a close relationship with the young people through online interactions, especially since this was the first time they participated in a project with us. Furthermore, due to COVID-related restrictions, we could only involve a small number of participants.

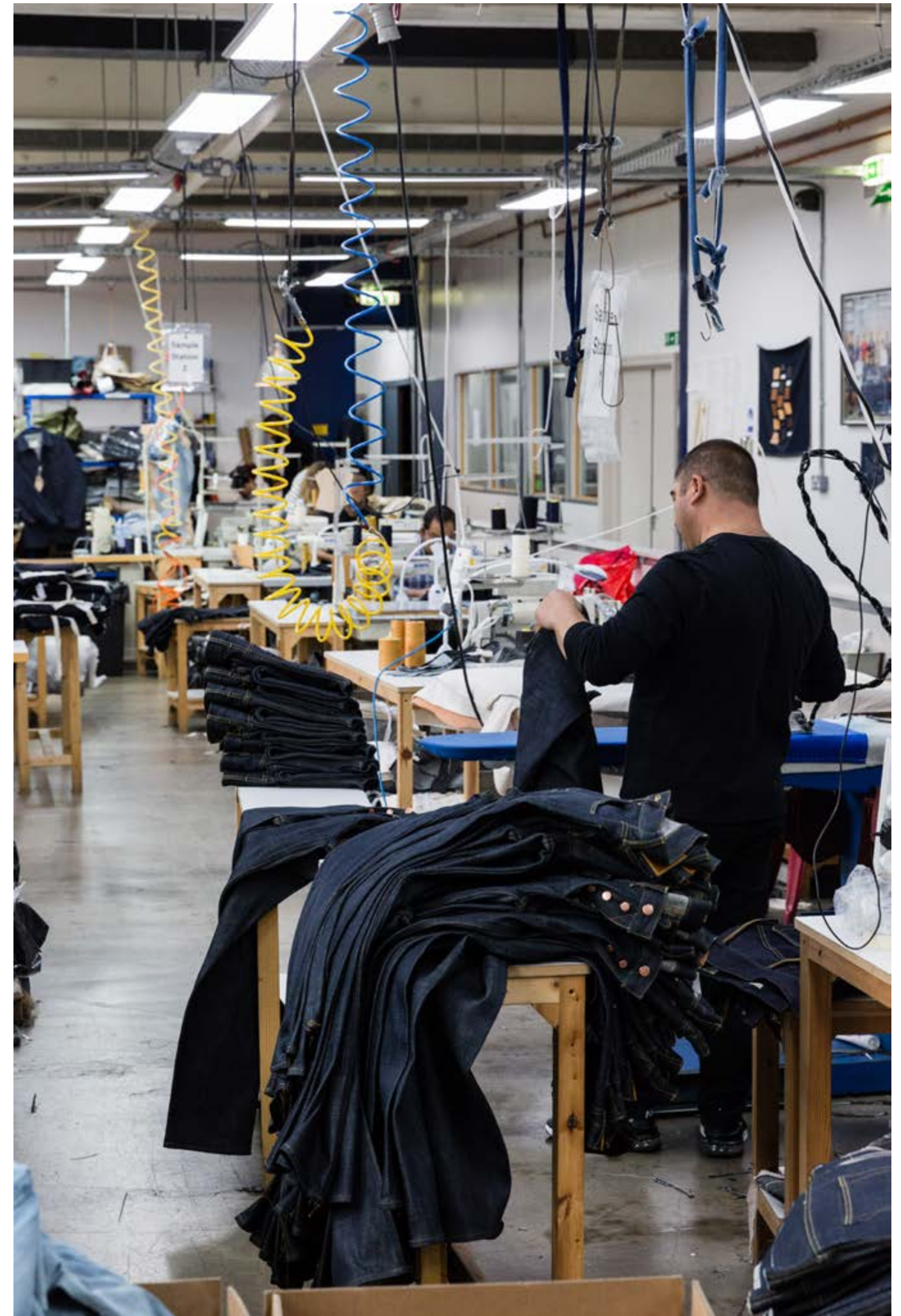
Due to the UK government restrictions and the lockdown imposed in response to COVID-19, the involvement of the young people in workshops at Blackhorse Lane Ateliers, as well as other public engagement activities, were limited. Since the core of the project was the interaction with young people from the borough, we had to act flexibly in response to the ever-changing context

and either postpone the delivery of in-person activities multiple times or adapt some of them to remote delivery (e.g. via Whatsapp or Zoom) when physical presence was not a possibility at all.

Due to the pandemic, the timeline of the project had to be reviewed multiple times and some of the activities from the original brief were postponed. We had to align timelines and deadlines and revisit budget allocations since multiple stakeholders collaborated in different project phases. Thankfully, LBWF agreed to extend the end date of the project, from 30th September to 14th December 2020.

