

Kanta to the World: Whose waste is this?

Who carries the burden of OUR unwanted textiles? Showcasing Kantamanto market and its community as a global leader in sustainable fashion

Wie draagt de last van ONS ongewenste textiel? Een tentoonstelling van de Kantamanto-markt en haar gemeenschap als voorloper in duurzame mode.

Hosted by: Kantamanto Social Club

Project Information (EN)

Fashion's Footprint

The textile industry is a major contributor to climate change, accounting for up to 10% of global carbon emissions and generating massive amounts of waste. In the EU alone, 5.2 million tonnes of garment and footwear waste are produced each year. Shockingly, about 92 million tonnes of textile waste are sent to landfills globally, equivalent to one garbage truck of waste every second. It is estimated that we already have enough clothing to outfit the next six generations, yet the fashion industry continues to harm the environment, making new production inherently unsustainable. The quality of garments has declined, with many items worn just 10 times before being discarded. While the industry thrives, those responsible for the pollution often escape the worst consequences, dumping excess textiles in poorer countries like Ghana and Kenya. Textiles from the Global North are often sorted for quality, with only the lowest-grade items shipped to the Global South, where they frequently end up in landfills or are incinerated, contributing to severe environmental damage.

Fashion's Backdoor

The Netherlands is a major exporter of used clothing, sending 248,000 tonnes abroad in 2022, primarily to countries like Poland and Pakistan, which serve as re-export hubs. Unfortunately, much of this clothing eventually ends up in "reuse hubs" in Africa, where waste management systems are overwhelmed. Recent European regulations aim to promote sustainable practices, but they often overlook the realities faced by communities in the Global South, who bear the consequences of excessive consumption from the Global North. For instance, Kantamanto Market in Accra, Ghana, is the largest second-hand clothing market in West Africa, receiving over 15 million garments each week. Of these, approximately 40% becomes waste within a month, ending up in Accra's overflowing landfills, where it leaches into the environment and the ocean—an effect of waste colonialism by the Global North. Moreover, the rise of fast fashion brands like Shein threatens these second-hand markets by reducing demand for used clothing. As we confront this challenge, the pressing question remains: how can we transition the fashion industry toward a regenerative model, or are we already too late?

Kantamanto market, one of the worlds largest second-hand markets, an incredible circular ecosystem.

However, there is hope—hope in the form of an extraordinary circular ecosystem that repurposes millions of garments each week. At Kantamanto Market in Accra, Ghana, thousands of workers manage the constant influx of textiles. This vibrant market not only provides affordable clothing but also creates jobs for over 30,000 people, making second-hand clothing an essential part of daily life, even in the absence of discussions about sustainability. This project aims to showcase Kantamanto's remarkable ecosystem and support its growth as a circular fashion hub. By collaborating with partners in business acceleration, waste management, and circular fashion, we seek to celebrate the resilient and creative community of Kantamanto. Our goal is to demonstrate how fashion can be approached in a more planet-centric way. We have worked with a group of upcyclers based in Kantamanto to showcase a collection of garments that exemplify resilience, creativity, and embodied circularity. These designers not only use Kantamanto as their material library but also consider it their fashion school. Join us at Manifestations and immerse yourself in the vibrant world of Kantamanto. Akwaaba!

Projectinformatie (NL)

Kantamanto, een van de grootste tweedehandsmarkten ter wereld, een bijzonder circulair ecosysteem.

Kantamanto-markt, in Accra, Ghana, is de grootste tweedehands kledingmarkt in West-Afrika. Het ecosysteem van de markt ontvangt wekelijks meer dan 15 miljoen kledingstukken, waarvan 40% binnen een maand als afval de markt verlaat en terechtkomt in de overvolle stortplaatsen van Accra, die in de natuur en de oceaan lekken, alles als gevolg van 'wastecolonialism' uit 'the Global North'. Ons initiatief heeft als doel het indrukwekkende ecosysteem van Kantamanto in de spotlight te zetten en te ondersteunen zodat het kan floreren als het circulaire fashion ecosysteem dat het is. Door samenwerking met partners op het gebied van afvalverwerking en circulaire fashion willen we de creatieve en veerkrachtige community van Kantamanto steunen zodat het een voorbeeld word van hoe we mode op een meer planeet- en mensvriendelijke manier kunnen benaderen. Met een 'growth-to-degrowth' aanpak willen we de ontwikkeling van de markt ondersteunen, los van de afhankelijkheid van de afvalstromen uit 'the Global North'.

Image List

Filename	Caption	Credit
phaquemani_1725119565.jpg	Designer at his shop, creating an upcycled piece.	
kttwpanel_1725119592.jpeg	Hybrid panel discussion at our London event.	
luckyblezz_1725119623.jpg	Designer at his upcycled fashion shop.	
phaquemani2_1725119680.jpg	Designer in the groups shared tailoring shop.	

The images above are included in the ZIP under /images.