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7<sup>th</sup> INTERNATIONAL DEFSA CONFERENCE

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**E T H I C S**  
A N D  
**A C C O U N T A B I L I T Y**  
I N D E S I G N

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**DO THEY MATTER?**

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## Editors

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Kate A Chmela-Jones

The conference proceedings is published by the Design Education Forum of Southern Africa (DEFSA) on the following website: [www.defsa.org.za](http://www.defsa.org.za).

The views expressed in this publication are those of the authors and not necessarily of DEFSA. Papers are published as submitted by the authors, after they have considered and included recommendations from peer reviewers.

### ISBN 978-1-77012-137-9

Ethics and accountability in Design: Do they matter? - DEFSA Conference Proceedings

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## CONFERENCE OVERVIEW AND PUBLICATION OF THE PROCEEDINGS

The seventh International DEFSA conference entitled, Ethics and accountability in Design: Do they matter?, were hosted by Midrand Graduate Institute & Vaal University of Technology. The conference presentation took place from 2-3 September 2015 at the Midrand Graduate Institute campus. The aim of the DEFSA 2015 conference was to honour and grow an emerging principle-driven, civic minded and human-centred design culture that takes issues of the sustainability, credibility, corporate social responsibility, professional accountability and personal integrity to heart. The typical worldview rhetoric of what should be done is redirected towards individuated responses and actions that foster meaningful change.

The conference catered for three subthemes.

- The individual: Ethics and accountability in Design
- The institution: Ethics and accountability in Design
- The industry: Ethics and accountability in Design

A conference review process took place after the submission of both abstracts and full papers. A call for abstracts was presented on the DEFSA website and communicated through the DEFSA network resulting in the submission of 37 abstracts. Each abstract was reviewed through employing a double-blind peer review process and a final evaluation by the conference review committee. The double-blind review process ensured that both authors and reviewers remained anonymous during the peer review process. A total of 37 abstracts were selected for submission of full papers, from which 31 papers were submitted and presented at the conference, resulting in 31 papers published in this conference proceeding. The 31 papers represent 19 institutions across South Africa. Combined with the delegates attending the conference, the 2015 DEFSA conference succeeded in bringing together 58 delegates.

Full papers were submitted for peer review after successful acceptance of a conference abstract. Papers adhered to the conference format and addressed the conference themes, sub-themes and conference focus areas. Expert specialists within the field of Art, Design and Architecture were selected to perform double-blind reviews with the review reports being evaluated by the conference review committee. A list of the peer reviewers is included in the Conference Proceedings. This peer review process took place prior to both the verbal presentation at the conference. Authors included comments presented by peer reviewers and feedback presented at the conference in papers resubmitted for publication in the Conference Proceedings. Authors received feedback in the form of peer review reports.

## FOREWORD BY PROF ALAN MUNRO

This conference, and the papers contained in these conference proceedings, comes at just the right time, as lifestyles, the world, and values of human flourishing are under more and more intense pressure. It is an altruism that ‘we share the world,’ but the nature of ‘sharing’ is fraught with tensions of beneficence through sharing, the right to grow, develop and foster self-enhancement, and the necessity to temper such self-enhancement for/with the demands for mutual (whose ‘mutuality?’) human flourishing.

Critically the conference was caught in a wonderfully provocative binary. It was Hume who suggested that there is a fundamental difference between what a thing ‘is and does’ and what a thing ‘ought to be and do.’ This binary neatly summarises the dilemmas, tensions and potential trajectories of Design as it wrestles with what the nature of Design is and does, and what it ought to be and do, within the pressure of modern living. (It is also pertinent to note that the previous DEFSa international conference engaged extensively with the former, and, therefore, this conference carries on the debate and moves it into the realms of the ethical).

The papers in the conference (and these proceedings) neatly engage with this debate in three realms that are the bedrock of the organisation: how to foster and engage with the abilities and creativity of the individual (and how this plays out in tensions between that individual and the community for whom designer designs), the role of institutions in inculcating principles of ethical responsibility and accountability to communities and the planet (much was written and spoken of the necessity of sustainability in and through design), and, reciprocally, the engagement with industry to develop ethically driven briefs and commissions (tellingly, one of the most provocative papers deals with whether designers should engage in commissions that can be viewed as unethical and to the detriment of human flourishing – see de Lange on ‘Non-Malificence’).

One of the central thrusts contained in models put forward to articulate such ethical accountability dealt with Human Centred Design (HCD), or related or interwoven approaches, and many of the papers speak to this ‘design as intervention strategy’. HCD speaks to all three themes of the conference and it is particularly pertinent that it does in this context because it situates (and opens out) the tensions that arise (and the negotiations necessary) between the individual designer’s sense of creativity and ability, on the one hand, and the particular views and demands of the community on the other, between the necessity to meet training outcomes on the one hand (a potentially normative experience), but the fostering of individuality on the other, and between the necessity of industry to grow and (economically) flourish, on the one hand, but potentially ‘suffer’ because of ethical (as opposed to legal) considerations on the other. These are, as some of the papers point out, ‘wicked problems.’ Both Yoko Akama and Julian McDougall, as key-note speakers, address these problems in their own particular and provocative ways.

Inevitably, with such a wonderful spread of design disciplines at play, and with the three themes that were to be engaged with, some, perhaps important, material was not engaged with to their full potential. Particularly this might be seen in what “ethics” actually means (or could mean) and how it relates to morals and the law, for example, and what the key considerations around accountability might imply. The notion of ‘human flourishing’ drives many of the papers, but a critical engagement with the concept is at times not as decisive as it could be. These are philosophical debates, but critical, in time, because they establish the bedrock of all that follows. Should designers also be philosophers?

I heartily recommend the papers in this collection of Conference Proceedings. (And I look forward to the next collection!)

## KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Two internationally acclaimed design education visionaries delivered keynote talks at the conference. A short biography of each speaker is presented below with the focus area of their presentations.

### Dr Yoko Akama

A Senior Lecturer and design researcher in the School of Media and Communication, RMIT University, Australia. Dr Akama is also Research Leader of RMIT Design Research Institute and Node Leader, Digital Ethnography Research Centre.

Her design research practice is entangled in social ‘wicked problems’, for example, to strengthen adaptive capacity for disaster resilience, and to contribute towards the efforts of Indigenous Nations enact their self-determination and governance. She is passionate about what people can do together to tackle complex problems and explores the role of designing in scaffolding engagement, co-creation and transformation. Her specialities include human-centred design, co-design, communication design, service design, participatory design, transformation design, and practice-based research.

Yoko is also a leader and founder of two prominent networks – Service Design Melbourne and Design for Social Innovation and Sustainability Lab Melbourne. She is a recipient of British Council Design Research Award (2008); a Finalist in the Victorian Premier’s Design Award (2012); and two Good Design Australia Awards (2014).

Before she entered academia in 2002, she worked as a Graphic Designer at Save the Children UK, and as a Publications Officer at Survival International for Tribal Peoples in the UK.

### Dr Julian McDougall

Dr Julian McDougall is a British educationist and media theorist. He studied for his PhD at Birmingham University whilst teaching at Halesowen College.

In 2000 he took up a Senior Lecturer post in Education at Newman University, before becoming Head of Creative Arts and then Reader in Education at the University of Wolverhampton. Currently, he is Head of the Centre for Excellence in Media Practice and Full Professor in Media and Education at Bournemouth University, United Kingdom (UK), where he leads a taught doctoral programme in Creative and Media Education. He is also Principal Examiner for A Level Media Studies (further education, pre-University) and an executive member of the Media Education Association.

He is editor of the Media Education Research Journal and Journal of Media Practice and author of a range of academic books, student textbooks and journal articles in the fields of media education, media arts and media literacy. Recently, he has undertaken research projects for Samsung, the United Kingdom Literacy Association, Sixteen Films, the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) UK, and the European Union.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

A large group of people have made significant contributions to the successful delivery of the DEFSA Conference and the publication of the Conference Proceedings.

The following people deserve receiving individual acknowledgement:

Dianne Volek (DEFSA website manager), Tanya Smit (DEFSA Secretariat), Sue Giloi (MGI: Conference Chair/ organiser), Thinus Mathee (past-President and VUT organiser), Dr Bernadette Johnson (VUT Research Support), Kate Chmela-Jones (VUT organiser and conference proceedings editor), Amanda Breytenbach (Conference proceedings editor).

The following groups are acknowledged for their input:

- DEFSA Executive Committee members
- Department of Creative Arts & Communication: MGI

DEFSA appreciates all the authors that invested a considerable amount of time and effort in the preparation and submission of the conference papers. In addition, a word of sincere appreciation is extended to the peer reviewers for reviewing the papers.

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# Mapping Empathy and Ethics in the Design Process

Veronica BARNES & Vikki DU PREEZ

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## Abstract

*There is no doubt that the role of product designers has changed considerably, not least with the rise of human-centred design. While Papanek's 1971 "Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change" seemed radical at the time, his ideas seem entirely at home in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, including his call to adopt more social responsibility in design. These views are echoed in the contemporary findings of professionals and researchers associated with ICSID, the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design. The focus has shifted, from the designer as the expert to the user, or community, as the expert in their own environment; and Co-design, Participatory design, and Universal Design are but a few examples of such people-focussed design approaches. And, as design is increasingly used as a tool for social development, the exposure of designers to vulnerable individuals and communities has increased. While research fields such as the social sciences have a long history of developing a code of ethics that is explicit, younger fields such as human-centred design and design research do not. While design and design research have adopted many social sciences methodologies (such as ethnography), the issue of ethics and accountability in design remains largely undiscussed.*

*The increasing importance of understanding the user in the design process is a key feature of human-centred design. Empathy is often described as "stepping into someone's shoes", however the full value of this process is described in Empathic Design. This deep understanding of the user's circumstances is temporary, and the designer then steps back out, with an enriched understanding of the user, enabling better design solutions. However, the interactions with the user - in order to gain this deep understanding - can also raise ethical concerns at stages during the design process.*

*The aim of this position paper is to explore the interaction moments, between designer and user, or designer and community within the design process. The Double Diamond design process will be analysed with a view to looking at characteristic tools in each stage, in order to reveal activities that require empathetic considerations. The contribution of this research will be an empathy map of the double diamond design process, with ethical implications. The significance of the analysis will be to highlight ethical concerns for individual designers, design researchers as well as those in Design Education.*

**Keywords:** Double diamond, design ethics; design process; empathy

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## Introduction

The Industrial Revolution resulted in a democratisation of access to products, with far more previously unattainable goods becoming available to the public. Thus consumerism was born, or simply – an unsustainable product-orientated culture (Manzini in Sotamaa, Salmi & Anusionwu, 2006:10). UNESCO granting ICSID (the International Council of Societies of Industrial Design) special consultative status in 1963, in order "to engage design on numerous development projects for the betterment of the human condition" (Smithsonian Institute 2013, p. 12), could be viewed as the beginning of an awareness of the ethical role of the designer. Papanek's call for an increase in social

responsibility among those in the design profession in “Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change” followed soon after in 1971. More recently, advocates have called for designers to evaluate their role in consumerism, but also highlighted the capacity of designers to make changes in their practice - that would benefit their immediate community and society at large. User-Centred Design<sup>1</sup> (UCD), Universal design, co-design, design for social innovation, empathic design and participatory design (among others) have all called for a change in focus from the designer as the expert, to the user. While UCD has been criticised for being exploited for commercial gain (Keinonen 2010, p. 17), the main principles of involving the user in the identification, analysis, and iterative development of solutions to their own issues are key, and form the basis of many other collaborative forms of design.

Any collaboration presents an opportunity for exploitation of one or more parties. In order to address this, there has been a growing focus on the role of ethics within the field of design. Ethics, as defined by the UNESCO Office of Ethics are:

At the simplest, ethics is a system of moral principles. It affects how people make decisions and lead their lives. It refers to well-founded standards of right and wrong that prescribe what humans ought to do, usually in terms of rights, obligations, benefits to society, fairness, or specific virtues.

Ethics is also concerned with what is good for individuals and society. It should help us to know how to live a respectful life, making use of the language of right and wrong, to define our rights and responsibilities. (UNESCO 2011, p. 8)

Although ethics are related to an individual/ community’s moral code, countless codes of ethical conduct exist. These are to provide an outline or guide as to how to make decisions within a specific context. ICSID (2013) has a Code of Ethics for Designers, but it focuses largely on the ethics of design as a business, as well as decisions related to manufacturing and development. Because of the focus of ICSID on the changing role of design – towards more human-centred activities – the underdeveloped nature of the ICSID Code of Ethics, as it relates to human interactions and social innovation, is surprising.

Despite being aware of global trends such as design for social innovation, the pace of curriculum change within industrial design education institutions may be much slower than desired. While there are pockets of best practice, logistical constraints (such as budgets, transport, time management, channels of communication, or community access) within organisations may hamper efforts to engage the community in collaborative design projects.

“Designing products, processes and systems within a framework of sustainable principles and outcomes is difficult; particularly when and where students have been raised in a world where unsustainable practices have been their life. As international agreements are created and globally responsible practices expected, students are challenged to design within complex social, ethical and environmental contexts.”  
(Fleming & Lynch cited in Sotamaa et al. 2006, p. 72)

Mindful of the trend towards collaborative design, and with community engagement being an area of focus in many South African Universities, vulnerable individuals or communities are now far more likely to face exposure to students. And while research fields such as the social sciences have a long history of developing a code of ethics that is explicit, younger fields such as human-centred design and design research do not. While design researchers have adopted many social sciences methodologies (such as ethnography and observation), the issue of ethics remains unresolved. University ethics forms may be generic and/or vague, and ethics review committees may be similarly unaware as to the requirements of design researchers. In fact, the “dearth of accepted standards and

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<sup>1</sup> The term was first used in 1986, by Norman and Draper.

ethical guidelines” has been identified as a worldwide obstacle to designing for social impact<sup>2</sup> (Smithsonian Institute, 2013, p. 6). Within higher education, the student experience is also mediated by the ethics policies of an institution. And thus, in many respects, the experience of the student is not individual, but mediated by the educators.

The increasingly fluid identity of the designer leans further towards people-centred activities, which impacts the need for ethical considerations. This paper aims to describe empathy and empathic design, the Double diamond design process, and where they intersect. The intersections are the points of ethical concern as they involve people interactions, and may have far reaching implications for design students, educators and design industries that aim for a human-centred design approach.

## Empathy

Empathy is a contentious topic within several fields, including science, medicine, psychology and ethical theory. Oxley, in her exploration of empathy, *The Moral dimensions of Empathy: Limits and Applications in Ethical Theory and Practice*, describes empathy as

“...feeling a congruent emotion with another person, in virtue of perceiving her emotion with some mental process such as imitation, simulation, projection or imagination” (Oxley 2011, p. 32).

Coplan describes empathy as a unique means for us to understand and thus experience what it is like to be another person, but identifies the affective matching, other-orientated perspective-taking and the ability to view oneself as separate as three key features of empathy (Coplan 2011, p. 6).

## Empathic Design

Functional and emotional needs are both important for the design process, and the idea of empathic design was proposed to best meet the *real* needs, as opposed to *perceived* needs, of the user (Wang & Hwang 2010, p.2). For that reason, Leonard and Rayport (who first coined the phrase empathic design) suggest that using empathic design techniques would “require unusual collaborative skills” (1997, p. 104).

Thomas and McDonagh describe empathic research strategies as including the following:

- shared language (finding a means for designer and user to understand each other, especially when coming from differing contexts)
- collaboration (co-operation between persons of different skills and abilities)
- ethnography
- empathy (the designer will be able to gain a deep and real understanding of the user/s’ context and issues, a critical feature of human-centred design)

(Thomas & McDonagh 2013, p. 3)

## The Process of Design

The design process has become a specific area of focus for a number of disciplines. This interest is aligned to the creative and non-linear characteristic of thinking associated with the design process – referred to as *design thinking*. Brown (2008, p. 85) defines design thinking as a ‘discipline’, which draws from the methods and responsiveness of design as a process. In this way design thinking allows for the context-appropriate analysis of users, their needs and a resilient way of addressing these - through physical and technological products, systems, services, interactions and environments. The methods often referenced in discussion and practical workshop sessions, aim to help designers, or facilitators, mediate interactions and guide the thought processes of user (or

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<sup>2</sup> At the *Social Impact for Design* summit, in New York, 2012, international representatives from academic programmes, nonprofit and for-profit organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and government structures were invited to discuss the challenging issues and opportunities in the field globally.

communities in the case of more socially driven projects) towards understanding and solution development. The process of design has been mapped by various sources and professional agencies, and generally refers to a series of steps grouped in three main phases: the analysis and exploration phases, the understanding and generation phase, followed by the sense-making and reflection phase. These phases often occur in iterative cycles.

During the analysis and exploration phase, the main goal is to gain an understanding of the user or community. Their contexts, aspirations and culture are considered to gain a better understanding of their needs and possible parameters, which any proposed intervention must acknowledge. During the next phase, the designer and user work towards a shared understanding of the problem context and collaboratively imagine and capture (document) possible solutions. In the final phase, a common solution, or direction, is negotiated and the selected solution can be implemented and tested. Once the solution has been evaluated, the suitability can be established – should the solution not speak to the original expectations, changes are made, or another solution is developed for testing. Once a design is finalised, Schön (1987) encourages reflection-on-action within design fields and beyond, during which the process is evaluated as a whole and information on how to improve future projects is collected.

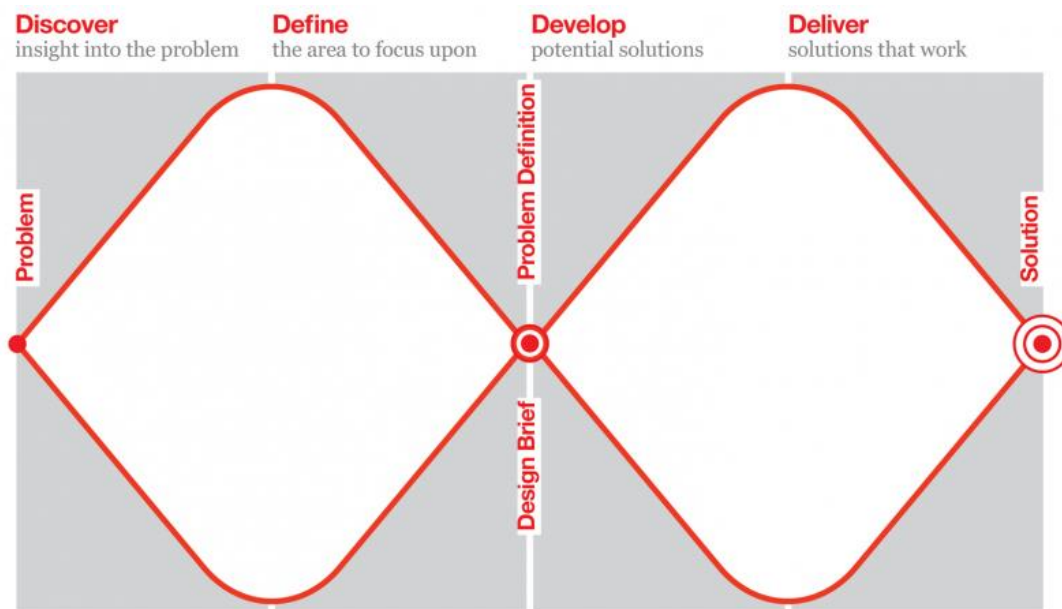


Figure 1: Double Diamond Design Process (Design Council 2015)

The Design Councils' Double Diamond model is an example of the design process: "Divided into four distinct phases – Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver – the Double Diamond (DD) is a simple visual map of the design process (figure 1). In all creative processes a number of possible ideas are created ('divergent thinking') before refining and narrowing down to the best idea ('convergent thinking'), and a diamond shape can represent this. But the Double Diamond indicates that this happens twice – "once to confirm the problem definition and once to create the solution" (Design Council 2015). The concept of moving from abstract thought to concrete actualisation is mirrored in IDEO's (2011) Human Centered Design Toolkit model (figure 2).

To recall these phases, simply remember H-C-D.

## From IDEO Human Centred Design Toolkit

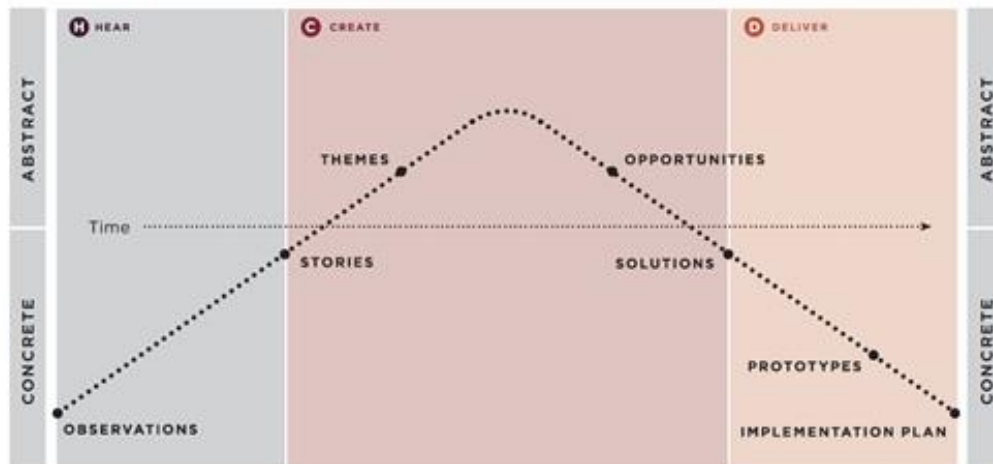


Figure 2: IDEO Human Centred Design Model (IDEO, 2011)

The DD process takes participants through four stages, divided into two main sections. The stages are: *Discover* (during which insights gathered in the various contexts are explored freely), *Define* (during which sense is made of the information found in the first stage, by creating a clear design brief that frames and describes the design challenge), *Develop* (during which many possible solutions are conceptualised, created, prototyped, tested in an iterative manner) and *Delivery* (during which the most appropriate solution is produced, implemented and launched). The focus on understanding the contexts of participants (and end users of the design) requires from facilitators and designers the ability to empathise throughout the design process (Ojasalo, Koskelo & Nousiainen 2015, p. 203). The DD process is, when evaluated, similar to many other design process models, including IDEO's Human Centred Design process model (2015), Kimbell and Julier's (2012) Social Design model and Moritz's (2005, p. 62) six-stage Service Design (SD) model. Many of the tools identified and described by these authors rely on interaction with, understanding of, and compassion for participants' context and needs. "In order to get to new solutions, you have to get to know different people, different scenarios, different places" (Kolawole quoted in IDEO 2015, p. 22).

### The changing role of the future designer

The need for greater user interaction and collaborative creative practice has reshaped the definition of a 'designer'. The 'Designs of the Time' project (Dott07), by the Design Council, yielded an in-depth overview of roles fulfilled by professional designers. Besides the traditional skills and roles associated with a product designer, the project found that designers were active within various roles that required empathetic interaction, including, as Tan (2009) notes:

- Co-creator: co-designing *with* people, rather than for them.
- Capability builder: building design-led skills among people to address challenges themselves.
- Researcher: using design research to bring people-centred perspectives to product and service development.
- Facilitator: Bringing together communities using design-led tools to act upon issues.

The roles described by Tan (2009) and Dott07 reflect a shift, not only in design as a practice, but as a profession. A more holistic view of the role of users and communities *before* and *during* the design process has yielded multiple design approaches including (but not limited to): user-centered design, participatory design, human-centered design, universal design, design for social innovation, and community-driven co-design. The shift in design, from frequently artifact- or spatially-driven design, to that of process-driven design for addressing complex societal and environmental problems, echoes the increased need of designers to master (or at least have competent) collaboration and

interpersonal skills.

...design offers problem solvers of any stripe a chance to design with communities, to deeply understand the people they're looking to serve, to dream up scores of ideas, and to create innovative new solutions rooted in people's actual needs. (IDEO 2015, p. 9)

In order to explore the depth of empathic practice required within current (and future) product and service design practice, a selection of tools and methods were interrogated. To select these tools and methods from the myriad of those available, the ones common to all of the three reviewed authors' design process models, were collated in table 1.

Moritz's Service Design Model	IDEO Human Centred Field Guide	Kimbell and Julier's Social Design <sup>3</sup>	Shared Tools/ Methods
1. SD Understanding: Finding out and learning	1. Inspiration	1. Exploring (Iterative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Immersed Fieldwork, exploration, shadowing</li> <li>Ethnography</li> <li>Context mapping/ analysis</li> <li>Interviews/ Conversations</li> <li>Observation</li> </ul>
2. SD Thinking: Giving strategic direction	2. Ideation	2. Making Sense (Iterative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Affinity diagrams</li> <li>Brainstorming</li> <li>Co-creation</li> <li>Role Playing (Bodystorming)</li> </ul>
3. SD Generating: Developing concepts		3. Proposing (Iterative)	
4. SD Filtering: Selecting the best			
5. SD Explaining: Enabling understanding	3. Implementation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Personas</li> <li>Scenarios</li> <li>Live prototyping (experience)</li> <li>Empathy tools<sup>4</sup></li> </ul>
6. SD Realising: Making it happen			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor and evaluate</li> <li>Scenario testing</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Phases of design processes and shared model and tools (Moritz 2005; Kimbell and Julier 2012; IDEO 2015)**

## Empathy and design tools

Krznicaric (2014) identifies ways in which one can cultivate personal empathy by focusing on various personal habits, including:

- The development of personal curiosity about strangers, which allows one to listen and gain the ability to understand another person.
- Challenge personal assumptions, prejudices and be open to discover commonalities.
- Immersing oneself in another's life to gain a fuller, more complete understanding of another person.
- Listen actively and communicate openly without any personal agenda.
- Aim to inspire action at a societal level and encourage social change.
- Develop your imagination to gain an understanding of individuals from all walks of life.

While empathic design aims to mine a deep understanding by activating empathy for the user, in

<sup>3</sup> In Kimbell and Julier's Social Design framework *Iteration* is placed as a fourth phase, but is described as an action that permeates the other phases. Their model acknowledges the non-linear implementation of the design process.

<sup>4</sup> Empathy tools can be described as physical products/ experiences of products or services being used, to allow designers to experience a sense of what users (including differently-abled users) would experience in a particular context.

order to best design to meet their real needs, this approach has been seen as most worthwhile in the first phases of design research (Postma, Zwartkruis-Pelgrim, Daemen & Du, 2012, p. 59). In their article, Challenges of Doing Empathetic Design: Experiences from Industry, Postma et al describe case studies in their analysis of empathetic design in practice. Their overall view was that while it is an extremely valuable human-centred approach, the gap exists between the theory and application of empathetic design principles in an industry context (2012, p. 69). In addition, Wang and Hwang assert that empathetic design can vary in different global contexts (2010, p. 4). For this reason, we have chosen to evaluate our design activities in the DD with the more general habits of empathy (as described by Krznicaric) in order to allow for the broadest range of analytical possibilities.

The habits identified by Krznicaric could be viewed as a basic set of points that evaluate the need for empathy (or not) in the design tools and methods identified as shared within design process models explored (table 2). The evaluation is not meant as a definitive analysis, but merely an indication of the possible empathy requirements that can be found within prominent design tools and methods.

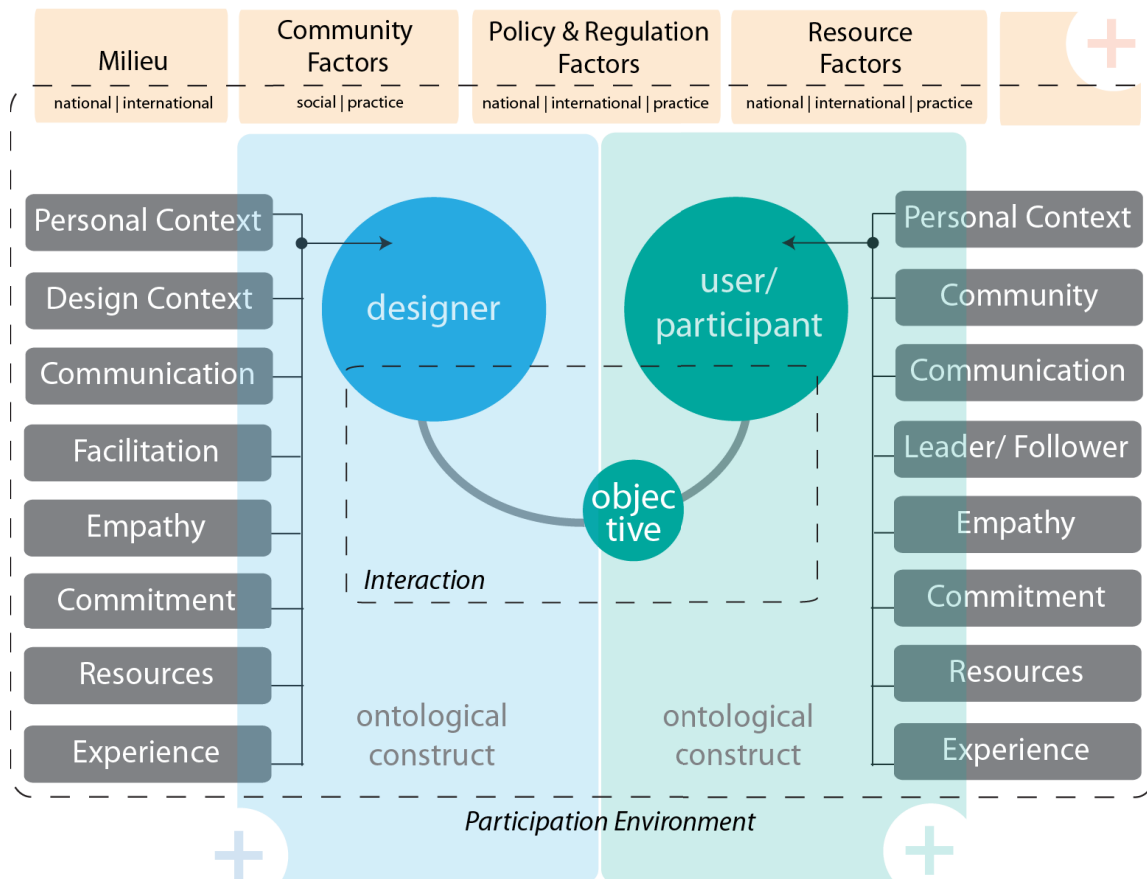
Empathetic Habit	Design Activity	Immersed Fieldwork, exploration, shadowing	Ethnography	Context mapping/	Interviews/	Observation	Affinity diagrams	Brainstorming	Co-creation	Role Playing	Personas	Scenarios	Live prototyping	Empathy tools	Monitor and evaluate	Scenario testing
Curiosity	Wanting to know more about people and understand their lives.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Challenge assumptions	Listen and participate openly, without preconceived ideas to establish the user's real needs and context.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		
Immersion	Experience another person's life to establish the user's real needs and context.	X	X	X					X	X	X	X		X		X
Listen actively, communicate openly	Listen openly, without preconceived ideas to establish the user's real needs and context.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Inspire action	Gain understanding, conceptualise solutions within a group and global perspective.	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X		X	X	X
Imagination	Think creatively and imagine multiple solutions.						X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X		X

**Table 2: Tools and methods compared to Krznicaric's empathetic habits**



It has to be noted that possibly not all design methods and tools require the level of empathy as those indicated above. The case to be made is merely that varying levels of empathy permeate many activities and methods within the design process.

## The designer-user interaction



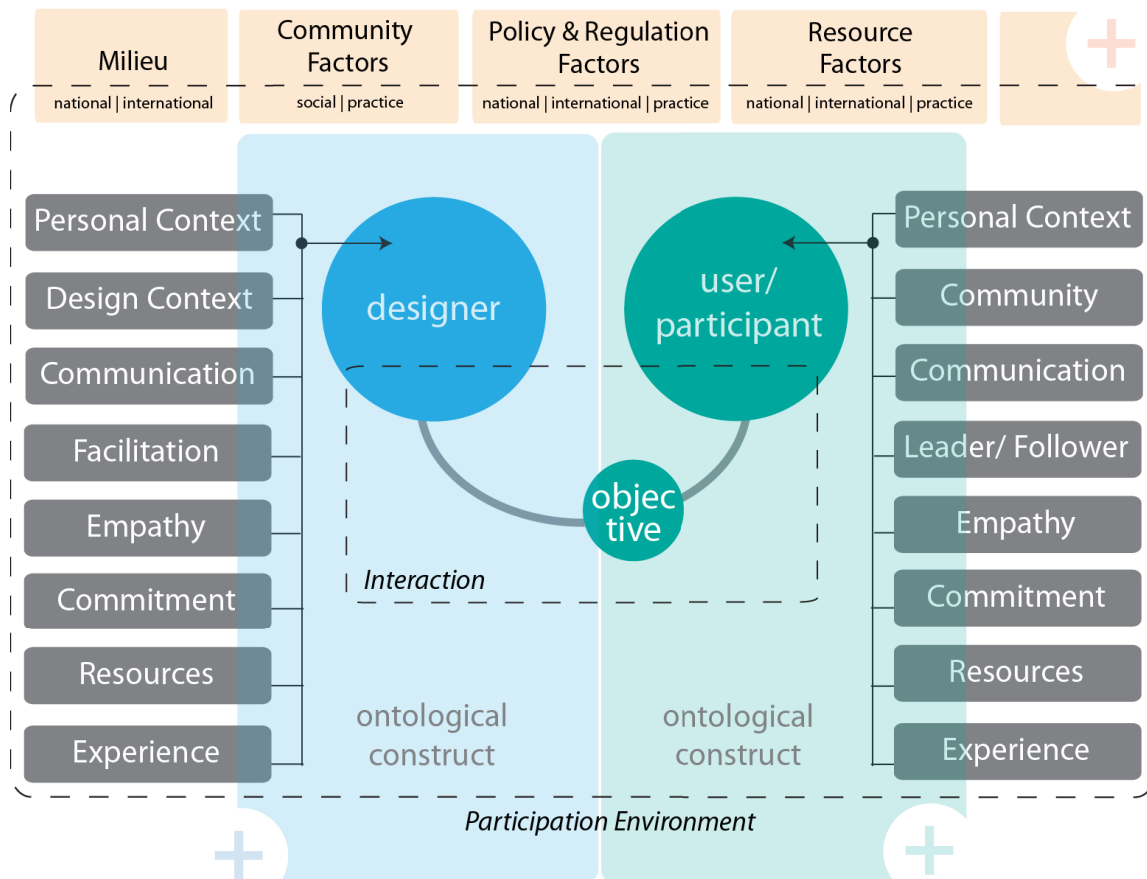
**Figure 3: The complex realm of designer/user interaction (Du Preez 2014)**

The interaction between designer and user (or community participant) is complex and dependent on a number of factors (figure 3). Some of these may be controllable, or adaptable, but others are imbedded in the context, experiences, values and behaviour of the individual. This means that personal bias, assumptions, negative impressions (or overwhelmingly positive impressions), as well as other factors can affect both designer and participant. Adding to the complexity of these interactions could be the nature of the engagement (and the level of friction or disagreement among participants or community members) and the space in which it happens. Therefore, simply focusing on the process and tools of design may not be enough.

Instead, the process of design, as outlined in the Double Diamond for example, can be mapped from two different perspectives: the one is focused on reframing purely *process-driven phases* (and tasks), the other to more *empathic and inclusive tools*. The goal is still to creatively explore the problem context, and through active collaboration with users, to define and develop what solutions may look like. However, the shift is from a *process that includes users* to *inclusive exploration, facilitated by the process*. The focus is then not only on the process but the impact, experience and growth of all participants in the process – designer *and* user (or community) alike. When the Double Diamond is viewed through this lens, one is able to map the design phases in terms of Krznaric’s empathy-cultivating habits, over the process to yield a human-focused design process.

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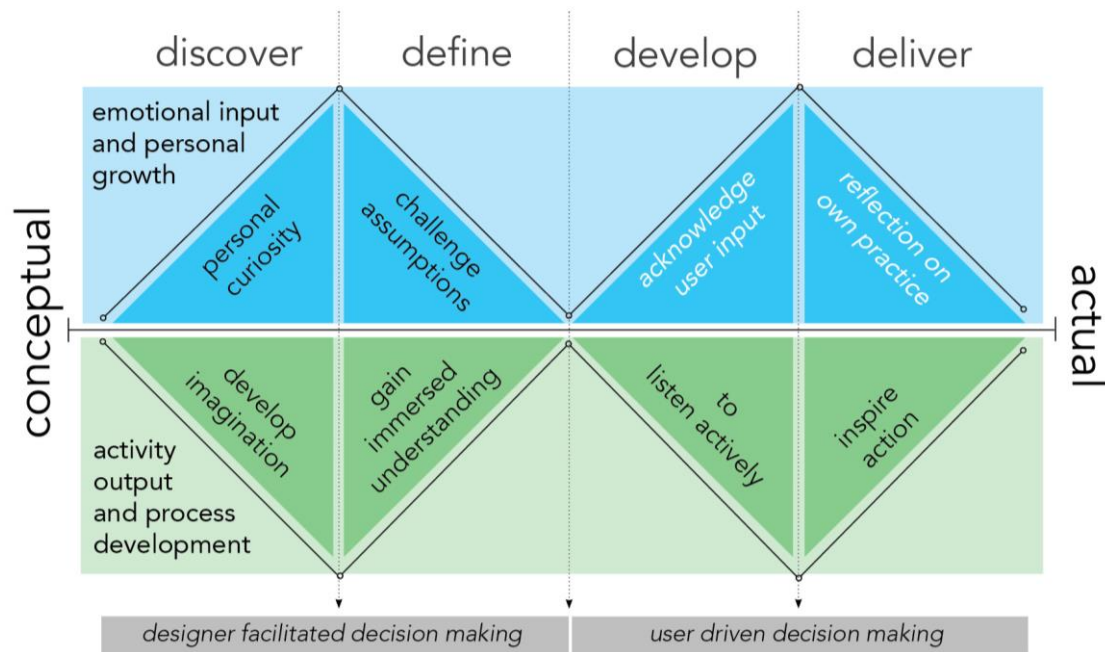
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**Figure 4: Double Diamond adapted with focus on empathy development**

The result is a process, which places the focus not on what users and community members can add to the design process (and resulting design), but rather an indication of activities and behaviours that support the creative exploration of a problem context. This perspective is linked specifically to design projects and processes where a continued and intense user and community input is required, such as participatory design, co-design, user centered design, human centered design and design for social innovation. The adapted process (figure 4) model is split into two streams of development; the first includes activities, which drive the exploration of the design problem context, while the second speaks directly to the emotional, behavioural and personal growth that should occur through the process. As the designer (and participants) move through the phases the development of personal curiosity and the ability to challenge personal assumption to identify commonality becomes the preface for honestly being able to acknowledge the input of participants. This acknowledgment of users and the need for personal reflection are additions to the original list proposed by Krznaric (2014). Schön (1987) encourages *reflection-on-action*, during which the design process is evaluated as a whole, and information on how to improve future projects is collected. This can also be linked to ‘feedback loops’, often used in economics, management and systems theory, where, upon reflection on the process and final result, adjustments are made to achieve a more effective result. It is, however, important that the development of the *self* in the process is considered. In order to answer, “how has this project influenced me?” requires personal reflection. Reflection-on-action in this sense, moves from an evaluation of the process and project (as it is often practiced), to include reflection on one’s own methods, behaviour, beliefs and development.