An initial idea for the project was to offer work placement opportunities for the young people in local creative industries, based on their own interests and aspirations. Although this was not possible within the limited timeframe of this pilot project, as well as the challenges local small businesses had to face during the lockdown, we envisage an opportunity for educational activities and work placement opportunities to be offered in the future. In this regard, all the participants expressed their willingness to be involved in future developments of the project.

Blackhorse Lane Ateliers.
Photography: Adam Razvi.



4.4 Recommendation for Future Works

Due to the strong partnership between LCF and LBWF initially established during the London Borough of Culture 2019, the CUT pilot project contributed to sustain the legacy of the 'Making for Change: Waltham Forest' project and amplify its impact. As this funded project has come to an end, we envisage the following opportunities for future work.

For London College of Fashion

- Building on the experiences learned from this pilot project and the partnerships built so far, there is an opportunity to set up project briefs for LCF students (e.g. as part of a Collaborative Challenge or Better Lives unit) to design other aspects of the project (e.g. wider design range, communication strategy, business model for a social enterprise) and amplify its reach. For instance, a knowledge exchange brief has been set up for the 'PR and Branding in the Fashion Industry' unit to be undertaken by BA students for LCF in a.y. 2020/2021. The students will explore how Generation Z can harness the strength of authentic PR strategies in order to shift common perceptions of socio-cultural issues through the lens of fashion activism. The students will work collaboratively to further develop the brand identity and communication strategy for CUT and design the final launch event, considering both online and/or offline options depending on eventual restrictions due to COVID-19. As a result, it is envisaged that they will develop knowledge from an ethical perspective, applying positive social change principles across the industry from the onset, will gain first-hand experience in contemporary fashion PR and will produce concepts that will influence the delivery of the event.
- CUT can be used as a case study to articulate a UAL-level narrative of value in relation to place-making and inform the next round of Knowledge Exchange narratives at UAL. This could benefit from Francesco's membership in the UAL Placemaking working group, and engagement with Dr Patrycja Kaszynska (Senior Research Fellow at Social Design Institute, UAL, exploring the concepts of value and valuation in design practice). In this regard, Francesco has shared the Theory of Change in relation to CUT and the wider 'Making for Change: Waltham Forest' project within the UAL Place-making working group and worked collaboratively with Patrycja and other colleagues to build a community of inquiry around the topic of valuation and collectively reflect on what successful place-making could look like for UAL in the future.
- Project CUT has recently been featured in the report 'Beyond Knife Crime' edited by Alison Frater and

Lorraine Gamman as a design-led project from UAL showcasing what relational engagement youth-led activities through design can deliver. As a next step, the Design Against Crime (DAC) research centre at UAL will launch the report at an event to be organised in Parliament in January 2021 as an opportunity to have meaningful discussions with policy-makers – from LBWF and other boroughs – to ensure people in communities are joining things up linked to a public health approach to youth violence. Building on these engagements so far, we envisage an opportunity to strengthen the collaboration between CSF and DAC, drawing on their complementary specialism, and scope and deliver a project – perhaps under the UAL Social Design Institute – using sustainable fashion to inform policy to design out crime and youth violence.

For London Borough of Waltham Forest

- Learning from this pilot project cutting across different Council services, LBWF could shape future policies and strategies that better support connectivity across different departments in order to take a holistic approach to tackling knife crime and youth violence. We envisage also an opportunity for LBWF to collaborate with Design Against Crime research centre at UAL to find ways for the systems map of youth crime to inform future programmes that adopt a public health approach to tackling knife crime, through art and design interventions.
- To continue collaborating with LCF and take joint actions to support the aspirations of local young people and help them pave their careers in fashion and the creative industries, strengthening existing partnerships with local businesses. It is envisaged that this could contribute to the 'future careers' work area outlined in the partnership plan between LBWF, LCF and Fashion District, working across the education system and industry to help young people get the skills needed to work in the industry and thrive within it.

- To support the development of a communication strategy for CUT – celebrating the creative talent of the young people and the unique story of local businesses – and contribute to its growth as a wider communication campaign. In this regard, we recommend that the promo-film and the photos developed through the CUT project will be used on the Waltham Forest Fashion web page and Instagram account to enrich the narrative for Waltham Forest and attract new makers to the borough. Also, LBWF could help promote the sale of the CUT jeans through pop-up markets which could be organised with a network of local fashion businesses, contributing to strengthening the identity of Waltham Forest Fashion as a brand.

