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Revolutions Come in Cycles: Mapping New Paradigms in Fashion Research and Practice To Social Change

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

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# ABSTRACT

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.

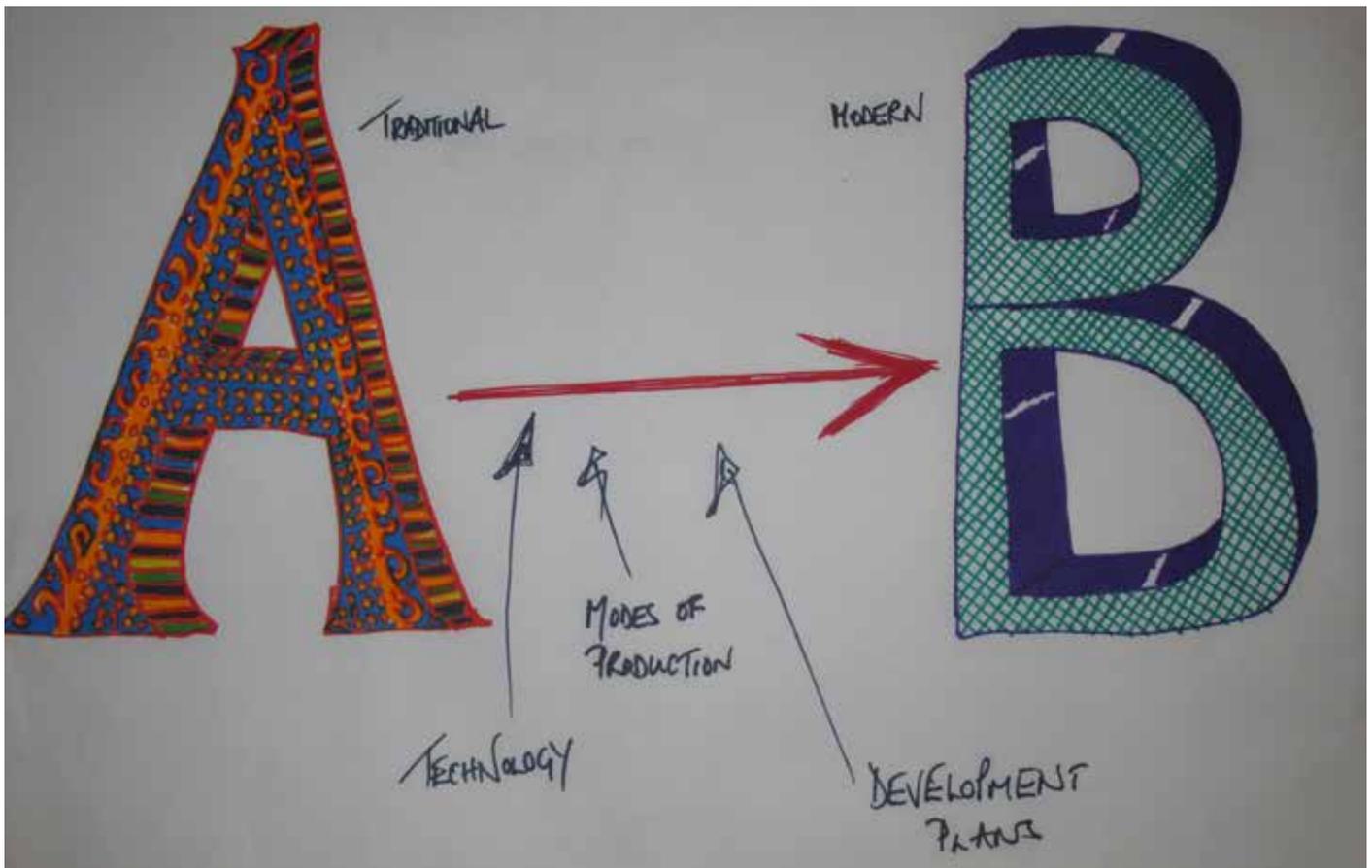
Fashion, with its reliance on inbuilt obsolescence has oft been viewed with scepticism by those who see the speed of change contributing to overconsumption and leaving in its wake mountains of waste.

Transcending boundaries between practical and theoretical work this paper will discuss research carried out to date that has explored local manufacturing and aspects of clothes recycling.

it will illustrate, by reference to a workshop undertaken in Dar Es Salaam university, Tanzania how in revolutionising approaches to fashion design, make and consumption we may be able to view the fashion industry in a new light.



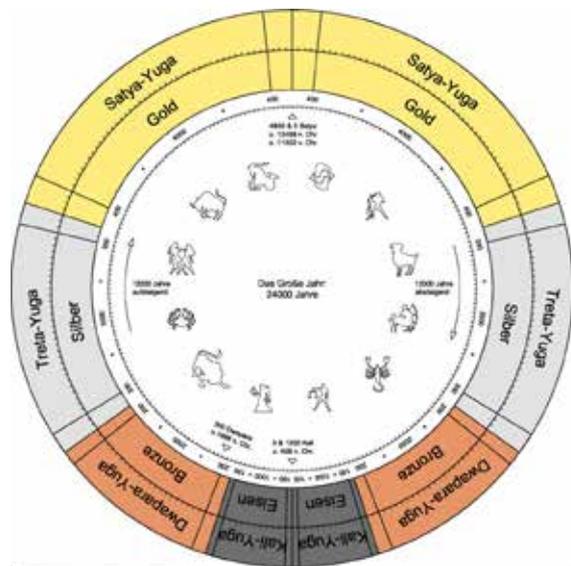
# INITIATING CHANGE



An underlying premise behind this paper is the belief that there is potential to bring about sustainable change in the fashion system. One way of doing this is through a closer investigation of the cyclical nature of fashion, and in particular the consuming and subsequent discarding of clothes. Cycles and patterns of change can be destructive, they can be self-consuming but they can also be regenerative.

Many of the practices we witness in the present fashion system are based on unsustainable practices. We manufacture and process clothing to the detriment of the planet, we then over-consume (and adhere to fashion cycles) to the point of suffocation and then have no alternative other than to off load our clothing onto someone else, somewhere else. In the UK alone we assign 350,000 tonnes of clothes to landfill with a further 80,000 tonnes going off for incineration (WRAP, 2015), with American dumping 10.5 million tonnes of clothes annually (Wheeler, 2016).

According to Hindu scripture we are currently living in the time of the Kali Yuga. The world has moved from a state of pure goodness to one that is composed of three quarters sin and only one quarter virtue. In this state we have the power to implode and no more is this most clearly represented than in our concerns for the environment. As we move towards global overconsumption and a state beyond our natural carrying capacity cries are being heard that we may have gone too far. Changes are occurring at an alarming rate and our unhealthy relationship to products and their obsolescence is often the cause of this. As we investigate local and global systems we see this proportion of three quarters sin one quarter virtue mirrored in many ways.



Western development has for long been seen to exist along a continuum – a process of moving from a state of A to a state of B. Development plans are drafted up along 5 year time scales and key indicators are decided upon that will determine the extent to which countries (but equally peoples, things, knowledge etc) are considered ‘developed’. We do this on both intrinsic and extrinsic levels to determine how far along the line we are. Problems occur, however, when there are so many different ends that we get tangled up and the start of a line for one signals the destruction of a line for another. We wipe out potentially good routes of living in favour of damaging ones, not necessarily because we want to but because options and choices have been taken away.

# EXPLORATIONS IN RECYCLING, IDENTITY AND CO-DESIGN

## DEVELOPMENT OF A TANZANIAN NATIONAL DRESS

Between 1-5th August, 2016 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.

The workshops were part of an ongoing Phd study by Mr Charles Kahabi and his research supervisor Dr Karen Shah. Extended aspects of the research also to explored methods of addressing the development goals of Tanzania such as poverty alleviation and income generation.



Participants on first day discussing National Dress (Shah, 2016)



Samwell presenting shirt idea (Lushaju, 2016)

The 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.

