Informal, Formal, Collaborative
Designing within underserved communities.

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Context.

Underserved communities are complex social ecosystems. Looking more closely at this complex reality, it is apparent that the social and human capital that exists within underserved communities could be used to solve specific problems of everyday life faced by this population. The very existence of these promising cases suggests the opportunity to imagine and conceive a new generation of services: collaborative services.
The project.

The project aims to investigate social innovation initiatives within underserved communities as inspirations to design new models of services that can create new opportunities for local development and new forms of relations between people from and outside these communities.
| The design process. |
| Identify social innovation cases within underserved communities. |
| Collaborate and exchange information with collaborating DESIS research labs. |
| Collaborate in specific collaborative service projects within underserved communities. |
| Reflect in depth on the nature and qualities of collaborative services. |
| Develop special knowledge and specific design tools. |
| Devise effective ways for design schools to intervene in each of these issues. |
There are cases, like Light Recicla, that consolidate new models to provide services. In this initiative, there is a service that seeks to reduce the price of the electricity bill of consumers through the exchange of recyclable garbage for discounts. It creates a connection between the electricity company in Rio de Janeiro and the people from the favelas, bringing benefits for both sides.
Other initiatives promote new ways of activism and civic participation. This is the case of Occupy Alemão, which is a group of young activists from the favela Complexo do Alemão that, to express their political awareness, have created an organized form of expression, concentrated in a collective. Through this group, the youth promote a political, cultural and affective occupation of the public spaces within the favela do Alemão.
There are cases that show new models of services within underserved communities that are strongly based on relational qualities. This is the case of Favela Orgânica, a service that promotes new ways to deal with food and it is based on trustful relations among local fair marketers, local community and external supporters like Slow Food.
Favela Orgânica is also an example of new ways of production and consumption. The project creates recipes using vegetable and fruits’ skin. It also has created a connection among local fair marketers, that give Regina Tchelly (initiative’s coordinator) the rests of vegetables and fruits that were not sold; the local community (especially women) that helps her to prepare buffets and workshops, and the external supporters, who gave to the project resources to strength and advertise its services.
There are also cases that describe new spaces for Design education. This the case of Collabo poa in Kenya. This initiative was conceived as a co-learning space where design students can interact with graffiti/street artists from Kibera (a well known slum in the sub-Saharan Africa). The interaction is seen as an opportunity for cultural exchange and cross pollination of ideas from the formal education environment with the informal expressions of daily life in the slums that is infused into the work of the street artists.
Also, there are new models of businesses that are born inside underserved communities that create new job opportunities. One of those is the initiative named Da Roça, a store inside favela Complexo da Maré that resells natural and organic products for local residents. These products are bought directly from local agriculture cooperatives. The initiative is directed to residents of the favela and adjacent neighborhoods who wish to purchase organic or natural products, with a fair price.
The collection of information from the social innovation cases is based on storytelling and pictures that contextualize the initiatives. During the research process, photos are taken in order to illustrate the actors and resources involved. This is a strategy of the project that aims to facilitate the dissemination of information among partners, as well as to create scenarios that can lead to insights to design new models of services and startups.
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