For the Local Community

- Thanks to the funding that will be raised through the sale of the CUT jeans, we recommend either establishing a new social enterprise or supporting an existing one which could sustain on-going activities focused on fashion to tackle knife crime and youth violence;
- This will enable opportunities for young people to undertake work placements and apprenticeships in local fashion businesses and other creative industries, based on their specific skills and aspirations;

- We also recommend to scale up the pilot project CUT to other boroughs as well as across London and the UK, through a campaign driven by a collective of like-minded brands providing opportunities for young people to learn skills and gain employment in the fashion industry. With this in mind, Catalyst in Communities has applied for a grant from Foundation for Future London to develop 'Scaling Up CUT', a partnership project with LCF aimed at engaging young people from four east London boroughs (Waltham Forest, Newham, Tower Hamlet and Hackney) and a number of designers to create a wide range of fashion items using the CUT buttons and rivets or design and make different products using the metal of knives that will be sold to contribute to a fundraising campaign. If the bid is successful, this follow-on project will contribute to amplifying the size and stature of the campaign and activating further social change.

Costumised label for CUT jeans
Photography: David Betteridge.



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CLT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

You will be given a copy of this information sheet.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT?

The purpose of the project is to turn knives – the very weapons that can take a life – into something that could support a life. A knife is only dangerous in someone's hand; up until that point, it is just a piece of metal. In order to shift this narrative, this project intends to turn knives into buttons and rivets to make customised pairs of jeans donated by Blackhorse Lane Ateliers, a denim design and manufacturing business based in Waltham Forest. With the right support, it is envisaged that those jeans will help create a knife crime awareness campaign in Waltham Forest. The aim of the project is to illustrate to young people that they have a choice in shaping their lives to be more purposeful, through fashion, making, and creativity. Furthermore, participating in interactive sessions and communal making, young people will gain skills that will have a lasting impact on their lives. Throughout the project, a film will be produced to capture the journeys of the young people and the positive changes the project will have activated in their lives. A fundraising event – consisting of a panel debate and pop-up exhibition of the bespoke collection of jeans made by the young people – will be organised in January 2021 (details TBC). The funding raised will contribute to supporting a social enterprise to sustain on-going activities focused on using fashion to fight knife crime.

WHO IS CONDUCTING THE PROJECT?

The project will be conducted by Anna Schuster (designer-maker, co-founder of sustainable fashion brand JOA), line managed by Dr Francesco Mazzarella (Research Fellow at Centre for Sustainable Fashion, UAL), and funded by the Great Place scheme in Waltham Forest.

DO I HAVE TO TAKE PART?

Participation in this project is voluntary. After you have read this information and asked any questions you may have, you will be asked to sign an Informed Consent Form. However, if at any time, before, during or after the project, you wish to withdraw from it, you can do so by contacting the project manager, and you will not be asked to explain your reasons for withdrawing. However, once the results of the project are published (expected to be by 30th September 2020), it will not be possible to withdraw your individual data from the project.

WHAT WILL I BE ASKED TO DO?

You will have the opportunity to engage with the project team in a series of design and making workshops. The project starts with a fashion roundtable to get to know each other, discuss topics related to the project and contribute to the development of the brand identity and communication strategy for the project. You will also be asked to re-design buttons and rivets for a bespoke collection of jeans and will collaborate with a manufacturer in order to produce your designs. You will also have the opportunity to add your signature, write a personal message or draw something inside the pockets of the jeans. Depending on the outcomes of the lock down, you may have the opportunity to undertake work placements (with flexible timings, to be agreed with each company) in one of the many creative companies based in Waltham Forest (based on your specific interests), in order to develop experience in diverse jobs around fashion, design and craftsmanship and make a meaningful contribution to your local community.

CUT

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Please complete this form after you have read the Information Sheet and/or listened to an explanation about the project.

Thank you for considering taking part in this project. If you have any questions arising from the Information Sheet or explanation already given to you, please ask before you decide whether to participate. You will be given a copy of this Consent Form to keep.

PLEASE TICK

1. I confirm that I have read and understood the information sheet for the above project. I have had the opportunity to consider the information and asked questions which have been answered satisfactorily. ☐

2. I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in the project, have the right to withdraw from it at any stage for any reason, and will not be required to explain my reasons for withdrawing. ☐

3. I understand that I will be able to withdraw my data up to 31/08/2020. ☐

4. I consent to the processing of my personal information for the purposes explained to me. I understand that such information will be handled in accordance with the terms of the UK Data Protection Act 1998. ☐

5. I understand that any personal details such as my email and phone number will remain strictly confidential. However, I agree that my name may be displayed in association with my opinions and contribution to this project in publications and other project outputs. ☐

6. I agree to participate in this project and I consent to the activities being documented in visual and textual form, as well as via audio, photographs and video. ☐