## Conclusion

Given the possible future roles of designers, the growing complexity of developing heterogeneous communities worldwide, and their associated issues, the importance of authentic user input cannot be understated. Currently, design processes are the focus of design education and professional practice, and the emphasis is on ethical behaviour within a reasonably traditional design approach and process. This, however, can be viewed as a “tick box” approach – once forms are signed and approved by ethics committees or communities representatives - there is no change to the design process followed. Processes may be user-focused, but not necessarily user-driven.

Essentially, without a concentrated development of personal empathy, or an expansion of a designer's personal empathy horizons, the principles of ethics and accountability will be meaningless. Ethics becomes an operational/ logistical hurdle in the planning process of a design project, and accountability is not with the users/community, but rather with the educators (or client) in terms of design success. Whether or not this trait of empathy is nurtured, or even acknowledged, within higher education institutions is unclear, but would need attention for the projected growth of collaboration-focused design projects in the future. Reflecting back upon ICSID's Code of Ethics (2013), referring to the benefits to the user:

Designers recognise their contributions to the social, individual and material well-being of the general public, particularly with regards to health and safety, and will not consciously act in a manner harmful or contradictory to this well-being. Industrial designers shall advocate and thoughtfully consider the needs of all potential users, including those with different abilities such as the elderly and the physically challenged. In this respect, designers will think of the whole value chain, from production to sales and use of the product. Designers realise that the humanisation of technology, the idea, usability and even the enjoyment of the product are part of their responsibility (ICSID, 2013).

The code clearly defines the role of a designer as one that does not harm or contradict the wellbeing of a user, however, without a deep understanding of the user this is impossible. To understand what 'harm' or 'benefit' means, one has to understand the person, thus, without empathy, any code of ethics may remain dependent upon designers' superficial assumptions.

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# The role of the industrial design educator in equipping design students to be ethical decision makers

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## Abstract

*The role of the design educator is to mediate learning and equip students to effectively contribute to their specific field once they graduate. With an ever-increasing demand for the ethical consideration of the sustainability of products and the impact of the manufacture thereof, so too the role of the educator should compensate and prepare learners accordingly. This paper aims to investigate the social and environmental responsibilities of industrial design professionals by referring to the works of key authors as well as current industry practices. Inquiry into suitable sustainability assessment tools which are used by designers and manufacturers is undertaken in order to identify appropriate assessment procedures which can be adapted / incorporated into design course content. This allows design educators to effectively prepare students for their future roles as ethical decision makers, conscious of their impact on the sustainability of the future. Within the field of industrial design a graduate is required to possess the ability to conceptualize, develop, and resolve problems during the development of products to a suitable manufacturable outcome.*

*As many developed products are intended for multiple units in manufacture, sometimes into the tens and hundreds of thousands, designers are largely responsible for what happens to these products once they are no longer used for their primary purpose due to obsolescence or failure.*

*Decision-making within the product design process has a direct impact in the suitability and sustainability of the outcome and there is a large amount of concern being placed on the suitability of the outcome with regards to its impact on the triple bottom line, being social, environmental, and financial implications. The designer therefore need to be an accountable decision maker, equipped to develop holistically considered products from conception through to long term impact, resulting in items which will benefit society and the environment. Design students who are able to interrogate their own design decision making against impact assessment scales will be able to better defend process, material and composition while still within the institutional environment, preparing them for their professional role as mediator between client, manufacturer, society and environment.*

**Keywords:** Industrial Design, Manufacture, Environment, Sustainability, Life Cycle Assessment

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## Introduction

This paper aims to provide insight and recommendations to educators within the field of Industrial Design, regarding the suitable application and incorporation of sustainability assessment and sustainability tools able to be incorporated into current syllabus. Aspects of this paper will be applicable to other fields within design education, depending on the accessibility and utilization of suitable sustainability assessment tools and appropriate computer software packages.

This paper will begin with an explanation of the industrial design process, explaining how products are developed for intended users. The stages within the industrial design process will be covered, from conceptualization, through to the explanation of the life cycle of the product. The process of product manufacture will be explained, where the finalized design is batch/mass manufactured. The link to sustainability assessments will then be made, where the manufacture and choice of materials

has a direct and often negative impact on the environment. An explanation of various impact assessment methodologies will be presented, focusing on methods and tools appropriate for industrial designers and product manufacturers.

These tools will then be linked back to the current tertiary educational institutions within South Africa which offer formal qualifications in the field of Industrial Design, drawing parallels between what is available and utilized by practicing professionals versus what is available institutionally within the local design schools.

Finally, suitable and applicable tools will be identified as being appropriate for immediate inclusion in current coursework in a manner which will allow students to effectively apply viable assessment criteria in student product design projects. This will grant students the opportunities to better understand their possible impact on the environment once they receive their qualifications and begin practicing as professional industrial designers.

## The Industrial Design Process

The industrial design process is a creative and inventive process concerned with the synthesis of such instrumental factors as engineering, technology, materials and aesthetics into machine-producible solutions that balance all user needs and desires within technical and social constraints (Fiell & Fiell 2006, p.6). This involves a systematic process initially starting with an identified need or evident requirement, which proceeds with conceptual ideation of solutions. These are then explored and refined through design sketching, model-making, prototyping and technical refinement of these prototypes. The final outcome is to be able to tackle the initial problem, providing an adequate solution. With industrial design, these solutions are generally manufactured physical products which are intended to be made using either batch or mass production. This can be anything from a single one-off manufactured solution, to mass manufacture of hundreds of thousands of replicas of the same product.

Designers have the chance to make something new, or to remake something so that it is better. Design gives the deep satisfaction that comes only from carrying an idea all the way through to completion and actual performance. It can be compared to the emotions aroused by making a kite and then being able to fly it in the sky: a feeling of closure, pleasure and achievement (Papanek 1995, p.9).

As many reproductions of the products are manufactured, it is extremely important that the designer does his/her best to assure the product is best suited to the intended end user. Designing meaningful and innovative solutions that serves the intended users begins with understanding their needs, hopes and aspirations for the future, and following qualitative research methods allows for the designer/design team to develop deep empathy for people for whom they are designing (IDEO 2011, p.41). This is a product design methodology which is called User Centred Design, placing the user at the centre of the design process (Figure 1).

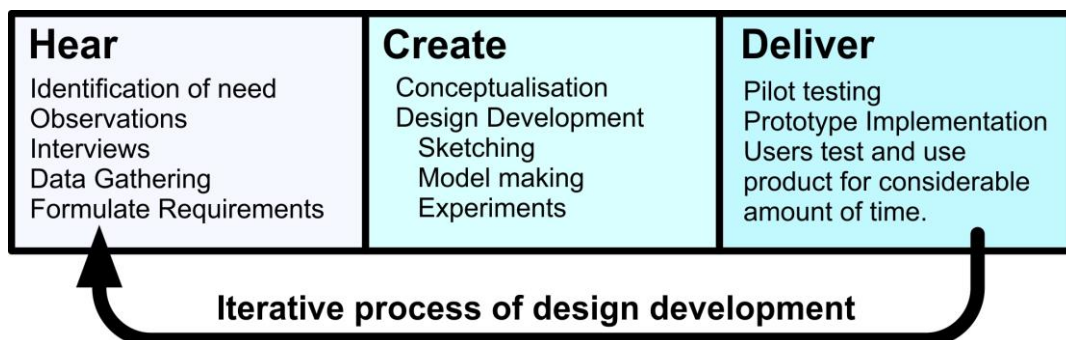
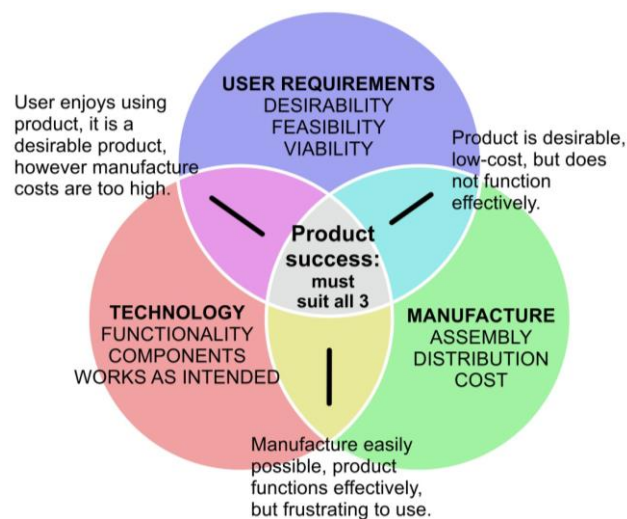


Figure 1. Steps of the design process. Adapted from IDEO 2011, p.8.

Once a design is at a point where it can be physical tested and prototyped into a usable item, this can be provided to intended users to offer them the opportunity to provide personal opinions regarding various aspects such as desirability, feasibility, viability, personal preference, usability and functionality (IDEO 2011, p.7). Only when the design reaches a point where it suits the intended users can manufacture begin. Although this manufacture is not personally undertaken by the designer who developed the product, the materials, manufacturing processes and assembly are all pre-determined by said designer during the design process. Being able to develop a suitable product for an intended end user is quite a task, keeping in mind that this end user is not a single person using a single product, but rather products can be mass produced for a mass group of intended end users. Furthermore, the products need to be able to be manufactured at a low enough cost to allow for profit to be made. This invites many areas of consideration for the designer to consider before a product is able to reach the market, be desired by the intended users, and still be able to make profit for the product manufacturer (figure 2).



**Figure 2. Product Success: Outcome must suit all 3 areas: User Requirements, Technology and Manufacture.**

This brings a concern with the designer not only being responsible for the development of a product which is adequately able to meet the three areas of product success as mentioned above, but also the responsibility of the types of processes and materials used in the manufacture of these products, as these materials and manufacturing processes have a direct negative impact on the environment. 'Despite how optimistic, idealistic, and future-oriented most designers are, design has sometimes created big problems in the world. Even where our best intentions have been engaged, our outcomes have often fallen short - sometimes making matters worse - because we didn't see the whole picture when creating what we envisioned' (Shedroff and Lovins 2009 p.xxv). It is evident that the industrial designer is responsible for decision making around the composition of the products and their methods of manufacture. Designers require an extremely diverse skill set which will equip them for this task. An inquiry into the different industrial design courses will provide an overview of what South African design graduates are equipped with.

## Industrial Design Schools in South Africa

Currently there are three schools across South Africa which offer accredited qualifications within the field of Industrial Design. These are listed in order of increasing distance from the Johannesburg, being the main manufacturing district in South Africa. The three schools are the University of Johannesburg (UJ), Tshwane University of Technology (TUT) and the Cape Peninsula University of Technology (CPUT). The three schools however are situated in different Universities, in different parts of the Country, and each situated in a different faculty, and offer a range of different qualifications. UJ Industrial Design falls within the Faculty of Art Design and Architecture, TUT



Industrial Design within the Faculty of Engineering and the Built Environment, and CPUT Industrial Design within the Faculty of Informatics and Design. For understanding the roles of the different courses, the departmental websites and course information brochures provided some insight into the departmental focus as well as an explanation of their position regarding the role of the industrial designer.

Institution	Explanation of the course on the associated departmental website
<b>University of Johannesburg</b>	“Industrial designers use drawings, models, and computer programmes to design products, which will ultimately be made in factories. Such factory-made products range from mobile phones to furniture or even cars. Industrial designers also design products which will be made as one-offs, such as craft products, trophies, or models and full-scale mock-ups for a movie. They can also use their skills to invent completely new products, to do computer modeling and animation, and to propose new ways of doing everyday things.” (Department of Industrial Design - University of Johannesburg, n.d.)
<b>Tshwane University of Technology</b>	“Industrial designers typically create finished products that emphasise the look, feel, safety and convenience of a product. They also understand manufacturing materials and processes making sure that products can be manufactured at the right price for the intended target market.” (Industrial Design @ TUT, n.d.)
<b>Cape Peninsula University of technology</b>	<p>“We are called Three-dimensional designers; Product designers and Industrial designers. Our graduates design anything and everything that is mass-produced – from BMWs to iPods; from couches to TVs. We turn good ideas into real products.</p> <p>Our department is a vibrant and dynamic space where emphasis is always placed on our students and graduates to become designers who are conscious of the needs of communities around them. We provide the opportunity for our students to learn using state-of-the-art equipment and software. Our biggest resource however, is a team of dedicated lecturing staffs who are experts in their respective fields and provide our students with a wealth of invaluable experience.</p> <p>Where it fits in with our curriculum, we partner with industry to run projects with our students. The benefit for students is the “straight talking” response from industry. This approach enhances teaching and learning for both students and staff.” (Industrial Design - Cape Peninsula University of Technology, n.d.)</p>

**Table 1. The three institutions within South Africa which offer industrial design qualifications.**

As is evident with all of the course descriptions, students learn how to develop products through from concept, to a level which is able to be manufactured. The understanding of manufacturing methods and processes is however part of the course with students understanding how to develop products, what tools are required to develop these products, and how these products are to be manufactured, and how this manufacture impacts the environment. Specific course module breakdowns of each of the institutions was not obtained, however this would provide useful future benchmarking opportunities between these institutions.

## Responsibilities of the Industrial Design Professional

Industrial designers need to understand that they are directly responsible for the impact caused to the environment due to the manufacture and distribution of the products they develop. It is therefore one of the responsibilities of the designer to anticipate the environment, ecological, economic, and political consequences of the design intervention (Papanek 1995, p.8). This has lead to a methodology of product development titled Design for Environment<sup>1</sup>, where the environmental

<sup>1</sup> Design for the Environment is also referred to as Green Design and Ecodesign.

impact of the products and the manufacture thereof is carefully considered as to prevent unnecessary negative impact. This opens industrial designers up to a world of Impact Assessment Tools and guidelines which are easily overwhelming in the attempting to splice this into the holistic product design process. This is due to the fact that industrial activity has the most significant effect on the environment (Giudice, La Rosa, Risitano 2006). It is explained that the main environmental issues concerned with industrial processes and products can be summarized as

1. controlling and limiting the consumption of resources;
2. avoiding the saturation of waste dumps;
3. achieving maximum energy conservation in production processes;
4. reducing as much as possible all types of emissions, whether inherent to the process or accidental; and
5. intensifying the processes for the recovery of resources (Giudice, La Rosa, Risitano 2006).

The designer needs to be aware of the impact that the decision making in the design studio, has knock-on impact on many different areas of the economy. The process followed in the development of a beautifully considered plastic water bottle may be an interesting process; however when the plastic bottle ends up floating across the ocean and polluting the environment, the designer should be aware of this.

## Design for environment – Sustainability assessment

In the Environmental Impact Assessment Review journal, sustainability assessment is described as a process by which the implications of an initiative on sustainability are measured and evaluated (Pope, Annandale, Morrison-Saunders 2004). These initiatives can be in the form of a process, policy, plan, product, project, piece of legislation, or an activity. This definition covers a broad range of different processes, many of which have been described in the literature as ‘sustainability assessment’ (Pope et al. 2004).

This allows for the bigger picture to be observed, not limited to the industrial designer and the product which is being developed, but rather the environment, the economy, and society. Furthermore it is not limited to the here-and-now, but to the future. This is what is known as the Triple Bottom Line (Figure 3), where the three pillars of Economic, Social and Environmental considerations are pivotal for the pursuing of a sustainable future. This stems from the most agreed-upon definition of sustainability from the *Brundland Commission* as “[Use and] development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Pope, Annandale, Morrison-Saunders, 2004 p.597. quoting the World Commission on Environment and Development WCED 1987).

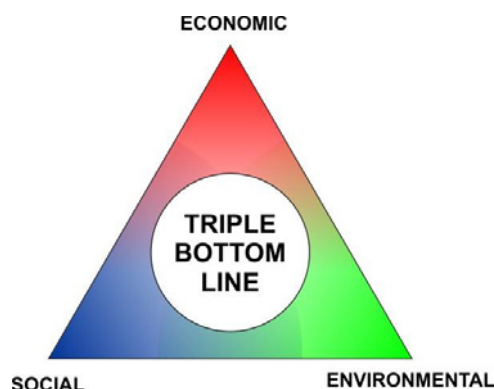


Figure 3: Triple Bottom Line

This three-pillar or Triple Bottom Line approach to sustainability assessment distinguishes between economic and social needs, in part to emphasize that material gains are not sufficient measures or preservers of human well-being (Gibson 2001 p.10). This approach as an

overarching theory is not difficult to grasp, however between 1987 and now, many different sustainability assessment tools have been developed all which are very similar to one another. For instance, in an overview of sustainability assessment tools from Ness et al (2007) a total of 32 different tools are mentioned. However not all of these are suitable for the manufacture of products. A flow diagram was used for arranging and classifying the various tools, which were divided into *indicators*, *product related assessments*, and *integrated assessments*. A cropped section of this table is included below, showing the tools which are most applicable for pairing up with the industrial design process, being the product related and integrated assessments (figure 4).

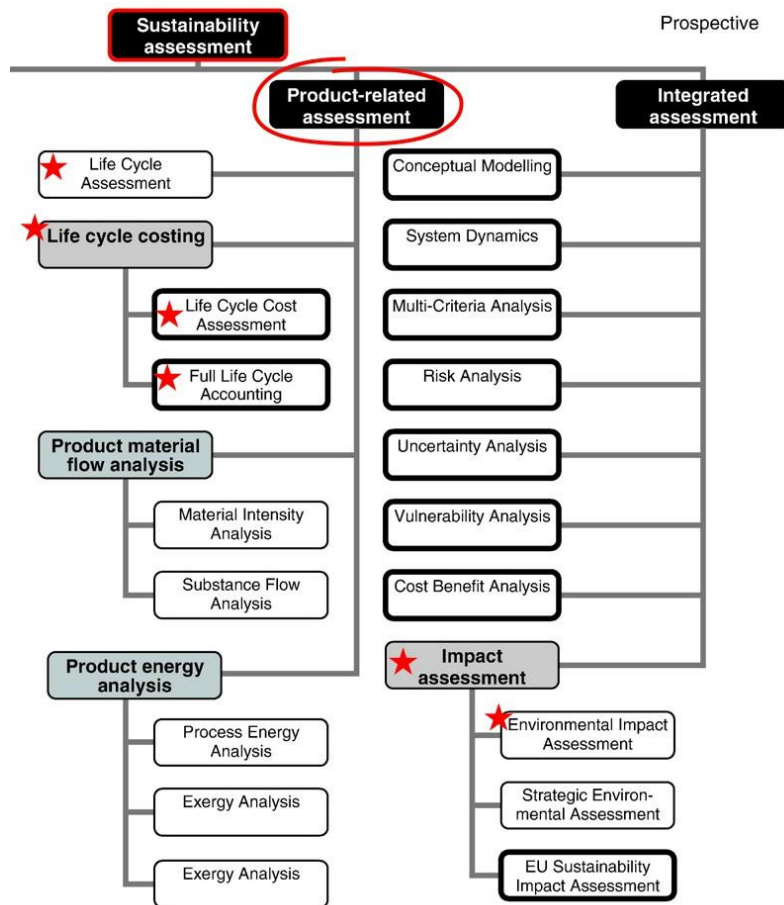


Figure 4: Sustainability tools, adapted from Ness et al., (2007 p.500)

Although there are many sustainability assessment tools and methodologies available, the most suitable for the industrial design process are those which carefully consider the manufacture of the products, energy consumption, material choice, as well as what happens to these products once they are no longer used for their intended function, i.e. disposal, repair, failure etc. The most suitable of those mentioned above seems to be the Life Cycle Assessment within the Product-Related Assessment (figure 4). Environmental Impact Assessment, within the Integrated Assessment section will also be extremely suitable as it allows for the assessment of the impact on the environment of manufacturing processes, energy use, choice of materials, and how products effect the environment once they are disposed of.

## How Industrial Designers approach the issue of sustainability

There are few tools in existence that wrap these issues together. Instead, designers must learn to patch together a series of disparate approaches, understandings, and frameworks in order to build a

complete solution' (Shedroff & Lovins 2009, p. 3). There are several approaches which have been developed by practitioners within the Industrial Design profession, to allow for the development of products and services with the role of creating more sustainable outcomes. These are different methodologies which can be utilized in the Industrial Design process and may or may not include sustainability assessment tools. Examples of these approaches are Natural Capitalism, Cradle to Cradle, Biomimicry, Life Cycle Analysis, and Social Return on Investment to name a few. As is now evident, the Sustainability approach of Life Cycle Analysis, as well as the associated sustainability impact assessment tools relating to this, allows for the realization that this is an industry standard method for measuring sustainability, as well as a currently practiced methodology utilized by industrial design professionals. For this reason, this measurement tool should most likely be the most suitable for attempting to match up with current design school curriculum.

## Life Cycle Assessment

As is evident above, Life Cycle Assessment, Life Cycle Cost Assessment, and Life Cycle Accounting are very similarly named, providing proof of the confusion between different sustainability tools. Although these may differ slightly, understanding the life cycle of the product is beneficial for sustainability assessment. Life Cycle even has an ISO standard definition as “consecutive and interlinked stages of a product system, from raw material acquisition or generation of natural resources to the final disposal” (Giudice, La Rosa, Risitano 2006 p.88 quoting ISO 14040 1997). This Life Cycle Assessment is also mentioned in product design and industrial design specific publications, but with another additional name to add to the list, being Life Cycle Analysis (Shedroff & Lovins 2009 p.121). A Life Cycle Analysis is illustrated in figure 5, taken from a book titled *Product Design for the Environment: A Life Cycle Approach*, which effectively bridges the gaps between sustainability tools and industrial design practices. This provides the opportunity for assessing and measuring impact during each of these stages, informing appropriate decision making. This in turn provides the necessary information for understanding what can be changed to allow for a more sustainable product solution.



**Figure 5: Life Cycle Analysis, adapted from Giudice, La Rosa, Risitano (2006 p.88)**

1. Raw Material Acquisition, includes all activities and processes required to obtain material and energy resources from the environment starting from the extraction of raw materials.
2. Processing and Manufacturing includes all the activities and processes required to transform resources into a manufactured product.
3. Distribution includes all the activities of transport, warehousing, and distribution that allow the product to arrive at the end user.
4. Use, Maintenance, Repair includes the entire phase of product life, including all typologies of servicing operations. This can be considered the time from when a user obtains a product, through to the dis-use of the product.
5. Recycle consists of the last phase of product use and indicates the recycling options, both internal (closed loop) and external (open loop) to the life cycle of origin.
6. Waste Management concerns the non recyclable fraction of the product and consists of the management of the final waste disposal (Giudice, La Rosa, Risitano 2006 p.88).

It is evident how different decisions made in each of the above steps can provide more suitable solutions. Each step can be tackle in an attempt to improve sustainability, for example: Manufacture

information provides indication of excessive waste produced. What can be changed or developed with the product or manufacturing process to decrease and ideally eliminate this waste.

## Software Tools for measuring impact

The methods of measuring impact become problematic as is evident by the numerous assessment tools.

... it should be noted that in order to calculate the sum of the wide variety of resources and emissions involved in a product's entire life cycle, it is necessary to acquire detailed information on a vast range of production processes, materials, and energy flows, and to make predictions regarding the product's use and the process it will undergo at end-of-life (Giudice, La Rosa, Risitano 2006 p.103).

This has led to the development of numerous software programs and electronic databases of information which proves useful. There are many types of software tools available to businesses, manufactures, and designers<sup>2</sup> (Loijos 2015). The impact of the systems, processes and manufacture can be assessed and simulated prior to the manufacture of any items through the use of these software packages. *GaBi Sustainability Software*, considered the number 1 sustainability software, is a product sustainability solution with a powerful Life Cycle Assessment engine. This software provides an easily accessible and constantly refreshed content database that details the costs, energy and environmental impact of sourcing and refining every raw material or processed component of a manufactured item. In addition, it looks at the impact on the environment presenting alternative options for manufacturing, distribution, recyclability, pollution and sustainability (Gabi 2015).

This helps guide the design and manufacture process, attempting to decrease negative impact. For incorporation into the industrial design schools, the costs of these software packages may be considered relatively high (in the terms of multiple seats requiring being purchased for educational institutions), with one of the *reasonably priced* packages, *Quantis Suite* costing R56 576.00<sup>3</sup>. This may be too expensive for incorporation into industrial design syllabus as the use of the software has not been piloted. Educational institutions can however apply for free educational installations of some of these packages which will provide access to the databases, and should be pursued.

## The utilizations of computer software for product development

Luckily, the purchasing of additional software packages may not be necessary as many of the current Design Software packages used by industrial design schools and professionals alike include embedded sustainability software. Understanding the types of software that is utilized in product development will provide better insight into how the sustainability software can run within. Computer Aided Design (CAD) Packages are already pivotal components of the product design process which allows for the development of accurate virtual 3D computer files. These files are used for many applications including but not limited to prototyping, tool-making and manufacture. Two of the main software packages used by the industrial design schools are SolidWorks, developed by Dassault Systèmes, and Autodesk Inventor from Autodesk. There are however other CAD Packages<sup>4</sup> used by industrial designers, however the two mentioned above are currently used by design schools and professionals alike, throughout South Africa. The balance between the software capabilities and the purchase cost allows the educational institutions to utilize the software as well as for it being affordable enough for young graduates to purchase once they begin their career. The sustainability tools within Autodesk packages are not well documented in publications and websites and have

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<sup>2</sup> Several of these software packages *SimaPro 7*, *GaBi 5*, *Umberto*, *Quantis Suite 2.0*, *EarthSmart*, *Sustainable Minds*, *Enviance System 6.4*, mentioned by Loijos (2015).

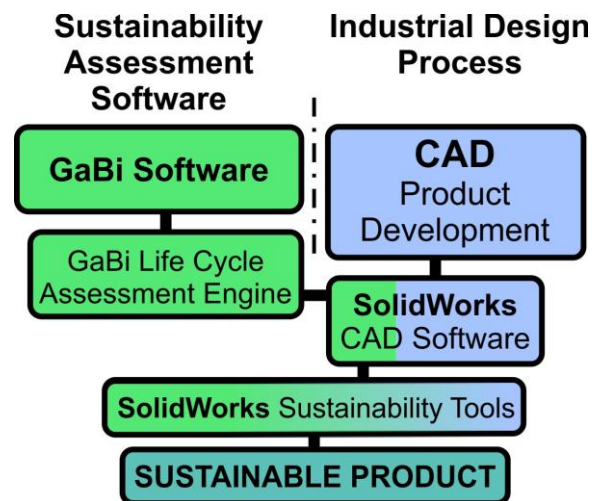
<sup>3</sup> USD4420 at R12.80, 01 July 2015

<sup>4</sup> Other widely used CAD Packages include *SolidEdge*, *Rhinoceros 3D*, *CATIA*, *CREO* and *Unigraphics*.

therefore not been expanded on within this paper. The applicability of SolidWorks however for utilizing sustainability software is more extensively documented and provides clear explanation of how the software links to various sustainability tools. This allows for a clear understanding as to how this can be used in design schools.

## Product Design software with included Life Cycle Assessment engines

Within SolidWorks, a sustainability component uses the gold-standard GaBi Life Cycle Assessment environmental impact database, against which it simulates the product being developed<sup>5</sup>. It includes diverse tools of with the additional capability to assess both parts and assemblies, using parameters such as transportation mode and distance, assembly energy, and use-phase energy consumption. (SolidWorks 2015b). This is extremely valuable to the product designer as variations of products can be developed and weighed against each other in terms of the various assessment criteria or areas of impact. Through the utilization of this built-in Life Cycle Assessment tool within SolidWorks it can allow students and graduates to engage with a software package they are already accustomed to. In figure 6 it has been illustrated how the Life Cycle Assessment software forms part of the SolidWorks CAD software, allowing for it to be utilized with the computer development of products.



**Figure 6: Developing a sustainable product using SolidWorks Sustainability tools. Diagram by Author.**

Incorporating the use of these tools into industrial design syllabus structure is as easy as linking it to the CAD software, engineering and manufacturing components of student projects. Depending on the course structure, there are many opportunities for effective incorporation of this software. For example, the designer (design student) is able to develop a product which may comprise of multiple components. This would be a virtual product, constructed from virtual materials. The CAD Software would be able to simulate and indicate what areas of the product may be considered creating a negative impact on the environment (figure 7). The student could then further development of the design by simulating alternative materials, remodeling components in a manner which utilizes less material, or omit components which may be unnecessary. As stated in the SolidWorks sustainability tool within the CAD Package:

When determining the environmental impact of a product, Life Cycle Assessment looks at what happens in the production, use, and the final disposal of the product. This even includes the transportation impact that occurs between the stages. Decisions on the material used, how it is manufactured, and other factors can result in vastly different

<sup>5</sup> The GaBi environmental LCI database is a peer-reviewed set of environmental impacts obtained through a combination of scientific experimentation and empirical results obtained in the field. Nearly all SolidWorks materials and typical manufacturing processes for each material are mapped to the equivalent GaBi material and process (Solidworks.com, 2015a).

effects on the environment. SolidWorks Sustainability shows you these impacts and helps you improve your design (SolidWorks 2014).



**Figure 7: Screenshot of SolidWorks Sustainability tool which runs within the CAD program (Solidworks 2014).**

This can easily tie back across to appropriate industrial design theory or technology, or business modules within current design curriculum. Students will be able to apply theory of sustainability directly into the CAD environment with the products they have themselves developed. The iterative process of design refinement and engineering, allows for multiple cycles of product refinement to take place, with each step becoming more sustainable, and impact the environment less than the one before. This would also assist in indicating to the student that the industrial design process, if undertaken carefully, is able to yield products which do not negatively impact the environment

Educational Institutions should also pursue free versions of sustainability software, for inclusion into their existing toolbox of software packages for students. Ideally this is to be incorporated directly into coursework. Furthermore these software companies should be approached for the possibility to undertake training basic training with their software (GaBi, 2015).

## Conclusion

Through the analysis of the various sustainability approaches which have a direct correlation to the decision making of industrial designers, it is evident that currently there are in fact accessible and suitable sustainability assessment tools at the disposal of the industrial design schools within South Africa. These tools allow for the development of more sustainable product outcomes, without the need for the product to even begin its life. This virtual simulation allows the designer to learn through trial and error gaining knowledge on how to develop sustainable products, practically applying what is learn in theory modules. The designer therefore is able to graduate as a more accountable decision maker, realizing the impact of the decisions made throughout the design process. The design student will be able to interrogate their own design decision making through the utilization of appropriate sustainability software and be able to better defend process, material and composition while still within the institutional environment, preparing them for their professional role as mediator between client, manufacturer, society and environment.

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# Do the right thing- combat our unsustainable future with design education

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## Abstract

*Governments, policy makers and environmental activists across the globe, entered the 21st century with a renewed focus in combatting the impact of humanities unsustainable practices. To achieve this goal a paradigm shift towards being environmentally responsible and accountable is required in which humanity will have to adopt radical personal change. This paper therefore aims to address the unsustainable future that humanity faces through investigating the role of education as agents of change in motivating sustainable practices and inspiring personal, ethical conduct amongst university students.*

*The research aim is achieved through conducting both a literature review and reflecting on a sustainable design based student project. The literature review commences with a reflection on the role and contribution of education in offering sustainable design education programmes through introducing the original six goals of environmental education as published in 1976 in the Belgrade Charter: A Global Framework of Environmental Education. The acquisition of appropriate sustainable design knowledge, awareness and skill is further investigated through presenting the sustainable curriculum developer, Paul Murray's (2011), teaching and learning approach that focuses on 'The Sustainable Self'. The literature reflection finally includes the moral development research conducted by James Rest (1986) which identifies in a Four-Component model how decision makers conduct moral decisions and explains the value and benefits of offering ethics programmes to students.*

*This paper will then discuss a project which aimed to develop design students personal accountability towards sustainable design as well as their moral judgement and decision making processes. The project tested the assumptions that a teaching and learning process can contribute to personal growth, improvement in moral judgement and ethical conduct which in turn contributes to developing design students that can take accountability for their design decisions and actions. In the paper, I will discuss the outcome of the project and focus on the behavioural changes identified by students in their personal feedback. The conclusion includes suggestions to improve the project through applying the goals of environmental education, Paul Murray's curriculum suggestions and Rest's framework to the context of the programme and the particular teaching and learning environment.*

**Keywords:** Sustainable design education, moral development, sustainable design project

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## Introduction

At the main entrances to our university campus are large banners that read "Do the right thing: Reduce, Reuse, Recycle". Within 800 meters from the main gate, on the side of the road leading to the campus, is a large billboard sponsored by the Endangered Wildlife Trust that reads "Destroy your environment, destroy yourself". These environmental education campaigns form part of many public attempts to promote a radical transformation within society that require attitudinal and behavioural changes. The messages in both campaigns also reveal the unsustainable dilemma that humanity faces – we know we are destroying the environment and are reluctant to take accountability.

Since the early 1960s environmental activists have pleaded with humanity to collectively take accountability and responsibility for the abuse and neglect that is imposed on the planet (Margolin 2007). The call to take action had reached critical levels when Wackernagel and Rees (1996, p. 125) announced in 1996 that the world was in a state of 'overshoot' which indicated that humanity's

ecological footprint had exceeded the global carrying capacity. Governments, policy makers and environmental activists across the globe, entered the 21st century with a renewed focus on saving the planet and therefore saving humanity. To achieve this goal a paradigm shift towards being environmentally responsible and accountable is required of human beings necessitates radical personal change.

Tony Fry (2009, p. 248) explains that if humanity strives towards building a sustainable future, the following three challenges needs to be met; 1) resolve (as many as possible) environmental problems caused by humanity; 2) adapt to the environmental conditions that we cannot resolve; 3) the most difficult challenge - transforming our actions to “cease generating the level of destruction, conflict and inequity that threatens our continuity”. Fry (2009, p. 240) evaluated, through reflecting on his personal experience, the efficacy of change agents to understand the context in which new sustainable design actions and practices could function. In this evaluation, Tony Fry rates the effect of environmental education as “moderate but potentially high” and further identifies environmental education as the only change agent with a potentially high effect. The scope of environmental education is identified to be a very broad area that spans from primary school to postgraduate studies. The activity area includes many thinking methods that can be rated from excellent and insightful to ‘fuzzy thinking’ that is below expectation. However, this evaluation indicates the important role of education to act as change agent in assisting in the transformation of human actions.

This paper therefore aims to address the unsustainable dilemma that humanity faces through investigating literature that provide guidances on the role of education as an agent of change in motivating sustainable practices and inspiring personal, ethical conduct amongst students. This paper will furthermore include student feedback that was obtained after third year students completed a project which aimed to challenge their ethical conduct and decision making processes. The project therefore tests the assumptions that a teaching and learning process can contribute to personal growth, improvement in moral judgement and ethical conduct. This in turn contributes to developing design students that can take accountability for their design decisions and actions.

## Research Methodology

The research methodology employed in the paper includes a literature review and consolidation and analysis of data gathered from student feedback. An investigation into literature assisted in providing insight to relevant theories, models and practices that pertain to sustainable design, ethical behaviour as well as goals and objectives of sustainable education. Student feedback was obtained through presenting a questionnaire to students that were enrolled in the third year theory module in which the project was executed in 2012, 2013 and 2015. The data was collated and analysed. Both statistical feedback and textual data were extracted from the feedback. Coding, themes and subthemes were utilised to analyse textual data and pertinent quotes were extracted and included within this paper to enrich the discussion of the research findings. The paper further includes the first person voice of the researcher, who was also the facilitator of the project. These reflections aim to enrich the content of the paper through including personal observations and explanations of critical decisions that were made during the teaching and learning process.

## The role of design education as a change agent in transforming society

### Goals and objectives of Environmental Education

The relevance and importance of environmental education has gained recognition since 1972 at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment that took place in Stockholm, Sweden. Environmental Education was identified as a vehicle through which global environmental problems could be resolved. In 1976, The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the United National Environmental Program (UNEP) published the Belgrade Charter: A Global Framework of Environmental Education (UNESCO, UNEP 1976). The Charter presents a global framework that established a need to adopt a new global ethic that includes both attitude and behavioural change for individuals and societies. The Belgrade Charter defines the goal of Environmental Education as follows;

To develop a world population that is aware of, and concerned about the environment and its associated problems, and which has the knowledge, skills, attitudes, motivations and commitments to work individually and collectively towards solutions of the current problems and the preventions of new ones.

The Belgrade Charter defines six goals for Environmental Education of which the first four goals can be summarized as the intention to help individuals, groups and societies to acquire awareness, knowledge, attitude and skills to understand and solve problems relating to the total environment. Environmental education should further assist in helping individuals to develop the ability to evaluate environmental measures and lastly to develop a sense of responsibility through participating in solving environmental problems.

The goals for Environmental Education identified in the Belgrade Charter were included in the school curriculum from the 70s onwards. I include the Belgrade Charter in this paper as an important reference point which defines the role and goals of environmental education and I do not intend to expand further on the development of strategic goals and objectives within the Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) programme. For the purpose of this paper I incorporate the six objectives, as presented in the Charter, to identify the fundamental core areas that informed the learning objectives and desired outcomes of a teaching and learning strategy.

Since the publication and original implementation of Environmental Education various evaluations and critical reflections have been conducted to determine if the objectives of the EE programme have been met. Kopnina & Meijers (2014, p. 196) explain that the EE programme has had “mainly activity and output objectives rather than outcome and impact objectives”. Kopnina & Meijers (2014, p. 196) further identify that literature published in the domains of social psychology and environmental anthropology challenge the assumption that an increase or change in environmental knowledge equals change in attitudes, motivation and behaviour. On the contrary, a rhetoric-behaviours gap has been identified which explains that “educating people to care about environmental problems does not equal raising their motivation, let alone providing guarantees of their participation in combating these problems”. Therefore, gaining an understanding and awareness of environmental problems does not determine a desire to take accountability for the unsustainability dilemma. This realisation turned my research focus to the work of sustainable design curriculum developer - Paul Murray.

