REVOLUTIONS COME IN CYCLES: MAPPING NEW PARADIGMS IN FASHION RESEARCH AND PRACTICE TO SOCIAL CHANGE

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CLOTHING HOLDS A UNIQUE PLACE IN OUR SOCIETY. IT TOUCHES OUR SKIN AND HELPS IN THE FORMATION OF OUR IDENTITY. IT IS AN OUTER TO OUR INNER AND CONTAINS WITHIN ITS MAKEUP BOTH INTRINSIC AND EXTRINSIC VALUES.

FASHION, WITH ITS RELIANCE ON INBUILT OBsolescence HAS OFT BEEN VIEWED WITH SCEPTICISM BY THOSE WHO SEE THE SPEED OF CHANGE CONTRIBUTING TO OVERCONSUMPTION AND LEAVING IN ITS WAKE MOUNTAINS OF WASTE.

REFLECTIONS ON A RECENT CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP IN TANZANIA FORM THE BASIS FOR THIS DISCUSSION INTO HOW FASHION AND TEXTILE PRACTICES CAN BE REVOLUTIONARY IN NATURE AND CONTRIBUTE MORE FULLY TO A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE.
DEVELOPMENT OF A TANZANIAN NATIONAL DRESS

EXPLORATIONS IN RECYCLING, IDENTITY AND CO-DESIGN

BETWEEN 1-5TH AUGUST A SERIES OF CO-DESIGN WORKSHOPS WERE DELIVERED TO INVESTIGATE THE ISSUES SURROUNDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL DRESS FOR TANZANIA. THIS INCLUDED A DISCUSSION ON THE POTENTIAL FOR THE UTILISATION OF SECOND-HAND CLOTHES WITHIN THE DESIGN AND MANUFACTURING PROCESSES

![Photo of a workshop session with participants engaged in discussion and design activities.]
THIS WEEK LONG EVENT TOOK PLACE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM AND WAS ATTENDED BY A RANGE OF 16 PARTICIPANTS.

THESE INCLUDED LOCAL DESIGNERS, BUSINESSES, REPRESENTATIVES FROM TEXTILES STANDARDS ORGANISATION, UNIVERSITY LECTURERS, TAILORS, VOCATIONAL TRAINING ORGANISATIONS AND THE ARTS COUNCIL OF TANZANIA.

THE WORKSHOPS WERE PART OF AN ONGOING PHD STUDY BY CHARLES KAHABI AND HIS RESEARCH SUPERVISOR DR KAREN SHAH.

THIS REPORT OUTLINES THE STRUCTURE OF THE WORKSHOPS AND HIGHLIGHTS KEY CONCLUSIONS FROM DISCUSSIONS, PRESENTATIONS, LOCAL DESIGN CONTEXTS INSPIRATION AND SUBSEQUENT COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES.
THE PRIMARY AIM OF THE WORKSHOPS WAS TO COLLECT DATA FOR A PHD STUDY AND TO INVESTIGATE THE POTENTIAL FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL DRESS FOR TANZANIA VIA THE MEANS OF CO-DESIGN. OBJECTIVES OF THE WORKSHOPS INCLUDED:

- IDEAS SHARING AMONGST PARTICIPANTS OF DIFFERENT SPECIALISMS
- GENERATION OF DISCUSSION WITHIN SPECIALIST AND MIXED GROUPS
- DEVELOPING STRATEGIES FOR DESIGN
- GENERATION OF VISUAL AND CONTEXTUAL DATA.
- DEVELOPING TOOLS FOR CO-DESIGN AND RECYCLING
ACTIVITIES AND ITINERARY OF THE WORKSHOPS INCLUDED:

• **DAY 1** - GENERAL DISCUSSION AND THE GENERATION OF DESIGN PRINCIPLES
• **DAY 2** - SECOND-HAND CLOTHES (MTUMBA) AND THEIR POTENTIAL FOR REAPPROPRIATION.
• **DAY 3** - EXPLORING LOCAL CONTEXTS/GENERATING DESIGN INSPIRATION - FIELD TRIP TO SECOND-HAND AND LOCAL MARKETS, DESIGNERS AND FABRIC STORES.
• **DAY 4** - REAFFIRMING DESIGN PRINCIPLES AND REFLECTION ON DESIGN INSPIRATION
• **DAY 5** - CO-DESIGN PRACTICAL INCLUDING PAINTING, SEWING, DRAWING AND PATTERN CUTTING DEVELOPMENT
STRUCTURE OF THE WORKSHOPS

THE WORKSHOPS CONSISTED OF PRESENTATIONS BY MR CHARLES KAHABI (PHD STUDENT) AND DR KAREN SHAH (SUPERVISOR), GROUPS DISCUSSION AND FEEDBACK PRESENTATIONS FROM PARTICIPANTS.

