

Ghanaian specific design and innovation models.

Contact

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Research Team

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Dr Cynthia Forson: Reader & Deputy Provost

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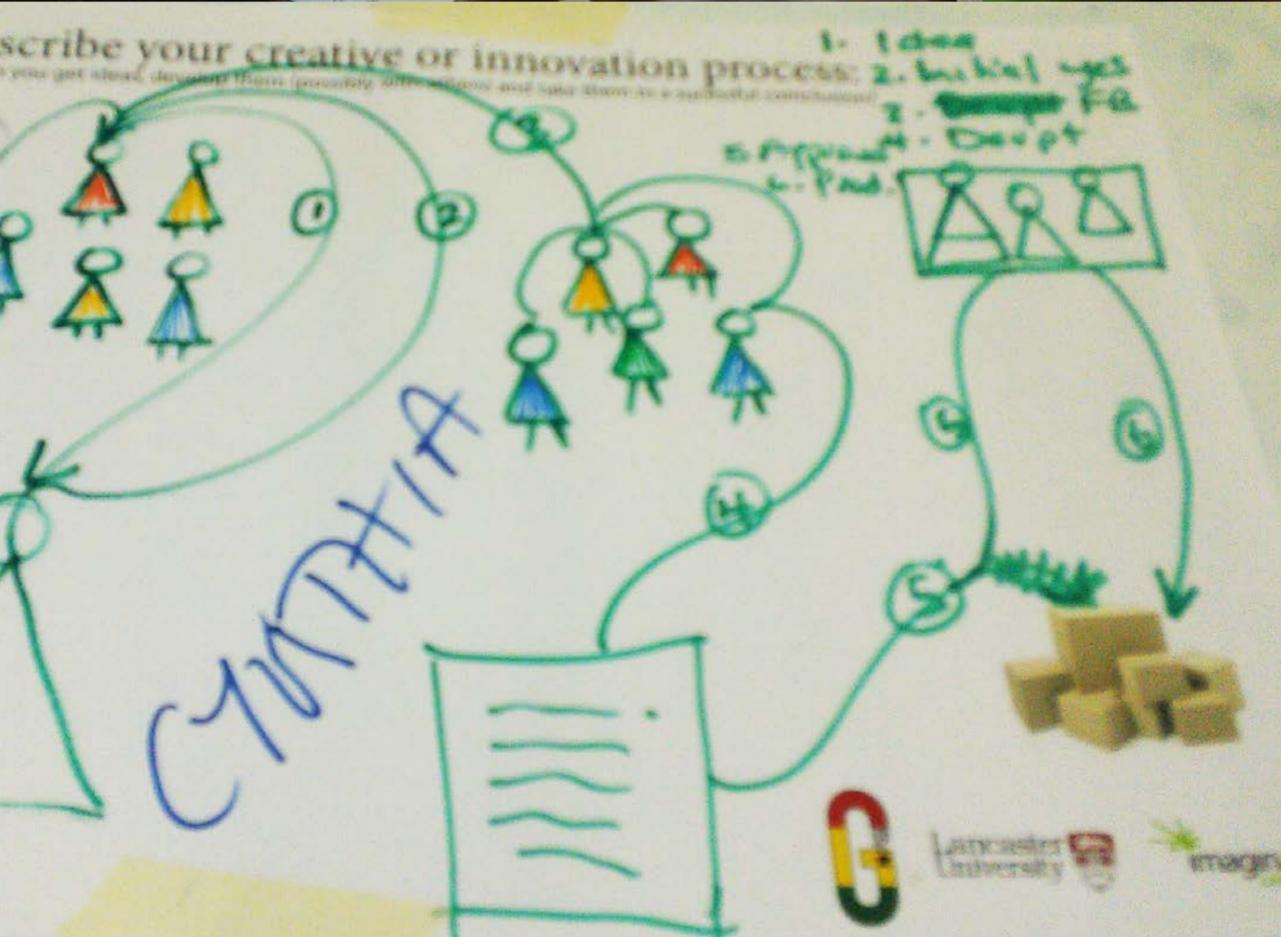
Accents & Art (Research)

Edmond Gablah



Research scope and activities





15 Interviews undertaken

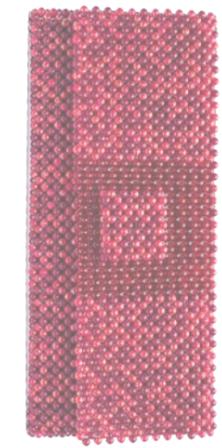
1 Workshop

1 Presentation

27 Participants in total

1 Corporate Partner

**Working with 7 academics
(5 from LU Ghana)**



Craft Design/Innovation starting position

Artisan / Craft worker

Strong oral tradition
Hands-on making
Low levels of education
Incremental
innovation over
long periods

Innovator/Designer

Visual/text tradition
Planning, not
making directly
Relatively high
levels of education
Dynamic innovation



Now... it`s complicated



**Now... it's complicated,
and more beautiful**



Cross-Cutting Areas

- 1. Cultural influences**
- 2. Gender & innovation**
- 3. Creative/innovation processes**
- 4. New ideas & progress**



Analysis of Cultural Influences

Dr Cynthia Forson





Ghanaian Culture

**Collectivist, Hierarchical,
Seeking Certainty (often finding
bureaucracy)**

**Challenges for
Commercialisation of tradition
New ideas / innovation
International/national /
local collaboration**





The dangers of cultural appropriation



Conclusion: Keep tradition at a safe touching distance

Tradition is part of the 'public good' so designing too close to tradition can make people reluctant to buy, too distant and it can be used inaccurately and possibly offend.