Name of Participant

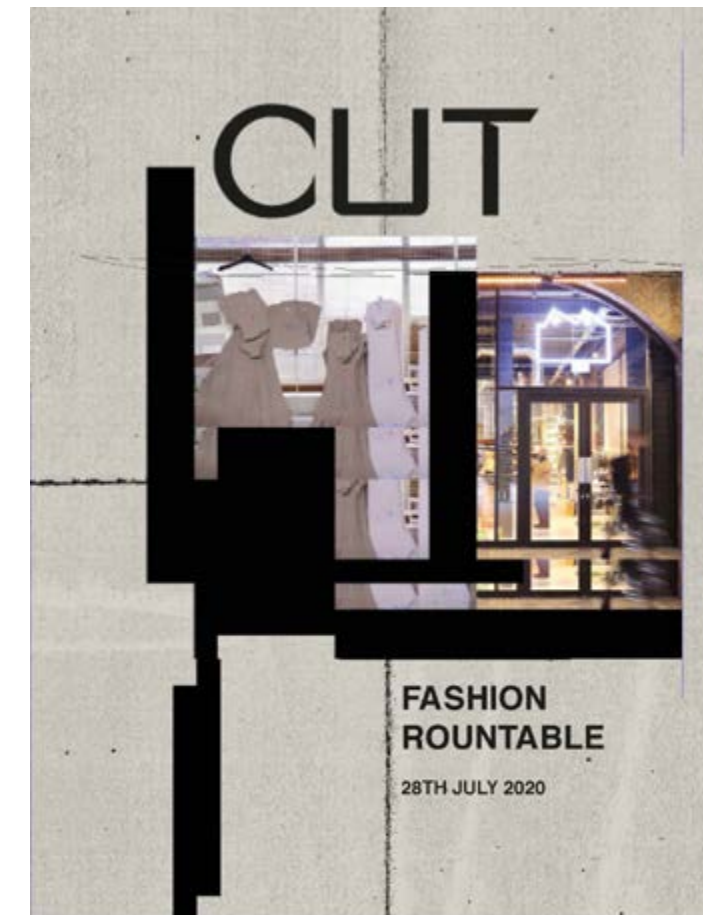
Date

Signature

Name of Researcher

Date

Signature



FASHION ROUNDTABLE

AGENDA

PART I: INTRODUCTION TO THE CUT PROJECT

1. WELCOME 3.00 pm - 3.30 pm

Robin: Introduction of team members and participants.
Francesco: Presentation of the project using fashion and making to tackle knife crime.

2. A COMMUNITY-FOCUSED BUSINESS MODEL 3.30 pm - 3.40 pm

Han: Introduction of Blackhorse Lane Ateliers to give an overview of the company vision, values, their products, manufacturing site and engagement with the local community.

3. THE POWER OF CRAFTSMANSHIP 3.40 pm - 3.50 pm

Anna: Overview of working as a craftsman, tools and techniques used, and products made from knives.

4. STORYTELLING AND AWARENESS RAISING 3.50 pm - 4.00 pm

Robin & Anna: Presentation of the concept for the film to raise awareness of knife crime issues, and collective discussion around the brand identity of CUT.

5. Q&A 4.00 pm - 4.10 pm

Participants: Opportunity to ask questions around fashion design, the making process, project partners, and other creative responses to the issue of knife crime.

BREAK 4.10 pm - 4.25 pm

PART II: ENGAGEMENT IN THE PROJECT

6. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION 4.25 pm - 4.55 pm

Robin & Francesco: Facilitated collective reflection and discussion around some of the following topics:

MEANINGS
MATERIALS
COMPETENCES
MOTIVATIONS

7. PROJECT PLANNING 4.55 pm - 5.15 pm

Francesco: Presentation of an initial project plan and discussion around opportunities for engagement within the project.

8. WRAP UP 5.15 pm - 5.30 pm

Anna: Collecting feedback and discussing the next steps + Take away activity.

3. THE POWER OF CRAFTSMANSHIP

STEP 1: Collection of knives

The knives used for the project are collected in Waltham Forest - knives were thrown away in parks and streets

STEP 2: Recycling of the blade

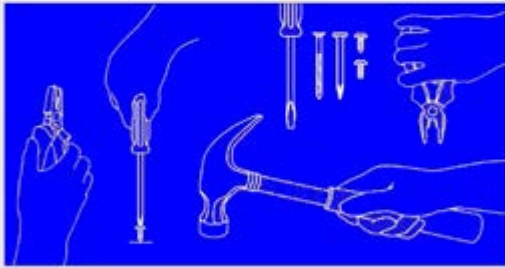
Through innovative technology such as water jet and laser-cut, the blades will be cut into the shapes of the buttons.