This paper outlines the structure of the workshops and highlights key conclusions from discussions, presentations, local design contexts inspiration and subsequent collaborative activities

Reflections on these workshops also form the basis for discussion relating to design inspiration, development and communication and the potential for new paradigms within this areas to initiate social change.

# PURPOSE OF THE WORKSHOPS

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 & mixed groups
- Developing strategies for design
- Generation of visual and contextual data.
- Developing tools for co-design and recycling
- Contextualisation within a wider socio-political environment



Participants on first day discussing National Dress (Shah, 2016)

## 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



Kido presenting her design ideas (Lushaju, 2016)

# 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.



Listening to presentations (Shah, 2016)

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.





Church goers, Dar Es Salaam (above and below) (Shah, 2016)

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 Nyerere.

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



Subira Wahure (local designer) presenting ideas with photo of JK Nyerere in background (IShah, 2016)

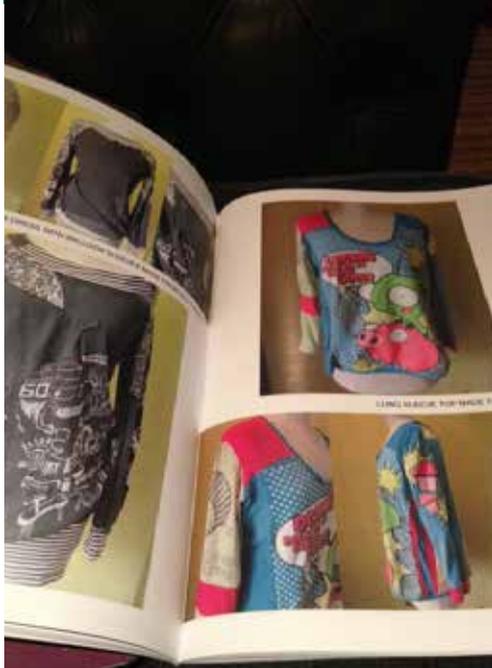
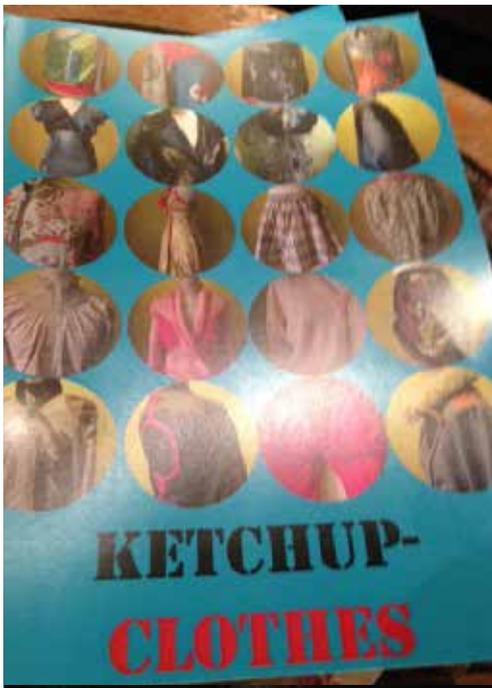
# EXPLORATION OF RECYCLING TECHNIQUES (DAY 2)

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 Tanzania.



Tailors exploring 'skin' of fabric made out of old T-shirts by Shah  
(Shah, 2016)



Examples of pages from booklet on Ketchup Clothes (Shah, 2016)



Kahabi discussion recycling with participants (Shah, 2016)

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 - cited as one of the reasons why the Tanzanian Government wants to ban the import of SHC).

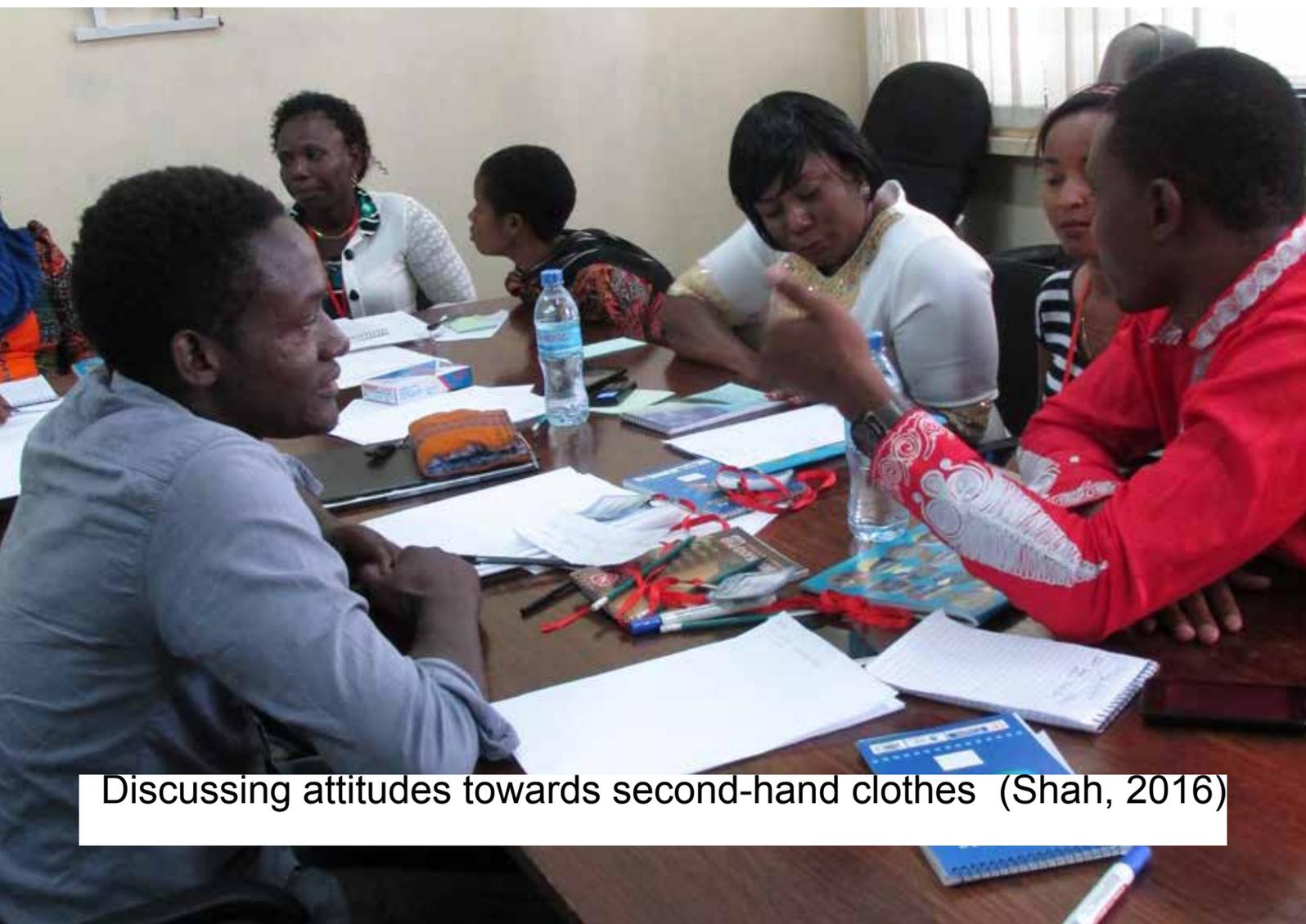
The garments in terms of fit and styles also appeared to work against traditional modes of dress and thus conveyed all manner of signs and connotations – more fitting to a western rather than African context.

# 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.

However, it was highlighted how the sorting of SHC represented a grave health hazards and was another reason why the Tanzanian government was trying to ban their import.



Discussing attitudes towards second-hand clothes (Shah, 2016)



*Used clothing has outcompeted and displaced African clothing manufacturing in Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania ,Zambia and other counrries which permitted imports of SHC.....In Uganda second-hand garments account for 81% of all clothing purchases.*

(Brooks, 2015:158;145)





Mary trying on batik T-shirts (Shah, 2016)

It was also revealed how second-hand clothing, as in the discarding of one's clothes is not a common practice but that if someone 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 .