Gender Within Design and Innovation

Dr Cynthia Forson



*'design cuts across gender;
absolutely has nothing to do with
the sex, as far as I'm concerned'*

*Bead-Bag
Designer*



'For me, I don't see any difference, because it's like I do for men, I do for women. And nowadays you even see men even communicate, as far as fashion is concerned, even better, because they have the eyes'

Bag Designer-Maker



'Women are not able to work with tools but they are finishers here'

Woodcarver

'I will mostly call men to do the finishing because women are not able to work the wood the way it should'

Woodcarver



*'A woman can also do it.
Everyone can do it. If the person
has the passion to do it, they'll
do it'*

(male) Shoe Designer



Conclusion:

We need a 'new normal' with real expectations of equality as well as relative perceptions



Creative or Innovation Processes

Coomerene Rodrigo



Key Insights

1 Templates, patterns, window shopping (and copying) are important idea-creating strategies

2 There are tensions in collaborative creative processes, it`s hard to keep quality levels high, communication is a challenge

3 There is a European influence on the creative process and international custom affects products





'I'll cut a piece and say, we did this the last time and I think when I came to the market, it works; so can we repeat the same thing again'



*Fabric (Batik)
Designer*



'When I check online, I download the design myself. Maybe I can go to the Versace site, I go to the Gucci site, I go to the Diesel site; when I download it, I sometimes add something to it. I sometimes also take stuff out'



*'You see, the commitment,
the planning is not there a
lot of the time when you're
working with a lot of the
people here.... we're not used
to collaborations in this
country'*

Bag Designer



'it's not that you'll speak to the person in a disrespectful way; at least you have to also know that it's your money, they're also inputting their memory to do the work, so you'll give respect and value to them'

Shoemaker



Conclusion:

A living repository of West African innovation/design could help. Build an open source innovation economy as a place for like minded people.

Collaboration offers a great potential for innovation but it`s problematic.

Craft and design perspectives need to be balanced.



New Ideas and Progress

Yaw Busia



Key Insights

Digital media and social media are big enablers

Designers and innovators draw from a wider range of sources than artisans, drawing on ideas as well as forms...

There is a strong master/apprentice model in place that can promote conservatism

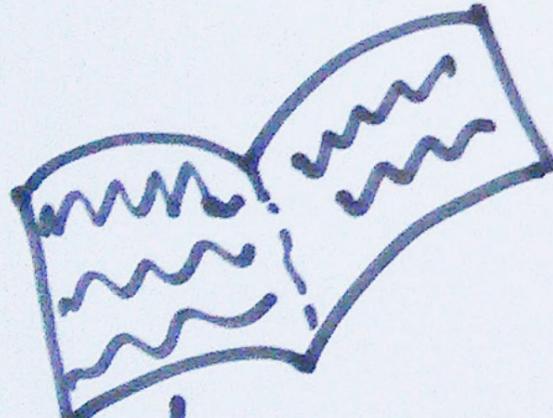


*'When I put it on social media,
on Facebook and Instagram, the
requests that come in make me
do more'* *Shoemaker*

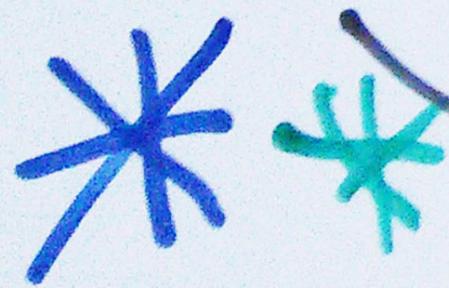
*'I use internet a lot. I like pushing
myself when I see people do extra.
I'm a very detailed person.
Everybody can see it'*
 Textile Designer-Maker



Designers and innovators often explicitly use theories as a part of their process in addition to seeing forms as inspiration.



Performance Theories??



Conclusion:

The digital medium is important throughout the innovation system, more so than levels of literacy would indicate.

There is a contrast between pull of craft-based workers and the push of more design-led activities.



Overall Recommendations and Further Work



Overall Recommendations and Further Work

- 1 Keep it distinctive**
- 2 Exploit digital and social media**
- 3 Collaborate, locally and internationally**
- 4 Lower barriers for success**



'Because it's like Africa, we have a lot of talent, but we don't get people to help us to develop the talent. They don't give us a lot of opportunities too. So you work on your own, you do everything on your own'

*(Esther)Textile
Designer-Maker*



How?



Together...

We are working on Ghanaian-led proposals to develop this innovation agenda; if you would like to get involved, contact:

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Group 1: How do we keep innovation excellent and distinctive to Ghana or West Africa?

Group 2: How can we exploit digital possibilities?

Group 3: What can we do to enable collaborations both locally and internationally?

Group 4: What practically will lower barriers to innovation success for women and others?



Thank You...

Please stay in touch

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