STEP 3: Finishing

The edge of the buttons will be ground and, through laser-cut, the surface can be engraved and customised.

STEP 4: Button & Garment

The buttons and rivets will be used to finalize the jeans made at Blackhorse Lane Ateliers.



12

5

TRADITION AND INNOVATION

Denim is the perfect material to start exploring fabric manipulations and play with structures. Due to the long-lasting quality of denim, you can use different techniques to recycle the material and reuse it.



You can experiment with traditional methods like patchwork and weaving and develop unique pieces using craft techniques such as embroidery and cross-stitch.

Laser technology can be used for garment finishing and customisation. This is an innovative method to replace traditional processes with more environmentally friendly and efficient solutions.



Link to video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sztr8mVJ84>

14

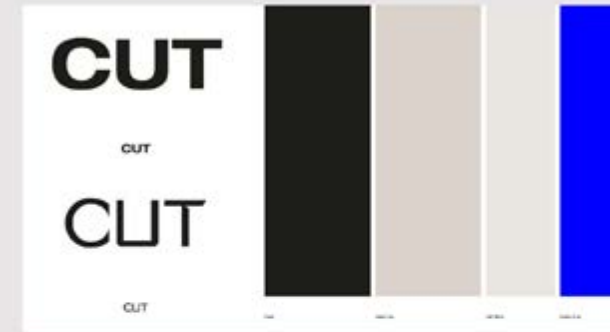
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As part of Making for Change: Waltham Forest, Blackhorse Lane Ateliers hosted a research residency with Anna Schuster. For this residency, Anna investigated sustainability issues related to denim, one of the most water-intensive materials used in fashion and focused on garment finishing processes. The production of a pair of jeans requires up to 7,000 liters of water (Levi Strauss & Co, 2015) and every year 1.7 million tons of chemicals are used to produce 2 billion pairs of jeans (Webber, 2018).

The central themes of the residency were design, craftsmanship and technology. With this in mind, Anna explored and experimented with sustainable and efficient textile and garment finishing processes that would reduce water, chemical consumption, and manual labor. The aim was to understand how the technology works, how it can be integrated into the design process, and what impact it can create in the denim industry. At Jeanologia, the world leader in sustainable and efficient finishing technologies for textiles and other industrial applications, Anna used laser technologies to understand their function within mass-production and customisation of jeans and show the potential of such processes to develop new UK denim wash aesthetics.

4. STORYTELLING AND AWARENESS RAISING



BRAND IDENTITY: LOGO AND COMMUNICATION

Which logo do you prefer?

What does C.U.T. mean to you?

How would you like to communicate this project?

Can you think of a #hashtag?

CUT
YOUTH
VIOLENCE
CUT
KNIFE
CRIME



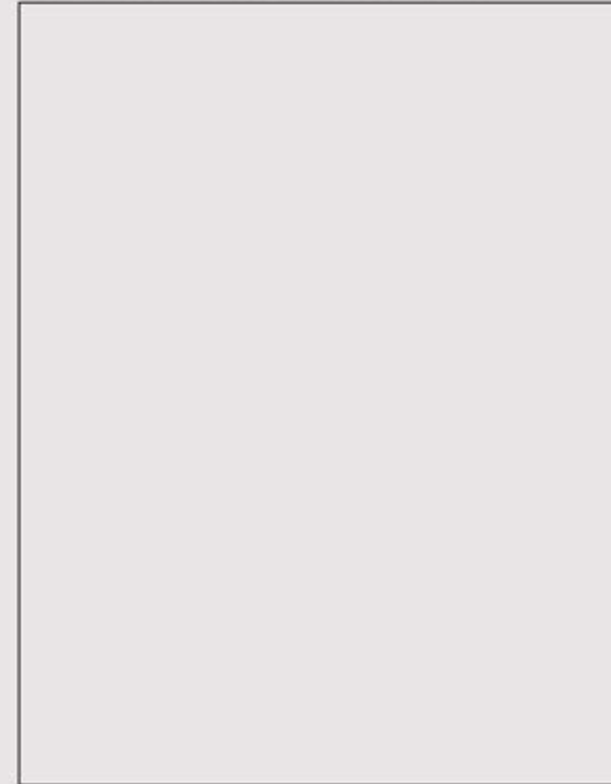
Visual reference: Studio Small.



16

17

CUT: BE CREATIVE - SPACE FOR SKETCHES



18

5. Q&A - SPACE FOR YOUR NOTES



19

FASHION ROUNDTABLE

5. ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION

MEANINGS

If you could use fashion to express yourself, what would your brand identity be?

In what ways can you use fashion and making to tell your stories?

Do you think collective making can help connect diverse people within a local community and tackle social issues?

MATERIALS

What do you think about turning a knife into another object related to fashion?