Kido trying on batik T-shirt (Shah, 2016)

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.

These garments were later remanufactured by Shah (2016) to produce garments that may be suitable for a western market and shared via the means of Whatsapp to gauge responses in terms of design and re-manufacture.



Waist coat & skirt made out of T-shirts and trouser legs (Shah, 2016)

A primary aim being to see if it is possible to develop styles and techniques that would be appropriate for production in Tanzania but re-exported for sale to America and the UK - thus closing the loop and sending the clothes back from where they came and adding value along the way.

# LOCAL CONTEXTS (DAY 3)



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.

Image: Lushaju, 2016)



*“Poor people may have little agency in shaping used clothing systems of provision, but they can and do respond in creative and unanticipated ways to imports of used garments. Imports have diverse affects within different societies. Norms of dress are transmitted by the prevelance of Western clothing. Yet rather than everyone being passive receivers of clothing culture, evidence shows how some individuals give textiles a new lease of life and recreate their own creolised trends” (Brooks, 2015:145)*



The Tanzania clothing sector, like many African economies, has been characterised by the large scale import of second-hand clothes coming from Europe and America. A ban on their import is envisaged to have an impact on local manufacturing and the economy.



*“One of the largest private companies in Tanzania, Mohammed Enterprises Tanzania Limited (MeTL) was an early entrant (to the import of SHC). In 1985, following trade liberalisation, MeTL met with American used-clothing exporters. 10 years later it had grown to import 4,000 tonnes of used clothing per month via Dar Es Salaam” (Brooks, 2015:165)*









*“Almost half (45%) of all donated clothing gets worn again, 30% gets cut down and used as industrial rags, 20% is ground down and reprocessed, 55 is unusable” (Cline, 2014)*

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.

*“...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.



Tanzania fashion designer, Manjou, with participants of the workshop



Image: Lushaju, 2016)



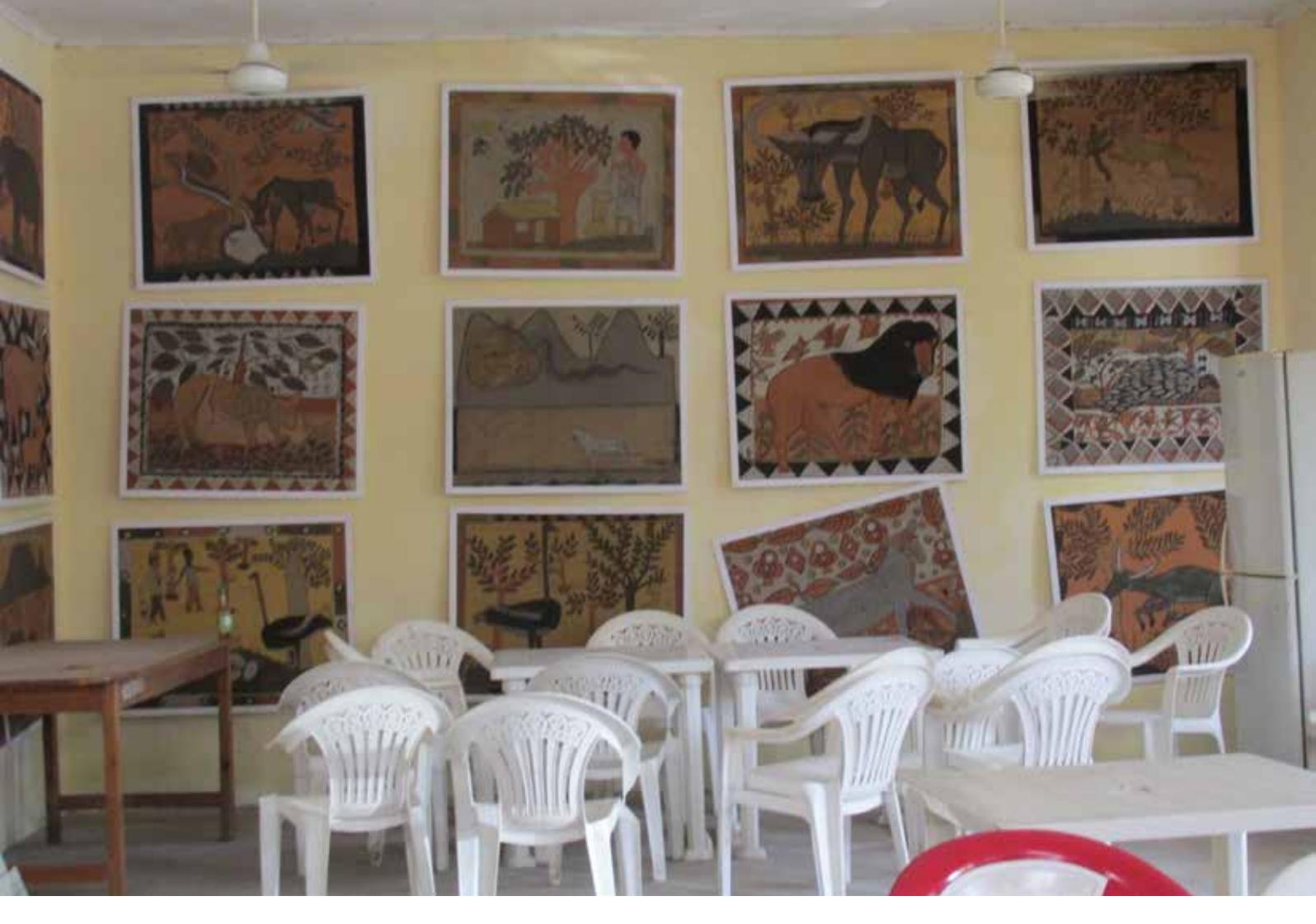
Image: Lushaju, 2016)



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.



*According to the Multi Dimensional Poverty Index 64% of Tanzanian are poor, 31.3% live in extreme poverty...Rural areas are worst hit ...the use of electrivity has doubled but usage is 8% (compared to 49% in urban areas.....Education is mixed - whilst 80% of primary school age 7-13 year olds attend ...quality of education is low with increasing drop out rates, reduced morale and motivation amongst teachers..... Tanzania has the fastest population growth at 2.7% per year adding 1.2 million people per year*

Efforts for Development Plans are centred, amongst other things, around

- Improving Education
- Creating Employment

Proposed that there needs to be a fundamental change to structure of economy (UNDP, 2014).

# INVESTIGATING 'KANGA'

'Kanga' - a length of fabric 1.5m x 1m wide holds great symbolism for many Tanzanian garments and is means of communicating via the way in which it is worn and the Swahili text applied to the design.

Since it was felt that potential existed for the development of a National Kanga to convey key social, political and environmental messages, a trip to a key area for the sale and purchase of 'kangas' was organised. This revealed diversity in design and key elements for aesthetics. These included colours, print techniques and symbolism.

Image: Lushaju, 2016)



Image: Lushaju, 2016)



Image: Lushaju, 2016)





*“ According to the Human Development Index (2000) Tanzania ranked 163rd of 170 countries, 152nd of 187 countries in 2013 . It is estimated that a third of people live below the international poverty line. Poverty alleviation has been slow and unevenly shared. “(IFAD, 2013)*





# MWENGE - TOURIST MARKET

Image: Lushaju, 2016)



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 and opportunities that may exist to sell at such a market.