### **Changing and developing the sustainable self**

In his book *The Sustainable Self: a personal approach to sustainable education*, Paul Murray encourages individuals to think and reflect deeply on the role they should perform in the sustainability agenda. Murray (2011) disagrees with the general approach that I present to design students which is to “save the planet”. Murray (2011, p. 1) considers this as the wrong message and explains that “[I]t is not the world that needs saving but us;...to save ourselves we need to embrace fundamental change.” Murray (2011) therefore argues that the shift towards a sustainable future commences with an attitude change within each individual on this planet.

The author included his personal attitude and approach in his observation. Through introspection the author discovered that as an academic, he approached sustainability as a ‘professional issue’ and his professional experience has barely influenced his personal choice and practices. This realisation had a profound impact on his research focus and through a United Kingdom (UK) funding initiative he developed, over a period of five years, teaching, learning and training techniques that could engage people at a personal level with what he refers to as “the biggest issue of our time” (Murray 2011, p. x).

Murray (2011, p. 22) acknowledges that it is not possible to accept new ways of thinking suddenly, but “they can be cultivated over time if we engage constructively with our internal drivers and mental capabilities”. The role of the educator, facilitating the sustainability teaching and learning process, is therefore not only to present knowledge and develop skills that could inform sustainable practices. A deeper level of approach is required that includes; promoting awareness, motivating a deep intention to act sustainably, foster empowering beliefs and establishing wise application of knowledge and skill. Murray (2011) explains that this can only be achieved if students recognize the

connections between their core values and sustainable behaviour which in turn create conscious awareness on altering our automatic responses and behaviour. Once students transform their self-limiting beliefs they will be empowered to override internal barriers to change. In order to obtain deeper levels of learning and change at an individual level it is therefore essential to employ teaching strategies as presented by Murray.

### **James Rest's framework: Changing moral values**

The final literature reflection is into the field of moral development and the Four-Component Model developed by the psychologist James Rest in 1986. Craig Johnson (2006) presents an outline of James Rest's Four-Component Model which aims to explain that ethical action is the product of four psychological sub-processes. These are (1) moral sensitivity (recognition); (2) moral judgment or reasoning; (3) moral motivation; and (4) moral character. According to Johnson (2006, p. 60) James Rest aimed to answer the following question with this model, "What must happen psychologically in order for moral behaviour to take place?" In order to discuss the four different sub-processes I present a brief summary of the stages as described by Johnson (2006, p. 60-72);

*Component 1* -Moral sensitivity is the ability to recognize that an ethical problem exists and is the key to transformational ethics. Such recognition requires being aware of how our behaviour impacts on others, identifying possible courses of action, and determining the consequences of each potential strategy. In order to solve a moral dilemma we have to know that an ethical problem exists.

*Component 2*- Moral judgement follows after an ethical problem has been identified. The decision maker (person that aims to resolve the ethical problem) needs to cast judgement (determine if a solution is right or wrong) on the situation and determine the appropriate course of action based on the evaluation conducted in component 1.

*Component 3 and 4* require personal motivation and moral character of the decision maker to ensure that the identified course of action is executed. Johnson (2006) indicates that rewards and emotions play an important role in the following though the ethical action. A strong willed, moral character is also required to resist distraction, overcome obstacles and persist when the decision maker encounters personal differences and difficulties.

Johnson (2006, pp. 65-66) indicates that Rest developed a Defining Issues Test (DIT) to measure moral development and conducted the test with over 800 students. Liisa Myyry (2003) explains that one of the goals Rest and his associates (at the University of Minnesota) had was to have a theory and methodology for studying morality of everyday life and not only to reason on hypothetical dilemmas. Johnson (2006, p. 66) outlines some findings and explains that Rest identified that older students benefitted greatly from an ethics programme and that moral reasoning improves with age. Students at higher levels (such as postgraduate or professional levels) therefore have greater benefit from ethic programmes. Dramatic changes occur in young adults in their 20s and 30s in terms of the basic problem-solving strategies and the manner in which they perceive society and their role in society. Educational environment makes a valuable contribution to developing and improving moral judgement through both offering ethics coursework and allowing students to debate topics outside the class room. Unfortunately, moral development plateaus when the educational context dissipates. Continuous activities and discussion within the domain of moral judgement and motivation therefore needs to take place. The most important conclusion from this study is that education plays a valuable and important role in teaching ethics and moral judgement to students. Furthermore, higher education has the opportunity to offer these courses to young adults who are in an age group where they develop their moral judgement and ethical perception of society.

## **Student project – A comprehensive Recycling Audit project**

### **Brief overview of a third year project**

In third year design students are expected to deliver project outcomes in which they show an ability to manage a greater scope and complexity of knowledge. In addition, students have to conduct deeper levels of critical thinking and evaluations through incorporating knowledge and skills obtained in the first two year of study. I am the facilitator of a third year module that includes themes that address sustainability and critical thinking. Taking the expected third year outcomes into

consideration I have developed and introduced a Recycling Audit project since 2011, which is evaluated and refined annually. The group project requests students to conduct a series of tasks which include conducting audits of recycling stations located on the university campus. The execution of the project takes place over a six week period and class sessions takes place parallel to the execution of the project.

The project provides students with an opportunity to observe their immediate environment and the recycling patterns of fellow students. The recycling station audit requires of students to document the usage of a recycling station over a five day period at two hour daily intervals during an 8 hour work day. The groups monitor the type of waste that is recycled, peak recycling periods, bin cleaning patterns as well as the correct recycling of waste. The theoretical component of the project aims to deepen the student's knowledge in relation to sustainability issues, create awareness of sustainability challenges and present the benefits of recycling initiatives. Class discussions assist in improving the students understanding of the broader sustainable design challenges through addressing climate change, impact on resources and the impact of the built environment. These teaching and learning activities therefore incorporate the first four goals of The Belgrade Charter goals for Environmental Education which is to acquire awareness, knowledge, attitude and skills to understand the total environment.

Through conducting the recycling station audits, observing recycling patterns of fellow students, interviewing students and engaging in critical group discussion that stemmed from the outcomes of the project; the students reached deeper levels of learning. The latter stage of this teaching and learning process assisted the students in gaining an ability to evaluate and measure their immediate environment as well as identifying ethical problems within this context. This action corresponds with component 1 (moral sensitivity) of Rest's Model. Through presenting a critical reflection and recommendation in relation to the recycling situation on campus, groups can debate aspects of moral judgement (Rest- component 2).

The ultimate level of learning is achieved when students through their personal insights and reflections identified that they needed to take personal responsibility to combat the impact of human actions. The final stage of the teaching and learning process was to inspire students to proceed to component 3 (personal motivation) and 4 (moral character) of Rest's model. The importance of reaching a stage of personal motivation further corresponds with the teaching and learning outcomes as presented by Paul Murray. These focus on developing self-motivated individuals that can take personal action and responsibility for their future design actions. If this final stage of learning is achieved, goal five and six of the Environmental Charter have also been included. These goals aim to assist in helping individuals to develop the ability to evaluate environmental measures and develop a sense of responsibility through participating in solving environmental problems.

The brief overview of the project therefore identifies two distinctly different stages of teaching and learning. The first stage aims to meet minimum expectation and outcomes prescribed in this curriculum. These achievements are assessed by being rewarded through the successful completion of the group project and completion of the individual assessment. This stage indicates that the students have acquired knowledge, understand content and mastered identified research skills. The second stage of learning is achieved through a student's personal involvement and commitment to the teaching and learning process. Students that become personally inspired and motivated through their individual reflections and take personal accountability and responsibility for their sustainable design actions; have reached the ultimate outcome that the facilitator aspires for in this process. The final stage cannot be assessed and rewarded with marks, but presents ultimate satisfaction to the facilitator and student. Over the past five years, I have monitored the outcomes delivered in the second stage through engaging in student discussions and in obtaining student feedback. This student feedback will be briefly discussed hereafter, in attempt to address the main investigation of this paper.

## Student feedback – can design education make a difference?

The findings presented in the student feedback reflect on student feedback obtained from three class groups;

- Class of 2012 - 11 students out of a class of 23 students (48 per cent participation)
- Class of 2013 - 25 students out of a class of 30 students (83 per cent participation)
- Class of 2015 – 31 students out of a class of 31 students (100 per cent participation)

Students were requested to indicate if the project was of personal value. Overall 88 per cent of students replied 'yes' to this question and 12 per cent responded 'no'. The majority of students that responded with a 'no' identified that they are already engaged in recycling initiatives at home.

"I am already aware of the low usage of recycling as it is something I do" (respondent 37)

Over the past five years, I have noticed with concern that students lack adequate insight, knowledge and practical awareness when embracing sustainability issues during the sustainability discussions. The six week project improves their knowledge and further provides them with practical tips into including sustainability practices as part of their daily activities. This observation was articulated by two students as follow;

"I emphasize to those I live with the importance of using only what we need in cooking food, using water and electricity as well as the way we choose what we buy" (Respondent 51).

"I am thinking of how I can design more sustainably and it taught me to not waste for eg, leave the light on, let water run" (Respondent 58).

A number of students indicated in the feedback an understanding that personal accountability towards sustainability should be incorporated in their future design actions and decision making processes;

"I realized that as a student if you start using sustainable resources in your designs as well as encourage green design it becomes a habit of your future designs" (Respondent 41).

"Enabled you to think differently and creatively also to challenge yourself and solutions in subjects such as interior design and construction" (Respondent 42).

"As a designer our job is to design for the environment. After the projects it showed exactly how important the designer's role is first hand" (Respondent 50).

"I started looking at ways to design to include environmental benefits" (Respondent 36).

A positive outcome was that through a focus on the value and benefit on recycling the majority of students indicated that they were willing to adjust their personal behaviour to incorporate sustainable practices (see table 1 below).

Questions relating to change in recycling behaviour		Yes	No
1	Did you recycle waste at home prior to the execution of the project?	43%	57%
2	If you answered NO in previous question, did you start to recycle waste after you completed the project?	55%	45%
3	Did you share the importance of recycling waste with family/friends or fellow students after you completed the project?	78%	22%
4	Did the project encourage you to improve your contributions towards a sustainable future?	97%	0%

**Table 1: Personal behavioural change (n=67 students)**

The ultimate level of delivering the teaching and learning outcomes is to determine if the students have moved to the second stage of learning as described in the brief overview of the project. This stage determined long term commitment to sustainability practices and indicated if students had reached level 3 of Rest's component and considered proceeding to component 4. The findings revealed that the majority of students have met basic project expectations, which indicates that they gained knowledge, insight and awareness in relation to the concerns and problems around the challenges of a sustainable future. The observation indicates that a small group of students reflect after a six week period that they are willing to take personal action and responsibility. The following responses describe some of the actions presented in the questionnaires;

"I have applied principles of sustainability in my own home and started researching more about how I can integrate it further into my design" (Respondent 11).

"I am internally motivated when it comes to the effects of not recycling and pollution because of the effects first hand" (Respondent 38).

"The project made me aware of others behaviour and motivated me to make a greater impact towards sustainability" (Respondent 39).

"It enlightened me about the recycling process that is operating on campus. It also made me think of what changes I could make in my community off campus" (Respondent 43).

"We have a social responsibility to conserve the eco-system for future generations" (Respondent 45).

This final finding corresponds with observations made by James Rest, through which he indicates that moral development and ethical problems should be a continuous process. This process therefore needs continuous reinforcement in a design curriculum and can be achieved through consistent inclusion of students participating in solving environmental problems.

## Conclusion

The paper explains the role of education in relation to developing sustainable design projects and programmes. The Belgrade Charter identifies that the intention of environmental education should be to assist individuals, groups and societies to acquire awareness, knowledge, attitude and skills to understand and solve problems relating to the total environment. Environmental education should further assist in helping individuals to develop the ability to evaluate environmental measures and develop a sense of responsibility through participating in solving environmental problems. These goals serve as a roadmap to guiding fundamental goals and objectives of a sustainable design teaching and learning process. However critical reflections in this area identified that merely acquiring knowledge and awareness of environmental problems does not guarantee personal motivation to take accountability and combat the desperate challenges of our unsustainable future.

The sustainable curriculum developer, Paul Murray (2011) suggests that educators should not only present sustainable knowledge and develop skills, but introduce a deeper level approach that motivates a deeper intention to act sustainably, foster empowering beliefs and promote wise application of knowledge and skills. The moral development research conducted by James Rest (1986) identifies that ethics can be taught to students and that they have great benefit from ethics programmes. Education can play an important and valuable role in offering ethics coursework or themes within a teaching and learning process.

In an attempt to assist the third year design students' in increasing their knowledge, awareness, attitude and skills in relation to social and moral responsibilities towards developing a sustainable future, I have included the role and goals of Environmental Education. Furthermore, I have consulted Paul Murray's presentation of the 'Sustainable Self' which describes the personal change that is required for individuals to make valuable contributions to the sustainability agenda and James Rest's moral development model. The overall student feedback indicates that students consider recycling and embracing sustainable practices as "The right thing to do". This acknowledgement of the right or

appropriate behaviour is however presented as a noble action, since findings show that very few students include a sustainable life style in their daily practices. The general response from students reveals the mammoth task that academics face in offering sustainable design modules, but the feedback also indicates that education can make a difference and assist in the ethical and moral development of students.

In a higher education teaching and learning environment design students are challenged to resolve problems, conceptualise solutions and apply critical thinking that will enable them to become responsible environmental citizens and sustainable designers. Their decision making process is driven by their moral value system and personal aspirations. If their individual or collective value system lack an understanding and awareness of environmental and social responsibility, then it becomes essential for the education process to inspire and encourage students to view the world “as social beings and world citizens whose future depend[s] on cooperation, peace, ecology, and equality” (Shor as cited in Stevenson 2007, p. 271).

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# Towards human-centered design solutions: Stakeholder participation during brief development

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## Abstract

*"...the [designer's] task is to design for the individual placed in his or her immediate context." (Buchanan 1998, p. 20)*

*This paper about a graphic design case study discusses the positive impact of stakeholder participation during the problem-setting phase of the design process on the designer's ability to reframe the design problem and to conceptualise human-centered design solutions that add value and enrich people's everyday lives.*

*A participatory action research methodology was followed with the designer in dual roles of designer and researcher. Mixed methods including interviews, participatory workshops and critical reflection were employed during four distinct phases — evaluating and comparing the development of the brief, framing of the design problem and the designer's proposed solutions after each phase.*

*Ethically the design process benefitted from participatory action research in terms of empowering stakeholders to actively, democratically and equally participate in the identification and solving of their own problems. The strict guiding principles of participatory action research guaranteed the designer's critical evaluation of and reflection on the process and the impact of potential solutions. Lastly, rich information about user needs enabled the design of innovative, useful solutions that addresses individual user needs on a practical level rather than only the aesthetic appeal of the product.*

**Keywords:** *Human-centered design; brief development; stakeholder participation; participatory action research; design research; design process*

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## Introduction

"The true challenge for design today is to arrive at engaging, meaningful outcomes in a way that addresses longer-term systemic issues rather than mere short-term desire fulfillment, while still giving joy..." (Eisermann, Gloppen, Eikhaug & White 2005, p. 20).

Current design discourse proposes that the ultimate task of designers is to effect design outcomes that empower individual human beings to become active participants in a search for, and agreement on what is good, just, useful and pleasurable in their local context or culture, (Buchanan 1998, p. 20).

By implication, the designer has a responsibility, an ethical obligation to correctly identify the stakeholders within a context or culture and to treat them with respect while making every effort to ensure that the design outcome creates economic, social, environmental, moral and aesthetic value, (Buchanan 2001, p. 16; Frascara 2001, sp; Morelli 2007, p. 5). Meeting this obligation requires an acute awareness of the complexity of the problem at hand, a concerted effort to ensure that the problem is framed correctly and a care to include a systematic evaluation process before any commitment is made to a specific design outcome (Findeli 1994, p. 65).

On a methodological level, it means that more time and effort should be extended to research and frame the design problem and to explore individual user values, needs and expectations during the initial phases of the design process.

The theoretical implication is that designers need practical research approaches that meet ethical research requirements, have built-in evaluation processes and are suitable for everyday use in day to day design practice (Findeli 1994, p. 65).

Yet, according to the International Design Alliance (IDA) World Design Survey Pilot Project's South African Findings (2010, p. 62), research is regarded by many designers as one of the least important prerequisites for successful design!

This paper focuses on participatory action research and specifically Open Space Technology as a useful research tool to discover and understand user needs and expectations and to reframe the design problem during the early phases of the design process.

Design involves an iterative process that can be modeled as a system of three demarcated spaces, each with related activities, rather than as a series of orderly steps (Brown 2008, p.88), as illustrated in Figure 1. Phase one, the inspiration phase, is exploratory in nature: Apparent random information is gathered, observations are made, questions are asked and ideas are discussed, elaborated or rejected (Swann 2002, p. 52, Brown 2008, p. 88). Two focus areas are discernible, namely brief development and interpretation of the design problem, (Tan & Melles 2010, p. 465). During phase two idea generation activities occur as the designer explores, develops and presents different conceptual ideas based on the brief. Phase three, the implementation phase, represents the final execution of ideas generated and tested during phase two.

Designers tend to focus on the design solution and do just enough design-specific research to enable them to complete the design process, (Swann 2002, p. 54; Tan & Melles 2010, p. 474). Relying heavily on and combining tacit knowledge and own understanding with new information gathered, designers often depend on the design brief – based on the client's knowledge and perceptions of the broad target market and sometimes on research done by external researchers – to frame the design problem and to supply any information with regards to user needs and expectations, (Swann 2002, p.54). This approach presents two stumbling blocks to discovering the values, needs and expectations of end-users and to framing the design problem:

Firstly, the designer has little or no direct interaction with the intended end-user of the design outcome. Consequently, discovering what users need, expect and value and anticipating their potential interactions with different design outcomes may be very difficult, especially when working with smaller businesses with limited research experience and/or capacity, (Bruce, Potter & Roy 1995, p.416; Brazier 2004, p. 69).

Secondly design clients who have a limited understanding of what design is and does, may require the designer to merely add aesthetic enhancement to a solution already created by other business units (Paton & Dorst 2011, p. 573; Phillips 2012, sp), thereby excluding the designer from the initial exploration and framing of the design problem.

Poor problem formulation, lack of clear objectives and insufficient information about the end-user, impede designers' ability to understand and consider potential interactions with and impact of design outcomes. Disregard for the importance of research and poor research skills among designers aggravates this problem which can and do result in a failure to deliver design outcomes that are respectful of user values and needs and considerate of economic, social environmental and moral impact. The consequence of such failure is dissatisfied end-users, disillusioned design clients, frustrated designers and design outcomes where the negative unintended consequences outweigh the aesthetic value of the design outcome, (Friedman 2003, p. 513).

This paper presents a case study borne of a designer's frustration with the gap between information regarding user needs and expectations contained in the typical design brief and the information

required to deliver empowering, respectful design solutions that are considerate of the individual end-user and his or her immediate context.

Said frustration led to the question: *How might a designer with limited research skills discover what users value, need and expect and what impact might this information have on re-framing the design problem and on the final design outcome?*

Theory suggests that stakeholder participation and/or collaboration during the exploratory phase of the design process may offer useful insights into common user values, needs and expectations, be helpful in identifying underlying design problems and could inspire new innovative outcomes that enrich users' lives (Sanders 2002, sp; Eisermann et al 2005, p. 19; Prahalad & Ramaswamy 2000, p.80).

This study investigated stakeholder participation during the exploratory phase of a design project. The primary aim was to supplement the design brief through the discovery of user needs and expectations by involving users in identifying underlying design problems and proposing possible solutions. A secondary aim was to explore participatory action research in the context of design practice as a research approach suitable for application in practice. An action research methodology was followed with the designer in dual roles of designer and researcher. Mixed methods including interviews, participatory workshops and critical reflection were employed during three distinct phases that are discussed in detail later in this paper.

## Participatory action research: how and why can design practice benefit?

One approach that appears to answer both Findeli's (1994) practical methodological requirements and the theoretical research requirements of ethical design, as discussed in the introduction, is participatory action research (PAR).

PAR is a collaborative, situation-specific approach to problem-solving with a social purpose. The premise of PAR is that all stakeholders can learn from and influence each other's knowledge (O'Brien 1998, sp; McNiff & Whitehead 2006, p. 23).

On a methodological level, many similarities exist between participatory action research and design in terms of process and practical application, (Cole, Puroo, Rossi & Sein 2008). Ethical, responsible design, like action research, is a problem-solving activity with a social purpose and impacts positively where action is informed by knowledge. However, the biggest challenges for design practice – and the areas where it can most benefit from PAR – are to apply the conditions of empowering participation and of critical, systematic reflection that are inherent in PAR (Swann 2002, p. 52).

Ethically, the democratic nature of PAR implies very specific considerations such as the identification of, consultation with and respect for all stakeholders; equal significance of all ideas and values and an acceptance of pre-negotiated guiding principles by all participants (O'Brien 1998, sp). It also demands a commitment by all stakeholders to seek an understanding of an agreement on the problem and its hypothetical causes in order to effect change, (Davison, Martinsons & Kock 2004, p. 75). Lastly, PAR demands ongoing, disciplined, systematic critical reflection during the process to ensure that focus on the problem is maintained and after the process on the outcomes, to evaluate and determine impact. (Cole et al 2005, p. 9).

Methodologically, PAR and design follow similar processes of iterative cycles (figure 1), suggesting that the PAR process and methodology might inherently feel familiar to designers.

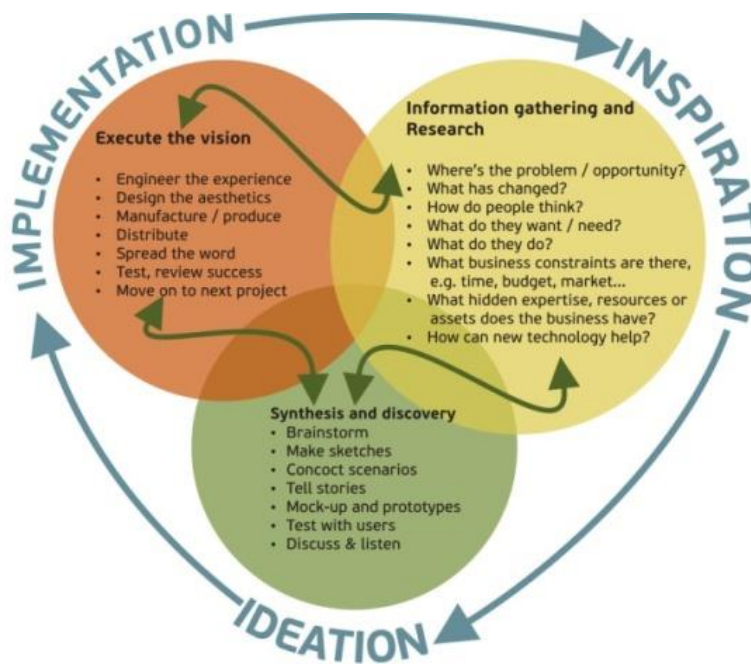


Figure 1: The design process (Brown 2008)

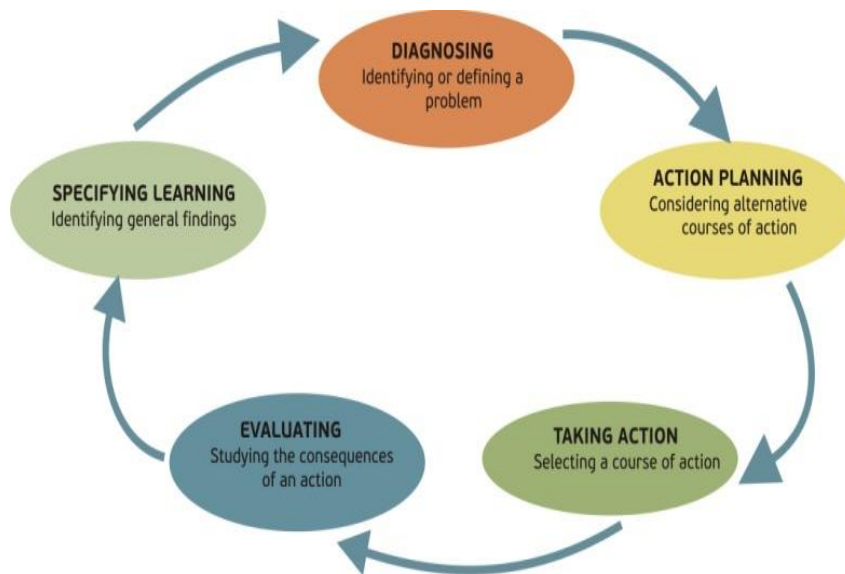


Figure 2: Actin Research cyclical change process model (Susman 1984).

The first phases of both PAR and the design process are exploratory and diagnostic in nature.

Participatory action research requires the researcher to conduct an independent diagnosis to confirm or refute the nature of the problem as presented by the research client, (Davison et al 2004, p. 73). Diagnosis is followed by the Researcher Client Agreement (RCA), an explicit written commitment between researchers, stakeholders and clients on approach, research focus, objectives and roles. (Davison et al 2004, p. 70; Cole et al 2005, p. 3). The RCA ensures that the ethical requirements of transparency and equality are satisfied and should therefore be in place before a project formally begins.

Theoretically, responsible design requires the designer to assume the role of researcher, collaborating with the client to identify and understand the design problem and study the context in which the problem exists, (Buchanan 2001, p. 19; Frascara 2001, sp; Blankenship 2005, p. 24-25). Before any design work commences, the designer and design client should ideally commit to the

design brief — a written agreement on approach, scope, objectives, roles and responsibilities and time frame. In practice, however, design work often commences without a clear comprehensive brief, (Phillips 2012, sp) which may result in outcomes that neither addresses underlying design problems, nor adds any real value in terms of economic, social, environmental or moral context.

The design process includes an evaluation and reflection cycle (Brown 2008), but as designers are usually not required to make their findings explicit, reflection and evaluation may not be systematic, disciplined, or critical, (Dorst 2008, p. 6). Adopting a PAR methodology ensures systematic, critical reflection that could help the designer to recognise potential negative impacts of a design outcome early on and to accurately measure and evaluate impact at the end of the design process.

### Case study: Packaging for Body Inc Diet Clinics

The case study presented in this paper documents the impact of stakeholder participation on brief development during the first phase of a design project by a graphic designer for a long-time client, Body Inc Diet Clinics. The designer is the owner of a small design consultancy, with projects for SMMEs contributing most of its revenue. The study was conducted in four distinct phases:

#### Phase one: The designer-client interview

Usually, the designer commences all projects with a semi-structured client interview to gain information about the client organisation, identify design problems and understand the client's needs. This information is analysed to write a creative proposal containing a short summary of the business problem, a profile of the business, competitors and target audience and a creative proposal for addressing the problem. Sadly, clients often have little information available about customer's needs or sometimes fail to see how the interview questions relate to their design requirements, causing considerable frustration and sometimes resulting in unsatisfactory design outcomes.



**Figure 3: Body Inc. products, from left: slimming tablets, colon support, multivitamin, slimming drops and slimming gel**

Body Inc. had been using design services from the designer since 2008 and its briefing method generally consisted of an informal verbal discussion with the designer, or an emailed design instruction. This project was no different, commencing with a design instruction to change the colour and styling of product labels on dietary supplements (figure 3). No clear design problem was identified, nor any information given about the business objectives, intended audiences, or competitors. The designer arranged a semi-structured interview with the client hoping to discover the business objectives that motivated this change, and to gain an idea of project scope, time frame, and target audience. As no market research had been done, the client had limited information about user needs and could only offer her own opinions based on her and her sales consultants' interactions with and observation of customer behaviour.

## Phase two: Analysis and interpretation towards a creative proposal

Mutual trust between the designer and the client based on their long-time business association was beneficial to the interview process as the designer had developed a strong sense of Body Inc.'s identity – a common occurrence in close client-designer relationships (Bruce & Docherty 1993, p.416), that allowed for the careful selection of questions. The designer could supplement information from the interview based on incidental knowledge gained through previous experience on projects for the client. This tacit knowledge and the client's information were combined with observational notes about packaging trends in competitors' products and analysed to draft a written design proposal.

The designer's interpretation of Body Inc's business objectives hinted at a wider underlying design problem: A younger than expected target audience and observation of competitor brands suggested that a stronger, more dynamic visual treatment of the entire brand identity was called for. Some products appeared to have wider appeal than the identified target audience. An umbrella strategy with a tiered branding approach and visual differentiation between product ranges would enable Body Inc to take advantage of this opportunity, while maintaining a cohesive brand.

The designer suggested a phased approach, starting with subtle changes to the existing brand identity, followed by the development of variations on the logo that could be applied to different product ranges and concluding with a new visual treatment of all product labels.

The designer's interpretation of the design problem, based on wider information and the proposed solutions, had already departed from what would have been a mere visual redesign of product labels as expressed in the client's instruction, yet notably excluded any consideration for user needs.

Available information offered little insight into customer interaction with products, what they needed, or how value could be added to enhance their experience. Based on theoretical knowledge gained from studying towards a Master's Degree, the designer suggested that stakeholder participation in the form of participatory action research could aid in discovering user.

For this project, the following stakeholders were identified:

- a) The designer
- b) The design client
- c) Sales consultants
- d) Customers / end-users

## Phase three: Participatory workshops

A major ethical requirement of PAR is mutual trust and respect among participants (O'Brien 1998, sp). An existing cordial long-term relationship between the client and the designer, a flat management structure and intimate working relationship enjoyed by the design client and her sales consultants and close relationships between customers / end-users and consultants made this project ideal for participatory action research.

Renowned for its effectiveness in situations where diverse people must deal with complex issues in productive and innovative ways, Open Space Technology (Owen 1992, p.12), a recognised PAR tool, developed by Organisational Transformation Consultant, Harrison Owen, was selected specifically for its strict governing principles that would satisfy the ethical need for democracy, equality and empowerment. OST has been in use since 1985 and has been used to great effect by large organisations such as NASA Goddard Flight Centre (Open Space Technology 2015).

Two creative workshops were arranged where participants, randomly selected from the client's customer database and from her sales consultants and including the client and the designer, were invited to explore and share their views on how Body Inc's product packaging could be improved through design to fit their needs.

Adhering to Owen's guidelines(1992, p.24), a venue offering an informal environment with movable furniture and a pin-up area was selected. Seating was arranged in a circle in the centre of the room. Work areas in the form of large tables were placed around the edges of the room and a pin up area was created along the front wall.

Participants were asked to create visual presentations of their proposed solutions, which would serve as a visual record for reference and analysis by the designer. To this end they received pre-packed toolkits, containing stationary and other creative aids, upon arrival (figure 4).



Figure 4: Toolkit given to participants.

Open Space Technology (OST) has specific strict governing principles that ensure democracy, equality and empowerment of all participants (Owen 1992, p.68-74). A trained OST facilitator was employed to facilitate workshops that commenced with an introduction to and explanation of the basic governing principles:

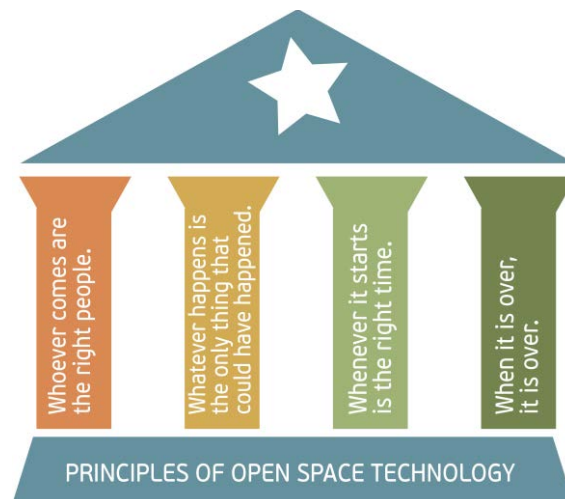


Figure 5: The guiding principles of Open Space Technology (Owen 1992)

### ***Principle 1: Whoever comes are the right people***

Participants were reminded that the number or status of contributors, is not important, but rather the quality of interaction and conversation. They were also advised of the ethical principles of PAR:

- a) all ideas were equally important and valid,
- b) all participants were on equal footing,
- c) any participant was free to withdraw at any time and
- d) decisions were to be made collectively.

### **Principle 2: Whatever happens is the only thing that could happen**

In the opening session, the facilitator explained that real progress and learning could only take place when all participants move beyond their own agendas. Owen (1992:70) strongly discourages the presence of any agenda or guidelines in workshops, as these limit discussions and hamper the discovery of true problems and solutions. Participants were requested to give free reign to the imagination disregarding production limitations or cost, and to consider all aspects of packaging rather than visual appearance alone.

Subsequently, participants were asked to publically "announce" and post any problems / concerns they had with the existing packaging on a bulletin board (figure 4). Participants decided to group products together per problem/concern. For example, they found the size of both the whey protein and the slimming gel containers too big, so these products were grouped together for one discussion.



**Figure 6: Issues posted on the bulletin board, workshop one on top and workshop two below.**

Individuals chose discussions they wished to participate in and formed groups at the various work areas. Concerns related to chosen products were discussed and ideas for alternative solutions were brainstormed. More concerns and problems emerged and ideas voiced, triggered other ideas that gradually merged into possible design solutions.

As possible solutions emerged, groups created their own designs, drawing, cutting, pasting, colouring and adding written captions where their drawing skills failed.

Workshops concluded with an open floor where groups took turns to visually present their ideas, give feedback on discussion outcomes and consider comments from other participants. Very few questions were raised and participants expressed satisfaction with the outcomes presented. Because initial groups are formed by participants who feel strongly about a specific problem, they are most likely to solve it and consequently consensus on outcomes is a common occurrence in OST (Owen 1992,pp.104-106).

### **Principle 3: Whenever it starts is the right time**

In the opening session, participants were reminded of the nature of creativity – it appears in its own time, which by definition is the right time. Groups were free to start their discussions at their leisure. Tea, coffee and refreshments were available on a continuous basis and participants were free to schedule their breaks and work time as they deemed fit.

### **Principle 4: When it is over, it is over**

As is common in OST workshops, some groups concluded their discussions early, allowing these participants to move to and participate in other groups, or take a break. Groups that did not



complete their discussions by the end of the workshop were free to present the ideas and outcomes they did produce. These outcomes were considered equally valuable and valid.

As neither the designer nor the client could be present in all groups all the time, all rough drafts, flip chart pages and notes generated during group discussions and all outcomes presented at the end of workshops were collected. This material served as a record of workshop outcomes and combined with the designer's personal notes and observations, as crucial source material for analysis and interpretation to inform a final brief.

#### **Phase four: Analysis and interpretation of workshop outcomes**

Workshops proved useful in highlighting concerns and needs that Body Inc had been unaware of. Participants' solutions were not always practical, but provided the a wealth of ideas and options for further exploration, enabling the designer to propose solutions that address much more than visual appearance.

Workshops identified similar issues. Participants appeared more concerned with practical usability of packaging than visual appearance, which the designer took as an indication that the design problem required a wider focus than the visual appearance of product labels.

Participants did express a preference for black paired with vibrant colours. The size and readability of product information on containers also emerged as a concern.

The main concerns emerging from workshops were a need for smaller, handbag-friendly packaging that would reduce the need and temptation to cheat on the diet when away from home and a need for containers that could accurately dispense the correct number of slimming tablets or drops at a time.

The absence of some products from discussions, raised questions for further investigation. Participants were, for example, not interested in discussing two products identified as poor sales performers in the client interview.

Information gathered inspired ideas that address users' needs and significantly increase the client's value offering. For example, based on user feedback, a pump-action dispensing bottle was sourced for the slimming gel and the product offering was expanded to include a 100ml travel-size option. The slimming tablets' pop-top container was replaced by a container usually used for artificial sweetener tablets, with a self-dispensing mechanism. Packaging costs on some products increased slightly, but smaller packaging options for example, could be priced lower, resulting in more frequent purchases, increased sales and higher income per unit, while raising customer satisfaction.

Analysis and interpretation of information from the client-designer interview combined with workshop outcomes impacted significantly on the content of the designer's final creative proposal, resulting in a major expansion of project scope and creative strategy.

#### **Impact of stakeholder participation on information and brief development**

This case study suggests that a combination of client-designer collaboration on brief development and stakeholder participation in the information gathering phase of the design process, impacts positively on brief development, providing the designer with a rich picture to draw on when developing a creative strategy. From Table 1, comparing the impact of information from each phase of the study on brief development and creative proposal, it is clear that stakeholder participation had a major impact on brief development. Based on an analysis of information gathered, the designer was able to reframe the design problem in a way that stimulated the development of outcomes that would truly address user needs, rather than offer a mere aesthetic enhancement.

**Table 1 (following page): Comparison of impact of information from each phase of the study on brief development and creative proposal.**

Information	Client instruction	Brief based on interview	Brief based on interview + workshops
<b>Project overview</b>	Limited to <i>what</i> the client wanted done.	Motivation became clear. Project scope emerged.	Expansion of project scope to include type of packaging rather than only visual appearance of packaging.
<b>Category or industry overview</b>	No information.	Expansion into new industries.	Workshops offered no additional information.
<b>Company portfolio</b>	No information.	Strong and weak performers in the existing portfolio were identified. Reasons for performance could only be guessed at.	Expansion of existing product ranges might be in order. A need for smaller handbag-size alternatives.
<b>Industry trends</b>	Only stated desired visual outcomes in vague terms.	Colour trends were identified. Trends cited as motivation for visual changes.	Visual appearance of stakeholders' workshop designs confirmed client's desired appearance as stated in initial instruction.
<b>Competitors</b>	No information .	Direct and indirect competitors were identified.	Competitors in secondary industries affecting individual products emerged in group discussions.
<b>Strategic business considerations</b>	No information .	Existing strategy reviewed and change in strategy to accommodate portfolio expansion discussed.	Branding strategy identified as area requiring further research.
<b>Target audience</b>	No information.	Demographic and socio-graphic profiles based on customer database.	Rich information in terms of user needs and expectations. More concerned with usability than visual appearance. Participants' solutions provided inspiration for idea-generation. Identified areas where value of product offering could be enhanced through simple changes or additions.
<b>Creative strategy</b>	Suggestions on visual appearance based solely on aesthetic enhancement.	Changes to visual appearance and branding strategy based on existing portfolio, competitor review, industry trends, target audience review and business objectives.	Comprehensive proposal addressing a wide range of issues including changes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project scope</li> <li>• Visual appearance</li> <li>• Type of packaging</li> <li>• Product ranges in company portfolio</li> <li>• Branding strategy</li> </ul>
<b>Practical concerns</b>	None were given. Designer was aware of existing practical limitations due to pre-existing client-designer relationship.	Practical limitations with regards to suppliers and type of packaging available. Limitations in terms of cost of sales. Legal requirements on labelling.	Limitations identified in client interview rendered some proposed workshop solutions impractical. Workshops solutions offered ideas for exploration to overcome limitations imposed by suppliers and cost.
<b>Timeline and budget</b>	Deadline for completion of project. No indication of budget. Designer had difficulty providing a cost estimate as project scope was unclear.	Project scope made the identification of project nodes with timelines possible. Allocation of responsibilities. Client unwilling to disclose budget. Designer could base cost estimate on scope and responsibilities.	As scope expanded, timelines expanded and project nodes added and prioritised. Cost estimate increased, but workshop outcomes suggest that increased cost could be offset by value increase of product offering.