Are recycling and upcycling (i.e. turning an object into something new) something you have already done before, and in what ways?

If you could design and customise a bespoke collection of jeans, what materials and processes would you like to use?

COMPETENCES

Do you define yourself as a creative, and do you have any hobbies around drawing, making, film, etc.?

What skills would you like to contribute to this project (e.g. fashion design, making, branding, marketing, film making)?

Would you be interested in gaining more knowledge and experience in sustainable fashion, and why?

MOTIVATIONS

Are you interested in fashion, design or making and would you like to pursue a career in the creative sector?

Are you interested in making a positive impact in your local community? If so, in what ways?

What are your main motivations for taking part in such a project focused on knife crime?

20

FASHION ROUNDTABLE

7. PROJECT PLANNING

This is a project activated by the local community and connecting diverse and disciplines. Fashion, design, craftsmanship and film are connected to raise awareness and have a positive impact on the local community. Collaboration is key and we want you to get involved in the area you are most interested in. We want to work with mixed media to shape the project and share its message within everyone within the local community and people all around the world via social media and the final event.

FASHION DESIGN
MANUFACTURING
FILM
SOCIAL MEDIA
CHARITY AUCTION

Who wants to get involved in the project, and what roles would you like to play?
What activities would you like to undertake?
When would be best to deliver such activities, and where?
How can we best collaborate within the team?

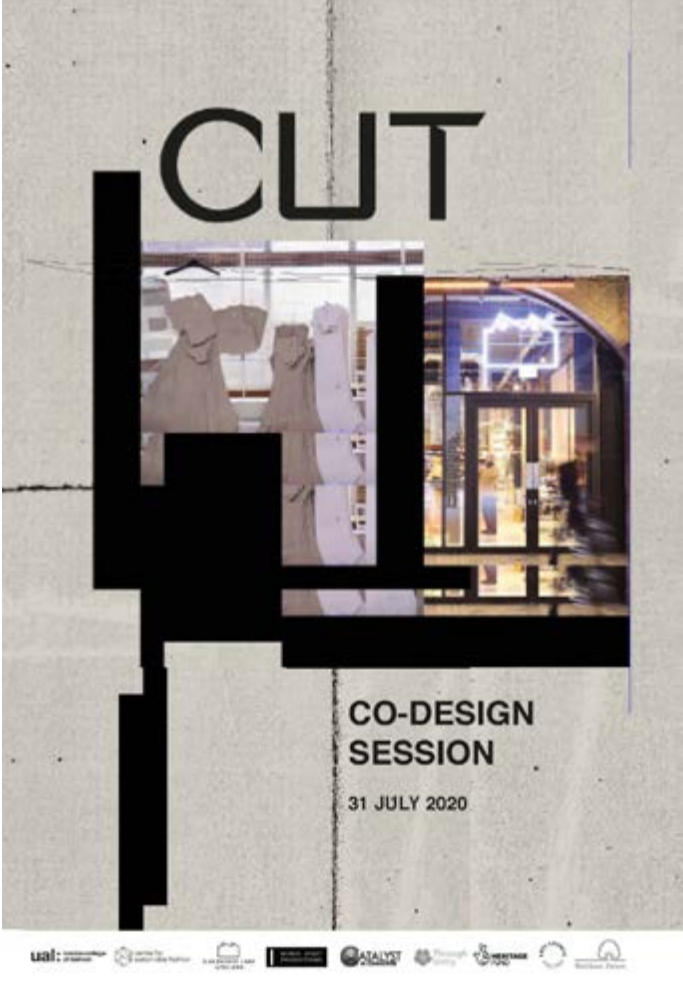
8. WRAP UP

TAKE AWAY ACTIVITY: GATHERING INSPIRATION

Think about denim styles you like, and create your own moodboard to bring to the next session. Research and collect some images of denim garments that inspire you and you would love to use to experiment with the possibilities of jeans customisation and develop a bespoke collection.

What denim pieces do you like? What style do you like?

Look at the details:
How many buttons do you like on your jeans?
How do those buttons and rivets look like? Are they engraved?



DESIGNING BESPOKE BUTTONS

Sean Paul

Graduated during the 1990s recession with a degree in Mechanical and Production Engineering. Given the economic climate, he couldn't find work in his field, so began a career in sales. Frustrated by days spent on the telephone, he started making picture frames and candlesticks at home. From there, he expanded into jewellery, pewter buckles, and cufflinks. An advertisement for a part-time store man at British Airways offered a route back into engineering. Sean took the job and ended up working as a structural composite aircraft engineer on Concorde, Boeing, and Airbus aircraft. Meanwhile, he was sponsored to do a part-time Masters in Design and Manufacturing Quality Management, where he learned about CAD/CAM (Computer-aided design and manufacturing).