# DEVELOPING DESIGN IDEAS

A VISUAL JOURNEY



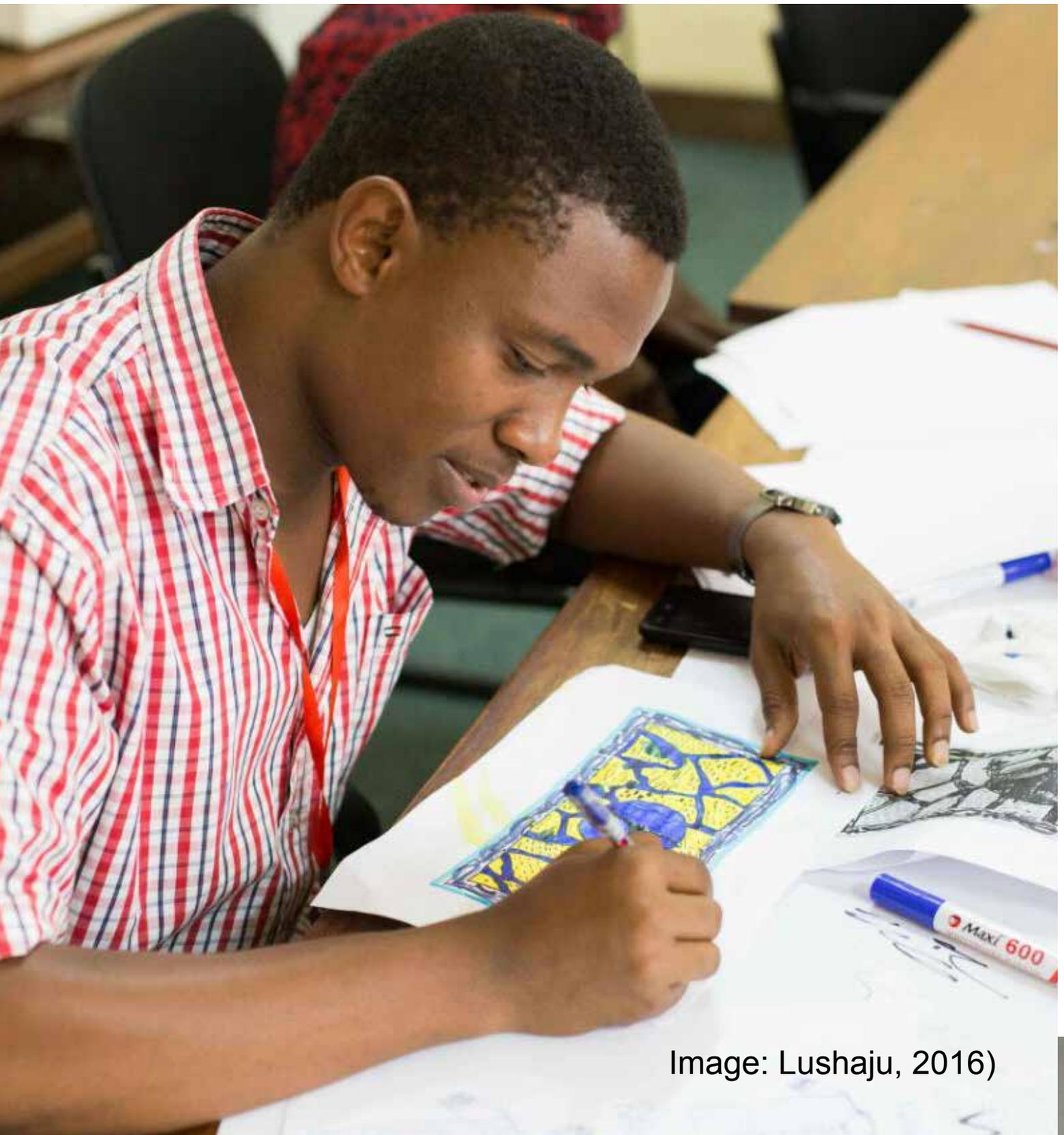


Image: Lushaju, 2016)

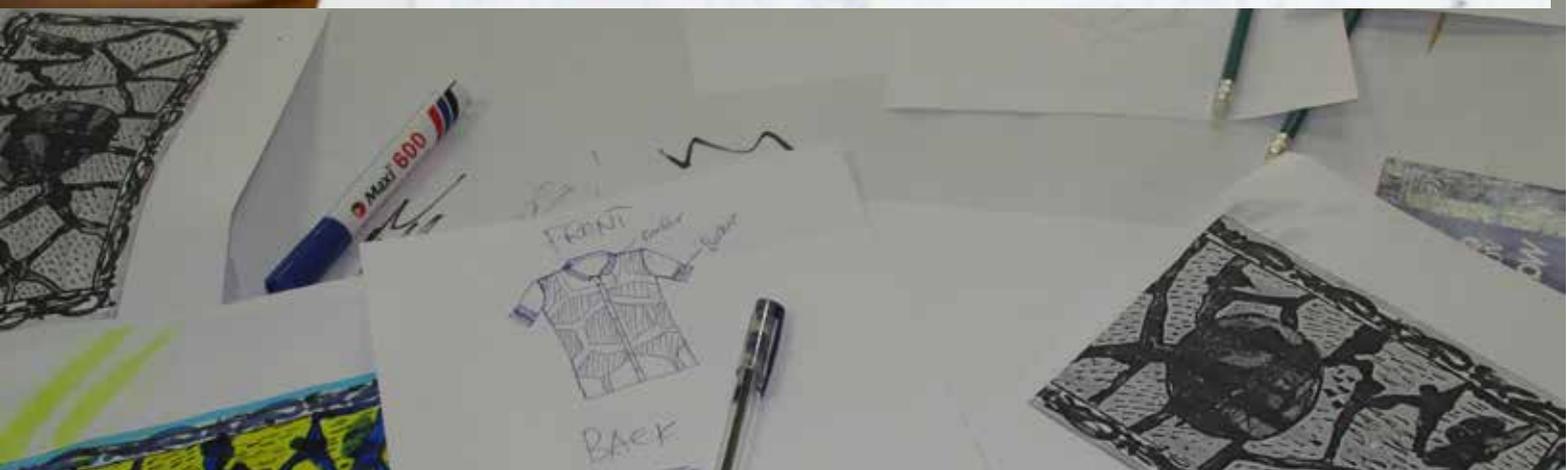










Image: Lushaju, 2016)