## Conclusion

The introduction to this paper discusses the ethical challenges faced by the design profession to create engaging, useful design outcomes that are valued for their positive impact rather than mere consumption driven desire fulfillment. Prominent design authors, such as Buchanan (2001:16) emphasise designers' responsibility to deliver design that is useful, just and pleasurable while empowering people to create their own solutions for their specific problems, (Morelli 2007:5-6).

Delivering on this responsibility requires the designer to have a clear understanding of the underlying design problem, to recognise and respect user needs and expectations and to take care to include a systematic process to evaluate the impact of potential solutions before any commitment is made to a specific design outcome (Findeli 1994, p.65).

Insufficient information, limited research capabilities and a lack of understanding and knowledge of design by the design client appear to present major stumbling blocks to correctly identifying and framing the design problem and to understanding user needs and expectations. Designers need practical research skills and approaches with built-in evaluation processes that they can use themselves and that are suitable for everyday use design practice (Findeli 1994, p.65).

The aims of this study were firstly to investigate the impact of user participation during brief development on discovering user needs, framing the design problems and the subsequent proposed design outcomes and secondly, to explore PAR in the context of design practice as a research approach suitable for application in practice.

In terms of brief development, the user participation had a major impact, enabling the designer to reframe the design problem in a way that inspired more useful outcomes than what the client's initial instruction demanded. New product research and development was driven by design, based on ideas generated by participants during workshops, which enabled the designer to demonstrate to the client the value of involving design early on in product development.

As a research approach, PAR fitted seamlessly and effortlessly into the design process, allowing for quick results, at relatively low costs as research was not done by outside researchers, but rather by stakeholders. The well-established and tested methodological guidelines and principles of action research ensured ongoing analysis and evaluation of and reflection on all information and outcomes gained from the process. They also proved extremely valuable in guaranteeing rigour, reliability and validity.

The specific ethical considerations of PAR guaranteed an equal and democratic consideration of all stakeholders' concerns, frustrations, needs and expectations and empowered users to voice their frustrations with products in their current form, and to explore their own ideas for solutions.

Whether PAR approaches will be useful to other designers in different projects is open to exploration. Conducting qualitative clinical research implies that each situation, as well as its role players, is unique, which makes inferences and replications a difficult task. The purpose of action research is not to prove or disprove specific patterns, but to explore possible relations and to illustrate potential new models. Nevertheless, this study raises questions about the wider application of participatory action research in design practice and its potential to facilitate human-entered design outcomes that empower people to create their own solutions for their specific problems.

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# The ethics of Ubuntu and community participation in design

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## Abstract

*In order to produce skilled design graduates schools regularly restructure their curricula to develop knowledge characterized by continuous advancements applicable to the ever-changing design industry. New schools are in demand and a concern arises that these offer little more than specialized software training and do not sufficiently prepare students to become empathetic, thoughtful individuals that may serve the needs of society. Former president of the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA), designer and educator Jorge Frascara (2008, sp) confirms this:*

*“[T]here is a need to change the purpose of design education: from technical to problem oriented; and the frame of reference: from teaching how to work in the consumer society to learning how to contribute to improve society.”*

*This view is further supported by several design academics such as Roos (2011) and Friedman (2012) who regard design as a tool for transforming user behaviour thereby increasing the probability of the success of artefacts and improving society. Design educators should therefore consider outcomes such as reflection-on-practice, empathy and mindfulness to be equally valid to those outcomes traditionally taught within Higher Education curricula. Through its focus on all of these aspects human-centred design manifests through a responsiveness to all the stakeholders in the design process as well as a consciousness of the community - a principle it holds in common with the traditional African ethics of Ubuntu.*

*Designers and educators working in a South African context should consider deontological norms and values as well as those traditionally found in African ethics. African ethics are founded on the communal rather than the individual and focus on responsibilities to the family and the clan. The ethics of Ubuntu meaning “a person is a person through others” (“I belong, therefore, I am”) are entirely contradictory to the well-known Cartesian view “Cogito ergo sum” (I think, therefore, I am”) or modern-day avarice expressed in sentiments such as “I have possessions, therefore I am”.*

*The importance on Ubuntu ethics within a South African design environment is increasingly significant due to its bearing on the principles and ideals of involvement and empathy within the context of communal and social interactions. This paper argues for the consideration of the ethics of Ubuntu in the formulation of new design curricula as a means of integrating social responsibility in graphic design education.*

**Keywords:** design ethics; human and participatory design; Ubuntu

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## Introduction

It is the role of the designer to be professional and impartial in his or her practice and yet designers always express a certain set of values each time they make a design decision. Design, as practice is by no means a neutral process and is also informed and influenced by its surroundings (Kinross 1989). Designers, regardless of the professional context within which they work must additionally consider

their own authorship as well as a number of stakeholders each with their own agenda and value system and how those stakeholders may have an impact on the final outcome of the design.

The American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA) will publish the fourth edition of its AIGA Design Business and Ethics series in 2015. The guide lays out standards of professional practice and includes chapters on the use of photographs and illustrations as well as copyright. This, rather constricted view of what constitutes ethical behaviour in design is what design graduates are most familiar with by the time they graduate. Although ethics as a subject has been introduced in most design programmes few courses have dealt with the subject in much depth. For graduates to have skills applicable to the ever-changing industry design schools must continually update and restructure their curricula. New schools compete with established Universities and a concern arises that, at times these offer little more than specialized software training and do not sufficiently prepare students to become empathetic, thoughtful individuals that may serve the needs of society. Moreover, as Nini (2004, sp) points out, designers' responsibility towards audience members and users has not been sufficiently addressed through education efforts and publications such as those made available by the AIGA. Former president of the International Council of Graphic Design Associations (ICOGRADA) Jorge Frascara (2008, sp) confirms this:

“[T]here is a need to change the purpose of design education: from technical to problem oriented; and the frame of reference: from teaching how to work in the consumer society to learning how to contribute to improve society.”

This view is further supported by other design academics such as Roos (2011) and Friedman (2012) who regard design as a tool for transforming user behaviour thereby increasing the probability of the success of artefacts and improving society. Design educators should therefore consider outcomes such as reflection-on-practice, empathy and mindfulness to be equally valid to those outcomes traditionally taught within Higher Education (HE) curricula. Through its focus on all of these aspects human-centred design manifests through a responsiveness to all the stakeholders in the design process as well as a consciousness of the community - a principle it holds in common with the traditional African ethics of *Ubuntu*.

## African ethics and design

A number of different definitions for the concept of *Ubuntu* exist and various scholars (Khoza, Chikanda, Teffo, Makhundu, Maphisa and Shutte) have attempted to define it by highlighting different aspects of the concept. A definition that lends itself well to a human-centred worldview comes from Khoza (2005:269 in Mabovula 2011, p.40) who defines *Ubuntu* as “an African value system that means humanness or being human, a worldview characterised by such values as caring, sharing, compassion, communalism, communocracy and related predispositions.”

Although the above definition stresses *Ubuntu* as an African value system the philosophy may have universal applications. Mbigi (in Roux and Coetzee 1994) developed an *Ubuntu* based model for life founded on four principals fundamental to the basic tenets of the philosophy:

- “Morality which involves trust and credibility;
- Interdependence which concerns the sharing and caring aspect that is co-operation and participation;
- Spirit of man which refers to human dignity and mutual respect that insists that human activity should be person driven and humanness should be central, and lastly
- Totality, which pertains to continuous improvement of everything by every member” (Mbigi in Mabovula 2011, p.40).

Elsewhere *Ubuntu* has been described as “an African philosophy of life that guides the thinking and actions of Africans and must therefore be found in their lived historical experiences and not from

philosophical abstractions that have very little meaning in actual life” (Nabudere n.d, p.3). This sense of lived experience is also where *Ubuntu* philosophy contrasts with western analytical and continental philosophies and is supported by Cheikh Anta Diop’s (1990, p.163) “two-cradle” theory of humankind; “an aggressive northern, Euro-patriarchal cradle emerged as a latter-day antithesis of the more humane southern cradle, which is African and matriarchal in its cultural ethos.” Humanity is seen as a traditional tenet of *Ubuntu* and according to Letseka (2000, sp) a significant degree of human happiness or “humanness” thriving in traditional African life is the inter-dependence often found in close-knit communities.

According to Mabovula (2011, p.38) the philosophy of *Ubuntu* has its roots in African communalism and forms of social order. This form of African communalism has been described as a “kinship-oriented social order, which is informed by an ethic of reciprocity” as well as “a sense of solidarity with large groups of people” (Gyekye 1987, sp). Allister Sparks describes this sense of solidarity in his book “The Mind of South Africa” in which he examines the philosophies and cultures of the people of southern Africa. Sparks has further described how Africa may have trailed behind Europe scientifically and economically but it was far advanced in terms of its “social and political philosophies and systems” (Sparks in Nabudere n.d, sp). The systems he defines, which revolved around communal relationships, “had developed a deep respect for human values and the recognition of the human worth based on a philosophy of humanism that was far more advanced than that found in the European philosophic systems at that time” (Nabudere n.d.).

This African philosophy manifests itself through the understanding that one comes to see one’s welfare as being linked inherently with the welfare of the community (Gyekye 1987 in Mabovula 2011, p.38). According to Australian academic and designer Tony Fry (2002) designers have an obligation to consider community welfare and therefore to be human-centred and should accept this condition if they wish for their practice to be ethical. A notion of community is a unique characteristic of African life and, according to Gyekye’s definition, an understanding of communalism implies that the stakeholder is a fundamentally communal being entrenched in an environment of social relationships and interdependence, and not an insulated individual. According to Mabovula (2011:38) in African communities, “people view themselves and what they do as equally good to others as to themselves”.

In the context of design an important tenet of human-centred practice is participation, co-operation and a certain interdependence of stakeholders – all principles found in *Ubuntu* philosophy. In order for designers to produce communications outcomes that emphasize and consider user’s needs and respect stakeholder contribution in the process as evident in participation and human-centred design practices a wider consideration of these methods may be recommended.

## Participatory and Human-centred design

Participation design (PD) roots are found in the determination of Scandinavian labour unions for workers to have increased autonomous and independent control within the place of work (Ehn 1989). In the 1970s when PD first emerged, the introduction of computers within the workplace was viewed as fundamental to a mounting discussion in Germany and Scandinavia regarding the position of industrial democracy in the place of work. PD advocates design “as a collaborative effort where the design process is shared among diverse participating stakeholders and competencies” (Bjögvinsson, Ehn & Hillgren 2012, p.101). The purpose of PD is to include all the stakeholders in the design process from the inception of the project, with equal contributions from all stakeholders influencing the course of that design process (Futurman 2014, p.44).

The first practitioners of PD considered the amount of control employees had over the technology that they used and how this effected wide-ranging administrative decision making, which included the pace and procedures of workflow. Increasingly, however PD projects have diversified in terms of the reasons and manner that users and stakeholders have participated. Recently, it has been

suggested that PD has evolved to include a wider range of stakeholders such as “direct users, users’ managers, co-workers, customers, suppliers and others” who would be affected by the final outcome of the design (Carroll & Rosson in Albinsson sa, p.10) and overtures have been made at addressing users who have had difficulty in participating in the past, such as children (Pardo, Vetere & Howard in Albinsson sa, p.10). On one hand, stakeholder involvement is restricted to the provision of access for designers to the expertise and capabilities of users. Within this approach however, the participants have limited or zero control in terms of the design process or its outcome. The designers determine the scope of the project or these are initiated by another stakeholder such as a client (in the case of an actual company, a company manager etc.), and end-user participation is limited to the elements of the project where user contribution is perceived as having value, but ignored in technology based decision-making (Greenbaum in Kensing & Blomberg 1998, p.173). Kyng (2010, p.54) observes the pressures in current PD projects: “[T]oday most PD projects ... focus on user participation and the results of design. At the same time a crucial part of their rationale is that they have positive effects for the participating and affected users and companies”. What Kyng and others such as Bannon and Ehn (2013) and Akama (2014) are questioning about contemporary participatory design projects is whether the involvement of the designers extends beyond the design phase and into supporting the users in utilising the outcomes in their everyday practice.

In well applied PD and human-centred projects stakeholders should participate not only because their expertise and knowledge are appreciated but ultimately all stakeholders must feel that their values and welfare is supported and that their interests are acknowledged in the ultimate design outcome. Designers such as Tony Fry acknowledge the importance of participation and stakeholder involvement but bemoan the fact “cultures of design lack the conceptual tools to think ethically” (2009, p.2) and views design as an ethical issue whereby ethics remain a “stranded debate and almost totally without the transformative agency it needs to have if design is to ethically progress” (Fry 2004, p.3).

## Ethics and designer responsibility

Although great strides have been made in accepting design as an area of research, design is largely still perceived by many as “service” profession, instead of an academic field of knowledge production. This manifests in how design ethics is perceived within the design community. Designers therefore may understand ethics as “the rules and standards governing the conduct of members of a profession.” One definition defines ethics as “a set of principles of right conduct”, while the Oxford dictionary defines ethics as “the study of the general nature of moral choices to be made by a person” (Oxford Advanced Learners’ Dictionary 2010, p.411).

A designers’ basic responsibility is to meet user and audience needs. At the core of this paradigm lies the nature of design professionals who want to be credited with the creation of *good* design. Design academic Audrey Bennett (2012, p.76) defines good design as design that “improves humanity or the environment; resonates with the culture/s of users; includes the user and other stakeholders in the design process; stimulates and facilitates ease of use in a public context and establishes credibility with its user.” Although definitions of what human-centred design encompasses vary, as its intentionality lies with creating a positive impact for the greatest number of people it can be labelled as “good design”.<sup>1</sup> With specific reference to graphic design Frascara (1988, p.21) states that social impact and human-centeredness in design can only be achieved through: “the impact that all visual

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<sup>1</sup> As human-centred design has its roots in ergonomics and human-computer interaction one definition describes it as “an approach to systems design and development that aims to make interactive systems more usable by focusing on the system and applying human factors/ergonomics and usability knowledge and techniques” (Giacomin 2012:[sp]) however definitions centred in a social sphere describe human-centred design as “a process ...to create new solutions to design challenges. The process helps people hear the needs of the people and communities they’re designing for, create innovative approaches to meet those needs, and deliver solutions that work in specific cultural and economic contexts” (HCD connect:online).



communication has in the community and the way in which it influences people; the impact that all visual communication has in the visual environment; the need to ensure that communications related to the safety of the community are properly implemented.” In order for design to be truly sustainable designers must use their skills as an instrument of social change as well as contribute to new and novel research in the field.

Nini (2004, sp) borrows from the code of ethics developed by the ICSID (International Council of Societies of Industrial Design) as well as IABC (International Association of Business Communicators) when developing the following ethical designer accountabilities to audience members and users:

1. “Designers must recognize the need to include audience members and users whenever possible in the process of developing effective communications and to act as an advocate for their concerns to the client.
2. The Designer’s main concern must be to create communications that are helpful to audiences and users and that meet their needs with dignity and respect. Any communication created by a designer that intentionally misleads or confuses must be viewed as a negative reflection on the profession as a whole.
3. Designers must not knowingly use information obtained from audience members or users in an unethical manner so as to produce communications that are unduly manipulative or harmful in their effect.
4. Designers must advocate and thoughtfully consider the needs of all potential audiences and users, particularly those with limited abilities such as the elderly and physically challenged.
5. Designers must recognize that their work contributes to the wellbeing of the general public, particularly in regard to health and safety and must not consciously act in a manner contradictory to this wellbeing.
6. Designers uphold the credibility and dignity of their profession by practicing honest, candid and timely communication and by fostering the free flow of essential information in accord with the public interest”.

Nini (2004:sp) further recognises that ethical issues such as aspects dealing with corporate policy or the nature of fieldwork have touched upon the interest of designers who are increasingly working within social contexts. Designers are beginning to feel a sense of responsibility that goes beyond traditional concerns of propriety information and design plagiarism that includes concerns about environmental impact and product safety. Furthermore Nini (2004, sp) argues that within the design field ethical concerns include standards of professional practice and the final social and cultural impact of the design. Akama (2012, p.2) conversely points out the question of ethical practice by designers is compounded by the fact that “[A] large part of the argument that surrounds a designer’s ethical responsibility places importance on adopting values and ideological perspectives that many designers find difficult in applying or translating to their daily, commercial practices.” Akama (2012, p.4) suggests reflective practice as one way for designers to become self-aware and consider how their choices impact on the well-being of others.

## Community interventions at a UoT

In order to address these developing issues within the curriculum at a University of Technology in South Africa a number of projects (or “Interventions”) have been developed as part of the graphic design programme. The projects briefly discussed below include the incorporation of both human-centred, participatory methods as well as the introduction to *Ubuntu*-framed ethics module. The projects are established as a sequence of scaffolded learning activities with third and fourth year students that reinforce the understanding of HCD fundamentals, processes and consequently develop broader concepts of empathy, cooperation and design-in-context. Importantly placing the

project within the students' own communities has enabled them to utilise the philosophies acquired within the ethics of *Ubuntu* seminars in an appropriate setting whilst in service to others.

Undergraduate students at third and fourth year level and selected members of the community participate in four scaffolded Interventions, each comprising four stages, in order to systematically escalate engagement with human-centred and participatory design. Each Intervention engages these senior students of graphic design in a consultative, immersive process with various stakeholders to investigate and explore the designer's role in enabling and facilitating stakeholder input in the design process. These Interventions take place within diverse micro-environments of commercial practice, educational practice and special needs community environments in order to broaden the social dimensions of the design process. The lecturers explore the processes and interactions of the practice of teaching human-centred design within the graphic design programme as well as the processes and interactions that graphic design students have with various stakeholders acting in the role of clients and users. The teaching of human-centred design is framed within the constructs of participation, simplicity (ease-of-use), consistency, applicability and accessibility. Assessment takes place following each intervention and students are given an opportunity to reflect on the process in class seminars as well as in individual web blogs. This reflection that takes place following each intervention forms an integral part of the teaching process.

The first Intervention with the third year graphic design group utilises a lecturer administered questionnaire to establish the baseline of knowledge and disposition to human-centred design (HCD) processes. At this level students are familiar with basic human-centred design concepts and have some familiarity with popular human-centred design toolkits such as the one developed by IDEO (2014) and d-school at Stanford University (Stanford Design Bootcamp:available online). The student cohort is usually limited to groups smaller than 40 students so intense focus group discussions following the administration of the questionnaire are possible in order to obtain richer data.

The second Intervention builds on the students' existing knowledge of HCD and participatory processes and introduces students to some novel concepts through a lecturer introduced brief. Through Intervention Two third year graphic design students identify a potential client within their community and work collaboratively with the client using human-centred systems of co-creation and co-design in developing a commercial outcome which suits the client's individual needs.

Interventions Three and Four engage students in learning activities that have a more direct impact on and engage a wider range of stakeholders in that they require the production of real-world solutions for existing (the University Library) as well as special needs clients at a community centre within a local community. Here the students will assist the manager and caregivers of the centre in developing new design solutions for the centre from an empathic, collaborative HCD context. The Interventions are structured in such a way as to enable the students to identify and thereafter develop visual communications solutions to the design problems at hand together with the clients in a human-centred, collaborative and importantly empathetic manner. As the Interventions involve the use of real-life situations and real-life clients it is important that ethical considerations are adhered to – to this end ethical permission has been sought before the students engaged in Interventions Two, Three and Four.

## Conclusion

This paper contextualizes a series of Interventions involving participatory and human-centred approaches to design that take place within the framework of a graphic design programme at a University of Technology. Within these design processes the designer must consider the other stakeholders in the design – the user as well as the audience. Here, empathy as well as human dignity and respect, tenets of *Ubuntu* philosophy play a crucial role. In design practice it is important is for

the designer-user-audience interaction to be of equal value to all participants or other significant ethical issues may come into play. As social responsibility is becoming increasingly important in design outcomes the philosophy of *Ubuntu* should play a considerable role in helping to shape future curricula for ethics in design courses within design programmes at South African Higher Education institutions.

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# Non-maleficence as an ethical guideline to design

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## Abstract

*South Africa finds itself in the difficult position of not having a truly representative voice for design practice. Furthermore, we find ourselves without an advertising regulator with legislative support or legal force with a view on ensuring ethical and non-harmful design practice. The closest we come to such a body, is our advertising self-regulator, namely the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (ASASA). The ASASA requires that advertising messages be legal, honest, decent, and truthful and further advocates that advertisers must respect consumers, must conform to fair competition, and must not bring the trade into disrepute nor diminish the public's confidence in advertising. These principles are likewise entrenched in advertising self-regulatory codes in most developed and in some developing countries. Despite appropriate codes, some design practitioners still thwart the principles of honesty and truthfulness through misleading advertising practices. An analysis of ad alerts issued and breach allegations lodged with the ASASA indicates that some advertisers, despite receiving adverse rulings, continue to violate the ASASA's code. Graphic designers knowingly or unknowingly participate in misleading practices by aestheticising harmful products through design. Whether a designer knowingly participates in promoting harmful products shifts the issue from the ethical to the moral, due to the maleficence of some of these products. A critical review of codes of conduct developed by national as well as international design organisations indicates that not all provide moral guidelines when practitioners encounter design tasks which may potentially cause harm. There is no code of conduct for graphic designers in South Africa and no legislation to enforce honesty, decency, and truthfulness. It is for these reasons that this paper advocates for a South African ethical code of conduct based on the principle of non-maleficence in opposition to utilitarianism. Such a code must harmonise with internationally accepted design codes, self-regulatory codes as well as legislation in order to provide guidance when designers are confronted with apparent or potentially injurious assignments.*

**Keywords:** Ethics; advertising self-regulation; non-maleficence; code of conduct; misleading advertising

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## Introduction

The proliferation of design examples that promote harmful products or services, the limitation of advertising self-regulation in South Africa, and the absence of an ethical code that could guide designers when faced with an apparent or potentially injurious assignment, motivated this paper. Harmful products, in the context of this paper, refers to untested and inert products such as herbal and health supplements and traditional elixirs that are available from self-styled healers, retailers and pharmacies. An example of such a harmful product is Miracle Mineral Supplement (MMS), an industrial chemical marketed as a cure for a diverse number of diseases such as AIDS, malaria and the common cold (USA 2015). This product was sold in South Africa by a company that markets its products as a “wonderful natural health products” that is available in pharmacies and retailers (Biosil 2015). The active ingredient, sodium chloride, is used in pesticides and hydraulic fracturing (or “fracking”). Although ASASA (2012) instructed the South African company to withdraw the advertisement in 2012, they continued to promote the product until 2014.

There is no South African code of conduct that can guide graphic designers when faced with an injurious assignment such as designing marketing material for harmful products such as MMS. Marketers of these products act solely from a profit-driven perspective and use the services of designers to gentrify their products, and do not adequately or fully consider the health and well-being of the end-user. Designers thus become abettors in an exploitative and misleading process that entices unsuspecting consumers to purchase and consume inert, and sometimes dangerous, substances. Whether a designer should knowingly participate in such misleading practices shifts the issue from an ethical to a moral choice.

The aim of this paper is to argue why we should adopt an ethical code for designers, and why such a code should include non-maleficence as a guiding tenet.

This paper further borrows from the concept of non-maleficence as well as Kantian ethics, and argues how these may provide the basis for an ethical code for South African designers. A reflection on advertising self-regulation in South Africa, and a review of codes of practice for designers in other parts of the world, demonstrate the need for such a code. The paper concludes by calling for a morally based code of conduct for designers, and demonstrates this in the form of an anti-manifesto.

## Ethical principles

The practice of misleading consumers is a calculated and deceitful process. A marketer does not necessarily have to lie to a consumer, but can, through the use of carefully constructed text and imagery, cause a consumer to draw inferences that may culminate in perceiving a dishonest message as truthful and honest. A message may therefore be truthful and misleading at the same time. A typology of truthful but nonetheless misleading messages by Hastak and Mazis (2011) provides an insight into how marketers deceive consumers. Two of the five messages identified in their typology are particularly applicable to this paper. The first is a *source-based misleadingness* claim. This is typically found where a medical practitioner endorses a product or where a consumer's testimonial supports a product's efficacy claim such as commonly encountered with regards to numerous weight loss advertisements. The second is *interattribute misleadingness* where claims in an advertisement will cause a misleading inference about the product itself. One example is the use of green leaves and images of nature on product packaging to imply the naturalness of the product, hoping that the consumer will infer that the product is natural and therefore safe. This is an approach that is contrary to the principle of non-maleficence.

The concept of non-maleficence is best understood when viewed from evidence-based medical practice where it is a guiding tenet for ethical conduct (Morrison 2010). The term is based on the Latin maxim *primum non nocere* ("first, do no harm"), and dictates that, as a first step, medical practitioners should, above all, do no harm when treating patients. A medical practitioner, when confronted with a patient, must make a decision whether the benefits of a prescribed treatment will outweigh the possible negative side effects of that particular treatment. Modern evidence-based medical practice in turn is influenced by Emmanuel Kant's moral philosophy. Kantian ethics is a secular deontological<sup>1</sup> moral philosophy whereby a person is duty-bound to act in a manner that adds value to the recipient of the action (Daniel 2015). Kant's set of rules, or what he terms as "maxims", is categorical in nature and makes us duty-bound to act in response. Kant referred to the ultimate principle of morality as the *Categorical Imperative* and declared that this determines our moral duty (CSUS 2015). Kant's third formulation of his *Categorical Imperative* (one that is applicable to this paper), states that "[t]herefore, every rational being must so act as if he were through his maxim always a legislating member in the universal kingdom of ends" (Kant & Ellington 1993, p. 43). This categorical imperative is based on the premise that a person is autonomous and that his or her decisions are not subject to personal interests. People become bound to their own rules (*maxims*),

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<sup>1</sup> Deontological is an approach to ethics that judges the morality of a decision based on the adherence to predetermined rules. It is an obligatory rule based approach to ethics.

but these rules are only valid if they are binding to others and become universalisable. Kantian ethics requires us not to act by *maxims* that create “incoherent or impossible states of natural affairs” (Shakil 2013). We can reformulate this as a question. If we create or allow a certain action (the maxim), is such an action morally permissible? Will others accept such a rule (i.e. condone the action) or will such a rule lead to an impossible state of affairs? The answer is simple if we apply this reasoning to medical practice. Making it morally permissible for a medical practitioner to prescribe inert medication will produce an “impossible state of affairs”. We are therefore duty-bound to reject the practice of prescribing inert medicine (Kant’s *Categorical Imperative*). Making such a rule universal would mean that doctors will be known for prescribing inert medication, leading to patients losing faith in the medical profession, resulting in the subsequent demise of the practice of medicine (and thus leading to an impossible state of affairs).

We can apply the same reasoning to graphic design practice. Let us, for example, state that it is acceptable to assist through design, a company to market inert medication aimed at AIDS sufferers. Universalising this rule and making it applicable to others (and ourselves), would imply that we will willingly and knowingly accept and administer such inert medication to AIDS patients. This, of course, is irrational. We cannot accept such a process as it will create an impossible state of affairs. We are therefore duty-bound to reject the notion of marketing inert medication, and as designers, the process of designing marketing material for such products. The principle of non-maleficence and Kantian ethics require a person to first avoid causing harm and as such he or she is duty-bound to reject those processes that cause harm.

Given the position of non-maleficence and Kantian ethics, one inevitably questions whether one should hold graphic design practice to the same ethical standard as with evidence-based medical practice. We can argue that both provide benefit to the end-user; the one provides health, whilst the other provides (gentrified) information for decision-making. Both practices have the potential to cause harm, to do good, and are in a position to avoid doing harm. It is for these reasons that we argue that one should hold design practice to a high ethical standard. One can nonetheless also argue that it is not possible to hold design practice to a high ethical standard, due to what some describe as the prettification and puffery nature of design. This is exactly what design should not be, especially human-centred or anthropocentric design. Acosta and Romeva (2010, p. 34) provide a fresh perspective critical of an anthropocentric approach and argue that it is “... *necessary to accept the opposite to Darwinism of evolution by competition: co-creation and cooperation between the planetarium species for coexistence. A more creative, harmonic and conscious of ecosphere human intelligence has to appear, and this intelligence has to be organize in equity with the capacities, actions and vital rights of the rest of planetarium species*”

If patients are protected from harmful medical practices by a code of ethics, should consumers not likewise be protected from harmful design practices by a code of ethics? If there is a need for an ethical code for designers, should such a code provide protection to the end-user? If we accordingly endorse the ethical principle of causing no harm to others through design, then the question is the prominence of non-maleficence in a code of conduct for designers.

Non-maleficence, as a central tenet, also resonates with some universally accepted secular codes of conduct. Although one’s ethical position is influenced by one’s culture and background, some universal principles still apply. In this regard Kinnier, Kernes and Dautheribes (2000) developed a short list of universal moral values. Their list is based on the frequency of these values in previously published lists by researchers, the major world religions, secular organisations and the work of philosophers and scholars who published in this field. They do caution that no individual or group is qualified to legislate what is right or wrong for others, but at the same time that there may be or exist a limited set of moral values that most people will accept as a matter of course. Their shortlist consists of four values: (1) commitment to something greater than oneself (seeking justice and truth), (2) self-respect and responsibility, (3) respect for others (the Golden Rule) and (4) caring for other living beings and the environment.

## Advertising self-regulation in South Africa

The Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (ASASA) is South Africa's only advertising self-regulatory body and one of the few functioning regulators in Africa. It is an independent body, reliant on funding by marketing and communication industry stakeholders. It aims to keep advertising legal, honest, truthful, and fair. Advertisers must respect consumers, must conform to fair competition, not bring the trade into disrepute nor diminish the public's confidence in advertising (ASASA 2015a). These universal principles are entrenched in advertising self-regulators' codes in Australasia, North America, Hong Kong, Singapore, India, Western Europe and South Africa to name but a few.

The ASASA is a reactive organisation and only responds to consumer and industry complaints as far as advertising is concerned. Consumers can lay complaints at no cost, whilst a business is required to pay a fee to have its complaint investigated. The ASASA, after receiving a complaint, provides a ruling, and base their decision on their advertising codes. An advertiser is required to withdraw or amend any objectionable advertisement, labelling and associated infringing marketing material when the ASASA rules in favour of a complainant. The Consumer Protection Act, No. 68 of 2008 (South Africa 2009), likewise aims to protect the consumer from misleading marketing practices, such as "exaggeration, innuendo or ambiguity as to a material fact" (Ibid: 86, Section 41(1b)). Despite a functioning regulator and appropriate legislation, some practitioners still thwart the principles of honesty and truthfulness when they receive an adverse ruling from the ASASA. A review of *ad alerts*, available on ASASA's database from 2011 to 2015 (ASASA 2015b), revealed that 10 of the 18 available *ad alerts* are for slimming and pseudo-medical products. One of the advertisers concerned, for example, claims that their product is proven to be an effective treatment for HIV/AIDS (ASASA 2013). An *ad alert* is a strong form of sanction and is issued when ASASA sends out a notification to their members not to accept any advertisements from a particular advertiser. In addition, we analysed *breach allegations* lodged with the ASASA by consumers and competitors. Thirty-seven breach allegations (from April 2009 to May 2015) are available via ASASA's subscription database. Eleven of these 37 *breach allegations* centre around medical and weight loss products. The ASASA upheld nine of these 11 complaints. A *breach allegation* comes about where a consumer or competitor complains that a respondent did not comply with an adverse ASASA ruling. Only four consumers are involved in these 11 complaints, of which one person, Dr Harris Steinman, is the complainant in no less than eight of these cases. Steinman has also lodged the most complaints with the ASASA regarding misleading complementary and alternative medical products. An extensive synthesis of these complaints and the ASASA rulings are available on CAMcheck (2015).

Whilst international and large national companies seem to comply with ASASA rulings (see the rulings by ASASA on their website), there are copious examples where some companies do not comply with ASASA rulings, and are unresponsive to sanctions imposed by the ASASA (see the examples on Steinman's CAMcheck). The principles of advertising self-regulation should work in an ordered and compliant society, but this does not necessarily take place in South Africa, which in turn brings into question whether self-regulation is an effective measure in enforcing non-maleficent behaviour.

## International codes of design practice

A number of design and related disciplines have established codes of conduct for their members. Architects, for example, must register with a professional body, must comply with their codes, and are subject to disciplinary action and sanctioning by their respective bodies. The situation is somewhat different from other design disciplines such as visual communication design, interior design, and industrial design. In general, practitioners from these areas do not have to belong to a professional body and do not have to subscribe to a code of conduct. There are, however, a number of design organisations that have established voluntary codes of conduct. The section that follows provides a brief reflection on aspects of codes that are applicable to this paper. It is by no means a



comprehensive sample, but provides a good indication of international trends. The table at the end of this section provides a summary.

The International Council of Societies of Industrial Design (icsid) has a *Code of Professional Ethics* and whose aim it is to advance the industrial design profession. The code (icsid 2014) consists of five articles that cover the client, the user, the world's eco system, one about enriching cultural diversity and one about benefits to the profession. Their article concerning the user requires designers to consider the well-being of society, and, in particular, their health and safety. The article further requires designers not to act in a harmful manner, nor to act in a manner that is contradictory to the well-being of the user.

The International Council of Design (ico-D [formerly ICOGRADA]) represents more than 140 organisations in 67 countries. They published a short code of professional conduct for designers that cover the community, the client and other designers. The (only) ethical consideration is that a designer should "act in the best interest of the ecology and of the natural environment" (ico-D 2011, p. 4).

The South African Institute of Architects (SAIA) has a *National Code of Conduct* (SAIA 2010) with five principles to regulate the conduct of their members. These principles cover professional conduct in public; the treatment of employees and clients; responsibility towards other members, the Institute and the profession; and a responsibility towards third parties affected by their work. Similar to the icsid Code, members must act with integrity towards third parties and must not misrepresent facts nor provide misleading information to members of the public that may be affected by their work. SAIA is the only organisation in this sample where members are required to belong to a professional body, where a code is enforceable and where members are subject to sanctions.

The Society of Graphic Designers of Canada's (GDC) (GDC 2012) *Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct* consists of 48 individual codes. Similar to SAIA's code, it covers the environment, other members, clients, employees, the organisation, and the profession. Two unique codes (Codes 4 and 5) stipulate that a member may not agree to assist, permit, or contravene any federal, provincial or municipal law, regulation or by-law relating to the practice of graphic design. Akin to the icsid Code, members are not permitted to participate in design activities that could be seen as a deliberate or reckless disregard of the safety and health of their communities. In addition they must take a responsible role when portraying people, the consumption of natural resources, the environment, and animals. They may also not accept assignments that violate human and property rights (Codes 31 and 32).

Although strictly speaking the theatre industry is not a design profession, their proximity to the arts and theatre design warrants a brief review. The South African theatre industry's code for the South African theatre (AFAI 2014) is a working document. The preamble to the code states that it is not binding upon its members and that it is "not cast in stone". The primary aim of their code is to ensure a positive working environment for all involved in the theatre industry. Members must treat each other and the public with respect, must act with honesty and integrity and must conduct themselves in a professional manner. This is then the only code that emphasises issues such as sexual harassment, sexual favouritism, violence, theft, corruption, fraud and alcohol and drug abuse.

The Australian Graphic Design Association's (AGDA) *Code of Ethics* covers eight sections and deals with members' professional business conduct. It has a utilitarian ethos where the designer is required to "always act in the best interests of the client". One clause, however, requires members to work in such a manner so that their actions cause no or as little harm as possible to the environment. They are also required not to use "false, misleading or deceptive statements in advertising or publicity material", but this only applies to their own promotional and publicity activities (AGDA 1996).

The American Institute of Graphic Arts' (AIGA) *Standards of Professional Practice* covers seven sections. Although it is similar to the AGDA's utilitarian focus, it promotes a number of ethical

principles. Designers must act in the best interests of their clients and self-promotional activities must not contain “deliberate misstatements of competence, experience or professional capabilities”. Their code thus requires a designer to act in a responsible manner and avoid projects that could harm the public. They are further required to be truthful and should not participate in false, misleading and deceptive design or do anything to harm the health and safety of others. Designers should furthermore consider the environmental, social, and cultural implications of their work and must minimise any adverse impact their work may hold. Members are also required to act in a responsible manner when portraying people, resources, animals and the environment. Interestingly, they are also encouraged to participate freely in projects that would benefit society (AIGA 2010).

Malaysia’s *Code of Professional Conduct* covers five areas. One of these addresses a designer’s responsibility to the public and another the designer’s responsibility towards the environment and society. Similar to the American code, designers are required to be truthful, and may not deceive nor mislead with design nor misrepresent their own competence. They must respect their audience, avoid stereotyping, and be sensitive towards others. Members must regard the health and safety of society, and must portray people, natural resources, animals and the environment in a responsible manner. They may not participate in discriminatory practices, must consider the impact of their work, and minimise such impact on the environment and society. They are, as with AIGA members, also encouraged to undertake charitable work for the benefit of society (wREGA 2013). This particular code has a strong ethical orientation.

