Call for Afrikan Design Thinking Stories

Are you a design thinking practitioner? An educator or coach? An entrepreneur or other professional who uses human-centred design in your work? Do you have a story to share (your own or borrowed) that tells of design thinking in Afrika?

Why are we calling for stories?

Many people in this field are frustrated with the lack of locally relevant stories to draw on when teaching design thinking, ones that are familiar to our contexts in the Global South. Many such stories from the Global North exist for this purpose. We need Afrikan stories of design thinking done in Afrika by Afrikans and for Afrikans. It's time to tell our story. And we need your help.

The Afrikan Collaboration Network for Design Thinking has embarked on a process to gather and build an open source collection of multimedia stories that demonstrate the practice and application of design thinking in a range of sectors and in a variety of African settings. This initiative is led by the Hasso Plattner d-school Afrika at the University of Cape Town and supported by the collaboration of other partners including the American University in Cairo (Egypt), Ashesi University (Ghana), African Nazarene University (Kenya) and Makerere University (Kenya).

Stories for whom?

The stories are aimed at design thinking coaches or educators for use in their teaching and facilitation with students, whether introductory multi-day courses or more advanced learning.

What are we looking for?

We need stories that offer real-world examples of design thinking for teaching and learning purposes, to make it practical and relatable and to help illustrate various teaching points related to design thinking.

Stories may be broad – showing how design thinking was applied to a particular problem – or narrow – demonstrating particular aspects of design thinking, such as the stages, mindsets, tools, and values in the design thinking approach. Some stories might tick several boxes.

The stories will illustrate the application of design thinking and provide evidence of its benefits as well as its limitations and challenges. They might include stories of success and of failure: where design went wrong or wasn't done well, and what we can learn from this.

We hope to derive lessons from these stories about how the design thinking approach was adapted for the local context or drew on local traditions of collaborative, creative problem-solving.

Whose stories?

We are looking ideally for cases of design thinking done in Afrikan settings by Afrikan practitioners, students or alumni. If international partners were involved that's fine, but we'd like to see strong Afrikan representation in the process. We would love to include in the collection stories from different kinds of organisations and in different sectors.

You might have such a story because you were directly involved in the process, or you might know of the story indirectly or be using it in your teaching but were not directly involved. All your submissions are welcome.

How to tell your story?

Please share the story with us by completing the online form using the link below.

If you don't have much detail but only a broad idea for a story, you will have the option to just give us brief information and we will contact you to explore it further in conversation.

If you do have more detail to share, the form will take about 30 minutes to complete and will ask you about the following:

- A broad description of the story
- The context in which it takes place
- The people involved
- What aspects of the design thinking process the story conveys
- How the story reflects the application (even adaptation) of design thinking for its particular context
- Details of materials and media that exist about this story (you can provide links or upload media)
- Any sensitivities around attribution and approvals to use this story

We encourage you to share just as much as you can in response to the questions, but we will be happy to follow up with you or other sources to explore further.

What happens next?

- After you submit the form, we will communicate with you and others you suggest, to explore the story further, verify the details, and check its suitability for this project.
- We will select stories that offer the best examples for the purpose of the project. Please understand that submission of your story does not guarantee that it will be published in the collection.
- Drawing on your submission and our further research, we will write up the story. In order to produce a shareable multimedia product, we will make use of existing materials or create new content where needed.
- We will first seek your review and approval of the story before it gets published.
- As each individual story is completed and ready, it will be shared publicly as an open source / creative commons resource.
- We will ask for feedback from users to help us shape future processes for producing and releasing the stories.

The project is emergent and responsive in nature and we may see the process unfolding in unexpected ways! Please join us in a spirit of generosity and playful experimentation as you share your story.

If you have any enquiries or ideas, please contact Jenni on jenni.vanniekerk@dschool.org.za.

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