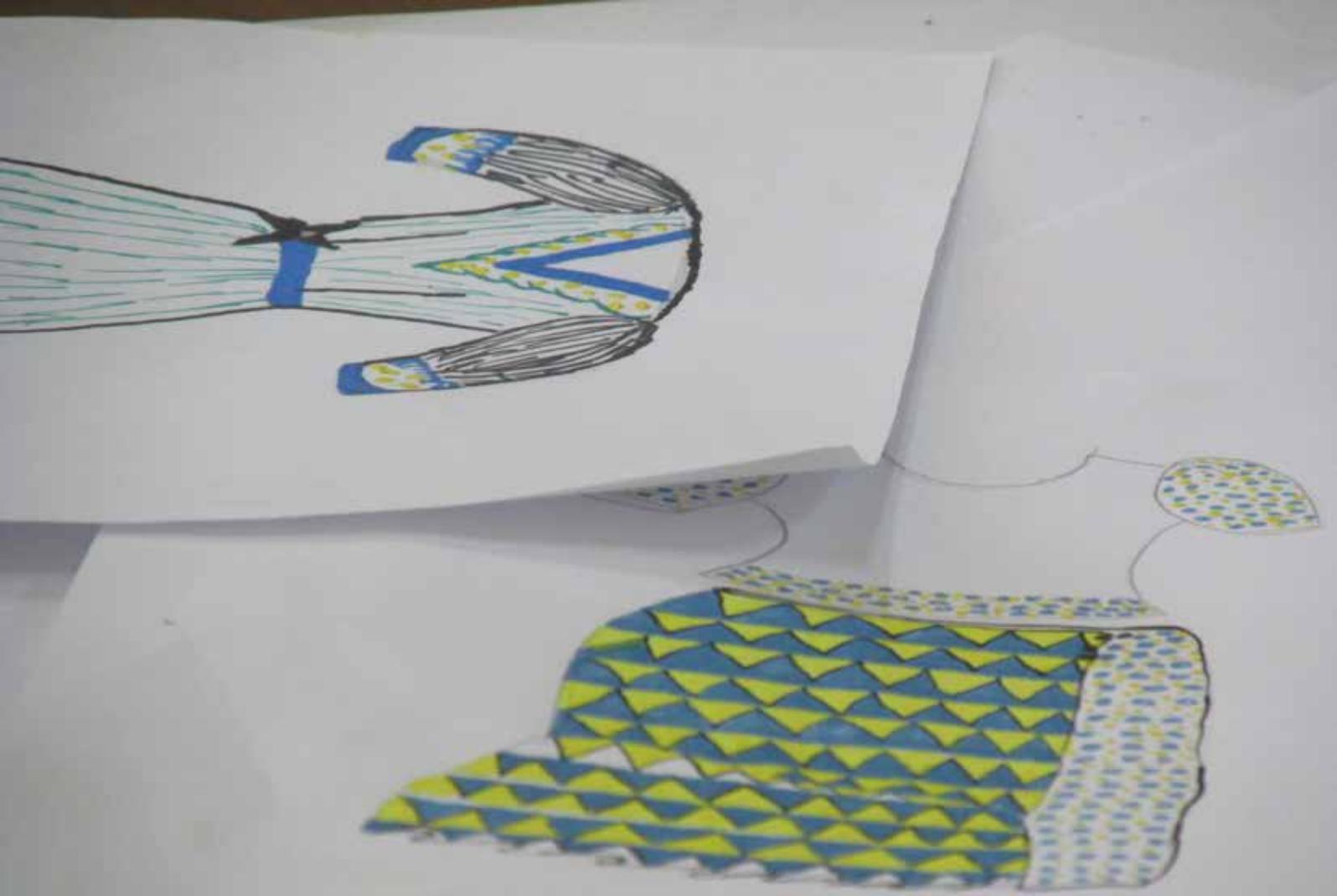




Image: Lushaju, 2016)





# National Dress



- Color
- Yellow
  - Purple
  - Yellow
  - Green
  - Black
  - Blue



Image: Lushaju, 2016)







Image: Lushaju, 2016)







Image: Lushaju, 2016)





Image: Lushaju, 2016)

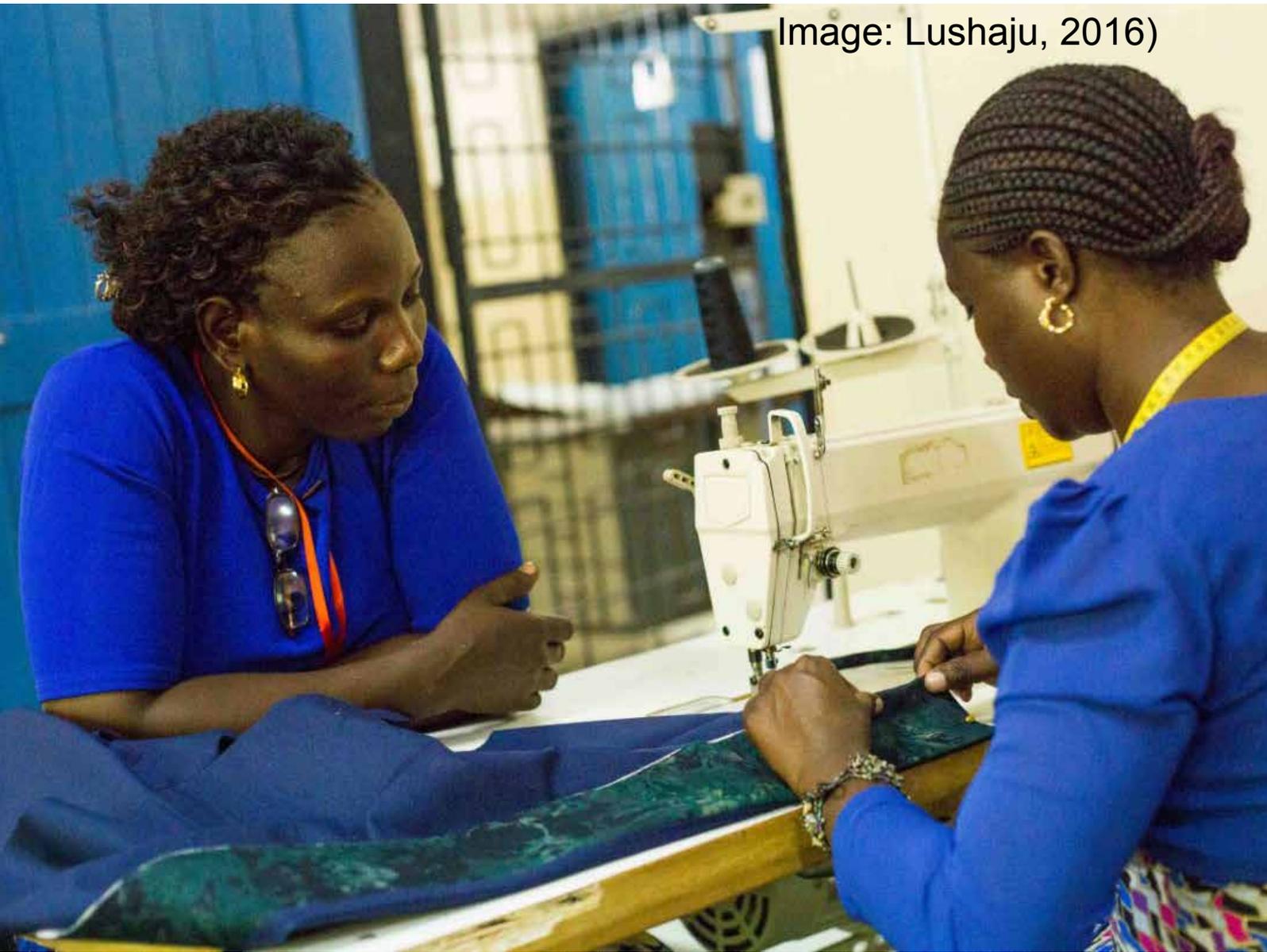


Image: Lushaju, 2016)



# CONTINUING THE CO-DESIGN PROCESS

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.





karibun vikoy

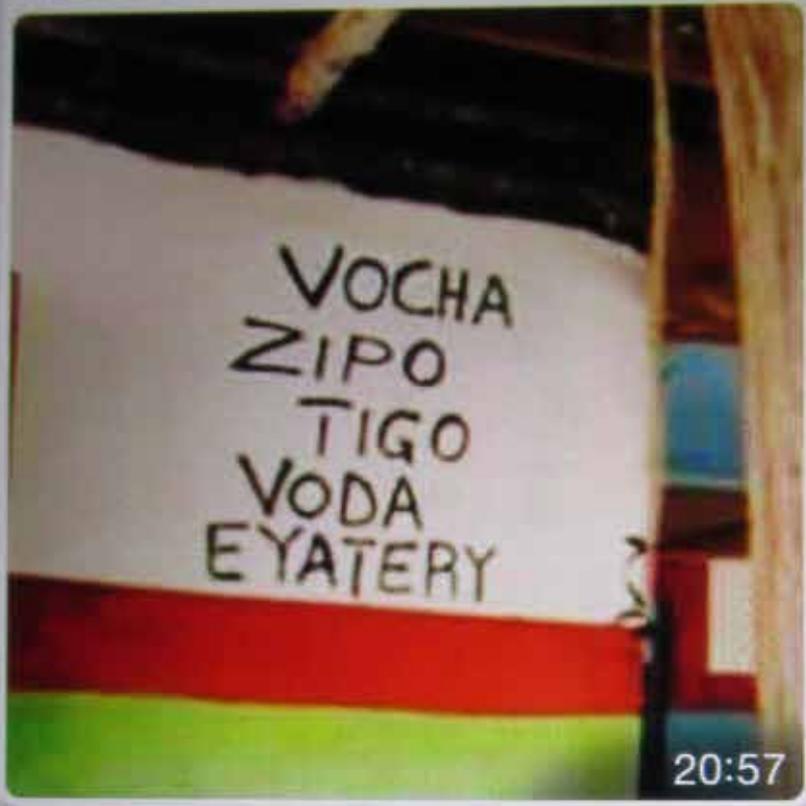
18:40



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# CO-DESIGN WORK...