PARTICIPANTS WERE ORGANISED INTO SPECIALIST AND MIXED GROUPS AND CUT ACROSS GENDER AND AGE. THIS PROVIDED THE OPPORTUNITY TO SHARE IDEAS AND PROVIDE INSIGHT INTO THE KEY ISSUES SURROUNDING THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL DRESS FOR TANZANIA.

IN LINE WITH CO-DESIGN CONVENTIONS GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPATION WERE PROVIDED AND CONSENT WAS GIVEN REGARDING THE USE OF IMAGES AND INFORMATION PRODUCED AS A RESULT OF THE WORKSHOPS.
DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR A NATIONAL DRESS (DAY 1)

AFTER A PRESENTATION BY MR CHARLES KAHABI ON THE RESULTS OF HIS FIELD VISITS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH GROUPS FROM A NUMBER OF DIFFERENT VILLAGES, IT WAS ESTABLISHED HOW THERE WAS A NEED FOR A NATIONAL DRESS. FURTHER DISCUSSION INTO DESIGN PRINCIPLES WAS THUS PROMPTED TO INVESTIGATE WHETHER IT WAS POSSIBLE TO DRAFT UP COMMON DESIGN PRINCIPLES.

WORKING IN GROUPS OF 6, PARTICIPANTS WERE ASKED A SERIES OF QUESTIONS AND DRAWING ON THEIR OWN SPECIALIST KNOWLEDGE FORMULATED RESPONSES TO THESE. KEY THEMES THAT EMERGED INCLUDED THE NEED FOR INCLUSIVITY, CULTURAL PRESERVATION AND THE REPRESENTATION OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND POLITICAL VIEWS.
IN RELATION TO NATIONAL DRESS IT WAS ESTABLISHED THAT NO PRESENT GARMENT/S EXISTED BUT THAT TRADITIONAL FABRICS AND GARMENT STYLES PLAYED A VERY IMPORTANT ROLE IN DAILY LIFE.

IT WAS STILL CONSIDERED AUSPICIOUS TO WRAP A CHILD IN A ‘KANGA’ WITHIN THE FIRST FEW MINUTES OF LIFE AND THAT EACH TRIBE (OF WHICH THERE WERE 120) WOULD WEAR THE KANGA IN A SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT WAY.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A KANGA (1.5 X 1M LENGTH OF FABRIC) WAS CONSIDERED IMPORTANT IN THE DESIGN OF A NATIONAL DRESS. THIS SHOULD CONTAIN ELEMENTS SUCH AS MOTIF AND COLOUR THAT WERE APPEALING TO ALL TRIBES AND CONVEYED MESSAGES OF NATIONALITY. THIS INCLUDED MOTIFS PERTAINING TO NATURE AND POLITICAL FIGURES SUCH AS JULIUS NGYERERE.

IT SHOULD HAVE SOME AFFILIATION TO RELIGION AND MAKE IDENTIFICATION OUTSIDE OF TANZANIA. GENERALLY IT WAS CONCLUDED THAT A NATIONAL DRESS WOULD BE SOMETHING THAT WAS WORN CEREMONIOUSLY AT SPECIAL EVENTS AND THEREFORE SHOULD NOT BE TOO CASUAL OR WORN RANDOMLY.
DESIGN PRINCIPLES

1. ACCEPTABLE TO ALL

2. DECENT

3. NOT JUST A COPY AND PASTE

4. NOT WESTERNISED

5. COMBINE WITH ACCESSORY (E.G. STICK) THAT CARRIES CULTURAL AND POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE.