After completing his Masters, Sean remained at British Airways as a senior technician and team leader. He worked there for twenty years, until he decided to leave and set up his own workshop. Sean sees himself as a designer and craftsman. He welcomes new projects which enable him to learn, develop his skills further, and push the boundaries of creativity. His workshop specialises in small to medium-sized batch production. In his artworks, he uses predominately metal and plastic resin, composites, and buffalo horn. Examples of his products include: buckles, buttons, badges, reproduction components, decorative furniture studs, handles, and jewellery.



AGENDA

1. INTRODUCTION	3.00 pm - 3.10 pm
Francesco & Anna: Catch up on what the young people have brought from the previous session, and introduction of the aim and schedule of this session, focused on hands-on participatory activities to design bespoke buttons, rivets and jeans.	
2. DESIGNING BESPOKE JEANS	3.10 pm - 3.30 pm
Annie & Han: Guided tour of Blackhorse Lane Ateliers, and explanation of the whole process to make denim jeans, from material sourcing to product development and manufacturing.	
Young People: Decision about target customer, styles of jeans to work on, sizes to produce, retail price, and development of ideas to customise elements of the jeans.	
BREAK	4.15 pm - 4.30 pm
3. DESIGNING BESPOKE BUTTONS	4.30 pm - 4.40 pm
Sean: Overview of working as a craftsman and explanation of the process of cutting buttons and rivets out the knives through water jet.	
Young People: Designing bespoke buttons and rivets, in terms of shapes, size, or other customisation elements (e.g. engraving) so that by the end of August Sean will be able to produce the buttons following the young people's designs.	
4. WRAP UP	5.25 pm - 5.30 pm
Robin & Anna: Facilitated collective reflection and discussion around the next steps + launch of take away activity.	

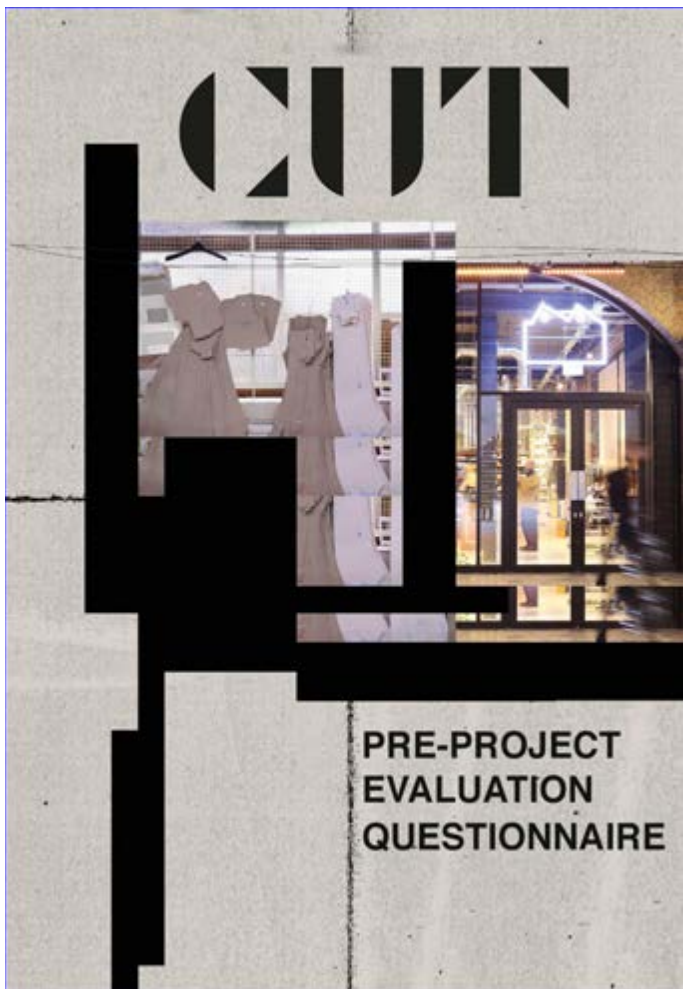
WRAP UP

TAKE AWAY ACTIVITY

In the next phase of the project, you will have the possibility to personalise the inside of the denim pockets. Each pair of jeans will be personalised choosing between different techniques, such as embroidery, textile paint or hand-writing a personal message or wish to potential customers. Think about ways to customise the jeans and gather inspirations, quotes and ideas to bring to the next session.