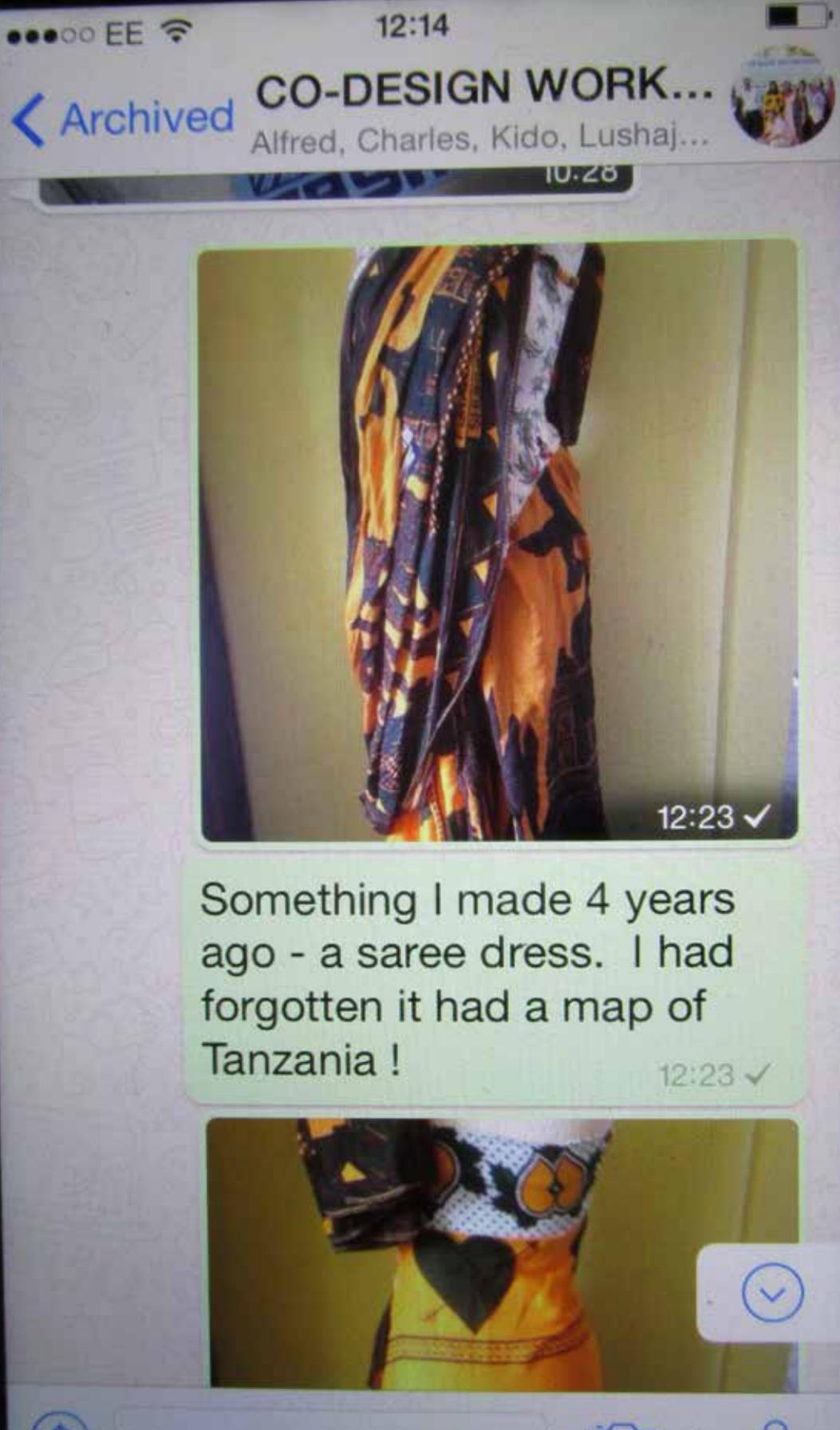
Alfred, Charles, Kido, Lushaj...



Alfred Lugallo



DESIGN INSPIRATION , ALFRED LUGALLO



PREVIOUS WORK CARRIED OUT BY AUTHOR AS A RESPONSE TO THE WORK OF YINKA SHONIBARE, KAREN SHAH

maji mengi?