Table 1 below (see next page) provides a summary of the various codes’ position in terms of a number of ethical principles. The decision whether the organisation’s codes merely support an ethical principle – leaving the decision to a member – or whether their members are compelled to comply, is based on the word-strength of the codes. An “s” in the table signifies a suggestion and could allow a member a choice whereas a “c” signifies that members are compelled to take the indicated route. Even though the judgement whether to classify an organisation’s position as suggested or compulsory is to some extent difficult to validate, it does, however, indicate the general position of these organisations and their codes. The last row indicates whether the particular organisation has a non-maleficence charter embedded in its code.

The SAIA, icsid as well as the Canadian and Malaysian bodies are four organisations that stand out in terms of binding their members to appropriate ethical conduct. The SAIA, however, is the only professional body and their code is consequently the only code whose guidelines are binding upon its members. The reason is obvious, as architects devise products that have the potential to cause physical harm if there is a design fault. It is also for this reason that SAIA is able to discipline its members and that registered architects are generally held in higher esteem than those who are not registered as professional architects with the Council. The Malaysian Code of Professional Conduct stands out in terms of compulsory codes. There could be several reasons for this. Pertubuhan Wakaf Reka Grafik Malaysia (wREGA), the Graphic Design Association of Malaysia, published their code in 2013 and most probably incorporated key ethical trends and requirements from existing design and related organisations into their code. wREGA operates in a Muslim cultural environment and cannot ignore (stricter) Islamic requirements for ethical business practices. A recent paper (Rahman et al., 2014) reflects on the (unethical) marketing practices in Malaysia and questioned the ethics of exaggerating product benefits, false information regarding products, and the use of women in advertising.

	International Council of Societies of Industrial Design	International Council of Design	Society of Graphic Designers of Canada	South African Institute of Architects	South African Theatre Industry	Australian Graphic Design Association	American Institute of Graphic Arts	Malaysia's COPC
<b>Kinnier et al.'s (2000) values</b>								
Justice and truth								
Self-respect and responsibility								
Respect for others					s			
Caring for living beings and the environment	s	s	s	c		s	s	s
<b>Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa's principles</b>								
Honesty				c	s			c
Truthfulness				c				c
Decency								
Legal			c	c	s			
<b>Society, end-user and the environment</b>								
Safety and health	s		c	c			c	c
Consider the end-user	s			c				c
Consider society	s		c	c	s			c
Responsible portrayal of people, resources, animals, ecology	s	s	s	c		s	s	s
Human rights, discrimination			c		s		c	c
Avoid stereotyping, dehumanising, culturally sensitive	s			c	s			c
<b>Personal conduct</b>								
Personal promotional must be truthful		c	c	c		c	c	c
Charitable work, philanthropic ethos							s	s
Conduct, discrimination, sexual conduct					s			
<b>Support the principle of non-maleficence</b>	Yes	No	Unsure	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes

Table 1: The position of organisations and their codes in terms of a number of ethical principles

## Recommendations and conclusion

The idea of questioning one's ethical conduct as a designer is not a new concept. Ken Garland published the *First Things First* manifesto in 1963 (Garland 1964). This manifesto questions the triviality of advertising items such as slimming diets and cigarettes, and states that other items are more worthy of designers' skills such as education and scientific publications. Similarly, Milton Glaser, whilst illustrating *Dante's Purgatory* for an Italian publisher, developed a series of moral questions that he named *The Road to Hell* and in which he questions the design profession's practice

of misrepresenting the truth. The eleven steps to a design hell range from a design assignment such as making a pack appear bigger on a shelf, to designing an advertisement for a product that could cause the death of the user (Glaser 2005). A noteworthy publication is a book titled *Do good design: How designers can change the world* by Canadian designer David Berman (2009). He touches upon a designer's social responsibility and provides a chronological and detailed account on the development of ethical codes for a number of organisations.

Even though a number of codes attempt to address misleading design practices by requiring their members to be honest, their parent organisation does not always have the statutory power to enforce their codes, and society does not have recourse against a designer that participates in injurious practices. The question that invariably comes to the fore is whether developing a code of conduct for South African designers is meaningful or not. One can argue that the Consumer Protection Act of 2008 is an adequate vehicle through which consumers can seek protection. The reality is that, despite legislation and an established advertising self-regulator, consumers are still largely unprotected against untested and unproven products and services. Given the trend that designers in many countries have developed their own codes of conduct, one can argue that it is inconceivable for South African designers not to follow suit and develop their own code of conduct. The question regarding the position and prominence of non-maleficence in such a code nonetheless remains, and whether such a notion should be categorical, likewise, remains an important question. A code of conduct for designers must support and augment legislation and self-regulatory activities. Such a position is only possible if a code of conduct positions the concept of not doing harm before utilitarian product or service claims. The position of utilitarianism as a moral philosophy – where an action that produces the best results and the most satisfaction (e.g. for the marketer) is seen as the correct action – is detrimental to society. It is at odds with the principle of doing no harm because it does not question the efficacy nor the harmfulness of the advertised product, and ignores the potential disadvantage to the end-user.

Positioning non-maleficence as a categorical variable in a code of conduct for designers will bolster the discipline's standing in terms of honesty, truthfulness, decency and legitimacy. Such a code will assist a designer to question or reject an injurious assignment. Non-maleficence as a central tenet also resonates with universally accepted codes of what is wrong or right.

We have argued why we should adopt a South African ethical code for designers, and why such a code should include non-maleficence, in opposition to utilitarianism, as a core principle. The peril of ignoring non-maleficence and ethical principles, such as those proposed by Garland, Glaser as well as Kinnier et al., becomes apparent when one translates an ethical code into an anti-ethical manifesto. Allow us to present such an anti-manifesto (after Kinnier et al. 2001) to demonstrate the need for an ethical code.

- 1) A designer should always, and at all times, place the interest of the client above, and to the disadvantage of the end-user, and society.
- 2) A designer is ultimately responsible to complete a design assignment and should not allow his or her self-respect and respect for others to sway his or her unethical design decisions.
- 3) A designer must deem the environment and other living beings as cheap and exploitable resources that he or she must use to maximise design effectiveness and profit.
- 4) A designer should not allow ethical considerations to affect his or her design decisions. Ethics interferes with utilitarian design, the maximising of profit and the successful exploitation of consumers.

A fifth anti-manifesto code, specifically applicable to South Africa, could read as follows:

- 5) A designer must acknowledge the criminal endeavours of those public officials who selfishly, unfairly, illegally and for personal gain, award contracts and approve tenders. Designers should factor in a recompense system as a reward for these officials for receiving and securing future contracts.

This paper advocates an ethical code of conduct for South African designers. Such a code of conduct should harmonise with advertising self-regulation and legislation to provide guidance when confronted with injurious assignments. The code should include non-maleficence, in opposition to utilitarianism, as a guiding tenet. South Africa's past, the levels of inequality, and opportunities for marketers to exploit consumers coupled with the difficulty to enforce self-regulation, make it judicious to develop a categorical code of conduct.

South Africa cannot avoid, nor should it defer, the development of a code of conduct for designers. What we do not know, and what requires further research, is what content would be acceptable to the design industry and to what extent we will be able to enforce such a code. We also do not know how design educators will respond to a call for the inclusion of ethics in their design curricula. Ethics and design in education will set the trend of ethics and design conduct in South Africa for future design practitioners. DEFSa, in partnership with representative professional bodies, is the credible vehicle to initiate such a process.

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# Whose creative expression is it anyway? A conceptual framework proposed to facilitate an authentic creation process of fashion design mood boards

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## Abstract

*Repurposing images has become an integral part of the ideation phase of fashion design processes. The use of online images presents both a challenge and an opportunity for fashion design students who use images of others to communicate a design concept through mood boards. The challenge pertains to the authenticity of their design concepts. Although the authors of this paper acknowledge the importance of referencing of visual material as a strategy to prevent plagiarism, the argument is made that compilation of mood boards with existing images can be further explored, especially with regard to the accountability of an individual in relation to the concept authenticity. The purpose of this paper is therefore to contribute to fashion design education, by proposing a conceptual framework that supports the creation of authentic (as in own) mood boards by students, as opposed to a process of combining several images that is cohesive on a visual sensory level only. In this paper, it is argued that repurposing images should involve the reflective process of a student during the design process when he/she creates mood boards. The concept of authenticity is explored as it links to accountability with principles that could be aligned to appropriate conduct when images are repurposed during the process of mood board creation. Since authenticity is also linked to creative expression, a framework is presented that guides the process of mood board creation on different levels of visual analysis. The information on the proposed process is then consolidated into a diagrammatical form as a means to illustrate how the concepts in the process relate. The framework can guide the activities of mood board creation to enhance reflection during the process so that a mood board is not only visually coherent, but also communicates the student's symbolic intention and consequently evoke emotion in a viewer.*

**Keywords:** Visual analysis, fashion design process, mood boards, authentic, creative expression, accountability

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## Introduction

The activity of concept representation through mood boards form an integral part of the ideation phase of the fashion design process. However, guidelines to create authentic mood boards that promote accountability are lacking. Mood boards are important instruments of communication and expression of design concepts in the global fashion industry (Aspelund 2010; Cassidy 2008; Faerm 2010; Garner & McDonagh-Philp 2001). A mood board visually represents the design concept by means of collated images, but is also an effective tool through which the designer engages with the design problem and communicates the solution in a tangible visual format (Aspelund 2010, p.67; Cassidy 2008, p.48). From an educational perspective, mood boards are required to reflect the authentic ideas of the student who creates the board, as he/she converts their own abstract design ideas into a visual format that expresses the concept to viewers. While the ideation phase of the design process has been well documented in design theory and a number of textbooks have been written about the fashion design process, the notion of accountability when images are repurposed during the process of mood board creation is often neglected.

It is common practice in fashion design to draw inspiration from existing images during the design process, in order to visually express an abstract design idea (Aspelund 2010; Cassidy 2008; Faerm 2010; Garner & McDonagh-Philp 2001). In the process of configuring selected images to communicate a design concept, the individual image loses its initial meaning and context, as the images collectively adopt new sensory (factual aspects of what one sees in an image) and symbolic meanings. The repurposing of images for creative expression on mood boards is generally acceptable practice (Aspelund 2010; Cassidy 2008; Faerm 2010; Garner & McDonagh-Philp 2001). Nevertheless, with regard to education, students are expected to acknowledge the creators of the images that they use through referencing techniques in their own mood boards. However, the question is whether technical referencing of existing images provides a sufficient mechanism for accountability when creating mood boards? The primary argument of this paper is therefore that accountability is important when communicating design concepts when fashion design students repurpose existing images during the process of mood board creation.

This paper contributes to fashion design education by proposing a conceptual framework that supports the creation of authentic (as in own) mood boards by students, as opposed to a process of combining several images that is cohesive on a visual level only. This framework proposes a strategy that aims to enable the creator to internalise the meaning of existing images within their context, in order to express and ultimately communicate an authentic design concept through a visual representation of collated images created by other people. The purpose of this paper is therefore to propose a framework that facilitates a process that promotes the creation of authentic mood boards as part of the ideation phase of the fashion design process.

To inform the proposed conceptual framework, the discussion in this paper reviews relevant literature. By means of introduction, appropriate design conduct when repurposing the ideas of others is discussed first. Following this, the concept of authenticity is clarified, followed by a discussion concerning creative expression through mood boards. The proposed process for creative expression of fashion design mood boards that are authentic is explained next. The information on this process is then consolidated into a diagrammatical form as a means to illustrate how the concepts in the process relate.

## Appropriate design conduct when repurposing the ideas of others

Lawson and Dorst (2009, p.24) consider design as a multifaceted concept that involves several phases while incorporating a range of activities and tools. Designers explore the implications of a design problem, in order to derive possible solutions (Schön, cited in Cross 2011, p.22). Within this context, design facilitates the possibility for tentative solutions to emerge, which indicate how a developing solution idea may be relevant to the problem faced (Cross 2011, p.11). Design, however, does not only involve an internal cognitive process, since the designer also engages with an external representation of his/her design ideas or thinking (Cross 2011, p.12). Representing original design ideas is important within the perspective of design as a professional practice that sets out to conceive and produce novel ideas and artefacts (Kuutti 2011). Therefore, the generation of original or novel ideas that reflect the internal process of the student can be viewed as accountability within the context of design practice.

During the early stages of the design process, a design idea is conceptualised by drawing on inspiration and the implementation of the concept planned (Ellinwood 2011, p.2). Inspiration can be considered an actual initial phase of the design process (Aspelund 2010; Ellinwood 2011), or it can be something that occurs throughout the early design phases (Lamb & Kallal 1992; Regan 1998). There is, however, consensus about the importance of inspiration in fashion design, particularly during the concept development stage (Aspelund 2010; Bye 2010; Cassidy 2008; Ellinwood 2011; Faerm 2010; Garner & McDonagh-Philp 2001). Inspiration is subjective by nature and designers obtain inspiration from a wide variety of existing visual material that allows for repurposing of images for mood boards. However, in order to reflect appropriate design conduct, authenticity is a key outcome of the design



process (Kuutti 2011). Authenticity in this paper is therefore viewed as a dimension of appropriate design conduct.

## Authenticity

The concept authenticity is often associated with real artistic expressions or the creator's own/real expression that should not be reproduced (Bendix 2009, p.6). More than half a century ago, Walter Benjamin (cited in Bendix 2009, p.7) characterised the elusive nature of authenticity as fundamentally an emotional and moral quest, which Bendix (2009, p.8) relates to a result of cognitive reflexivity that is unique, especially within a mass-mediated world. The individuality of an expression is thus the principle of authenticity from this perspective. Therefore one can argue that a designer/creator (in this case a student) can enhance the authenticity of a design concept by internalising the context and meaning of the images they use to create a mood board, assuming then that the repurposing of images will be a creative expression resulting from the subjectivity of the idea.

## Creative expression through fashion design mood boards

Creative expression reflects the emotion of the creator and in turn evokes emotion in the viewer (Fiore 2010, p.8), which requires strategy with regards to the design process. All design processes essentially involve three primary phases, namely: analysis, synthesis and evaluation (Au, Taylor & Newton 2004). These authors relate the three phases as particularly relevant during the process of searching for design ideas and consequently creating a visual representation of the conceived design concept. It is argued in this paper that purposeful and accountable decisions should underpin the analysis, synthesis and evaluation of inspirational images that are often found online as representations of the ideas of others. The skills applied during the process of developing and visually expressing a design concept, however, require visual literacy abilities in order for a student to effectively analyse and evaluate the appropriateness of an image in relation to an intended design concept.

Visual literacy is based on the notion that visual material, such as images encapsulates meaning that can be understood and uncovered through a process of analysis (Barnard 2002; Helmers 2006; Rose 2012; Van Leewen & Jewitt 2007). Visual analysis involves a systematic procedure through which the structure of visual material is critically studied and interpreted according to the goals of the analysis (Helmers 2006; Van Leeuwen & Jewitt 2007). Critical visual analysis therefore requires strategic consideration of images since the selected images, collectively, need to express sensory and symbolic effects in the larger "picture" (completed mood board). Image interpretation is subjective by nature, and can be intentionally manipulated by the creator (Barnard 2002; Fiore 2010; Helmers 2006; Rose 2012; Van Leewen & Jewitt 2007). In turn, the subjective nature of visual interpretation and personal context of the student can contribute to the authenticity of the creative expression, for example in a mood board.

The following section explains a strategy that can be implemented in a tertiary education context to support the creative expression of fashion design students to communicate authentic design concepts through mood boards. The devised strategy incorporate principles and practices of established visual analysis methods proposed by Barnard (2002), Gaimster (2011), Helmers (2006), Rose (2007; 2012) and Van Leewen and Jewitt (2007).

## Proposed process for creative expression through fashion design mood boards that are authentic

### Awareness and acknowledging the context of images

To encourage authenticity as a result of the mood board creation process, students should be aware that images extend beyond the visual sensory content and are created by someone, for an intended audience, and with a specific purpose that often communicates symbolic meaning (Helmers 2006,

pp.10,20,31). However, online sources in particular allow students to retrieve images that often lack contextual information, which poses an opportunity as well as a challenge to students. It provides an opportunity, as it may be easier for students to use their creativity to conceptualise their own ideas to repurpose the images. Limited information available on an image could nevertheless also encourage irresponsible re-purposing of images. It is acknowledged that creativity often involves the forming of associated elements (such as existing images) into new combinations and contexts (such as mood boards) that meet a particular requirement (Mumford 2003; Wagner et al. 2004). However, a lack of awareness regarding the content and context of an image could make it difficult for a student to understand the deeper meaning of an image, in order to construct own symbolic interpretation. In this regard it is suggested that the images for mood boards should be critically viewed on three levels of visual analysis.

### **Visual analysis level 1: engagement on a sensory level**

The first level of visual analysis has two aims. The first is to acknowledge the creators of images on a technical level through referencing techniques. The second aim is to analyse and evaluate the relevance of the sensory design elements of an image to represent an intended design concept. Although the sensory response is important, this level of analysis only becomes meaningful when advanced to an interpretive level (Helmets 2006, p.11).

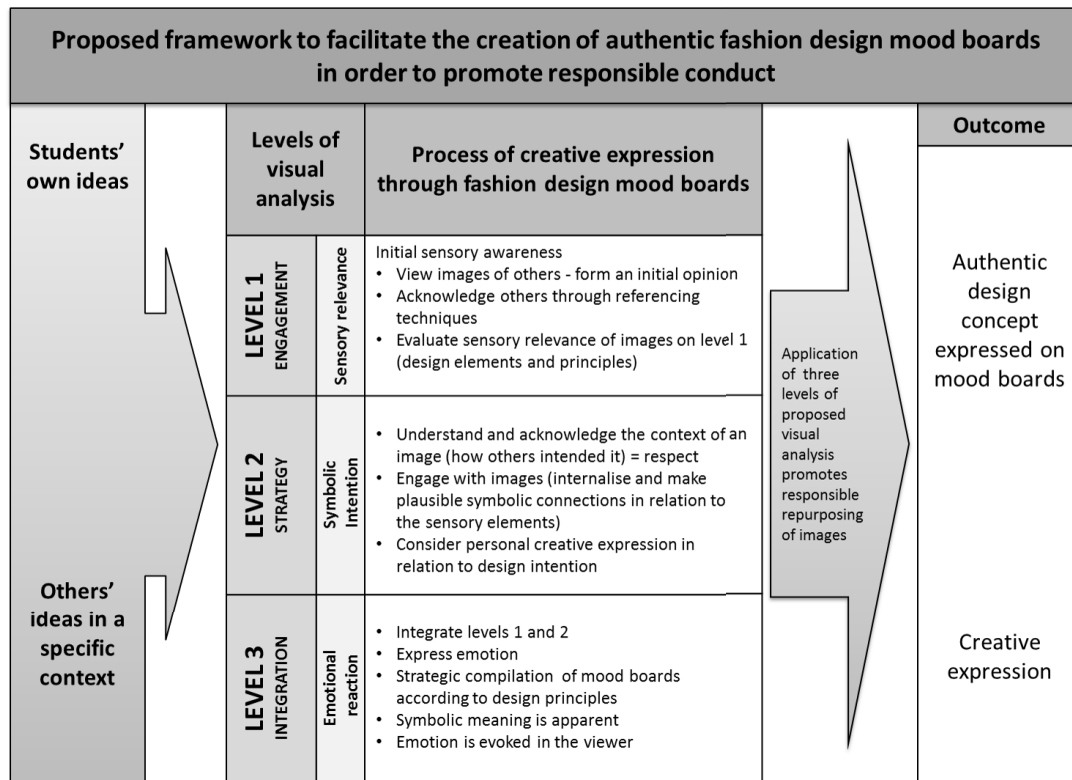
### **Visual analysis level 2: engagement on a symbolic level**

The second level of visual analysis should involve intention and strategy. The aim is to advance the level of analysis to a deeper understanding of the symbolism and personal expression encapsulated in an image, for the student to be able to interpret and communicate their own meaning in a new and authentic way through the design elements. This requires that the image content should be internalised to allow that plausible symbolic meaning, relating to an intended design concept, can be attached to the sensory content (Barnard 2002; Gaimster 2011; Helmets 2006; Rose 2012). Although there are many possible meanings that images could represent in a mood board, Fiore and Kimle (1997, pp.45-47) provide some dimensions of symbolism, namely: reality (representation of “what is”), fantasy (“what could be”) or entertainment (“seeking or finding something new, unusual, unexpected, or challenging”). These dimensions can guide the students’ strategy with regard to communication of specific symbolic meaning. This implies that students should turn inward (reflect) in order to clarify ideas so that the visual representation of the design concept also communicates their own internal process.

### **Visual analysis level 3: Expressing emotion**

The third level of the visual analysis integrates levels one and two of the visual analysis. Emotion is therefore created as a result of the combination of sensory and symbolic levels. Fiore (2010, pp.33-34) connects emotions to dimensions relating to: pleasure (good, preferable, liked), dominance (feeling of being unrestricted or in control of a situation) or arousal (feeling-state varying from sleep to frantic excitement). This implies that turning inward (in this case reflect and feel) can enable the student to communicate and hence reflect his/her inner process and in turn portray and evoke intended emotion. Therefore, level three can only be successfully achieved when levels one and two are integrated, for the student’s emotion to be effectively portrayed and evoked as intended.

Figure 1 demonstrates the consolidated proposed process, aimed at guiding students’ authentic creative expression, which is the culmination of levels one, two and three.



**Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of the proposed framework to support the creation of authentic fashion design mood boards in order to promote ethical conduct (self-constructed)**

The risk for unaccountable behaviour during the process of conceptualising and communicating a design concept situates largely within levels one and two. If a student does not engage responsibly during the first two levels, it may result in copying, or simply repurposing without reflecting, which would not be appropriate conduct that supports the authenticity of the design ideas generated and communicated on mood boards.

## Conclusion

Accountability when fashion design students repurpose existing images when creating mood boards needs to be further explored in terms of authenticity. The primary argument of the paper is that theory concerning the design process provides limited guidelines to inform appropriate conduct for accountability during the ideation phase of the design process. This paper contributes to fashion design education and addresses this issue by presenting a conceptual framework that proposes a strategy to support the creation of a design concept that is authentic. It is suggested that authenticity can be a result of the student's responsible repurposing of images for fashion design mood boards, after turning inward to reflect and then turning outward to visually communicate the intended design concept. The framework proposes a process that can enhance authenticity and accountability during the mood board creation process. The proposed methods in phase one can involve evaluation of existing images in a workshop where students communicate the sensory relevance of the images and acknowledge the creators of the images. The second phase can be facilitated by means of analysis help sheets that probe the students' thinking on the symbolic meaning of the images in relation to an intended design concept. This help sheet could involve a written narrative on the meaning of the individual images and then collectively as a combined concept. The third level of visual analysis should portray the process followed in levels one and two so that the intended emotion is evident. An action research approach is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of the first two levels of visual analysis of the framework in order to achieve the strategy of provoking an emotion on the third level.

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# Exploring design strategies to determine information needs of caregivers

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## Abstract

*In this paper, the authors present information needs required by caregivers in a resource-constrained community during their health-education activities with considerations to design ethics. The role of visuals and technology in facilitating health communication, the need to design “with” users and the benefits thereof are discussed.*

*The study adopts a service design ethos to obtain data from research conducted with the Grabouw community in the Western Cape, South Africa. Participatory and co-design workshops were organised with caregivers in the community. Due to the complex nature of healthcare services provided by caregivers, ethical considerations were factored into co-design activities. Researchers in this case adhered to relevant ethical procedures and therefore were “enkratic”, giving due consideration to the concerns of the caregivers at all times in every design engagement. This process helped in establishing desirable trust and empathy needed to facilitate the co-design activities.*

*Also, the study highlights design as an evolving process of engagement and how designers are becoming increasingly eco-centric. It lays emphasis on designing “with” stakeholders at the grassroots level, which potentially fosters community participation and emancipation. Thus eco-centric design is encouraged in community engagements rather than “ego-centric” design – which is designing “for” users, without including their perspective. The authors suggest “co-design” as a process of enquiry – an alternative to determine information needs of healthcare workers in resource-constrained contexts.*

**Keywords:** Caregiver, Co-design, Design Ethics, Information Needs, Service Design

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## Introduction

Information is relevant in health education activities to promote health literacy. Improving patients' health through preventive measures requires relevant information that patients can relate to in order to improve their health behaviour (Schulz & Nakamoto 2013, p.5-9). Currently, through the use of available Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), Community Healthcare Workers (CHWs) are able to communicate with their clients and facilitate health-education in resource-constrained settings (Braun *et al.* 2013, p.1-2). However, providing equitable health information using ICTs to patients in remote settings is sometimes a challenge for health service intermediaries such as caregivers. The disparities in literacy levels among patients, limited relevant promotional materials and Internet connectivity are some of the drawbacks to health education in such communities (McConnell *et al.* 2006, p.20-21).

In this study the researchers focus on inquiring about information needs desired by caregivers to facilitate health education activities to mothers in Grabouw, South Africa. Although ICTs are available to caregivers in this community, the provision of health information via these platforms still needs to be explored. Thus, service design strategies such as co-design and participatory design methods were adopted to engage with caregivers to determine their information needs relating to Maternal and Child Healthcare (MCH). Outcomes of the design activities revealed that promotional materials for caregivers were insufficient. Consequently, educational materials are desired in critical areas in

women's health – before, during and after pregnancy. Thus, exploring the use of multimedia messaging as a means of communication can facilitate women's access to health information (McConnell *et al.* 2006, p.5).

Further, ethics and accountability do matter in service design activities. Service designers usually serve as advocates for their users and are perceived as the voice *of* and *for* the people. They rarely assume the position of their users. Instead, they empathise with them using service design tools such as personas, storyboards, and design probes to find solutions to problems. In such engagements, designers are perceived to be ethical when their solutions are geared towards sustainability although this might not be the best approach to solve problems in all cases. Designers are expected to reflect on their choice of solutions and its impact on the lives of end-users as part of ethical considerations in design activities (Carlsson 2010, p.2-4). In this study, the authors discuss how efforts were made in applying ethical norms during design engagements with participants. Fundamental ethical considerations in line with design principles were made during co-design activities due to the nature of healthcare workers involved. Efforts were made not to exhibit *akrasia* (acting on opinions rather than reason). Rather, the researchers focused on "*what*" they wanted to achieve with deep reflections on *enkritic* norms (acting reasonably) which is expected to be demonstrated by designers in co-design engagements (Young 2013, p.90-91).

## Background and purpose

### Information needs of caregivers

Information needs or "wants" by healthcare workers can be multifaceted and varied, encompassing different scopes in their field of expertise (Pakenham-Walsh & Bukachi, 2009, p.8). The roles of health workers are different and so are their information needs. Soliciting information directly from caregivers can potentially indicate the "wants" on relevant topics where information is desired in their professional practice (McConnell *et al.* 2006, p.51). This way, they are more likely to use health information materials developed in their professional practice than when they are offered materials without their contributions.

### The community caregiver and health education

Community healthcare workers such as caregivers play a crucial role in the South African Public Health Sector. The authors refer to home-based carers as caregivers in this paper. They act as front-liners in providing health information to improve the health of patients in their localities (Cargo & Flores, 2014, p.8). They have contributed extensively to health outcomes in remote areas especially with MCH by providing basic information on Prenatal-Care, Antenatal-Care and Postnatal-Care to women (Medhanyie, Spigt & Kifle 2012, p.2). The authors did not elaborate on the activities of caregivers in this paper as they have been discussed extensively in earlier publications from this research case but highlighted the context of caregivers and opportunities for technology integration in their education and work practice (see Debrah *et al.* 2014, p.96-99; Van Zyl 2014, p.1-7). In this paper, some of the challenges that confront caregivers regarding their information needs desired for health education activities are discussed.

Studies have shown that there are complexities that always confront health professionals such as caregivers in communicating information to patients. Some of these challenges have been outlined by Kreps (2012, p.14) as:

- "Limited, availability and access to relevant health information,
- Lack of sensitivity in the delivery of care,
- Ineffective health education and health promotion programs,
- Poor consumer adherence with health recommendations, and
- Failure to engage in recommended behaviours to help detect and avoid health risks" .

These challenges, among others, slow down the progress of health organisations to achieve global health targets such as the *Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 5*, which aims at improving MCH (United Nations 2012, p.30-38). Evidently, the role of relevant information in minimising these challenges cannot be underestimated. For instance, the challenges with health literacy are compounded by how health information is designed. A well-designed health education and health promotion strategy, facilitated by simplified information without language barriers, could increase the interest of patients in health messages to promote health literacy (Paasche-Orlow *et al.*, 2005:182). As indicated by McConnell *et al.* (2006, p.51), engaging community partners in research processes can facilitate the design of relevant information for effective health education.

Further, the inclusion of users in the design process conveys a sense of ownership and minimises strong resistance to accepting health education interventions, tools and policies (Kreps 2012, p.17). Inclusive design strategies allow data to be obtained directly from end-users, and relinquish power to them in making suggestions which could directly provide solutions to their problems (Holmlid, 2009:2; Mager & Sung 2011, p.1). In this research, the investigators focused on community caregivers as the participants by assessing their challenges with information needs regarding MCH. Thus, the questions underlining this research are:

- How can design strategies be employed to determine information needs of caregivers in the African context?
- What ethical considerations should be factored into the design engagements?

In addressing these questions, service design strategies such as co-design and participatory design were adopted to determine the information needs from the perspective of caregivers.

The co-design methods and ethical considerations followed in this research have been deliberated upon in the subsequent subdivisions of this article.

## Materials and methods

The study was conducted qualitatively using service design strategies. Service design aims at designing from the user's perspective. Service design can be described as a multidisciplinary process that incorporates functionality and the complexity of services by visualising systems "with" the "user" at the heart of the process (Trischler & Zehrer 2012, p.59). The services must be useful, usable and desirable to the user; they must be efficient and effective from the provider's point of view (Mager & Sung, 2011, p.1). Design modalities such as co-design were used to obtain data. The design process began with prior investigations through informal conversations and observations. The adaptation of these methods made it possible to gain insights into the context of caregivers and their challenges with information in their healthcare service delivery.

### The design milieu

The design milieu is situated in the Grabouw community in Western Cape, South Africa. The general public living in this locale are predominantly farmers. The high population ratios in the area put pressure on healthcare and other amenities in the community. Grabouw is confronted with social issues prevalent in similar resource-constrained settings in developing parts of Africa. These include drug abuse, teenage pregnancy and crime (Mendonca & Van Zyl 2014, p.103). Other crucial challenges are in relation to women's health – where there is a lack in educational materials for health education. Caregivers in Grabouw provide additional health education to complement what is offered in major community hospitals (Van Zyl, 2014, p.5). They care for patients in their homes to achieve global health objectives for women and children as stated in *MDG 5* (United Nations, 2012:31-33). Thus, through service design approaches, the researchers explored possibilities of achieving some of these health goals by giving due consideration to design ethics.

### Ethical considerations: human-centred-design perspective

The concept of ethics is defined as the philosophical study of morality (Keller 2009, p.11). Ethics in research terms refer to the moral principles such as the norms and values identified by a research

community to guide a particular research project. The word *ethics* is often used interchangeably with *morality* where morality means ethical behaviour (Keller 2009, p.11; Collins, 2010, p.82). Morality encapsulates what we think is *right or wrong* as moral agents. There are still unanswered questions about the meaning of ethics from the philosophical point of view, many of which seem to be multifaceted.

For instance, the questions about who or what should be counted in ethical deliberations is answered by philosophers from the human-centred perspective that humans are the right subject matter for ethics and rationality is the necessary state to demand ethics. Western traditions and philosophers such as Socrates and Sartre assure that humans are the core of ethical considerations (Keller 2009, p.40).

Further, design is defined as a problem solving activity that is directed at meeting societal needs or creating something new towards the goodness of society. Designers by their professional standards have good intentions in their practice and are expected to be rational in the process of solving problems for social good (Inácio & Gerardo 2006, p.1-3).

However, as design research and practices evolve, humans have become more central in the design process from the pre-design to the post-design phases in the design of products or services (Sanders & Stappers 2014, p.11). The issue about *ethics, value, rigour and accountability* cannot be discounted during the design of solutions to multifaceted problems when humans are the core beneficiaries of the designed solutions. The idea of being ethical in simple words can be said to be “*doing the right things*”, which is accepted by society. Therefore ethical reasoning in design engagements to a large extent, is essential to foster the “*making*” of “*right*” solutions based on “*rationality*” that will benefit end-users. Contrary to these norms and values, the designers’ behaviour is perceived as irrational regarding design ethics (Inácio & Gerardo 2006, p.10).

### Ethical reasoning in co-design

Ethical reasoning in design is a crucial issue that needs to be tackled in creative research whether visual or textual and in contemporary research approaches to protect the actors involved in the creative process. *How then do we define ethics in design?* Porter Stewart states, “*Ethics in other words is knowing the difference between what you have the right to do and what is right to do*” –(as cited in Collins, 2010, p.82). Designers, irrespective of their specialisation in the discipline, have guidelines and codes of ethics that govern their sense of judgement in design which ought to be factored into the design process. However, in design activities where human-centredness is the core of the outcomes, design values, attitudes and beliefs regarding what design-researchers reasonably believe is *right* to do, are significant concerns which ought to be factored into the planning process and brought to decision making during co-design engagements. Some of these ethical considerations include providing informed consent and ensuring that participants are aware of how visual and textual data will be disseminated. In situations where there are observations through audio-visual documentary, images and audio data must be managed and used creditably without compromising ethical norms and values in visual related research (Collins 2010, p.84-85).

### Co-design in practice: Enkratic versus Akrasia in review

The philosophy underpinning these concepts of *enkratic* and *akrasia* is that designers have to behave ethically (Young 2013, p.90-91). Inácio and Gerardo (2006, p.10) assert that “*To be enkratic, one must hold to the rational judgment he performs, i. e., he must rationally choose the good course of action and take it. This is contrary to the akratic behaviour, where the agent, in spite of knowing what the good action is, he chooses something else*”.

For instance, in creative research that employs methods such as service design, designers are likely to use visual data, which include photographs, drawings, audio recording and so on. The right thing to do in such situations is to obtain permission from participants by seeking their “*informed consent*” in order to use visual and textual data in research outcomes (Collins 2010, p.84). When a designer undertakes this ethical process it is perceived as being *enkratic*. On the contrary when a designer knows the right thing to do and acts otherwise, then the designer may be considered as exhibiting



*akrasia*. Further, within the discourse of co-design ethics, designers are seen to be ethical when they design based on what they deem to be *morally right* and not otherwise. Inácio and Gerardo (2006, p.16) have indicated that even though designers are able to be *enkratic* in their actions, not all their actions are perceived to be rational and therefore *in general* they are akratic in almost every action (Young 2013, p.90-91) .

However, if designers integrate their morals into what they intend to do, then in that case they are considered as *enkratic*-designers. In contrast, in situations where designers do not base their judgment and considerations on the same ethical philosophies in line with *enkratic* norms, they are considered to be exhibiting *akrasia*. *Akrasia* is said to be the state when people act against their personal sense of judgment (Coates, 2011, p.329-330). This conflict often occurs in circumstances when designers make decisions based on their personal *opinions* and not *reason*. In such instances, designers are considered as acting against social good – thus being unethical (Young 2013, p.90-91).

The inference is that ethics and accountability must be integral in co-design practice and in particular, design education as a whole. Designers are encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and encouraged to be rational agents. Krippendorf (1998, p.179) notes that even though designers may suffer from *akrasia*, they do not suffer from *amnesia* and are encouraged to decide to be rational in their judgment and decision making regarding ethics (as cited in Inácio & Gerardo 2006, p.16).

### Co-design engagement: reflecting on design ethics

In this study, researchers made attempts to be *enkratic* during design deliberations for the co-design engagement. Adhering to *enkratic* norms, efforts were made to extend ethical considerations into co-design activities *with* the participants. For instance, to be rational agents of design, time had to be effectively managed because the participants in this case were caregivers who have patients to care for daily. In view of this, co-design sessions were spread over a period of two days per session in a manner that would permit them to attend to their patients. Additionally, caregivers signed consent forms during the initial stages of the co-design activities, providing permission for the researchers to engage with them. Explanations regarding the end use of visual and textual data were made known to caregivers involved in the design activities. Participants were not restrained from withdrawing from workshop activities should they find it not comfortable at any point in time. However, most caregivers co-operated very well and actively participated in all the design sessions.

### Designing with caregivers

Design has evolved from *ego-centric* design where solutions are only designed “*for*” customers to socially responsive design which focuses on designing *with* users. Eco-centric design focuses on designing from the perspective of users rather than only designing “*for*” users (Young 2013, p.91). Socially responsive design in a developing context requires expert facilitation. However, designers usually act as facilitators using service design protocols in such contextual explorations to achieve desired goals.

Design could be defined as a process of planning to arrive at outcomes, which may either be a service or a product (Simonsen *et al.* 2014, p.1-2). Previously, designers only focused on product related outcomes with minimal inclusion of the *users* in the design process. Designs were mostly done “*for*” users and not “*with*” users. In recent times, design has become multidisciplinary as a way of tapping into a broad range of expertise to find solutions to *wicked* problems “*with*” or “*for*” users (Trischler & Zehrer, 2012, p.59). Thus, design can be described as a process to solve problems that meets human needs, by empathising with users in order to obtain the necessary user value for the desired solutions (Friedman & Stolterman 2014, p.7-9). As Mager (2006, p.7) indicates, “*good design is connected to good strategy*” and this also applies to products and services.

Service design methods were adopted to engage caregivers through participatory and co-design sessions in this research. In line with this, it was essential for researchers to consider core design concepts such as eco-centric design, to facilitate the probing process with caregivers. Through visual

modalities, caregivers expressed their ideas in the design setting. Using coloured sticky notes and visual probing tools, caregivers shared their experiences with researchers in order to identify topical areas where more information was required for women's health. These were conducted in a suitable *design milieu* with the caregivers at Elgin Learning Foundation – the training centre for caregivers in Grabouw.

### The design milieu and participants

There were approximately 60 caregivers who participated in the co-design sessions. Some of the design activities were conducted directly in the communities where the caregivers lived and worked, whereas subsequent sessions were undertaken at Elgin Learning Foundation. This was done at different intervals in different working groups ranging from 20-25 participants per session. Within each design milieu, there were 4-5 participants in each working team (Figure 1). This way, participants freely shared their thoughts on the various tasks under review (Debrah *et al.* 2014, p.99-100).