Appendix: Pre-Evaluation Questionnaire



6) Which of the below techniques or skills have you used before:

	YES	NO
Design: Draw or create your own designs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Making (from mending clothes to sew your own designs)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Pattern and fabric cutting (for a pair of jeans)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trimmings: Buttons, rivets and belt loops – special machines	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Recycling, upcycling, remanufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Customisation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please, specify)		

7) What are your main motivations for participating in this project? (Please select all that apply)

a) To experience something new ☐

b) I was already interested in fashion and design, and wanted to learn more about it ☐

c) I already have some experience in this area and thought I could help ☐

d) I am interested in being a creative professional and I wanted to further my knowledge ☐

e) To get inspired on ways in which fashion can contribute to tackling knife crime ☐

f) To learn more about local initiatives ☐

g) To meet new people ☐

Any other reasons:

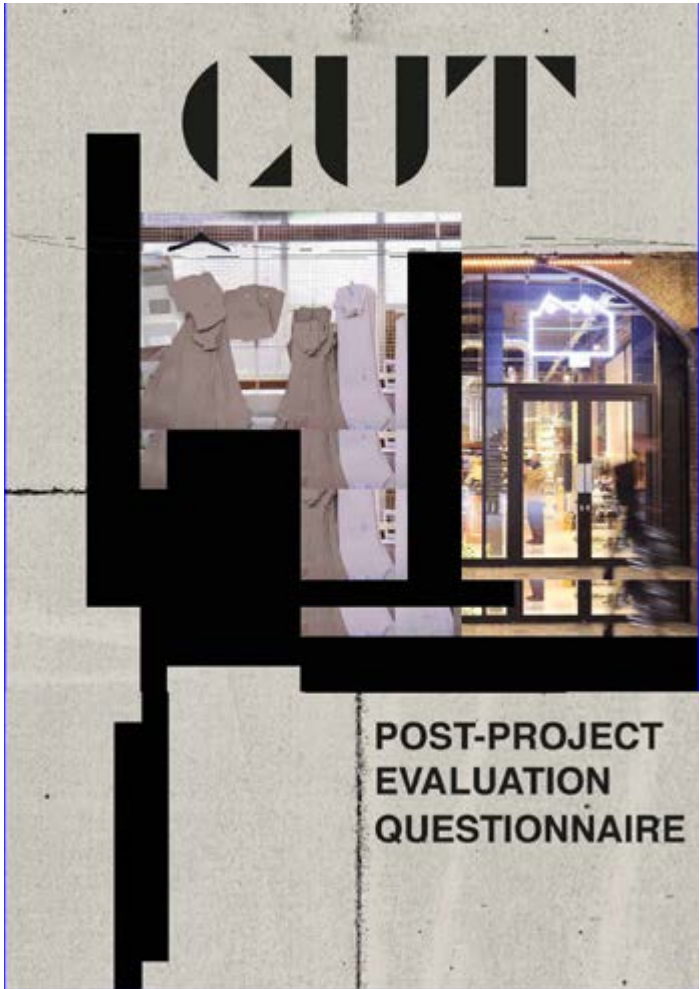
8) Would you be interested in a work experience in fashion or other creative industries in Waltham Forest and beyond?

	YES	NO
If yes, in which sector or role?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9) Which of the following age groups do you belong to? (Please tick one only)

<input type="checkbox"/> Under 16	<input type="checkbox"/> 30 – 34	<input type="checkbox"/> 50 – 54	<input type="checkbox"/> 70 – 74	<input type="checkbox"/> Prefer not to say
<input type="checkbox"/> 16 – 19	<input type="checkbox"/> 35 – 39	<input type="checkbox"/> 55 – 59	<input type="checkbox"/> 75 – 79	
<input type="checkbox"/> 20 – 24	<input type="checkbox"/> 40 – 44	<input type="checkbox"/> 60 – 64	<input type="checkbox"/> 80 – 84	
<input type="checkbox"/> 25 – 29	<input type="checkbox"/> 45 – 49	<input type="checkbox"/> 65 – 69	<input type="checkbox"/> 85 or older	

Appendix: Post-Evaluation Questionnaire



7) Based on your experience of the project, how would you rate the following? (Please give one rating for each item)

	Very good	Good	Neither good nor poor	Poor	Very poor
The organisation, communication and management of the project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The venues of the project	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Your level of participation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
The opportunity to learn new skills	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8) Do you think the skills and knowledge you have gained through the project will support your career in the creative and cultural sector?

	YES	NO
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9) Please note any specific skills you feel you have learnt through the project:

.....

10) Are there any competences that you would like to learn in the future?

.....

11) What did you like the most about the project?

.....

12) What elements of the project do you think could be improved?

.....

13) What do you think would be the ideal next steps for the project?

.....

Many thanks for filling in the evaluation questionnaire. Your opinion is very important to us.

The CUT project team

.....

.....

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& Anna Schuster

Designed by
Anna Schuster

For more information visit
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Lasercut +