14:31



14:34 ✓

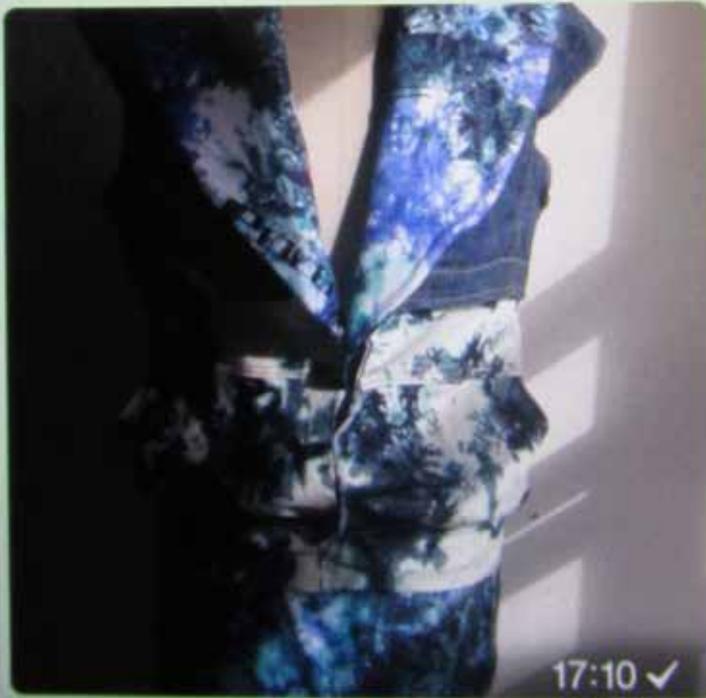


RESPONDING TO SECOND-HAND 'BATIK' TSHITS BROUGHT BACK FROM THE WORKSHOP, KAREN SHAH



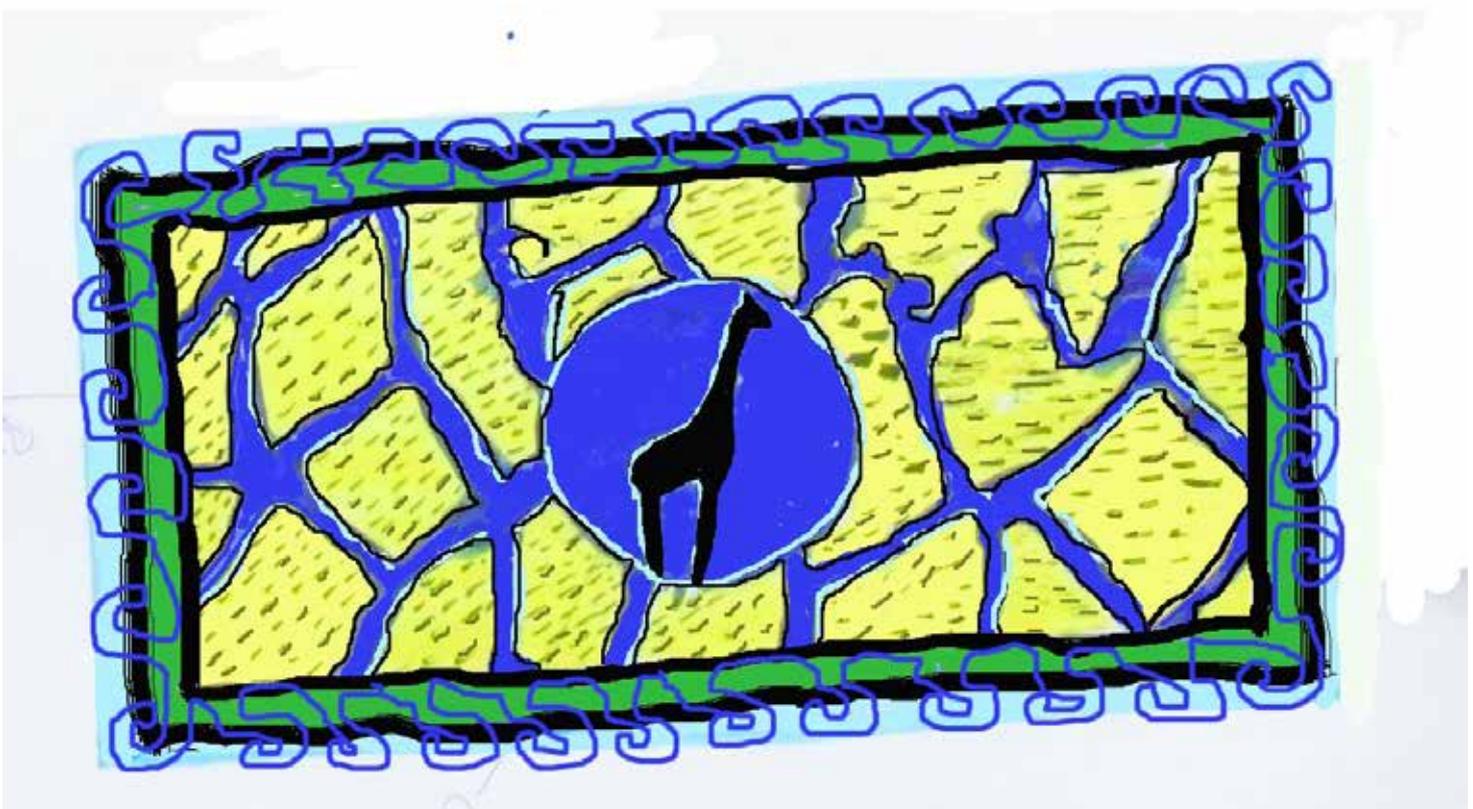
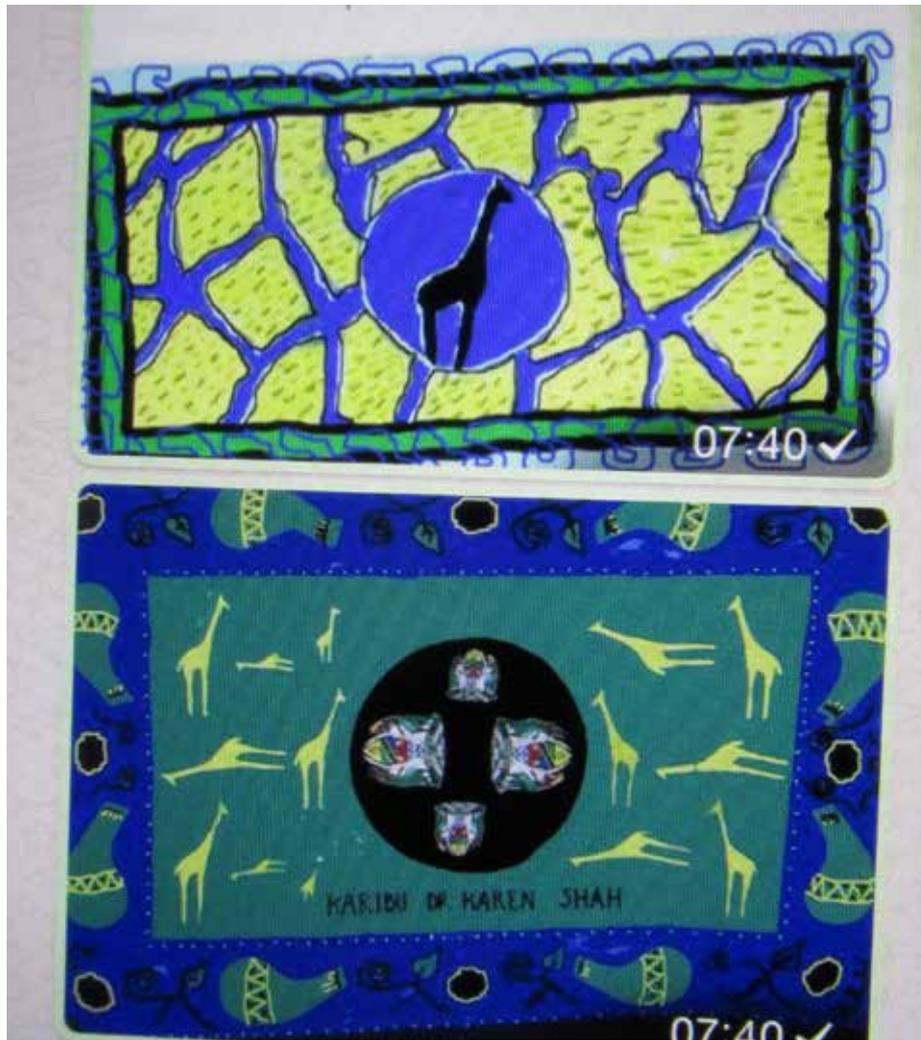
Mitumba ! ❤️

14:34 ✓



17:10 ✓





Digitally reworking kanga design developed during workshop  
(Lugallo & Shah, 2016)



KARIBU DR. KAREN SHAH



KARIBU DR. KAREN SHAH

 **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



CO-DESIGN WORKSHOP

Alfred, Charles, Lushaju, +255 712 083...



So in my head .... The man is the sweetcorn waiting to go back into the earth to start again .....