Figure 1: Caregivers at work in the design milieu

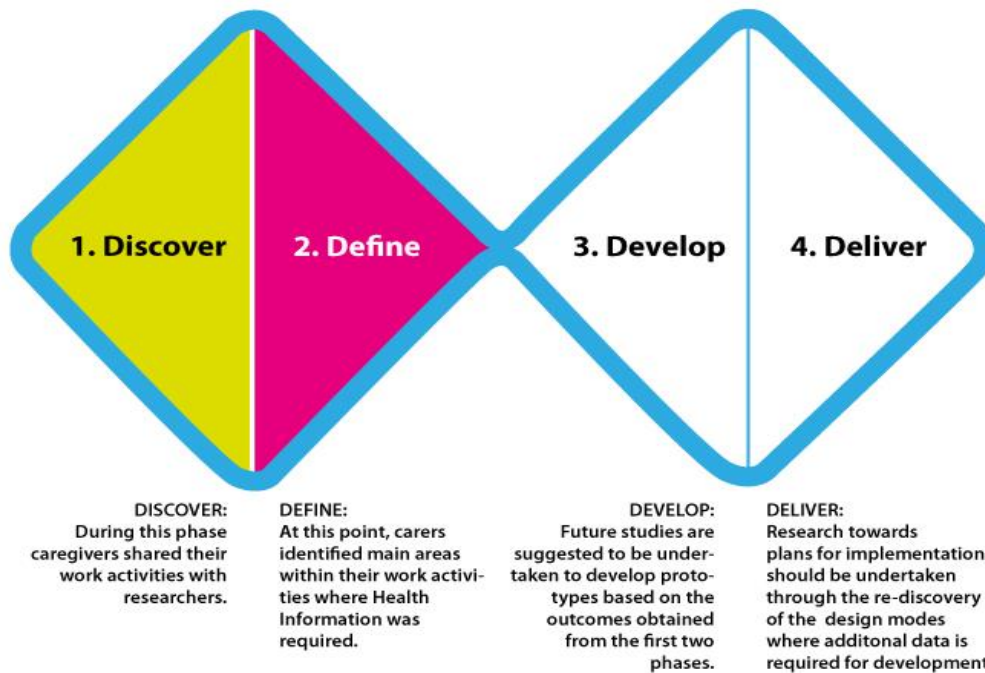
### Materials used for the design sessions

Basic stationery and consumables such as pens, paper, colour pencils, markers, staplers, adhesives and paper clips were the main materials used during design engagements. Projectors were used to facilitate the presentation of the various tasks in the design milieu whereas cameras were used to document activities in the design sessions for record purposes and further interpretation of data obtained (Debrah *et al.* 2014, p.100).

### Design modes

In line with fundamental design procedures, initial research was conducted. This was mainly done through informal conversations and observations. The outcomes provided an understanding of the work activities of the caregivers and served to ascertain where challenges exist with information for health education (Debrah *et al.* 2014, p.99-105). This formed the basis and the starting point of the study. Also, service design processes follow concrete modalities to arrive at outcomes. As identified by the Design Council in the double diamond process, service design process is made up of four phases – Discover, Define, Develop and Deliver (Davies & Wilson 2013, p.6). The study explored through the first half of the double diamond (discovery and defining) iterative process to identify information needs of caregivers (Figure 2).

During these design sessions, caregivers came up with challenges regarding their information needs. After a collective agreement by team members, they indicated some of the topical areas on women's health where information will be required. A vivid description of the content of the messages desired on women's health were noted by caregivers. In some instances, suggestions for accompanying visuals on some of the relevant topics were communicated (see compilation in Table 1). The descriptions mainly covered preventive measures, signs, symptoms and treatment procedures to facilitate communication during health education activities.

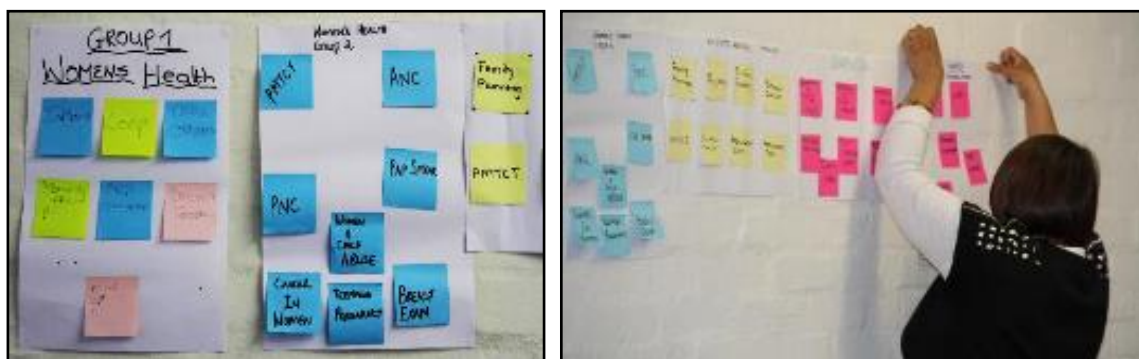


**Figure 2: The double diamond design process (Davies & Wilson, 2013:6), showing phases where data were obtained by researchers in this study.**

## Results

Outcomes presented here are mainly based on the data obtained from the discovery and define stages of the design process during co-design activities (Figure 2). Additional data was obtained through informal conversations and observations in the community in line with ethical principles. The results obtained from design sessions revealed many instances where information was required by caregivers, a few of which are presented for discussion in this article.

The topics were mainly based on the major areas in women’s health as expressed by caregivers during the design sessions. These covered common illnesses, their signs and symptoms, as well as their preventive measures. The topics were then grouped thematically by identifying the various categories, with the classification based on the most recurring topics and suggestions as communicated from the caregivers’ perspective (Figure 3).



**Figure 3 – Thematic clustering of healthcare topics as obtained from Caregivers’ perspective in the design milieu**

### Information needs identified

Most of the desired information for health education indicated by caregivers (Table 1) covered relevant health topics with their relevant description of preventive measures and treatment

procedures. The caregivers explained that due to the limited availability of promotional materials on the said topics, information communication is sometimes challenging during health education. Also, due to the presentation formats of some of the health education materials it becomes uninteresting for patients to appreciate and relate to healthcare instructions. In order to constantly achieve desirable health outcomes, caregivers require relevant information to communicate effectively with their patients. Through health education activities and empowered by technology such as mobile Health (mHealth) initiatives, CHWs could have equitable access to relevant health information to facilitate health education in developing contexts (De la Harpe, Kabaso & Debrah 2014, p.139). It is anticipated that through the availability of relevant information there will be improvement in health behaviour of women to minimise maternal morbidity and mortality in resource-constrained settings. Improved health behaviour, according to Butler (2014, p.42-43), could be realised by acting on and adhering to health information offered through planned, consistent and integrated learning to circumvent health risks.

Health topic	Information in visuals
<b>Antenatal care</b>	Early booking so that mothers can know their HIV test results; How the mother and her unborn baby need to be taken care of; Prepare mother for birth process; Early booking and caring for mother and baby during pregnancy.
<b>Family planning</b>	It is better to plan a family; Different family planning methods, e.g. pill and injection; 2 months injection, 3 months injection, implants for 3 years; How to do the implant, etc.
<b>Breast feeding</b>	Exclusive breastfeeding is very important; How to position the baby during breastfeeding; Such as keeping the baby in a position which is comfortable for the mother.
<b>Road to child health</b>	The need for children to all have cards for immunisation; Vitamin A immunisation, deworming, etc.; Mothers to take children to clinic regularly for examination.
<b>Cervical cancer</b>	The need for women to undertake Pap Smear; To encourage women to go for treatment i.e. between 21-30 years and every 10 years to avoid cervical cancer.
<b>Breast cancer</b>	How to examine the breast; The need for frequent breast examination.
<b>HIV testing</b>	To promote test as it is very important to know your status; Prevention of HIV from mother to child; And preventive methods such as using condoms, etc.
<b>Drug and alcohol abuse</b>	<b>Effect on health and preventive measures.</b>

**Table 1: Health topics that caregivers desire information for patient education**

## Discussion

Health education activities always require information to facilitate the communication process for effective patient education. The engagements with the caregivers revealed areas where information is needed in women's health. The results, as compiled in Table 1, show some of the relevant areas where information is desired by caregivers to facilitate health education. Primarily, the topics obtained from caregivers were mainly related to women's health. These covered crucial areas – before, during and after pregnancy. The carers presented a vivid description of the type of images they desired for each of the topics identified in Table 1. These were mainly basic instructions required for the signs and symptoms in topical areas in MCH. Additional information was based on preventive measures on chronic diseases such as cervical and breast *cancer*.

Furthermore, caregivers presented a vivid description of these information needs and described how it could be developed as visual aids to facilitate communication during health education activities. Results obtained confirmed some of the assertions by Kreps (2012, p.13) that inequalities still persist in health information for communication between privileged and less privileged societies. Other

studies indicate that access to communication and relevant information is one of the several components which are crucial to improving the quality of maternal health education, especially in resource-constrained settings (Noordam *et al.* 2011, p.622). However, constant research to identify information required by community caregivers through design methods – participatory and co-design– are encouraged (McConnell *et al.* 2006, p.51).

Future studies are needed to explore design modalities to discover more sub-categories of the health topics identified in this case study where content is anticipated. The co-creation of sustainable relevant content (visual media) *with* caregivers in each of the desired health topics is suggested as a way to align with design ethics (Carlsson 2010:2-4). Also, the use of mass media messages seem to be eye-catching in areas where there is sufficient coverage. Potentially, it facilitates the communication of healthcare messages to viewers (Althabe *et al.* 2008, p.56). Therefore, the health topics described by caregivers in this research, enabled by ICTs with face-to-face communication, can facilitate health education process between MCH stakeholders for equity in healthcare service delivery.

## Conclusion

Service design processes, such as co-design, are user-centric. The process can create an enabling environment for key stakeholders to be involved in finding solutions to emerging problems. Caregivers were the main participants for this study. Engaging with them using design strategies allowed information needs to be shared with researchers in a very conducive design milieu. Through open participation, some of the fundamental areas where information is required were documented. The use of technology to enable access to information cannot be underestimated. This is because contextualised visually engaging messages in print and electronic media, can facilitate health communication between caregivers and women. Therefore, technology can potentially facilitate access to health information. Besides, relevant instructional materials integrated into participative health education activities could increase health outcomes. Future design research needs to focus on how health education materials should be sustainably designed *with* stakeholders in order to appreciate and act on healthcare instructions. This could lead to improved health behaviour to minimise health perils. This way, caregivers can obtain desired results in their health education activities and help to improve women's health in resource-constrained settings. Regarding design ethics, the authors encourage designers to be *enkritic* in their design activities by reflecting on their essence as moral agents of design and to take action based on *reason* and not only depend on *opinions* during service design engagements and practice.

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## Acknowledgments

We thank INDEHELA ISD4D and University Research Fund (URF) for making it possible to undertake this research. To all staff and students from Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Faculty of Informatics and Design for all their assistance throughout the project. Our heartfelt thanks goes to Elgin Learning Foundation and caregivers who participated in this research work.

# The *Betterness* of Braamfontein

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## Abstract

*In this paper, we argue that the current environmental information system of Braamfontein is problematic as it is ethically unconsidered and overwhelmingly bias towards the interests of commercial stakeholders - over those of the residents, workers, students and visitors. While a business is justified to act in a conceited manner, we believe that information provided to the public in a public space needs to be more utilitarian, servicing the needs of the majority over those of the few.*

*A brief review of current literature pertaining to the thematic concerns of the paper is discussed. These themes include: Experiential Graphic Design (XGD) - as a field of practice; the role of meaning and sense making; the commoditisation of public space; and lastly Umair Haque's economic theory of 'Betterness'.*

*This theoretical review is followed by an analytical framing of Braamfontein as a problem ecology, primarily relating to XGD. The analysis applies the Firma Model, a meta-framework for design research, strategy and critique to holistically frame the problem, and thus identify concerns with the current information environment. Findings are discussed in relation to key concerns raised in the literature. The paper concludes by outlining key concerns evident in the current state of Braamfontein information environment and describes potential approaches for any future design interventions.*

**Keywords:** Information environment, Experiential Graphic Design, place-making, meaning.

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## Introduction

This paper is concerned with identifying an ethical approach to Experiential Graphic Design for urban spaces in Johannesburg. Experiential Graphic Design (XGD) is used in the context of this paper as a noun to include both digital and non-digital visual information systems and related content pertaining to a specific environment.

We will argue that an ethical stance is needed as the current approach to information design for urban spaces in Johannesburg is dominated by commercial enterprises that tend to have their own interests at heart. However, it is not the concern of this paper to critique business or the regeneration of the city but rather to argue that the city as a public space should serve all its residents better. This implies, from an XGD perspective that residents of Johannesburg should have access to information that is *meaningful* to them.

Our argument will introduce a range of theoretical positions that advance the notion of an ethical, altruistic approach to conceiving XGD. The theoretical discussion will be contextualised throughout the paper by referring to an analysis of Braamfontein, a historical suburb and business district of inner-city Johannesburg.

## Methodology

Methods used in this qualitative study include:

- A brief review of current literature pertaining to the thematic concerns of the paper namely Experiential Graphic Design, meaning, the commoditisation of public space, and lastly Umair Haque's economic theory of *Betterness*.



- A concise analytical framing of problems relating to XGD in Braamfontein. This analysis applies the *Firma Model* (Fenn & Hobbs 2015, p. 5): a meta-framework for design research, strategy and critique to holistically frame the problem within Braamfontein. The lenses prescribed by the framework are historical, political, societal, economical, cultural, environmental, the marketplace, the organisation, the users and the legacy of the problem.

The framing of Braamfontein will apply an array of research methods including reviewing literature, internet documents, observation, and generative activities<sup>1</sup> with people in Braamfontein. Both methods of data collection are used in the paper to support the argument that the current state of XGD in Braamfontein is fundamentally unethical in supporting the needs of the few, usually commercial organisations over those of the many - the people.

## Experiential Graphic Design

Experiential Graphic Design (XGC) is the design of immersive information environments to shape experiences that orient, inform, educate and delight users (Dixon 2015). XGD, as used in this paper, denotes the combination of wayfinding<sup>2</sup>, themed or branded spaces, retail design, signage, architectural graphics and various other forms of environmental<sup>3</sup> graphic design through the orchestration of visual aesthetics (typography, colour, form, etc.) and content that serve to create ‘environments that communicate’<sup>4,5</sup> (Dixon 2015).

## ‘Meaning’

David Weinberger in *Everything is Miscellaneous* (2007, p. 169) describes *meaning* as what ultimately ‘gives value to our lives’. Weinberger further explains that the relationships and patterns, people form, between things is what inevitably gives the ‘things of our world their *meaning*’. *Meaning*, if broken down to its core can be understood as the ‘unspoken’ or ‘unsaid’, which is principally what enables the ‘said’. *Meaning* thus provides the context for people to make ‘sense’ of things, of an environment, of their lives (Wendt 2014, p. 136).

Weinberger (2007, p.169) argues that designers, when attempting to communicate and structure information do not necessarily take the context of the *place* into consideration when designing for it. Due to its availability, designers inevitably tend to focus on the spoken, rather than the unspoken and *implicit*. Focusing on the existing manifestations of information and information systems in an environment assumes that previous choices were considered and appropriate. If there is any indication that this is not the case there needs to be an unfurling of the *implicit*, so as to make the explicit known (Weinberger 2007, p. 169).

In order to help reduce people’s disorientation, and to improve understanding and create *meaning*, a sense of *place* needs to be created. Andrea Resmini & Luca Rosati, in *Pervasive Information Architecture* (2011) describe *place-making* as the concept of building a sense of *place*, for continuity and the creation of a recognizable “being there”. In theory, externalising this *meaning* in an urban environment seems simple enough, but in practice the world is a complex place with many subjective interpretations of what is *meaningful* for the people who inhabit it. Understanding a societal context

<sup>1</sup> Generative activities allow for the producing of ideas, insights and concepts (Sanders & Stappers 2012)

<sup>2</sup> Wayfinding design is the systems approach to navigating users in a physical environment.

<sup>3</sup> Environment, in this instance can be understood as ‘the conditions, circumstances, etc. affecting a person’s life’ (Oxford Dictionary 1995, p. 387), a place of surrounding influences and physically bounded systems.

<sup>4</sup> Many ‘branded environments’ are utilizing XGD’s integration approaches to enhance experiences and create more *meaningful* interactions for the users in that place (Dixon 2015, [sp]).

<sup>5</sup> In XGD, the rich interactions between place and user is the result of the integration of different forms of information available in the build environment (Dixon 2015), which can also be understood as *pervasive* information architectures. Whilst many approaches to information architecture (IA) exist, the emphasis of IA in this instance will be on its information design, which is concerned with the ‘static design of large quantities of visual information’ (Resmini & Rosati 2011, p. 24).

is notoriously fraught with disagreement, ill-definition and indeterminacy (Rittel and Webber, pp. 155-169).

## Commoditisation of public space

A 'commodity' can be defined as something that is bought and sold (Oxford Dictionary 1995, p. 228), thus 'commoditisation' entails the culture of buying and selling. In urban regeneration models, the occurrence of commoditisation is a natural result of urban renewal initiatives.

Urban renewal models, which are initiated by various stakeholders, aim to, and are primarily concerned with maximizing economic growth and profits, thus posing an uninformed threat to the mundane needs of the people who occupy the space, but also threaten the historical and cultural heritage of the prescribed area. As Laura Burocco, in her paper, *People's Place in the World Class City: The Case of Braamfontein's Inner City Regeneration Project* (2013) suggests that in urban regeneration, the individual *place* loses its importance and interest is shifted toward an economic, business-centered environment.

Within public space, urban regeneration-driven interactions are shaped by global economic interests, local private and public stakeholders, and that the imposition of the Western urban model is fundamentally 'shaped by a liberal economic ideology, a consumerist culture and a polarized social structure' (cited in Shatkin 2007, p. 4).

In addition, 'attentiveness to urban living on the part of city government has encouraged strategies that aestheticize the city and have been accompanied by an increase in private groups' control over specific public spaces' (cited in Zukin 1998, p. 826). The exacerbation of this dilemma is the result of Public Private Partnership's (PPP's) neoliberalist experimentation by a marginalisation of the old industrial working class by the establishment of the new knowledge class (cited in Shatkin 2007, p. 4; Brenner et al 2010, p. 196).

Burocco (2013) argues that commoditisation and social exclusivity are inextricably linked, city improvement models 'have generated criticism due to their profit-oriented conception of redevelopment through the creation of commodified spaces of elite consumption, the intensified surveillance of public spaces and collateral exclusionary processes' (cited in Didier et al, 2012, p. 2).

## Umair Haque's economic theory of Betterness

In *Betterness Economics for Humans* (2011), Umair Haque argues that economics are founded on negative paradigms. A 'healthy economy', which in Haque's opinion should be criticized, is explained by eighteenth century economist Adam Smith, as an 'invisible hand', which today we understand as 'an economy where self-interested, profit-seeking corporations are free to sell products and services to consumers who are free to buy them, with the happy side effect of maximizing the volume of output'. The current economic paradigm is defined by three industrial age pathologies: *liberalise*, *privatise* and *stabilise* – these, Haque argues, do not maximise economic potential, practically speaking it rather limits human achievement, which creates a stagnant economy.

Haque (2011, p. 10) proposes that we need to redefine the term "healthy economy" and go beyond commerce defined by 'pervasive organisational and managerial disorders'. Haque further speculates, 'what if the great challenge for the enterprise in the twenty-first century is no longer manufacturing the alluring, spot-lit glamour of mass-produced opulence, but cultivating a more authentic plenitude that matters in human terms?' This paradigm is what Haque terms *betterness*.

In spite of this, Haque believes that the status quo does not allow for the unfurling of *betterness* - 'shareholder value creation, mass-production, hierarchical management, and disposable goods are less profitable, useful, worthy, and beneficial than ever' (Haque 2011, p. 12). Business is only one approach to human exchange, which is not user centered, and is also progressively detrimental.

Haque (2011) calls for a rewriting of human-exchange, the 'reimagining of prosperity for the twenty-first century'.

## Framing Braamfontein's information environment

In order to understand the *meaning* inherent in Braamfontein, a contextual framing of the environment was undertaken. The analysis and interpretation of our findings is organised using the *Firma Model*, under a variety of categories used to frame complexity (Fenn & Hobbs 2015) - ranging from the paradigmatic lenses of historical, political and societal, to the more immediate lenses of environmental, economic and cultural, to lastly the contextual lenses of the users, the marketplace, the organisation and the legacy of the problem.

### History

*History*, in this framework is *paradigmatic* in that it serves as the broadest influence amongst society. Johannesburg was founded as a result of the discovery of gold in the Witwatersrand during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, which subsequently drove the development of its first mining settlement (Brodie 2008, p. 34). The 'Gold Rush' was Johannesburg's initial claim to fame as it initiated rapid economic growth within the city, making it a sought after destination, thus thousands of fortune seekers flocked to the gold reef to stake claims in the city's new representation of wealth.

Braamfontein, originally a farm called Braamfontein Township, was established in 1886 as an area strategically brought into existence for living (to house the influx of workers in the other formal mining villages) and working purposes (Burocco 2013, p. 37).

Up until the 1950's, the physical territory of Braamfontein had remained relatively similar, after which the suburb underwent two significant modifications: the first being the relocation of the seat of the City from the Johannesburg CBD to Braamfontein Hill; and the second, the rezoning of land from an initial 5 000m<sup>2</sup> to a much larger 163 000m<sup>2</sup>, which subsequently attracted commercial interest as a result of corporate property developments from the 1950's onwards (Burocco 2013, p. 37). However, in the political climax of the Apartheid years between the 1980's and early 1990's, and afterwards until the mid-2000's, the inner-city of Johannesburg underwent an urban decline. Braamfontein inevitably suffered as the economy eventually crashed, neglecting the area which was once an integral part of Johannesburg's economic system.

Sappi and Liberty, two of Braamfontein largest corporate investors, maintained their headquarters for the duration of the 20 year urban decay, whilst other corporates followed the pattern to decentralisation to the suburbs (Burocco 2013, p. 37). Today, these companies strongly impact the decisions made within the City Improvement District's (CID) redevelopment decision-making.

Over the last decade Braamfontein has become a regenerated living, working, and education spaces, making it a place of consumption and production, characterized by its historical buildings and sites such as Wits University, Constitutional Hill, the Braamfontein Cemetery, the Women's Jail, the Milner Park Hotel, the Joburg Theatre and the Civic Centre.

### Society

Braamfontein is primarily used for commercial, residential and education purposes. Its residents, workers and visitors reflect the general multi-cultural breakdown of South African society. The majority of residents are students, but an emergence of young upwardly mobile residents has also occurred.

### Politics

In terms of Braamfontein's political stance, it is an area that has often contested service delivery inconsistencies. Public and private agencies also strive to maintain strong connections between the

African National Congress (ANC) and its government sectors - whose various headquarters reside within the vicinity.

### **Economics**

In 2004, Braamfontein was branded in a bid to accelerate investment and further enable promotion of the space, as well as to secure current private investments (Sappi and Liberty Life). Along with the branding service, additional cleaning and security has been funded to create a new energy, which has subsequently created an interest amongst investors who are actively involved in purchasing property within the area, thus adding to the vibrancy of the city by opening shops, bars, restaurants and coffee shops.

Braamfontein's wayfinding system, developed in order to help orientate users of the space, is part of the Braamfontein Management District's ongoing branding efforts, which is seemingly speculative in its expectation for inclusivity.

The new imagery marketing strategy being sold to future investors benefits from the ongoing commodification of Braamfontein is a result of the urban renewal model being used in improvement districts worldwide, also known as the 'global city' model, is the result of the strategic identification of a moderately abandoned urban area, with the potential for exponential economic and cultural growth. Pragmatically speaking, this process of reform is undeniably exclusive and acts as an unsustainable mechanism of control that is developed and implemented by various stakeholders to satisfy current and future investors.

### **Culture**

Braamfontein has become a space of entertainment with many individuals (living in and outside of the area) spending their days exploring and enjoying Braamfontein's cultural hot spots. There is a very cosmopolitan street culture evident along Juta Street, says Burocco (2013, p. 54), while segregated along economic lines, it is fairly racially mixed

Other culturally prevalent spaces in Braamfontein include the Civic Centre and Alexander Theatre, Constitutional Hill, Wits Art Museum, Stevenson Gallery, and the Wits Origins Centre, etc. All of these spaces boast a significant amount of public interest.

In terms of its public art, Braamfontein is a node within Johannesburg's 'Cultural Arc', whereby a 'trail' of public art has been created between Newtown, Braamfontein and the Johannesburg Art Gallery (Brodie 2008, p. 95). This initiative had been driven by the JDA in partnership with the Trinity Session (a public art commission), and other artists such as Clive van den Berg – who is well known for the design of his gigantic eland at the corner of Bertha and Ameshoff streets.

### **The Environment**

The technological environment of Braamfontein consists of internet cafés, electronic devices, technology hubs (Tshimologong Precinct), selected access to WiFi, and the increase in the popularity of innovative mobile applications such as Uber and SnapScan.

Within the information environment, there has been an increase in Braamfontein's online cultural presence, there are countless social media sites dedicated to extending the conversation of Braamfontein's cultural significance. Much of the print media (pamphlets, user guides, and information booklets) being circulated around that space is designed for cultural enthusiasts eager to participate in the weekend consumer frenzy.

The physical environment of Braamfontein<sup>6</sup> consists of the Nelson Mandela Bridge, the main connection between the Central Business District, and Newtown. Braamfontein is also known for

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<sup>6</sup> The physical environment of Braamfontein is particularly attractive to private investors in that thousands of people commute to, through, from and around Braamfontein every day.

being a 'gateway' between various parts of the city, such as Hillbrow, which boasts historically significant buildings that have subsequently become derelict, and then on the opposite side, the northern suburbs, which clearly suggest social and spatial disparities. The main landmarks that territorially define Braamfontein are Constitutional Hill, the Nelson Mandela Bridge, the M1 highway, Jan Smuts avenue, and Wits University (Burocco 2013, p. 3).

In and around these landmarks is an array of high-rise buildings and old office blocks, within these buildings reside residential flats, apartments, commercial offices and bottom floor shops – such as coffee shops, restaurants, bars, retail shops and markets.

### The Organisation

*The Organisation*, an immediate area of concern, is, as Fenn & Hobbs (2015) suggest, the culmination of businesses, government organisations and non-profit organisations. 'Researching the organisation includes existing products, services and platforms (a website, for example), relevant processes, people and teams, systems and data, organisational and departmental objectives and strategies, brand, etc.'

Braamfontein is the epitome of the Johannesburg Development Agency (JDA) revitalisation efforts (Brodie 2008, p. 95). The JDA, along with other private and public stakeholders, have invested millions of rands in Braamfontein<sup>7</sup> in order to promote commercial interest in the space.

The section from Juta Street, De Beer Street, Melle Street and Jorissen are managed by public and private investors in an effort to maintain their control of Braamfontein's marketing strategy – enforced by the Braamfontein Management District. Burocco (2013, p. 129) suggests that this is assisting to enhance the perception around the topic of the city's socially transformative continuance – however, how much of this transformation is a consequence of public and private intervention, and how much is a natural evolution of the city? There has been a clear establishment of these organisation's economic interests and goals (Burocco 2013, p. 130) explains that this has become evident since there has been a significant promoting of a homogenous space of consumption, which in some ways contradicts, but corresponds to their idea of development value, which prioritizes exchange value over value of use.

### The Users

Lastly, our choice of selecting the *users* category is quite simple, *the users* are the end-receivers of a product of service. In this case, the user responsible for the 'delivery, administration, or maintenance' of the product or service is not included here, these individuals would be situated in *the organisation* category.

The majority of the users in Braamfontein are students who are primarily responsible for the increase in Braamfontein's residential use (Burocco 2013, p. 123). Most of these students fall into the study, live/study, work/study, or the live/study/work category, and attend either the University of Johannesburg or the University of the Witwatersrand. Other users include individuals who neither study, work nor live in Braamfontein, but visit the city to experience its street culture. The last sets of identified users are those who work, live, or work and live in the space. We can classify these users as: students, the working class, the creative class, and the corporate working class. While there is a definite cohabitating of multiple groups of users, interaction between these groups of users is poor (Burocco 2013, p. 132).

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<sup>7</sup> Private developers in Braamfontein include: South Point, Play Braamfontein and other small businesses, along with Sappi and Liberty Life; and then there are the public developers (who are seldom differentiated from private developers in that they are capable of 'mobilising and managing private resources') which include: Johannesburg Development District (JDA), Urban Genesis-BMD The Braamfontein Management District, the Department of Art Culture and Heritage, Constitutional Hill, and Wits University (Burocco 2013, p. 98).

Burocco (2013, p. 131) highlights that the primary users of Braamfontein are not considered in the planning processes of the marketing strategy. The majority of users within the space are students, however these students cannot afford the exorbitantly priced necessities that are provided by the regeneration initiative (Burocco 2013, p. 134). Another problem faced by students is that private investors are not particularly interested in focusing on students as their target consumers. Essential to this point is that there is a clear differentiation and further widening between the students, the creative class and the corporate class - the *ideal* consumers (Burocco 2013, p. 134). Burocco (2013, p. 120) stresses the issue that if urban regeneration positively affects certain individuals, it must be acknowledged that for other individuals this might not be the case. What results here is the unbalanced ability to enjoy a *meaningful* citizenship.

However, with the issues pertaining to the privatization aside, the increased socialisation of Braamfontein comes with it a new set of complexities, and naturally a new definition of the idea of purpose and *meaning* to the people who exist in the *place*.

### The Marketplace

The *marketplace* are the providers of products and services, and the way in which these products and services are delivered and subsequently experienced (Fenn & Hobbs 2015, p. 5). In the scope of this paper, the *marketplace* can be understood as the existing Experiential Graphic Design (XGD), which, while fractured and non-systemic is the natural competition for any alternative system.

This section comprises an analysis of photographs and observations of Braamfontein's current visual information layer (provided by the *marketplace*) by referring to the previously mentioned discipline of XGD, and its core components<sup>8</sup>: wayfinding and signage, interpretation, and place-making.

In terms of Braamfontein's current visual information layer, there are three very evident visual aesthetic styles, within these styles consist clearly distinguishable types of content. On the one hand it is clear in the style that an emphasis has been made to promote the area as a creative city, whilst the second style indicates the promotion of day-to-day goods and services for the lower-middle income class of Braamfontein, and then the third style, which is visibly concerned with its corporate image.

An example of visual information in Braamfontein is the abundance of guides and maps that have been printed as a result of the increase in traffic through and around the area<sup>9</sup>. Play Braamfontein, the area's main property developers (who reside in the creative precinct of Braamfontein, just off Juta Street) have their own informal map - 'A Guide to Braamfontein'.

In a recent workshop<sup>10</sup>, anonymous participants<sup>11</sup> were tasked with marking the routes and the areas in which they travel and spend the most time. The main information nodes depicted on the map were primarily related to private, commercial places of interest, with the exception of a few select cultural landmarks such as the Wits Art Museum (WAM). The participants mapped out their routes, and their own places of interest (Figure 1). The outcome of this mapping was that the places identified as important by the participants were not shown on the Play Braamfontein map. In fact,

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<sup>8</sup> Wayfinding' consists of visual cues, human-guides, maps, pathways and GPS systems, which are all solutions for creating mental models and maps of an environment (SEGD 2015, p. 5). Signs are conjointly used to orientate and guide people through environments. 'Interpretation' refers to the information of the place and how it tells a story, and subsequently creates *meaning* for the users of that environment (SEGD 2015, p. 15). 'Place-making' is concerned with the creation of a distinguishable, and somewhat original image for a site (SEGD 2015, p. 15). Ensuring that place-making exists within the framework for communication means that the intent of the communication is more than just graphic design, art, interior design, or architecture – which, isn't true place-making (SEGD 2015, p. 15).

<sup>9</sup> However, there is a lack of one clear consistent wayfinding system –both in the formal and informal visual information layer.

<sup>10</sup> The workshop was held in order to gain insights into the everyday users of Braamfontein.

<sup>11</sup> The participants were comprised of students who travel through, socialize, work, or live in Braamfontein.

the participants mapped routes and places that hadn't even been acknowledged by the map designers.



**Figure 1: Photograph of final mapping of routes in Braamfontein (2015)**

If we refer back to XGD's core components: wayfinding and signage, interpretation, and place-making, the Play Braamfontein map strongly associates with commercial places of interest within the creative precinct. It provides a clear guide for users within the creative precinct, but once individuals venture into other parts of Braamfontein, there is little to no information pertaining to possible places of interest.

The images within this section (see Figures 3-15) show the clear formal signage distinction between the different precincts within Braamfontein, and the inadequacies in the overall wayfinding system – which, from our observations is undoubtedly limited.

The wayfinding that exists in Braamfontein is limited, inconsistent and insufficient, which creates a somewhat disjointed trail of navigation, direction and orientation. The information provided on the available formal signage is also inadequate and not necessarily coherent with the information seeking needs of the primary users of Braamfontein, eg. places to eat, get internet access, shops, ATMs, etc.

The forms, media and materials of the signage in Braamfontein vary quite significantly, there's an evident process of form exploration within the corporate and creative precincts, where the signs have been designed in relation to their environmental context (Figure 2 and 13). The location of these signs are also strategically positioned, whereas the signage outside of the creative and corporate precincts are positioned wherever there is free space, and are usually surrounded by various other dilapidated, informal signs. These signs (both formal and informal), their buildings, the neighbourhood trees, and along with public artworks are what essentially navigates, orientates and directs Braamfontein users (Figure 15).



**Figure 2: No clear wayfinding system in one of Braamfontein's busiest areas (the creative precinct). The buildings are used to orientate users (2015).**

The overall place-making (the distinctive image of the area) in Braamfontein lacks the essential framework for clear, consistent communication because of the area's distinguishable branding and inadequate wayfinding efforts within the different precincts. What this inevitably does is that it interferes with the interpretation of the information - the telling of a story, and the *meaning* of the environment to the user.

The users of the space, and their information needs are clearly disregarded by private and public developers, and thus contradicts the idea of creating a 'sense of community', even though this is something that Adam Levy of Play Braamfontein strongly acknowledges as indicated in an interview with Burocco (2013, p. 42). Perhaps developing comprehensive communication strategies for the neighbourhood is not the private developers' responsibility, however, their vision of creating a 'sense of community', which is made apparent through public administration, should be evident in the occupied space and its surrounds (Burocco 2013, p. 42).

The *organisation*<sup>12</sup> of Braamfontein assumes that people travelling within the space will automatically be able to direct themselves without the assistance of some sort of unified, comprehensive wayfinding and signage system. This poses a problem for all three core components of XGD as users of the space may find themselves disorientated, unable to interpret the environment, which would then inevitably cause them to have a less *meaningful* experience of Braamfontein.

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<sup>12</sup> See 'The Organisation'.





Figure 3: The different bus signs on a street pole - one old, and one new (2015)



Figure 5: Wits University wayfinding system - consistent throughout the university (2015)



Figure 6: Generic sign providing orientation and directional information (2015)



Figure 4: Rea Vaya's attempt at a limited wayfinding system, which is scattered in and around Braamfontein (2015)



Figure 7: A much older sign directing users to a place that no longer exists (2015)



Figure 10: Rea Vaya wayfinding in the corporate precinct (Google Maps 2015)



Figure 12: Bottom floor shops with their walls covered in informal signs and advertising (2015)



Figure 13: Branson building, often used by users to orientate themselves (Google Maps 2015)



Figure 11: Ambiguous directional and navigational sign (2015)



Figure 15: Public art along Juta Street - these artworks have subsequently become the orientation, direction and navigation cues for users within Braamfontein. (2015)



Figure 14: Three different types of bus signs (2015)

## The Legacy of the Problem

Over and above our knowledge that Braamfontein is a socially mixed, living, working, and studying urban regenerated social space, the main insights gathered from the above framing are that public and private interests dominate the area by giving preference to commodified spaces, through urban planning and management - or lack thereof. And evidently that there is a current lack of contextual *meaning* of 'new' Braamfontein which is caused by social disparities within public and private space.

The impact of this occurrence on civic engagement is an inconsistent use of information that currently ceases to assist in the guiding and orientation of people in that space, and in which to communicate the historical and cultural value of the suburb. Not to mention that the commodification of the city runs at a cost, private investments are linked to the creation of unequal spaces of consumption that do not necessarily cater for the needs of Braamfontein's users, but instead focuses on the organisation's needs.

The legacy of the problem exists in the conversation surrounding the unethical creation of segregation along economic lines through the misappropriation of necessary information, which inevitably allows for social inequality and misguidance within commodified consumption spaces in Braamfontein.

## Conclusion

In summary, we argue that the current information environment of Braamfontein is problematic as it is ethically unconsidered, and is naturally inclined towards satisfying the interests of commercial stakeholders - ultimately inhibiting socio-economic prosperity.

The economic paradigm of *betterness* divulges in the significance of creating for inclusivity. This perspective, in relation to Braamfontein, is functioning as somewhat of an afterthought, which could inevitably continue the pattern of a systematic socio-economic expansion (urban regeneration), followed by an indefinite period of stagnation.

At the thriving rate in which socialisation is being experienced in Braamfontein, its current erratic information environment is clearly a problem space which requires urgent and mindful attention. Corporates and businesses within the area are justified to act within prescribed grounds, however, we believe that information provided (by the relevant stakeholders) to the public in a public space needs to be more utilitarian, servicing the needs of the majority over those of the few in a more altruistic manner.

This argument is supported through theoretical texts, as well as a case-study that explores the complexities of Braamfontein, and concludes through the use of a visual analysis to demonstrate the inadequacies of the information environment.

To resolve this ethical dilemma, we propose that Braamfontein requires a *meaningful* information system from which users can construct their own sense-making. The creation of this system should involve engagement with all stakeholders, including business and users. In order to design meaningful experiences for the users of Braamfontein, designers must engage with users to identify their experience needs and goals.

Steve Diller, Nathan Shedroff, and Darrel Rhea, in their book *Making Meaning: How Successful Companies Deliver Meaningful Experiences* (2005) provide a framework: the 15 Core Meanings<sup>13</sup> (Figure 16) that is used in identifying appropriate experience goals that support the creation of XGD environments. In this model, meaningful experiences are characterised by fifteen meanings categories, which sit at the core of human values. These needs have been chosen based on their universal significance - in that there is constancy in their relevance (Diller et al 2005). Any future

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13 Marc Hassenzahl (2010, p. 44) *Top 10 Psychological Needs* provides a similar framework.

design interventions that seek to improve the current erratic information environment of Braamfontein could benefit from applying the 15 Core Meanings or the Top 10 Psychological Needs framework in designing XGD for inclusivity and most importantly, betterness.