6. AFFORDABLE

7. BASED ON KANGA DESIGN - EITHER FABRIC OR GARMENT

8. USE COLOURS OF BLUE, GREEN, YELLOW AND BLACK IN LINE WITH FLAG AND NATIONAL COLOURS

9. INCLUDE ASPECTS OF TRADITION BUT ALSO BE MODERN.

10. INCLUDE ZANZIBARIANS

11. CELEBRATE NATURAL RESOURCES.

12. SHOULD BE MORE POLITICAL THAN TECHNICAL

13. SHOULD BE A CELEBRATION OF INDIVIDUALITY BUT ALSO REPRESENT UNITY

14. INCLUDE SWAHILI TEXT TO CONVEY KEY MESSAGES

15. ITS MANUFACTURE SHOULD CONTRIBUTE TO BETTERMENT OF SOCIETY
EXPLORATION OF RECYCLING TECHNIQUES (DAY 2)

ASPECTS OF RECYCLING WERE INTRODUCED TO THE DEBATE INTO THE DESIGN OF A NATIONAL DRESS ON DAY 2. THIS CONSISTED OF A PRESENTATION BY DR KAREN SHAH OF HER OWN PRACTICE AND HOW SHE UTILISED VARIOUS TECHNIQUES IN THE CONVERSION OF SECOND-HAND CLOTHES.

THESE WERE COMPILED INTO A BOOKLET WHICH EACH PARTICIPANT TOOK A COPY OF AND DISCUSSION WAS FRAMED AROUND THE POTENTIAL FOR SECOND-HAND CLOTHES AND PARTICIPANT’S ATTITUDES TOWARDS RECYCLING. IT WAS ALSO TO SEE IF MODELS OF PRACTICE TAKEN FROM A UK CONTEXT COULD BE APPLIED TO THAT OF TNAZANIA.
REFLECTIONS ON MTUMBA

DISCUSSIONS AS A RESULT OF THE WORKSHOPS REVEALED THAT THERE WERE DEFINITE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN SMALL-SCALE ACTIVITIES SET WITHIN A UK TO THAT OF THE TANZANIAN TAILOR. BOTH WERE SMALL-SCALE IN OPERATION AND UTILIZED WASTE CLOTHING TO A LESSER OR GREATER EFFECT. FOR THE TANZANIAN TAILOR IT WAS CITED HOW THEY WOULD OFTEN HAVE A STOCK OF SECOND HAND CLOTHING TO USE FOR TRIMS, BUTTONS AND FOR CONVERTING INTO ALTERNATIVE PRODUCTS SUCH AS PILLOWCASES. WHILST THERE WAS NOT MUCH EVIDENCE OF TAILORS OR DESIGNERS MAKING FULL GARMENTS OUT OF SECOND-HAND CLOTHES THERE WAS A SENSE THAT THESE TECHNIQUES WERE MOVING INTO TEACHING PRACTICES.
THEY ALSO REVEALED HOW SECOND-HAND CLOTHING, AS IN THE DISCARDING OF ONES CLOTHES IS NOT A COMMON PRACTICE BUT THAT IF THEY DID FIND THAT THEY NO LONGER REQUIRED SOMETHING THAT IT WAS LIKELY TO BE PASSED DOWN THROUGH THE FAMILY OR TAKEN BACK TO THEIR VILLAGE WHEN THEY RETURNED FOR HOLIDAYS.

IT WAS REVEALED THAT THIS WAS CHANGING AND THAT INTERNAL RECYCLING OF CLOTHES EXISTED THROUGH CHARITIES AND CERTAIN NETWORKS. THERE WAS GENERALLY A VERY POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CONSUMPTION OF SECOND-HAND CLOTHING SAYING THAT IT OFFERED INDIVIDUALITY, QUALITY, AFFORDABILITY AND AVAILABILITY. THE NEGATIVES BEING THAT THE SHOPPING ENVIRONMENT WAS GENERALLY NOT CONDUCIVE TO TRYING ON CLOTHES AND COULD ENTAIL SORTING THROUGH LARGE PILES OF CLOTHES JUST IN THE HOPE THAT YOU WOULD FIND SOMETHING.
EXAMPLES OF GARMENTS AND FABRICS MADE FROM SECOND HAND CLOTHES WERE ALSO PRESENTED BY NEW ERA DESIGNS (NED). THEY DEMONSTRATED HOW MTUMBA WAS USED IN TRIMMINGS AND BATIK TECHNIQUES WERE APPLIED TO WHOLE GARMENTS.

