LOCAL
Design in the Global South.

University of Johannesburg - FADA
Design Society Development
South Africa
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Terence Fenn, Desiree Smal, Marcha Naudé, Pia Findlay, Oratile Mokgatla, Sandile Nkosi, Kyle Brand, Peter Harrison, Ivan Brown, Natalia Tofas, Jomari Budricks, Naudé Malan, iZindaba Zokudla: Conversations About Food
Context.

South Africans suffer from one of the most unequal societies in the world. However, even the most marginalized people are not without creativity. By partnering with local experts, design can be used to amplify creative activities and achieve appropriate endogenous change. Local design challenges the ethnocentric view of the world brought about through modernization, and hence plays particular interest to our local context, cultural diversity and local needs.
The project.

In this project, researchers and designers involved in the DSD DESIS Lab partner with local experts to:

• Better understand how people act within the limitations of their particular social, cultural, economic, political and environmental contexts.
• Explore the ingenuity of everyday expert / lay / informal designers to meet their needs.
• Utilise collaborative context-centred design as a means to practically extend human capabilities.
• Practically explore the decolonisation of design in the Global South.
Sub-projects.

Sub-projects under the LOCAL project currently include:

- Lite Manufacturing Technologies for the South African Context – Martin Bolton
- A Menstrual Hygiene Product for South African women – Pia Findlay
- Eyedentity Eyewear to Accommodate Human Diversity – Marcha Naudé
- Developing a Design Process Model for Paediatric Medical Device Design in South Africa – Ashton Bullock
- The Human-Centred Design for an Irrigation System for Small-Scale Farmers – Oratile Mokgatla
- Technology Innovation by Small-Scale Farmers in Johannesburg – Angus Donald Campbell
- Off-grid Food Processing for Micro-Enterprises – José Antonio Marín Pacheco
- Beegin Beehive System – Ivan Leroy Brown
The design process.
A variety of collaborative design research methods within a pragmatic practice-based research paradigm are employed. Methods are chosen based on their suitability for each individual sub-project.
Many of the LOCAL projects engage with government, laypeople, academic institutions and civil society groups to identify issues with current policy and encourage its improvement. This is always approached from the bottom-up using local experience to drive better top-down policy.
Many of the LOCAL sub-projects work with local partners, who actively work with communities to bring about appropriate endogenous change.
As per any collaborative design project, relationships are built with a multitude of invested local stakeholders, in order to engage with action at the grassroots, as opposed to designers preconceptions.
Most of the sub-projects are located within the Gauteng-City Region, a larger geographic area than the City of Johannesburg, but not too distant to make one-on-one engagement with local partners logistically problematic.
Food insecurity is an issue that continues to be apparent in many marginalized communities both in the context of South Africa and other "developing countries". In South Africa, considerations towards this pressing issue have been approached in the form of government grants and external aid programmes (only to name a few) yet food insecurity continues to intensify.

External aid proves to be unsuccessful in introducing technology to marginalized communities as it fails to consider important aspects of the context, rendering the users dependent on the external source. An effective approach to this problem, that remains largely untapped, resides in the field of industrial design, specifically with the use of co-design methods.

Central to the study are the participants, who have informed the solution through a process of co-design, involving iterative prototyping and product development. The farmer co-designers consisted of members of the Region D Farmers’ Forum (RDFF) from Soweto. The project is a response to the observation that there is a lack of existing design solutions for the problem of inefficient post-harvest food storage for small-scale farmers, which results in post-harvest losses and limited productivity. The study takes a stance that a pragmatic "bottom up" approach to design will result in a product that is more appropriate for the intended context. Design criteria for the resultant Umlimi Urban food storage unit, rather than being pre-determined, were informed through participation with farmers by utilizing a Participatory Action Research (PAR) methodology. Such an approach has more potential to assist the farmers to emerge within their community.

Many of the LOCAL projects are designed for local production, local distribution and, in some cases, are used to increase productivity, and hence increase income for the various producers who use them.
Many of the LOCAL projects consist of an educational aspect, whether it is to improve current practice towards more sustainable ends, or how to manufacture the product, or how to use technology to manufacture saleable outcomes. The projects also acknowledge the expertise of the local partners, and together with them, use technology to share such expertise for the benefit of other local communities.
Job Creation

Technology to increase productivity
Local production of technology for employment
Entrepreneurialism

The participatory design methods used to develop outcomes, in most cases, provide the opportunity for sustainable intensification, and the potential for increased profit. This, in turn, provides visible evidence of the feasibility of such enterprises to the broader community. In turn, this creates enthusiasm for broader participation.
Storytelling and conversation provide the opportunity for designers to share their skills and for local experts to help the designers understand contextual realities. Stories, lead to concepts and prototypes, which aim to deeply address the needs and support the underlying motivations of the local partners.