## THE 15 CORE MEANINGS

### Accomplishment

Achieving goals and making something of oneself; a sense of satisfaction that can result from productivity, focus, talent, or status.

### Beauty

The appreciation of qualities that give pleasure to the senses or spirit. Of course beauty is in the eye of the beholder and thus highly subjective, but our desire for it is ubiquitous.

### Community

A sense of unity with others around us and a general connection with other human beings.

### Creation

The sense of having produced something new and original, and in so doing, to have made a lasting contribution.

### Duty

The willing application of oneself to a responsibility. The military in any country counts on the power of this meaning, as do most employers.

### Enlightenment

Clear understanding through logic or inspiration. This experience is not limited to those who meditate and fast.

### Freedom

The sense of living without unwanted constraints. This experience often plays tug-of-war with the desire for security; more of one tends to decrease the other.

### Harmony

The balanced and pleasing relationship of parts to a whole, whether in nature, society, or an individual. When we seek a work/life balance, we are in pursuit of harmony.

### Justice

The assurance of equitable and unbiased treatment. This is the sense of fairness and equality that underlies our concept of "everyman" or Average Joe.

### Oneness

A sense of unity with everything around us. It is what some seek from the practice of spirituality and what others expect from a good tequila.

### Redemption

Atonement or deliverance from past failure or decline. Though this might seem to stem from negative experiences, the impact of the redemptive experience is highly positive.

### Security

The freedom from worry about loss. This experience has been a cornerstone of civilization but in the U.S. in particular, acquired increased meaning and relevance after 9/11.

### Truth

A commitment to honesty and integrity. This experience plays an important role in most personal, professional, and brand relationships.

### Validation

The recognition of oneself as a valued individual worthy of respect. Every externally branded piece of clothing counts on the attraction of this meaningful experience.

### Wonder

Awe in the presence of a creation beyond one's understanding. While this might sound mystical and unattainable, consider the wonder that Las Vegas hotels create simply through plaster and lights.

Figure 16: *The 15 Core Meanings* (Shedroff 2010)

Ideally, this problem framing and resolution will form part of the basis within which a design solution will be facilitated by the authors. This solution will be steered towards the creation of a cross channel approach used to align the information needs of the users of the space with the interests of the public and private stakeholders within Braamfontein. Future research in this topic by the authors will be a continuation of certain particulars within this paper.

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# Re-representation: Addressing objectifying media portrayals of women in South Africa

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## Abstract

*Objectification imparts harm to women and sets a detrimental precedent for self-objectification. This is particularly true for young women who are seeking information to assist them in the process of identity construction. Experimental studies indicate that objectification in media causes negative body esteem, an unnecessary drive for thinness, eating disorders and related psychological problems. Globalised media trends emphasise and value women for their physical appearance. These trends de-personalise women, depict them as objects to be gazed at, and style them as decorative, rather than a person with a mind, aptitude, intellect, personality and a 'voice'. This often results in a situation where value judgements of women's physical appearance are made by women for women, and by others based on narrow definitions of beauty, including body type and shape, youthfulness and 'sexiness'.*

*Objectification has become so pervasive that it is the de facto design for a range of products such as cosmetics, perfume, and slimming products. The inherent medical danger of objectification and self-objectification, and the negative social outcomes, compel us to ask whether one should actively, (especially when knowing the harm it causes), participate in objectification design. Designers, by nature of their profession, use puffery, exaggeration, idealisation and prettification to present a product in the best manner possible to potential consumers. Whilst advertising regulation allows puffery as a legitimate marketing practice, objectified images have a hedonic appeal with potential long-term harmful effect on young viewers.*

*This paper is a theoretical study that looks at objectification and its practice through a feminist-ethical lens and questions the value of this design trend given its associated harm and poor communication effect, particularly in light of several calls for a more ethical and responsible visual communications practice. Extensive research is available on the negative portrayal of women in media – this contribution aims to extend the topic by highlighting alternate constructive approaches for media designers to consider. We recommend a contextually sensitive design approach that include responsible and critical practice for society; that do not exploit vulnerable consumers; that avoid exaggerated claims (puffery); that work toward content and meaning rather than 'prettifying up'; and that break dichotomies through diversification of masculine/feminine, beautiful/ugly. Designers should critically re-evaluate objectification design, and consider alternative ethical design strategies to market products to young women. The aim of this paper is to create an awareness amongst design community about the destructive potential of objectification design, to re-instil the importance of designing with social responsibility in mind.*

**Keywords:** objectification; visual communication; women; ethics; representation

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## Orientation

Portraying women as sexual or beauty objects is global and a widespread media practice. It is where the media use women as an object, or part of their bodies as an object to decorate a consumer item or to promote an idea. Objectification provides a visual scaffold and disregards the intellect, abilities,

the 'voice' and individuality of the objectified. These portrayals include actions where models touch themselves in suggestive manners; where men are portrayed as active, and women as passive and submissive sexual or beauty objects for visual pleasure; to roles where women are portrayed as objects of sexual violence (Economou 2013). Objectification is not the mere explicit sexual portrayal of a model promoting a product, it is determined inter alia, by a number of variables such as the facial expression by a model, the emphasis of the camera angle on a body part, and even the way a model wears make-up. A model does not have to be scantily-clad to become an objectified image. A fully-clothed model with a sexually suggestive pose, for example, could qualify as being an objectified image (Stankiewicz and Rosselli 2008). Although objectification has bearing on both genders, we have delimited the scope of objectification to women due to the focus of this paper. Portrayals also tend to emphasise youthfulness, idealised facial features and body shape, and reproduce narrow and idealised notions of beauty. These images are by and large enhanced through digital manipulation.

Objectification imparts harm to women by assigning them to a subjugated position, trivializes sexual violence and sets a detrimental precedent for self-objectification. This self-objectification process emanates from Fredrickson and Roberts's (1997) Objectification Theory and posits that people internalise the objectifying gaze (self-objectification). The result is that they become unhappy about aspects of their own body. This unhappiness in turn causes them to experience anxiety and shame because they do not meet the ideals set by the media. Self-objectification in addition, contributes to feelings of inadequacy, cause victims to become alienated from their own internal cues, and trigger victims' preoccupation with self-surveillance leading to depression (Fredrickson and Roberts 1997; Moradi and Huang 2008). Internalization of beauty ideals can be described as the degree to which societal (and media) norms of appearance become the standard by which women or girls measure their own appearance (Vandenbosch and Eggermont 2012). Not only has self-objectification been linked to negative mental and physical health risks, including body shame, anxiety, depression, sexual dysfunction and eating disorders, exposure to objectifying media has been identified as predictors for self-objectification (Slater and Tiggemann 2014, p. 2; Fardouly et al. 2014).

Upholding an (unrealistic) ideal slim figure and the pursuit thereof is one of the major reasons for eating disorders amongst young women (Hawkins et al. 2004; Fredrickson and Roberts 1997). Eating disorders and unhappiness with one's appearance and weight has permeated even the body image perception of school children. A large survey in the Netherlands for example (Bun et al. 2011), obtained the body mass index (BMI) and the body image perception of 10 767 primary and secondary school children. What is revealing is that 27.5% of 2 097 secondary school girls with a normal BMI regarded themselves as too fat. This became somewhat less in the primary school, where 6.9% of 2083 girls with a normal BMI index regarded themselves as too fat. In South Africa, it is significant that young black women are increasingly pressurised to conform to Western beauty ideals of slenderness in contrast to African cultural ideals that value plumpness as a sign of beauty, fertility and prosperity (Morris and Szabo 2013; Ogana and Ojong 2012).

It is not surprising that a person will experience anxiety and shame when confronted with objectified imagery. Most women and young girls will not be able to achieve the unrealistic and medically unhealthy ideals set by objectified images. Apart from the slenderness and specific body shape of models used in media representations, features, complexion, youthfulness and sexiness are additional beauty ideals endorsed and normalised via repeated representation in the media. Internalising media's prevailing beauty ideals and working towards achieving these, i.e. 'being beautiful', has become an accepted part of what 'being a woman' means today (Vandenbosch and Eggermont 2012 Lazar 2011).

We posit that the media by and large portray idealised models in objectified imagery; that these models project a medically irresponsible BMI, and 'perfect', idealised and/or digitally manipulated complexions and features; that this ideal is unrealistic and unattainable for most healthy persons; and that the internalisation and pursuance thereof will invariably lead to health and psychological problems. Apart from the negative effect of objectified images on some viewers, we can rightfully

ask whether sexualised images are effective variables in marketing endeavours. Whilst we acknowledge that suggestive imagery, through its arousal effect on men, does attract attention (LaTour 1990; Bongiorno, Bain and Haslam 2013) and that objectification is a standard marketing practice for some products, the question about its value as an effective marketing communication agent still remains. Evidence from a number of experimental studies indicates that objectification may not be that affective, in particular when marketing products to women (Bongiorno et al. 2013). In addition, a study in Australia conducted amongst students, reports a desire amongst consumers for more diverse and average size body media depictions in addition to general dissatisfaction with women being largely valued for their appearance (Diedrichs, Lee, and Kelly 2011).

It is against this background, and the reality of this entrenched design trend, that we evaluate the notion of objectification and its practice through a feminist-ethical lens. Given that objectified imagery imparts harm to young women, and that its communication value is questionable, we are confronted with pragmatic and ethical reservation in terms of design and design education, particularly considering the call for a more ethical and responsible visual communications practice. We aim to create awareness in the design community as to the destructive potential of objectification design, to re-emphasise the importance of socially responsible design and design education, and to suggest a contextually sensitive design approach for the responsible portrayal of women that seeks to instil a sense of gender equality and respect in society.

As design educators we use a dual-authored feminist-ethical approach in this qualitative study, blending theoretical findings from local and international sources in a range of disciplines, including media and marketing studies, visual communication, feminism, philosophy and psychology. We recognise that the media in South Africa are affected by globalising influences, as such validating our use of international sources within our local context, in combination with localised studies.

In what follows, we explore how the objectification as a theoretical construct, with gender implications has been understood by Feminist studies.

## Feminist conceptions of objectification

The concept of objectification is key to the work of contemporary feminist theory, and simply put, involves treating a person (woman) as an *object* (Papadaki 2010, p. 16, emphasis in original). For McKinnon and Dworkin, who write as anti-pornography feminist activists, when a woman is objectified, she is reduced to a 'thing' and her humanity is seriously harmed. These feminists relate objectification to the removal of rational capacity, autonomy and subjectivity – as such, objectified women exist solely to be used and are in great danger of being violated and abused (Papadaki 2010, p. 21). Nussbaum, a feminist philosopher, highlights the notion of 'instrumentality' as the core of McKinnon and Dworkin's conceptions and supports their ideas, indicating that treatment of people as instruments for others' purposes is most always morally problematic (Nussbaum 1995, p. 286). Nussbaum expands on the idea of objectification, outlining seven ways in which a person can be seen or treated as an object (Nussbaum 1995, p. 257; Padakadi 2014):

1. Instrumentality: the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;
2. Denial of autonomy: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;
3. Inertness: the treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also inactivity;
4. Fungibility: the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;
5. Violability: the treatment of a person as lacking in boundary-integrity;
6. Ownership: the treatment of a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold) and
7. Denial of subjectivity: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.



Langton (2009, pp. 228-229) later expands Nussbaum's list, adding:

8. Reduction to body: the treatment of a person as identified with their body, or body parts;
9. Reduction to appearance: the treatment of a person primarily in terms of how they look, or how they appear to the senses;
10. Silencing: the treatment of a person as if they are silent, lacking the capacity to speak.

Nussbaum's view on objectification is not as narrowly focused as McKinnon and Dworkin. She believes that 'objectification' may occur in benign ways and may not necessarily always involve destructive consequences (Nussbaum 1995, p. 273) For example, Nussbaum explains that when she uses her lover's stomach as a pillow while lying in bed, it is not difficult to see that this type of instrumentality ('objectification') is not necessarily harmful, as it occurs within the context of a loving relationship where there is consent, or in the case of her lover being asleep, at least implied consent (Nussbaum 1995, p. 273, 265). The context of the loving relationship provides an understanding that the individual is not being treated as purely instrumental, but that additional dimensions and variations, other than that of subject-object, exist within the relationship. In this way, Nussbaum highlights the possibility for some form of positive 'objectification' and indicates that it can occur in contexts where equality, respect and consent are present (Nussbaum 1995, p. 251). Papadaki (2010, p. 28) finds Dworkin and McKinnon's conception too narrow and Nussbaum's list too broad to describe adequately the concept of objectification. Several activities in everyday life involve treating people instrumentally, which does not necessarily lead to harm, for example our interactions with taxi drivers, bus drivers, waiters, till operators and with even with our partners. Context needs to be considered as integral in order to delineate adequately objectification as a harmful practice, which for Papadaki (and Nussbaum) occurs when the person's humanity is undermined. Within the context of 'morally safe' relationships, where equality and respect for one another are present, humanity cannot be denied. Therefore Papadaki (2010, p. 32, 35-36) provides an adaptation of Nussbaum's definition:

Objectification is seeing and/or treating a person as an object (seeing and/or treating them in one or more of these seven ways: as an instrument, inert, fungible, violable, owned, denied autonomy, denied subjectivity), in such a way that denies this person's humanity. A person's humanity is denied when it is ignored/not properly acknowledged and/or when it is in some way harmed.

In terms of the theme of this conference, the focus of this paper permits us to define objectification from a design and ethics perspective as follows:

Objectification in design is an unethical process whereby a designer deliberately or unintentionally visually represents another person, and in particular women, in ways where mutual equality and respect are not evident and subjectivity and humanity is denied, constituting the person's role instrumentally as solely for visual pleasure and for sexual gratification of a consumer market and/or for commercial advantage of a third party.

## Feminist conceptions of beauty objectification

The conception and portrayal of women as beauty objects – as objects to be gazed at, and for visual pleasure, has been widely documented. Historically, 'beauty' and feminism have shared an uneasy, sometimes even antagonistic, relationship. In the United States, as early as 1914, as part of the First Wave Feminist Movement, "the right to ignore fashion" was included as a right to ensure women's freedom and equality (Murnen and Seabrook 2012, p. 438). Second Wave feminism, from the 1960s onwards, earnestly began to question the socialised role of women's bodies and that of accompanying beauty practices in limiting their life experience. Many remember Second Wave feminism in relation to anti-beauty pageant protests theatrics: such as "crowning a sheep Miss America and throwing 'oppressive' gender artifacts, such as bras, girdles, false eyelashes, high heels,

and makeup, into a trash can in front of reporters” (Krolokke and Sorenson 2006, p. 8). Radical feminists such as Dworkin, McKinnon, and Rich, question and protest the notion that women are required to ‘improve’ their bodies and incessantly work towards achieving societal norms of beauty, referring to ‘beauty work’ such as the elimination of body hair, wearing makeup, conforming to fashion standards, and dieting (Murnen and Seabrook 2012, p. 438). Expanding on this concept, Brownmiller (in 1984) draws attention to the differences between men and women’s relationships regarding their appearance and bodily behaviour, and exposes these as relating to patriarchal structures of dominance and submission. While men’s fashion during the industrial revolution becomes more functional and adaptive to encourage freedom of movement, women’s fashion remains restrictive and either hide or emphasise sexualised body parts, as such enforcing women’s position as submissive sex objects (Murnen and Seabrook 2012, p. 438). Similar arguments regarding women’s subjugated position in society and the feminised body have been raised. In her acclaimed book *Unbearable Weight, Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body*, Bordo (1993) emphasises the unrealistic thin ideal of beauty portrayals as detrimental to women’s self-concept and as perpetuating serious physical and mental health risks (in Murnen & Seabrook 2012, p. 438). Bartky (1990, p. 66-82), a postmodern theorist combining gender studies and philosophy, draws on the Foucault’s conceptions to demonstrate how women’s bodies are ‘disciplined’ by culture through beauty practices. Women internalise the idealised beauty portrayals in media and these become the measure by which women constantly ‘police’ – monitor and regulate, their appearance and behaviour. Women learn to see themselves as objects, through the eyes of an “anonymous patriarchal Other”, as objects to be gazed at and as ‘decorative’ for men’s visual pleasure (Bartky 1990, p. 72). In this way, women are constituted as docile bodies that are “controlled and disciplined in accord with prevailing sociocultural discourses of attractiveness”, invoking the concept of gaze theory (Tyner and Ogle 2007, p. 77):

Key here is the notion that docile bodies engage in a perpetual surveillance process, in which they monitor the physical self for fit with cultural ideals and invoke disciplinary practices (e.g., diet and exercise regimens, beauty and health care procedures, wearing of fashionable clothing) to manipulate the body to conform to the given ideal.

Bartky (1990, p. 69-74) outlines the ways in which beauty objectification is harmful: the practices socially inscribe the feminine gendered body as needing to be smaller (thinner) and more restrictive in its occupation of space and range of movement than men’s, and as needing to be visually pleasing (decorative) and sexually appealing (women’s faces should not show any signs of deep thought or wear). Cultural beauty standards direct women to keep their skin soft, smooth, wrinkle and blemish-free, relating to the infantilisation of women’s bodies and faces (Bartky 1990, p. 71-73). Ultimately these beauty practices, as socially inscribed ‘disciplining’, support patriarchal notions of women’s submissiveness to men (Bartky 1990, p. 74). Feminist authors, Faludi (1991) and Wolf (1991) have similarly criticised social and cultural ideals of female beauty for fostering discourses about woman’s bodies that encourage unrealistic and narrow definitions of beauty defined as slenderness and youthfulness, and for promoting the idea that “a woman’s physical appearance is an appropriate measure of her social worth” (Tyner and Ogle 2007, p. 76).

Currently, these types of feminist beauty criticisms are arguably considered ‘out-dated’. Many young women today do not necessarily want to be associated with feminism due to a perceived link between feminism and ‘anti-beauty’ or ‘anti-feminine’ appearance. A ‘postfeminist’ sentiment is popularised in consumer culture, under the assumption that women have indeed gained equality and freedom, and young women are expressing this “with a celebration of all things feminine, including the desire for self-aestheticisation” (Lazar 2006, p. 505). Radical and Second Wave Feminism’s so called anti-beauty advocacies seem no longer relevant to many young women. It is within this context that Third Wave Feminism has emerged, gaining ground from the 1990s onwards, and, influenced by postmodern and postcolonial conceptions of individuality and concerns for diversity, adopts an inclusive attitude that advocates for individual woman’s right to choose and avoids categorical thinking. The Third Wave feminist movement, as such, becomes a splintering of diverse

variations of more personal feminist approaches, of which many embrace beauty and sexual displays, symbols that older feminists consider inextricably linked to male oppression. Third Wave 'Lipstick Feminists' such as 'Pinkfloor', 'Grrrls' and 'Riotgirls' position themselves as sex and beauty subjects rather than objects – claiming power by appropriating terms such as 'slut' and 'bitch', with the aim to subvert and neutralise these weapons of patriarchy using mimicry and irony (Krolloke and Sorensen 2006, p. 17). What is concerning for us, is that the critique within these uninhibited sexual and beauty displays may go unnoticed for contextually unaware or uninformed audiences, or that the critique may become diluted if the cycle of mimicry continues.

This current embrace of sexual and beauty display as empowering has not gone uncontested. Within current feminist theory, there are still strong currents of criticism against beauty idealisation, which exist alongside neoliberal, Third Wave or 'post-feminist' embrace of beauty and sexiness. Jeffreys (2005, p. 28-29), a British feminist scholar, condemns beauty practices, including cosmetic surgery, as harmful cultural practices which are detrimental to women's health, constituting gender performance for men's benefit, which serve to reproduce gender stereotypes. The 'pornification' of culture, together with the neoliberal postmodern and 'post-feminist' ideas of 'choice' and sexual freedom, are criticised for having paved the way for extreme body modification beauty practices, such as breast implants, and have popularised exaggerated display of sexual objectification and self-objectification for women (Jeffreys 2005, p. 67, 77-78).

There seems to be no easy way for women to negotiate this current socio-cultural environment that concurrently condemns and celebrates women's beauty and sexual expression (which as we argue can constitute sexual objectification). Women and young girls are faced with an impossible range of diverse, and often competing ideologies to navigate in daily life regarding their appearance and bodies. As authors, we acknowledge that the expression of sexuality, and rightly so, is an integral part of society and culture. In fact we delight in the notion that women today have more freedom to express themselves confidently and in more diverse ways than what past conservative histories have allowed, including their right to be beautiful and sexually attractive. Nevertheless, we criticize the cumulative effect of a system of media images that emphasize womanhood as being necessarily appearance-based and sexual, and as false empowerment. We contend that objectifying sexualised images of women have in no small measure been encouraged by neoliberal and capitalist profit-making interests and serve to reinforce gender inequality and sexism.

## Visual Communication strategies to avoid objectification

From within the discipline of graphic design, the pervasiveness of objectifying portrayals has not necessarily met with enough scrutiny, but has neither been ignored. Barnard (2013), Berger (2003), Heller (2000), Jobling and Crowley (1996), Roberts (2006) and Sparke (1995), amongst others, have drawn attention to issues regarding gender and sexuality in design and graphic design. Amongst a call for a variety of social and environmental concerns to be foregrounded in graphic design, Berman (2009) focuses on the visual representation of women in *Do Good Design*. "The most familiar approach taken by designers who want to help sell more stuff is the misleading and manipulative coupling of sexy bodies with products", Berman (2009, p. 73-74) comments critically and asks, "what unreasonable expectations are we burying in the messages that we give our daughters today regarding the composition and use of their bodies?". The question that remains, and one that we attempt to answer in what follows below, is: what can we as graphic designers and as educators do to remedy the situation?

If we consider, as Nussbaum and other feminist do, that relationships or contexts of mutual equality and respect, where humanity is not denied, provide the key for defining approaches as non-objectifying, we may ask ourselves: how can we translate this idea within the limitations that visual media offers? This is complicated for a number of reasons. Images are only representations of real people, so by nature images involve a type of material objectification. In addition, static visual images, such as photographs in print media, 'capture' a model for a single moment in time, and as

such tend to represent narrowly a limited version of 'personhood' within a freeze frame moment. While women in everyday life may have opportunities to express their sexuality and physical attractiveness alongside their many other qualities, skills and cognitive abilities, this is complicated with media images. Media representations have to get an idea across to a viewer in a relatively short time and space, and often, and unfortunately so, rely on 'visual shorthand', common generalisations, and stereotyping. Relationships in real life are fostered through personal interactions that usually occur over time and through a variety of different experiences, and thus exist as complex and diverse understandings of, and between people. The context of 'relationship' becomes complicated within image configurations. There are many implied relationship possibilities within visual representations, for example the relationships between people or groups of people within an image frame or representation, as well as, and perhaps more relevant, the relationship between the model(s) represented in the image and the viewer(s) or consumer(s) of the image (see Mulvey, 2006) for an discussion on 'relationships' generated via 'looking' within cinema). These relationship configurations function as imaginative constructions and cannot necessarily involve Nussbaum's ideal context of mutual equality and respect and support of humanity. In fact, it is often this escapism from the real that make these media images so very appealing and lucrative for the consumer markets. Generalising, when we consider South Africa's patriarchal society and its reputation of violence against women, it does not generate much confidence for mutual equality and respectful relationships to exist potentially between media representations of women and a collective patriarchal 'other'. Within the current context, we remain pessimistic about the possibility of representing any generalised notions of women's attractiveness, beauty and sexual desirability in consumer media, without constituting these images as objectifying. Sensitive to the feminist conception of objectification and to the inherent challenges that visual media brings, we cannot recommend any essentially failsafe design strategies. We nonetheless recommend a contextually sensitive design approach and suggest a personal self-implicating ethical approach for designers and design educators.

This contextually sensitive design approach, proposes the following:

- Design must start disassociating women's bodies and sexuality away from consumer products and services. We must endeavour to reverse consumer commodification of female sexuality (see Posel 2004 regarding consumer commodification of women in South Africa).
- Design must become more reflective of reality and of real and diverse women, rather than prescribing ideals for feminine beauty and sexual attractiveness according to narrow and generalised stereotypic norms. Creative potentials need not to be lost, but certainly should shift the focus away from the dematerialisation of feminine beauty (that has reached the point of simulated fiction through digital editing techniques) towards more realistic and diverse portrayals.
- We must critically re-consider how the current use of 'accepted' digital techniques, including cropping and digital manipulating, does harm by drawing away from reality and humanity (see Borgenson & Schroeder (2004, p. 14) regarding the relationship between cropping techniques and objectification).
- We must not exploit vulnerable consumers. Young women, seeking information to assist them in identity construction at a transitional stage in their lives, progressing from childhood into adulthood, are a particularly vulnerable group. These girls are particularly susceptible to idealised, attractive and sexualised media images. South Africa as a young developing democracy, remains in a state of identity flux, with many diverse 'displaced' and transitional identities (Wasserman and Jacobs 2003, p. 15), that may be potentially vulnerable to media images as examples to model behaviour and appearance.
- Design must avoid the mimicry of globalised media trends. Copying this trend and stereotyping women is not a constructive strategy. Generalised media images that follow globalised norms, do not speak to the realities in South Africa, do not reflect the diverse and unique qualities of women in South Africa and has the destructive power to alienate what is local, unique and relevant.

- Design needs to shift focus onto content, communication and meaning-making as primary over surface and style. As designers, we should rethink the way that they portray women, given that messages in images influence society's understanding and perceptions of women. Here, the role of consumer images play to "produce meaning outside the realm of the promoted product or service" must be acknowledged (Borgenson & Schroeder 2004, p. 1).
- Design education must continue to emphasise and critically engage with cultural and visual theory and meaning-making as primary over aesthetics and style. One must guard against using 'dominant semiotics' i.e. one must guard against "grounding what categories, characteristics, or individual signs can mean within the dominant culture" (Borgenson & Schroeder 2004, p. 6).
- We should consider more nuanced and representative meanings and associations that heed against stereotyped representations that perpetuate ideological dichotomies. This is particularly relevant in the complex South African context.
- Lastly and fundamental within design ethics is the concept of sensitising, generating a deep personal awareness and a personal transformation process. Key to this is an emphasis on the role of graphic design as potentially constructive or destructive within the world, as Berman (2009, p.1) states:
 

Designers have an essential social responsibility because design is at the core of the world's largest challenges... and solutions. Designers create so much of the world we live in, the things we consume, and the expectations we seek to fulfil. They shape what we see, what we use, and what we waste. Designers have enormous power to influence how we engage our world, and how we envision our future.

In addition to the nine-point general approach to objectification, we propose a personal self-implicating ethical approach. This self-regulatory ethical design process, based on the ideas by Berman (2009), the work of Nussbaum (1995) and Langton (2009) is as follows:

Will I allow another designer to project myself or part of myself in a visual communication medium when I am portrayed as:

- A person without intellect, self-worth, determination and autonomy?
- A person worth less than a consumer product?
- A person without any standards and moral values?
- A person that is available to the highest bidder?
- A person that others may use for their sexual gratification?
- A person that has no value, one that may not speak and only be seen and utilised?

## Conclusion

Our aim has been to evaluate critically and discuss the notion of objectification, as a theoretical feminist construct and as a design practice, in order to generate an awareness within the design education community regarding the destructiveness of objectification design.

Objectification design is a widespread and harmful practice that assigns women to a subjugated position, promotes negative self-perception, and is linked to a variety of mental and physical health risks. The notion of objectification as a theoretical construct through a feminist lens, led us to define objectification, from a design and ethical perspective, as (reiterating and simplifying our earlier definition): an unethical process whereby a person's subjectivity and humanity is denied, and their role is constituted as for visual and sexual gratification of a consumer market and/or for commercial advantage of a third party.

Second Wave feminist conceptions of beauty practices as a 'disciplining' the body, as disempowering and linked with patriarchal discourse, contrasts more recent Third Wave conceptions of beauty and sexual display, arguably as personal freedom and choice within a postfeminist context. Reviewing the inherent material deficiencies of media images to constitute women as multi-dimensional diverse and real, we propose that designers and design educators adopt a self-critical and contextually

sensitive design approach, a position that may assist to empower them to work ethically and represent women in more constructive ways.

What we do not know, and what requires some investigation, is the position and willingness of South African design lecturers to teach ethics in terms of objectification. Addressing objectifying media portrayals of women in South Africa may not be that simple, as this has become part of our media culture. Nevertheless, designers and design educators could address this problem at a personal level and take active steps to work towards visual meaning-making that aspires to meet the needs of society and culture in a more constructive way.

We hope that the proposed contextually sensitive design approach to design and objectification, and the self-implicating ethical process, may provide some guidance to designers and design educators when confronted with objectification in their work.

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# Paying it forward: Practicing Scholarship of Engagement in Design Education

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## Abstract

*This paper reports on a project named Platform 6, which was designed to facilitate teacher development and thereby to develop teachers as scholars. Initiated within the context of Boyer's Scholarship of Engagement (1991), Platform 6 is a training programme and awareness drive devised for secondary school design teachers on the pedagogy of teaching design thinking and practice.*

*The exploratory first leg of Platform 6 was limited to a sample of National Senior Certificate (NSC) schools in the Western Cape. Qualitative-exploratory research methodology was employed to gain real world insight about the teaching and learning environment of design teachers in South Africa. It was useful to understand the dynamics of design teaching in grades 10 to 12 in Western Cape schools.*

*Emergent central themes are that Design still receives poor recognition at secondary (high school) level, is undervalued, and the subject is stereotyped and consequently not always well supported. The most notable theme is the belief that design is a 'soft subject' for those 'creative learners that struggle with more challenging academic subjects' such as mathematics, science and biology. Although design teachers share a positive, constructive and impassioned approach to design teaching, they (for the most part) have not benefitted from professional developments in design teaching. Higher Education Institutions cannot ignore this need and as scholars of community engagement, Private Higher Education (PHE) is also obligated to contribute knowledge by paying teaching skills and knowledge forward.*

**Keywords:** Design Education, Design Thinking, Design Curriculum, Design Teacher training programme.

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## Introduction

### Questions regarding Design Education in South African Schools

Reasons for the majority of South African schools' underperformance make for constant debate not only in the educational sphere but also in society at large. While the blame is generally laid on inadequate education resources and expertise (Modisaotsile 2012, p.72), some voices ask the very relevant question: might it not be because teachers themselves are confronted by subject-specific challenges in the teaching and learning environment? Considering this as a historical dilemma, who needs to contribute to reparation? Albertyn & Daniels (in Bitzer 2009, p.410) argue that in a bigger context of community engagement it is morally responsible and necessary for any Higher Education (HE) institution to contribute constructively to the global knowledge society.

In the discipline of Design the issue manifests at secondary (high school) level where design teaching still receives scant recognition within the education system (Sidogi 2013). Design as a school subject remains a major challenge, where its value is not yet fully understood or accepted within the school system, consequently not always well supported and easily stereotyped.

## **Platform 6 as practicing scholarship of engagement in Design Education**

This paper reports on a collective that was formed to develop design teachers as scholars and educators of design thinking and practice. Initiated within the context of Boyer's Scholarship of Engagement, or Application (1991), Platform 6 (a collective of tertiary design schools/faculties in South Africa) delivers training devised for secondary school design teachers (grades 10 to 12) on the pedagogy of teaching design thinking and practice. The training workshops were first developed and conducted as an official project of World Design Capital Cape Town 2014 (WDCCT 2014). However, in completion of WDCCT, Platform 6 agreed that the promotion and support of the teaching of design thinking and practice at secondary school level is an important long-term commitment. Therefore within a series of six workshops spanning eight months during 2014 and a two-day workshop hosted in 2015, a group of design Higher Education lecturers shared their skills in design with the community of teachers. The authors of this paper were an integral part of planning, driving and monitoring the roll-out and success of the initiative.

## **Review of Literature**

### **Design diversity and capability**

A broad purview of design includes broad-based systems design, environmental and spatial design (architecture, interior design, urban planning, production design and civil engineering), communication design (graphic, web and game design), service and interaction design, product and surface design (fashion design, industrial design, mechanical engineering, textile and furniture design). Design can be classified as object making, systems making, image and message making, place making, experience making for business and public sectors (DEDAT 2012). Design disciplines furthermore evolve and overlap as new technologies emerge and divergent skillsets are increasingly required to be able to develop and implement integrated solutions for these arising challenges.

Design as a discipline and act is practiced in product, process and systems development in commercial and social contexts, in real and virtual worlds. Tim Brown (2008, p.86), CEO and president of the renowned Design and Innovation Firm IDEO, explains that the thinking and practice of design have evolved into approaches towards social and commercial problem solving because innovation is a principal means of differentiation, of establishing a competitive advantage and importantly, of adding value to peoples' lives.

### **Positioning creativity, innovation and design**

Reconciling the requirement for a more creative and innovative society and commercial world with the fundamentals of an education and career in design still seems to be a challenge for incumbent school leaderships, wider teaching fraternities and significant numbers of secondary school learners parents facing those all-important subject choices at senior secondary school level. Soberingly, Robinson (in Azzam 2009, pp.22–26) contends that instead of promoting creativity, society and schooling may actually be ensuring its systematic demise. Teal (2010) in agreement, reasons that learners are generally unable to cope effectively with the ambiguities of creativity.

Design should however not be positioned solely as abstractly creative in nature and output. Norman and Klemmer (2014), having studied the design curriculum and teaching and learning strategies of tertiary institutions in Asia, North America and Europe, explain that the stereotyping of design as subject and design students is a universal challenge. Learners and students are encouraged to take design because they may be labeled creative when they express aversion to STEM subjects. The misguided perception that design involves a mainly aesthetic focus on craft still persists. This view presents a significant barrier to attracting those design learners and students who, according to Norman (2011), can meet the modern demands of design with increased insight and skill in scientific methods of approach, procedure, solution finding and testing. Design thinking and innovation applies an interdisciplinary skillset and involves various mental states in a linear and non-linear manner (Teal

2010). Lau, Ng and Lee (2009) in a study of numerous approaches to creativity training in design education, confirm this thought direction, ranging from critical analysis required to identify the nature of a complex, ill-defined or “wicked” problem, divergent thinking for generating alternative solutions or convergent thinking to sort and prioritise options and creative decisions. The designer will skillfully analyse and synthesise patterns and reassemble them to identify what is original and meaningful (Amabile & Khairi 2008; Cassim 2013).

### Teaching design thinking and practice

Amabile and Khairi (2008, p.102) reflect the views of a colloquium of leading scholars on creativity in organised environments with the premise that “one doesn’t manage creativity. One manages for creativity”. The conclusion is an appreciation of all the different creative types, diverse perspectives, individual interests and skillful support of the dynamics combined in the phases of design and the building of a group culture to guide and support idea development, enable collaboration and decrease fear of failure (Amabile et al. 2014, p.55; Palus & Horth 1996, pp.2–5)

The design teacher is encouraged to guide learners in discovering that innovation often results from unexpected connections garnered from a multiplicity of sources, or as Norman and Klemmer (2014) argue, in the realisation that the subject of design calls upon all of the humanities, the social, physical and biological sciences, engineering and business. Design teachers teach for creativity and innovation to overcome functional fixedness by stimulating interdisciplinary subject curiosity and exploration.

Design education furthermore promotes a pedagogy that encourages learners to approach all activities with a view to construct their own knowledge, to think creatively, collaborate with others and benefit from diversity rather than promote homogeneity. Robinson (in Azzam 2009, pp.22–26) emphasises the phrase “teaching for creativity” and like Savery and Duffy (in Wilson 1996), positions creative and collaborative learning in a constructivist paradigm, where understanding is socially negotiated as learners test their own- and examine the understanding of others. Teaching implies following a deepening approach to engage the acquired knowledge of students, stimulate their intrinsic curiosity at a conceptual level and encourage collaboration with peers and teachers in active learning (Biggs & Tang 2011).

Teachers of design, much as leaders and managers of creative organisations, should be knowledgeable enablers of deep learning built on design thinking and practice. The current design teacher is challenged in building a learning culture that integrates and accepts different creative types, diverse perspectives and individual interests; guides and supports idea development, enables collaboration, decreases fear of failure and skillfully supports the phases of design.

### Research Methods

This research study aimed to identify and share insights into the challenges that educators of design and by extension young designers currently face at secondary school level. It is exploratory in scope and nature since it was limited to a sample of National Senior Certificate (NSC) schools in the Western Cape. The relevance of insights to other provinces in South Africa and to IEB (Independent Examinations Board) schools throughout South Africa require further research. Of the 430 schools that follow the NSC curriculum, 88 offer Design as a grade 10 to 12 subject (Buchner 2014). These schools were all invited by the Western Cape Department of Education (Design and Visual Arts) to participate in the projects implemented by Platform 6 in 2014 and 2015. Due to geographic programme constraints and other practicalities involved in the delivery of programme content and holding focus group oriented team discussion sessions, Platform 6 was limited to a maximum of twenty-four schools in the first programme phase (2014). In 2015 twenty-four secondary school teachers from eighteen schools and art centres participated in the two-day design workshop.

The participating schools serve a broad range of learners, ranging from affluent communities with a long-standing history of offering arts subjects, to schools serving mainly previously disadvantaged

communities where art subjects, specifically design, are at best recent additions to the school curricula (Buchner, 2014).

Qualitative-exploratory research methods were employed due to the paucity of available findings about the teaching and learning environment of design teachers in South Africa, particularly to gain real world insight (Stebbins 2001) into the dynamics of design teaching in grades 10 to 12 in schools in the Western Cape.

The 2014 Platform 6 programme consisted of a six-part series of 5-hour workshop sessions on the pedagogy of teaching design thinking and practice. Sessions were interspersed with small team discussions comparable to focus groups (Seale et al. 2004). Workshop presenters and facilitators helped five teams of approximately six teachers per team to identify and delve deeper into key issues and challenges in the teaching of design. The two facilitators (the authors of the paper) attended all of the workshop sessions and formed a working unit to analyse discussion content and systematically classify and track pervasive themes (Kothari, 2011; Adams et al. 2014). To collect data and ensure authenticity and representativeness of themes emerging from discussion sessions, the exploratory groundwork and identification of key themes resulting from the small team discussions were followed up with an online survey comprising of open-ended questions that presented teachers with the opportunity to freely reinforce their own experiences and the individual challenges encountered within their teaching environment (Marczyk et al. 2005). Content analysis of the latter reinforced the key themes that emerged from small team discussions in workshop sessions and presented specific examples of the key issues and challenges encountered by teachers in the teaching of design thinking and practice in grades 10 to 12. Of the participants, 17 of the 24 schools involved in the 2014 workshop series and small team discussion sessions submitted answers to the questionnaire.