TAILORS, IN PARTICULAR, EXPRESSED THEIR ENTHUSIASM FOR THE CONVERSION OF WASTE INTO NEW CLOTHES AND ALL SAW THE POTENTIAL DESIGN DEVELOPMENT THAT COULD OCCUR AS A RESULT OF UTILISING SECOND-HAND CLOTHES.
CERTAIN PRETEXTS, IN RELATION TO WORKSHOP DISCUSSION, HAD BEEN SET SUCH AS THE FACT THAT TANZANIA APPEARED TO BE IDENTIFIED BY ITS ACCEPTANCE AND IMPORTATION OF LARGE QUANTITIES OF SECOND-HAND CLOTHING (COMING MAINLY FROM AMERICA) AND THAT THIS WAS UNDERMINING ITS INDIGENOUS MANUFACTURING CAPACITY.

THE GARMENTS IN TERMS OF FIT AND STYLES ALSO APPEARED TO WORK AGAINST TRADITIONAL MODES OF DRESS AND THUS CONVEYED ALL MANNER OF SIGNS AND CONNOTATIONS – MORE FITTING TO A WESTERN RATHER THAN AFRICAN CONTEXT.
A FIELD VISIT TO LOCAL MARKETS, AN INTERVIEW WITH A PROMINENT TANZANIAN FASHION DESIGNER MANJOU, DISCUSSIONS WITH KANGA (FABRIC) SELLERS AND A TRIP TO A TOURIST MARKET, ALL IN DAR ES SALAAM, WAS THEREFORE ORGANISED FOR DAY 3. THIS PROVIDED A FURTHER GROUP BONDING EXERCISE AND THE OPPORTUNITY TO COLLECT KEY RESEARCH DATA AND DESIGN INSPIRATION.
IN THE BUSTLING SECOND-HAND MARKETS, WORKSPACES HAVE BEEN SET UP TO REPAIR AND TRANSFORM CLOTHES, SHOES ETC. AND VENDORS STATE THAT BUSINESS IS GOOD AND PROFITABLE.
SEEN IN THIS LIGHT THE PROBLEM OF WASTE BECOMES A SOLUTION FOR A RELATED ACTIVITY – THAT OF CLOTHING OUR BACKS TO SATISFY BOTH BASIC AND COMPLEX SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL DEMANDS.

IN THIS CONTEXT SECOND-HAND CLOTHES (SHC) SERVE A FUNCTION AND PROVIDE A MUCH NEEDED RESOURCE. THEY SATISFY THE NEED FOR AFFORDABLE, AVAILABLE AND QUALITY CLOTHING AND THE SORTING, DISTRIBUTION AND SALE OF THE SHCS PROVIDE VALUABLE INCOME-GENERATING OPPORTUNITIES FOR TAILORS, FIXERS AND ENTREPRENEURS.
CHANGING OPINIONS ARE BEGINNING TO EMERGE IN RELATION TO THIS EXPORT OF CLOTHING FROM ONE CONTEXT TO ANOTHER. THE TANZANIAN GOVERNMENT IS ONE SUCH BODY THAT IS SEEKING TO BAN THE IMPORT OF SECOND-HAND CLOTHES, FRAMING THEIR JUSTIFICATION AROUND THE PREMISE THAT THEIR PROCESSING REPRESENTS MAJOR HEALTH HAZARDS AND THEIR PRESENCE WORK AT THE DETRIMENT OF THE GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL MANUFACTURING CAPACITY.
“…WHILE THE UNITED STATES AND WESTERN EUROPE TEND TO FRAME SECOND-HAND FASHION CONSUMPTION ALMOST ENTIRELY WITH THE NOTION OF CONSTRUCTED IDENTITY AND OTHER ‘POSTMODERN’ NOTIONS, AFRICAN FEELINGS COULD VERY WELL BE LOCATED TOWARDS THE MIDDLE OF THE CONTINUUM WITH THEIR RECOGNITION OF FUNCTIONAL AND RATIONAL SOCIO-ECONOMIC MOTIVATIONS IN USED CLOTHING CONSUMPTION, AS WELL AS CONSUMPTION PRACTICES THAT ARE INFORMED BY LOCAL CULTURAL NORMS AND THROUGH WHICH IDENTITIES ARE CONSTRUCTED AND CONTESTED. (ISLA, 2013, P.22)”
GIVE SUSTENANCE NOT ABUSE

This image of a female tailor, located at the second hand market with a treddle sewing machine making bags from kangas, typified to me the potential for developing small-scale capacity around the market places.
THIS IMAGE OF A FEMALE TAILOR, LOCATED AT THE SECOND HAND MARKET WITH A TREDDLE SEWING MACHINE MAKING BAGS FROM KANGAS, TYPIFIED TO ME THE POTENTIAL FOR DEVELOPING SMALL-SCALE CAPACITY AROUND THE MARKET PLACES.