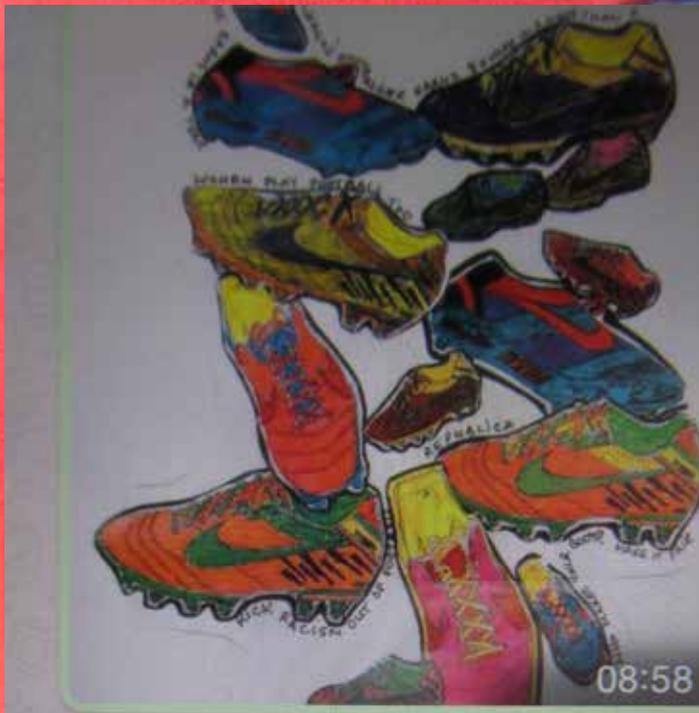
08:16 ✓









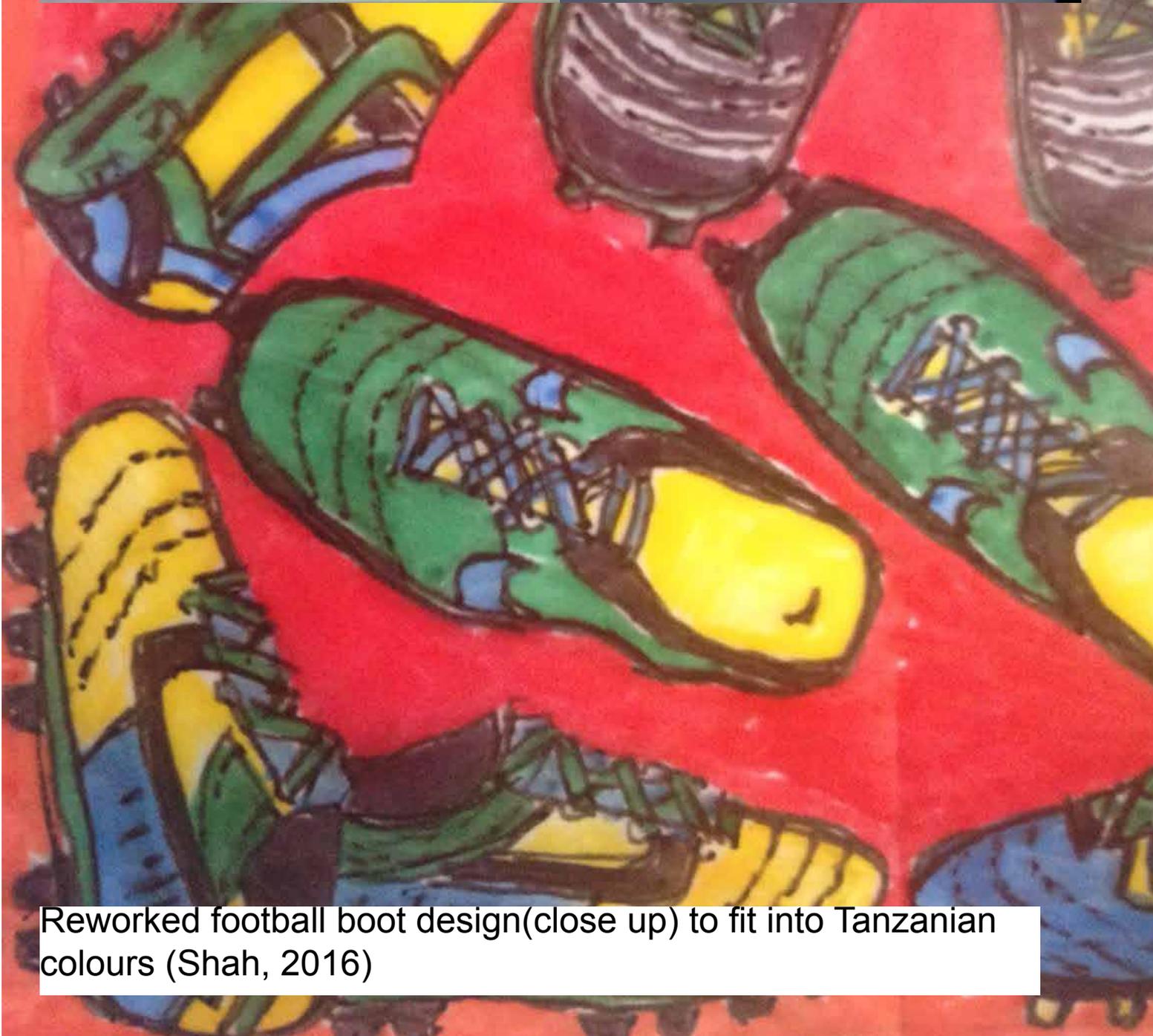


08:58

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

08:58

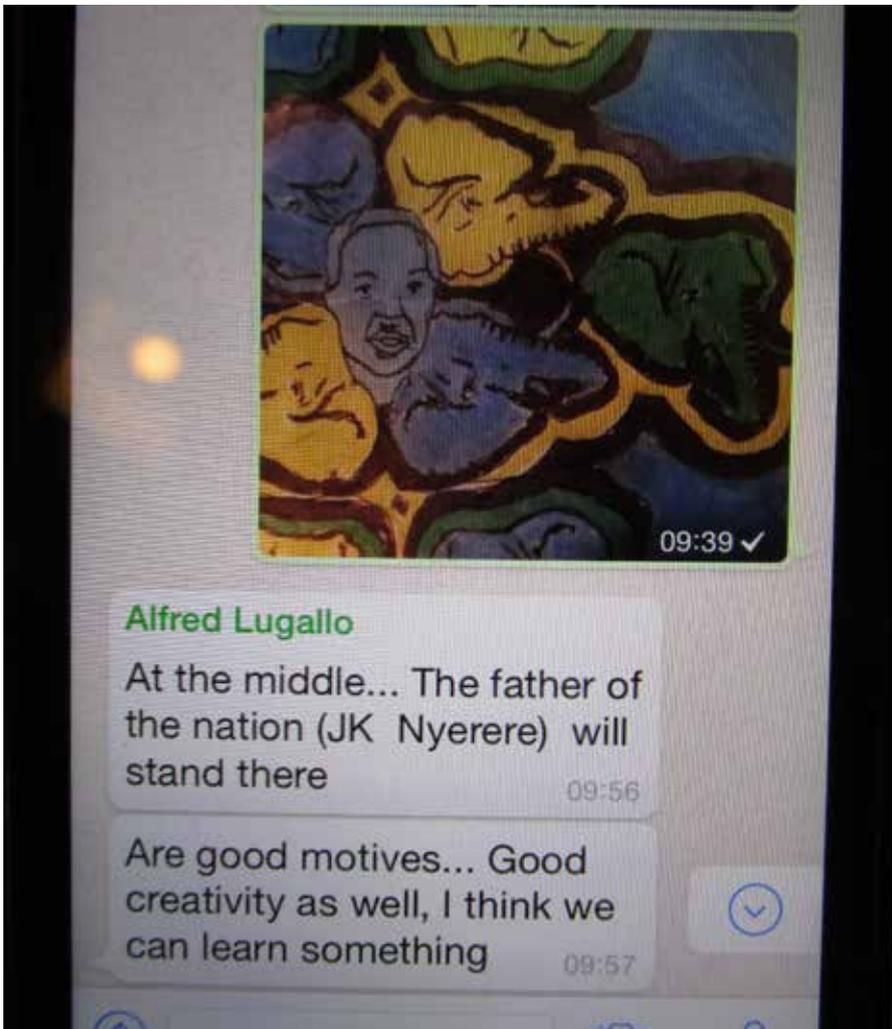


Reworked football boot design(close up) to fit into Tanzanian colours (Shah, 2016)



Football boot Kanga (above) and imagined as a shirt for the National Team (below)





*JK Nyerere agreed with Amartya Sen's human development approach that development is a process of expanding the capabilities of the people to lead the kind of life they value. (UNDP,2014:xi)*



# Freedom and Unity / Uhuru na Umoja



# Familyhood/ Ujamaa



# CONCLUDING REFLECTIONS

Involvement in the co-design workshops in Tanzania afforded the opportunity to investigate further the links between clothing and development; between fashion and social change. Fashion, as a concept of change and as a physical entity that we clothe our backs with, is inextricably connected to social change. The extent to which this change is positive is dependent upon a number of factors.

In designing, making, marketing and consuming clothes we need to be more aware of not only the environmental impact of their disposal but also the cultural shifts that can occur when clothing designed for one context find its way into another. Discussions with participants and observations gleaned from visits to the second-hand markets in Dar Es Salaam demonstrated how a previous negative connotation of their import could be converted into a positive one.

Second-hand clothes do indeed serve a function and their affordability, quality of make and fabric, availability and convenience are all reasons how they can fit alongside other clothing systems. However, the question arises over how long this can continue. Vendors, fixers and entrepreneurs did not view the activities they were doing as particularly aspirational for their children even though good profits could be realised. Poor working conditions, lack of financial support and the physical state of market buildings being some of the reasons.

In attempting to close the loop, and design a system whereby the positive aspects of cyclical development can be more fully realised, it is proposed that efforts be focused on promoting and enhancing the remanufacture of second-hand clothes, particularly within a country such as Tanzania.

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