TANZANIA FASHION DESIGNER, MANJOU, WITH PARTICIPANTS OF THE WORKSHOP
DISCUSSIONS WITH MANJOU REVEALED HOW THERE WAS A MARKET FOR A NATIONAL DRESS BUT THAT CAPACITY IN THE SECTOR WAS PREVENTING IT FROM BECOMING A REALITY. HE VERY MUCH SAW HIMSELF AS AN ARTIST AND DRAW HIS INSPIRATION FROM NATURE AND NATIONAL FIGURES. HIS DESIGNS HAVE GAINED MUCH POPULARITY AMONGST HIGH PROFILE CLIENTS AND HE CAN DEMAND HIGH PRICES FOR HIS PIECES. HE STATED, HOWEVER, HOW HIS STUDIO WAS CRAMPED AND CLIENTS COULDN’T BELIEVE HOW LITTLE SPACE HE HAD.

OBSERVATIONS GLEANED WHILST LOOKING AROUND ADJACENT STUDIOS REVEALED A CREATIVE AESTHETIC AND PLEASANT SURROUNDINGS.
INVESTIGATING ‘KANGA’

A TRIP TO A KEY AREA FOR THE SALE AND PURCHASE OF ‘KANGAS’ REVEALED DIVERSITY IN DESIGN AND KEY ELEMENTS FOR AESTHETICS.

THESE INCLUDED COLOURS, PRINT TECHNIQUES AND SYMBOLISM.
A TRIP TO A TOURIST MARKET WAS CONSIDERED KEY TO UNDERSTANDING THE MARKET FURTHER AND GENERATE DEBATE INTO THE EXTENT TO WHICH PRODUCTS ON SALE THERE CONFORMED TO NOTIONS OF NATIONALITY.
Colours: Yellow, Purple, Blue, Green, Black, Blue
CONTINUING THE

AT THE END OF THE WORKSHOPS A WHATSAPP DISCUSSION GROUP WAS FORMED TO CONTINUE THE DEBATE AND ENABLE DESIGNLY RESPONSES TO THE MATERIAL PRESENTED.

THE FOLLOWING IMAGES PROVIDE ILLUSTRATION OF THIS DISCUSSION AND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT WORK.
KANGA DESIGNS DEVELOPED BY NEW ERA DESIGNS (NED)
DESIGN INSPIRATION, ALFRED LUGALLO
Something I made 4 years ago - a saree dress. I had forgotten it had a map of Tanzania!
RESPONDING TO SECOND-HAND ‘BATIK’ TSHITS BROUGHT BACK FROM THE WORKSHOP, KAREN SHAH
Mitumba ! ❤️
DIGITALLY REWORKING KANGA DESIGN DEVELOPED DURING WORKSHOP
JIFUNZE KITU HAPA

Baba mmoja alikuwa na wake wanne, Alimpenda sana mke wake wa nne na alitumia gharama kubwa kwaajii yake na kumpa matunzo bora.

Pia alimpenda mke wake wa tatu na siku zote alipenda kuwaonyesha marafiki zake mke huyu wa tatu kwakuwa alikuwa mrembo kwelikweli.

Hata hivyo alikuwa na hofu kwamba huenda mke huyu anaweza msaliti aende kwa mtu mwingine kati ya hao

RESPONDING TO ‘NATIONAL STORY’
So in my head .... The man is the sweetcorn waiting to go back into the earth to start again .....
Oh just one more thing...
Here is a design I did some time ago - An idea for getting a political message into a design

About women playing football and how much money players get compared to nurses
At the middle... The father of the nation (JK Nyerere) will stand there

Are good motives... Good creativity as well, I think we can learn something
CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS
THANKS

TO ALL PARTICIPANTS OF THE CO-DESIGN WORKSHOPS
THE STAFF OF THE UNIVERSITY OF DAR ES SALAAM GERVILS
LUHAIJU FOR THE USE OF HIS PHOTOSS

SPECIAL ALSO THANKS TO

ALFRED LUGALLO FOR HIS CONTINUING SUPPORT IN THE
FACE OF MY MANY QUESTIONS!