The research conducted in completion of the 2015 two-day workshop also involved discussion groups and individual questionnaires comprising of open-ended questions. With nearly half of the 2015 workshop as first-time attendants of a Platform 6 training event the aim was to create an opportunity for new themes to emerge or for themes to evolve or shift in nature and priority. The workshop attendees were not exposed to previous research results or insights. The analysis of the data obtained through the 2015 workshop discussion groups and individual questionnaires reinforced the key themes that emerged from the research conducted in 2014 - the themes reemerged in the same form and order of priority. Correspondingly the 2015 research also produced ideas with regard improving the status of design as school subject – these thoughts are presented in completion to the paper under a theme titled ‘visibility and collaboration’.

The exploratory groundwork also included in-depth interviews with the head of Design and Visual Arts at the Western Cape Department of Education as well as a director of the department’s curriculum consultancy resource, Rock City Foundation (RCF). The purpose was to clarify and gain further insights into the key themes that emerged from the teacher discussion sessions and surveys. Many of the complexities and intricacies involved in promoting the purpose, scope and career pathways of design for current learners still need further investigation and exploration in an abductive style of scholarship Henn (2010) presenting the reasoning of conjecture, or ‘what could be’.

Three central themes emerged from the content analysis of team discussion sessions and surveys. A discussion of the three themes follows and verbatim statements from discussion sessions and surveys are interspersed in italics in order to place issues in context and to share the narrative of Platform 6 design teachers (Adams et al. 2014).

## The Case for Promoting and Teaching Design Thinking and Practice

### **Theme One: Misconceptions regarding the purpose, scope and status of Design as subject**

The Platform 6 research reveals that teachers of design are reasonably well informed and quite committed to the purpose and scope of design thinking and practice. They regard design as a

valuable school subject to develop critical, creative thinking and problem-solving skills for commercial and social contexts – “design is all around us, woven into every aspect of our daily lives”. The majority of design teachers believe that design develops a way of thinking that is valuable for all subjects and vocational training.

That these views are not widely shared within school leadership and management (governing bodies and principals), teachers and parent bodies and inevitably too, the learner community at large however, forms a significant barrier to the proper positioning of the discipline and the value of design teaching. Teachers state that design is at best narrowly perceived as an aesthetic subject focused on craft learning in graphic or product design. Schools that are “art focused” seem to enjoy a more supportive environment in which creative output is celebrated, but the subject of design is nevertheless still perceived as minor or secondary to other art subjects. Its curriculum focus is, according to these teachers, equally misunderstood. A key theme reveals that design teachers routinely experience the role and scope of design as misunderstood, and consequently the healthy development of a culture of design thinking and education at secondary school level is frustrated – “school management do not understand what I teach” and “my colleagues disregard the subject”. The net effect is that learners are discouraged from exploring design as a subject choice.

To make matters worse, design as a subject is not included in the designated list of school subjects approved as preparatory for the higher demands of degree studies. The Umalusi (the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training in South Africa) directive for certification of NSC schools specifies that learners who aspire to undertake degree studies be expected to perform satisfactorily in at least four subjects from a designated list of National Senior Certificate subjects (Umalusi, 2013). Whereas the subjects Visual Arts and Dramatic Arts are included in the designated list, Design as subject is not. This condition, according to design teachers and the head of Design and Visual Arts at the Western Cape Department of Education, is the central most influential factor deterring school governing bodies and principals from offering the subject design in grades 10 to 12, or in recommending the subject choice to learners and parents. Design teachers say that due to anxieties that surround learners’ subject choices, the confusion that currently exists around designated subjects, all compounded by a general lack of appreciation of the role and scope of design as subject and career choice, it is no surprise that school managements, teaching bodies and parents are rather dismissive of design as a subject choice. Teachers argue that they “are losing excellent designers because it is not a university subject” and that “the school will not give resources because we are not a designated subject”.

There is some scope for reprieve, however. The same Umalusi directives for certification allow Higher Education institutions the prerogative, in terms of section 37 of the Higher Education Act, 1997 (Act No.101 of 1997), to determine specific admission requirements, levels of achievement and or combinations of recognised NSC subjects (Umalusi 2013). Teachers, school leadership and parents can play an active role in promoting design as a subject of importance. Unfortunately the qualitative-exploratory research conducted through Platform 6 indicates that teachers, school leaderships, parents and learners are still generally ignorant about which public and private Higher Education institutions recommend or recognise design as a subject for further studies.

### **Theme Two: Combating the creative stereotype clouding Design as Discipline**

Misconceptions with regard to the purpose of design, its scope and status have led to many negative stereotypes. The exploratory research conducted through Platform 6 reveals that these negative views exist widely within the broader teaching body, the school leadership and also parents. The dominant stereotype seems to be that design is a “soft” subject for learners who battle with academic subjects – “it is hardly acknowledged as a subject with substance, let alone one with academic merit”. Negative views about design as subject also extend to the negative profiling of its learners and teachers.

This Platform 6 study contributes to the notion that the majority of design teachers still have to overcome a badly informed understanding of the nature, purpose and status of design as a subject as well as combat several negative stereotypes associated with the discipline. Learners seem to have very limited support in the process of exploring and pursuing design as a subject and career interest. When sound-boarding does take place, for example with parents and or teachers in other subject areas, this advice suffers from a constricted understanding of the role and scope of design, tainted by ill-informed ideas and stereotypes around creativity and design as practice and future area of study. It is possible that the Design Maturity Ladder (DEDAT 2012) among stakeholders in Design, as grade 10 to 12 subject, is confined to an understanding of design as a function merely of aesthetics for the creatively oriented non-academic learner.

### **Theme Three: Design teachers need skills and confidence to teach**

The groundwork done through Platform 6 suggests that the current level of teaching and the knowledge required for teaching design in schools needs to be addressed. The insights gained from group discussions and surveys reveal that the vast majority of design teachers participating in Platform 6 do not have formal qualifications or experience in design teaching or practice. Buchner (2014) confirms that this is true for the majority of teachers in the 88 schools in the Western Cape who teach design in grades 10 to 12. The teachers mostly have Fine Art qualifications and years of experience in teaching Visual Arts. It must be noted that according to Norman and Klemmer (2014) who speak from the Asian, North American and European perspective, qualified teachers and lecturers in design thinking and practice is a universal scarcity primarily because theory, curriculum and qualifications unique to the requirements of design thinking and applied practical design are not long established. Cassim (2013) furthermore points out that the field is challenged in keeping abreast with the expanding and shifting definitions of the design profession. Teaching and training in the field thus depends heavily on self-acquired practitioner wisdom.

The exploratory research insights do however present a positive and constructive frame from which the teaching skill base in the thinking and practice of design can be developed. Teachers unanimously believe that they have the fundamental skillsets or alternatively the aptitude to educate learners in design. They claim this with passion and commitment for the subject and a desire to continue developing personal insight and expertise in teaching design. It is also important to note that many teachers in moments of reflection evinced a strong sense of responsibility to promote the purpose and value of the subject to learners, parents, fellow teachers and school leadership - "it starts with us, we are the educators" and "(design learners) can make a difference and change the world".

### **Conclusion: Platforms for Innovation**

Horst Rittel's concept of 'wicked problems' seems apposite here. The information is confusing, many stakeholders are involved and the ramifications are unclear (Buchanan 1992, p.15). The problems surrounding the teaching of design thinking and practice in grades 10 to 12 seem to be largely rooted in and fed by misconception. The field and subject of design are misunderstood in role, scope and conditions and indicate much room for further studies. These conditions may be limited to NSC schools in the Western Cape, but most likely are not.

The development of a next generation of design thinkers and practitioners and the promotion of the purpose, scope and career pathways that design may offer current and future learners are critical goals. The aim must be to embed design as a vital economic tool for unlocking innovation and a driving force for competitiveness at state and provincial level.

This qualitative-exploratory study posits that innovation platforms such as The Western Cape Design Strategy (DEDAT) and Higher Education South Africa (HESA) - a government body tasked to conduct research on and recommend changes or additions to the current designated list of NSC subjects, should collectively investigate the potential for the subject of design to help prepare learners for the creative and critical thinking required for first-time degree studies. Roger Martin, dean of Toronto's

Rotman School of Business, responsible for injecting design thinking into tertiary management education, argues that “today’s business people don’t need to understand designers better, they need to become designers” (Dunne & Martin 2006, p.513). In the short term an innovation platform such as The Western Cape Design Strategy (DEDAT) can, as proposed by design teachers in this study, identify and create clarity around public and private Higher Education institutions that recommend or recognise design as a suitable subject for higher degree study.

An official shift in the status of the subject of design, coupled with clarity around the admission requirements of public and private Higher Education institutions, will have a systemic impact on the challenges identified in this paper. Misconceptions with regard to the purpose, scope and status of the subject will largely dissipate as the purpose of design becomes better understood and will also stimulate further interest in its scope and wide-ranging potential pathways for studies. The better the purpose, scope and status of design as subject is understood and promoted, the more it will become difficult for easy stereotyping to hamper the development of a culture of design thinking and education at secondary school level. Discouraging learners from exploring design as a subject choice will lessen. It is conceivable that a systemic shift will, as this paper suggests, inspire and support a new era of design learners within a South African culture of innovation.

Thankfully, there is a positive and constructive framework from which the teaching skills base in design thinking and practice can be developed. Teachers believe they have the fundamental skillsets or aptitudes required to educate learners in design; they possess the passion, commitment and desire to continue developing the expertise needed for teaching design and a strong sense of responsibility to promote the subject’s purpose and value to learners, parents, fellow teachers and school leadership.

This framework has encouraged an ideas-oriented theme of ‘visibility and collaboration’ to emerge. Design teachers recognise that a higher level of self-responsibility among teachers of design is required to optimise and increase opportunities to showcase design events and projects at school level. Functional integration with existing school systems and projects may be able to support general exhibition of learners’ work throughout the year. This involves creating awareness of the subject of design by developing, for example, design solutions specific to the school’s systems, procedures and events. Platform 6 facilitated such a social innovation project in 2015 in collaboration with the school management, design teacher and learners from a secondary school in Athlone, Cape Town. Grade 11 and 12 pupils engaged with challenges such as teenage pregnancy and drug and alcohol abuse and were tasked to troubleshoot their prototypes with peers, teachers, the parent body and community at large.

Visibility, according to the design teachers involved in Platform 6, can accordingly be increased and learners, parents and school leadership and management may be further inspired by collaborative visits from tertiary institutions and the department, including showcasing prize-giving and bursary events for top performers. The possibility of a unique online showcase of grade 10 to 12 design work by top performers and competition winners, possibly hosted or supported by the Department of Education (Design and Visual Arts), was also mentioned.

This paper, based on insights gained from qualitative-exploratory research conducted through Platform 6, presents a polemic and a call to action. Complexities and intricacies still need to be uncovered and explored, but as an initial study promoting ‘what could be’, it hopes to contribute key insights and focus points for innovation platforms and policymakers towards building a more supportive and inspiring secondary school design culture and a next generation of able design thinkers and practitioners in South Africa.

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# Framing Complexity: an experience-led approach to designing user research

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## Abstract

*Human-Centered Design (HCD) methods have been identified as valuable and effective approaches to designing with and for people, but is also due to complexity and indeterminacy, often difficult to practice. With the popularisation of HCD in contemporary design education, and the subsequent emphasis of human-centered research an ethical question arises as to whether design students are adequately prepared to engage with the type of research that more and more they are expected to conduct.*

*This paper engages with this concern by presenting an approach, which utilises Marc Hassenzahl's Three-level Hierarchy of Needs model to conceive and design a human-centered research plan. The approach described in the paper is first introduced from a theoretical perspective, and then illustrated as applied in a design project.*

**Keywords:** *participatory design; user research; activity theory; focusing research exploration*

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## Introduction

Human-Centered Design (HCD), and in particularly participatory design methods have been identified as valuable and effective approaches to designing with and for people. Participatory design, philosophically and in practice, includes users and other stakeholders directly in the design process in order to facilitate understanding between the individual stakeholders and between the stakeholders and the designers (Grønbaeck 1993, p. 79, Steen 2011, p. 49). Participatory design approaches are advocated by a number of authors (Sanders 2008, Wright & McCarthy 2010, Molapo & Marsden 2013, Byrne & Sahay 2007, Frawley 2012) as viable methodologies for engaging with users in order to design solutions that are empathetic, useful and usable particularly when the community for whom the solution is intended is unfamiliar to the designer or design team.

However, understanding societal problems is itself an arduous process as the problems themselves can be ill-defined and elusive, hidden in the complexity of social reality and offering no clear direction for resolution (Rittel & Webber 1973, p. 156; Krippendorff 2007, p. 71-72). Furthermore, underpinning most HCD methods is the rejection of any assumption of what the solution should entail (Keinonen 2010, p. 18, Buchanan 1992, p.10). The designer, when practicing HCD is therefore often faced with complexity on both ends of the design process as both the framing of the problem as well as models for solving the problem are unknown.

Due to the complexities embedded within societal formations and the absence of clear design outcomes it can, particularly for novice designers, be difficult to ensure that outcomes generated from participatory exploration are in fact relevant and capable of positively impacting on design decision-making. Additionally, the use of qualitative primary methods of research associated with participatory design often result in complex and fragmented data (Visser et al 2005, p. 14) which may or may not be relevant to the resolution of problem. Lastly, and perhaps most relevant, it is our experience obtained through running HCD design courses with undergraduate students, that they often do not have a considered approach to constructing research questions. The result of this lack of

technique is that undergraduate students struggle to obtain rich and insightful data from their research activities.

From a general ethical stance this paper acknowledges HCD with its focus on designing with and for people in order to identify and respond to people's actual needs as opposed to *creating* need to feed unsustainable economic growth<sup>1</sup>, as just. However, the specific ethical concern this paper seeks to address is perhaps more mundane in nature and relates to the expectation placed on design students to engage through qualitative, primary research with people's experience of the world. The concern here is that these expectations are often uncritically placed on design students with very little support in terms of the transfer of technique.

The aim of this paper is to address these particular concerns by introducing and illustrating an approach to framing participatory exploration. However, it is worth noting that this approach is not exclusive to participatory design and can be used in other HCD methods. Additionally, the term 'research question' as used here should not be confused with interview questions as while the 'research questions' may end up as interview questions, they could be used in any number of methods to guide data collection.

This paper proposes an experience-led approach to framing participatory design research explorations, substantially informed by Activity Theory<sup>2</sup>. As such, the framing of research is perhaps most relevant to fields of design concerned with the goal-orientated interactions of people with products, systems or services. These fields include, but are not limited to: interaction design, industrial design, information design, wayfinding, user-experience design, and service design.

## Methodology

Initially this paper provides a brief theoretical framing related to the resolution of complex problems through the application of participatory design. This framing acknowledges the benefits of a participatory approach as well as its challenges. The framing is followed by an introduction and explanation of Marc Hassenzahl's *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model (2010, p. 12, 44). The model presents a hierarchical approach to the conceiving of users' actions in which their instrumental goals are orientated by their current and desired motivational needs.

Understanding people's psychological needs is an essential aspect of understanding their motives, Hassenzahl argues, and to this point presents the *Top-10 Psychological Needs* (Hassenzahl, p. 46) as a model for assessing whether design products do indeed meet the motivational needs of users, and as an extension of this provide appropriate user-experiences.

This paper extends Hassenzahl's use of the models by suggesting that the *Top-10 Psychological Needs and Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model can be used to directly structure participatory design research interventions.

The application of these models to this end is described in a short case-study example of a *contextmapping* (Visser et al. 1995) design project undertaken with small-scale urban farmers in Soweto, South Africa. Lastly, the paper concludes by outlining the benefit of the applied model in the facilitation and focusing of participatory exploration.

## The value of participatory processes.

HCD, as illustrated in Figure 1 is a broad umbrella term that includes design approaches that focus on users and their contexts of use throughout the planning, design, implementation, and reflections on a design solution (Steen 2011, p. 45). How users and their contexts are engaged can vary depending on the selected methodology. The methodologies on the left of Figure 1 include: Empathetic Design,

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1 See Fry (2007) for a critique of unsustainable design practice

2 See Kuuti (1995) and Nardi (1995) for seminal descriptions of Activity Theory

Contextual Design, and Ethnography which tends to place the users as the passive object of the researchers study, and as such seeks to understand the current practices and perceptions of the user (Steen 2011, p. 50-53). These methodologies are often applied in commercial design practice when users' contexts are familiar to the designer. However, particularly when designing solutions for communities outside of the designers' familiarity, these approaches to HCD can be limiting (ibid, p. 148).

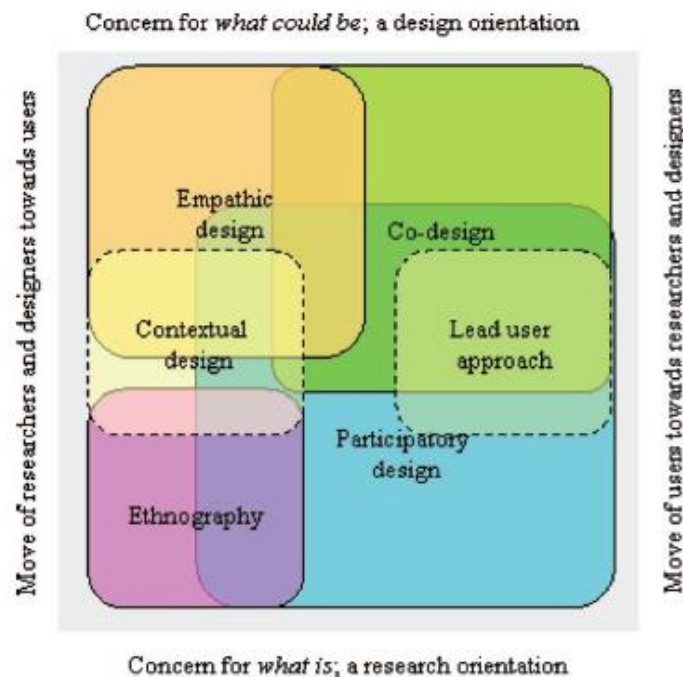


Figure 1: The various different approaches to Human-centered Design, Elizabeth Sanders (Steen 2011, p. 48).

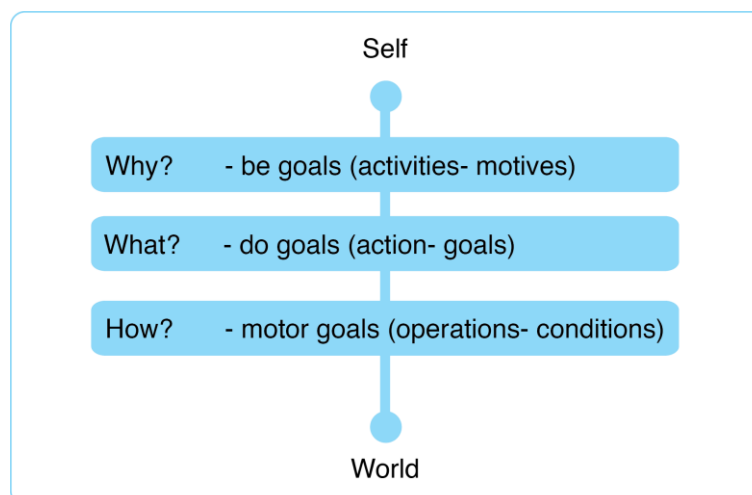
Participatory methods of which Co-design and Lead-user Approach are, in the context of this paper considered as sub-categories, advocated by a number of authors (Sanders 2008, Wright and McCarthy 2011, Molapo and Marsden 2013, Byrne and Sahay: 2007, Frawley, p. 2012) as viable methodologies for engaging with users in order to design solutions that are empathetic, useful, and usable.

Participatory design, philosophically, and in practice, includes users and other stakeholders in the design process in order to facilitate understanding between the individual stakeholders and between the stakeholders and the designers (Grønbaeck et al. 1993, p. 79, Steen 2011, p. 49). Peter Wright and John McCarthy (2010, p. 4) describe participatory design as capable of uncovering “people’s desires, values and feelings” in a realization of a “humanist vision” for design through a “commitment to understanding and working through the relationships between users and designers as different placed centers of value in the design process” Participatory design research methodologies due to their qualitative intentions and generative methods focused on obtaining rich data tend to be unstructured. For example, Wright and McCarthy (p. 27) position narrative enquiry as valuable methods for participatory explorations as they contend, storytelling relies on the generation of a shared understanding emerging via the teller’s account but framed to consider the listener’s point of view and the subsequent reciprocal response of the listener. In this example, it is evident that the participatory process method can promote common understanding between the designer and the participants. What is perhaps not clear, is what the ‘story’ should be about and how the storytelling should be planned in order to generate relevant narratives. This predicament could be applied to many other generative participatory research activities including *Design Charette* (Martin

& Hanington 2012, p. 58), *Collage* (Martin & Hanington 2012 p. 34) and *Role-Playing* (Martin & Hanington 2012, p. 148).

While it is true that any shared understanding will to an extent help the designer better understand the user, when designing (particularly with vulnerable or resource- scarce communities) there is an increased ethical need that design solutions are relevant and applicable in order to “maximize the purchasers’ investment” (Marsden, in Rogers et al 2012, p. 452). In order to ensure that design solutions are as appropriate as possible, an emphasis on constructing effective research practice needs to be in place.

To help focus participatory research inquiry, this paper puts forward Marc Hassenzahl’s *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model (2010, p. 12, 44) and his *Top-10 Psychological Needs* (p. 46) framework as a viable approach for guiding practice. The *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model (see Figure 2) is based on Activity Theory (Hassenzahl 2010, p. 44- 45) and articulates how user-goals can be divided into three levels, which he terms *be-goals*, *do-goals* and *motor-goals*. A user- goal is an expectation of an end-condition that is personal to the user (Cooper et al 2007, p. 15). From a design perspective, the envisioned product, service or system is designed to facilitate the users’ achievement of their intended goals. User-goals are a fundamental concern for any design field that seeks to understand and design for human interaction.



**Figure 2: Adapted from Hassenzahl’s *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* (2010, p. 45)**

The *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* describes how the individual user relates to the world through action (Hassenzahl 2010, p. 44). A *do-goal*, which sits at the middle level of the hierarchy, is a concrete outcome the person performing the action wants to achieve. For example, a *do-goal* would be ‘monitor their bank account’. *Do-goals* generally do not change much over time. For example, today one can simply use a mobile phone go on line to see banking details while ten years ago you would need to go to an ATM, and twenty years ago it would entail visiting a bank branch.

*Motor-goals* at the lowest level of the hierarchy are the sub-units of actions that collectively contribute to how a *do- goal* is achieved. While *do-goals* are consistent, *motor-goals* tend to be constructed around the particular *do-goal* they support (ibid). Thus the operational actions involved in visiting a bank teller and using a banking app both fulfill the same *do-goal* but are completely different in execution.

Hassenzahl identifies human emotions as the drivers of behavior at the *be-goal* level. *Be-goals* occupy the top level of the hierarchy. According to Hassenzahl (2010, p. 43-44) *be-goals* are the user-goals that motivate action and provide meaning to the action. He describes *be-goals* as focusing on

the larger life-orientated needs of the users rather than on technological needs such as those described by *motor-goals* and *do-goals*. So for example, while *operational* goals would define how a user would navigate through the individual processes of the *do-goal* of monitoring a bank account, the *be-goal* would focus on 'why' the account needs to be monitored. Is the user neurotic, fearful of cyber-theft or is she merely trying to see whether she can make it to month end?

The Three Level Hierarchy of Needs model provides a holistic account of experience design that "comprises perception, action, motivation, and cognition." (Hassenzahl 2010, p. 4). These conditions occur when *do-goals* are orientated by motivational *be-goals* and made actionable through the contextual application of *motor-goals*. Without carefully considered *motor-goals* and *do-goals* an interactive system would probably provide poor service. Likewise *motor-goals* and *do-goals* without the teleological aspects of *be-goals* could provide poor user experience and subsequent uptake.

In reference to identifying *be-goals*, Hassenzahl (2010, p. 46). provides a framework, the *Top-10 Psychological Needs* (Table 1), which he adapted from Sheldon, *et al's* research into humanity's most enduring and commonly recurring needs. The purpose of the *Top-10 Psychological Needs* framework is not to be definitive in terms of identifying individually occurring needs but rather aims to capture the fundamental qualities of "a class of experiences" (Hassenzahl 2010, p. 47) associated with positive need fulfillment. To this purpose the needs framework is helpful in understanding related feelings, typical behaviour, conditions, rules, and problems (Hassenzahl 2010, p. 48) of users' current lived experiences.

Autonomy/ Independence	Feeling like you are the cause of your own actions rather than feeling that external forces or pressure are the cause of your action
Competence/ Effectance <sup>3</sup>	Feeling that you are very capable and effective in your actions rather than feeling incompetent or ineffective
Relatedness/ Belongingness	Feeling that you have regular intimate contact with people who care about you rather than feeling lonely and uncared for
Self-actualizing/ Meaning	Feeling that you are developing your best potentials and making life meaningful rather than feeling stagnant and that life does not have much meaning
Security/ Control	Feeling safe and in control of your life rather than feeling uncertain and threatened by your circumstances
Money/ Luxury	Feeling that you have plenty of money to buy most of what you want rather than feeling like a poor person who has no nice possessions
Influence/ Popularity	Feeling that you are liked, respected, and have influence over others rather than feeling like a person whose advice or opinion nobody is interested in
Physical thriving/ Bodily	Feeling that your body is healthy and well-taken care of rather than feeling out of shape and unhealthy
Self-esteem/ Self-respect	Feeling that you are a worthy person who is as good as anyone else rather than feeling like a "loser"
Pleasure/ Stimulation	Feeling that you get plenty of enjoyment and pleasure rather than feeling bored and under stimulated by life

**Table 1: Hazenzahl's Top-10 Psychological Needs Framework (2010, p. 46)**

<sup>3</sup> Effectance is a psychological term that describes the influence an individual may have on their environment (Dewey 2007).

Hassenzahl's attempt to classify experiences has been viewed by other commentators as problematic as it potentially runs the risk of reducing people to objects of research rather than as participants in the design process (Wright and McCarthy 2010, p. xii). However Hassenzahl's Psychological Needs Framework does present a practical, focused approach for ensuring that the core attributes required to understand users' motivations and actions becomes the focus of the participatory process.

This paper proposes that combining Hassenzahl's hierarchy model and its associated needs framework within a participatory process can negate the weakness of each individual approach. The needs model brings a focus to the research process with a structured approach highly relevant to understanding users' motivations and behaviours while in return the participatory approach negates the objectification of the research participants.

It is in respect to these two positions, each with their own unique value that I propose to unify the two viewpoints into one framework in a participatory design methodology that applies the *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model.

The case study, which will be used to describe how the unified framework can be applied in order to establish research goals, structure research findings and develop design strategy, was a participatory design project undertaken in collaboration with small-scale farmers in Soweto, South Africa. The final objective of the research project was to co-design a mobile web application that would promote better access for the farmers to information, in order to improve their livelihood. The participatory method used was contextmapping (Visser et al. 2005, Sanders 2000, Kistemaker *et al.* 2010) of which the primary co-design activity was a series of workshops.

## Applying the unified framework: A case study of the Soweto Farmers Project

Applying the unified framework to establish research goals requires setting goals that will engage with each level of the *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model. Depending on the broader aims of the design project, specific questions could be formulated to enquire about any of the three levels. For example an interaction design project with a primary focus on usability may wish to unpack explore the *motor-goals* level in more detail while a new banking site may be concerned with what type of transactions clients may like to perform and thus explore the *do-goals*. Alternatively, as in this case study, focus could be applied to exploring the lived-experience of the users, in order to conceive of a new solution. *Be-goals* would then be the most relevant area of study. However no matter what the intention and focus of the study is, it is that all three levels should be explored as human action invokes all the levels simultaneously.

### 1. Identifying the be-goals

The initial participatory activity of the *contextmapping*<sup>4</sup> co-design methodology is known as the *Sensitization Phase*. In this phase, research participants independently of the facilitator perform activities designed to help them recall and focus on specific aspects of their lives. Ensuring that participants have undergone a reflective phase prepares the participants to readily engage with themes presented in the later co-design workshops phases of *contextmapping*.

In the *Sensitization Phase* of this case study, the various categories of the *Top- 10 Psychological Needs* were used to construct a series of worksheet activities. Four examples of the worksheet exercises are as illustrated in Figures 3 and 4. Table 2, indexes all the questions that were asked in the *Sensitization* worksheet with the ten psychological needs of the framework. The worksheet questions were explicitly constructed to explore the farmer's motivational *be-goals*.

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<sup>4</sup> Contextmapping consists of six phases: 1. Preparation (of research), 2. Sensitization, 3. Sessions (co-design workshops), 4. Analysis of data, 5. Communication (with co-designers) and 6. New Design Concepts

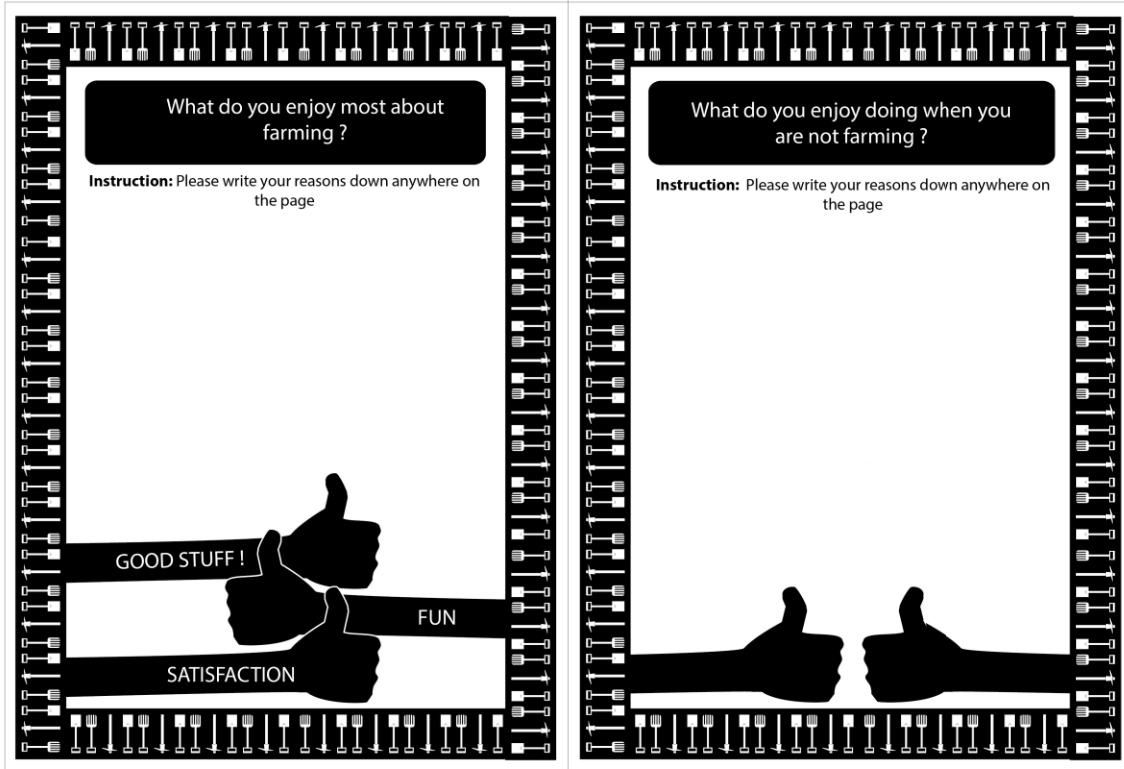


Figure 3: Worksheet examples of the applied psychological needs related to pleasure/stimulation

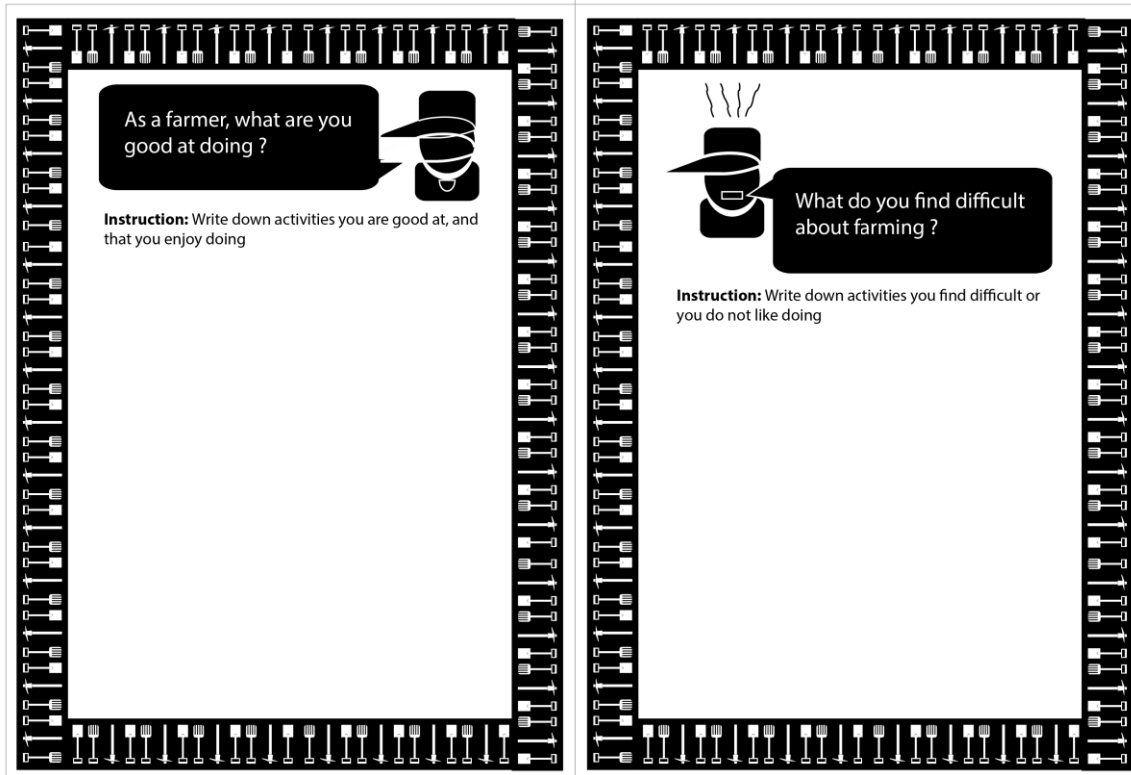


Figure 4: Worksheet examples of the applied psychological needs related to competence/ Efficacy



Psychological Need	Worksheet question
Autonomy/Independence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you feel you are independent? <i>Write down some of the things that help a farmer to be independent.</i></li> <li>2. Are you an independent farmer? <i>Write down some of the things that stop you from being independent?</i></li> </ol>
Competence/Effectance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As a farmer what are you good at and enjoy doing?</li> <li>2. What do you find difficult or do not enjoy doing?</li> </ol>
Relatedness/ Belongingness	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Write down the names of people or organisations that help or support you?</li> <li>2. Do you feel there is somebody that should be helping you more?</li> <li>3. Who do you help, and how do you help?</li> <li>4. Do you feel you could help others more, if yes how?</li> </ol>
Self-actualizing/Meaning	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you think farming is a good career?</li> <li>2. Why did you become a farmer?</li> <li>3. Why are farmers important in South Africa?</li> </ol>
Security/Control	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What are the things you can control in terms of your farming?</li> <li>2. What are the things you cannot control? <i>Describe how these things make you feel.</i></li> </ol>
Money/ Luxury	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How do you spend your income from farming?</li> </ol>
Influence/Popularity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Do you feel that other farmers respect you?</li> </ol>
Physical thriving/Bodily	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Does your work make you feel healthy?</li> </ol>
Self-esteem/ Self-respect	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Are farmers respected in the community?</li> </ol>
Pleasure/Stimulation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. What do you enjoy most about farming?</li> <li>2. What do you enjoy doing when you are not farming?</li> </ol>

**Table 2: The following table depicts how the worksheet questions were indexed to Hassenzahl's Top-10 psychological needs.**

## 2. Identifying do-goals

The initial goal of the Soweto Farmers Project, which emerged during preliminary research, was to enable the farmers to have better access to agricultural-related information. While having an initial design strategy for solving the problem before focused research begins may seem counterintuitive as the purpose of design research is primarily the understanding problems in order to resolve them appropriately. Without a general hypothesis of what the problem and corresponding solutions may be, focusing research can be difficult. Thus having an initial starting point is unproblematic as long as there is a commitment to allowing the evidence, emerging from the research to alter or negate the initial hypothesis. For example, the high-level *do-goal* of this case study was specific enough to focus the study on the farmers' information needs but did not presume to prescribe *what* the 'information' was. Therefore, the *do-goal* of this study was concerned with establishing the nature and characteristics of the information content that farmers considered valuable.

## 3. Identifying motor-goals

The *motor-goals* in the context of the case study was concerned with *how* farmers currently accessed information in terms of their strategies, behaviours and practices.

## Generating do-goals and motor-goals

Both the *do-goals* and the *motor-goals* were explored in two activities during co-design workshops. In the first activity, see Figure 5, farmers were asked to map their own experiences of their individual journeys of learning about farming and how they continue to learn about farming. The farmers created the learning-journey maps by collaging images and text found in magazines. Participants then used their collages to orally explain the 'story' of their journeys. The narrations of the journeys often involved discussions between the narrator, other participants and-the facilitator, in order to substantiate, unpack or clarify points.



**Figure 5: An example of one of the participant's collage depicting her learning journey.**

The second co-design activity, see Figure 6, applied a design fiction method within which participants were tasked with using clay to model a fantasy machine or tool to help them to be better farmers. Again once participants had completed their models, they explained what they had created and why and how their creation would benefit them.



**Figure 6: An example of one of the clay models. This example depicts a robot helper with a computational core and robotic tool arms**

## Analyses of the data

The raw data from all three of the activities was collected. This included the textual answers in the worksheets as well as audio recordings of the farmers' oral explanations of the co-design activities. All relevant data points were transcribed in a spreadsheet and finally onto individual post-it notes. The post-it notes, which numbered about 250, were then patterned, synthesized and categorised

into new formations of meaning, or relationships using the Affinity Diagram method (Martin & Hanington 2012, p. 12)<sup>5</sup>.

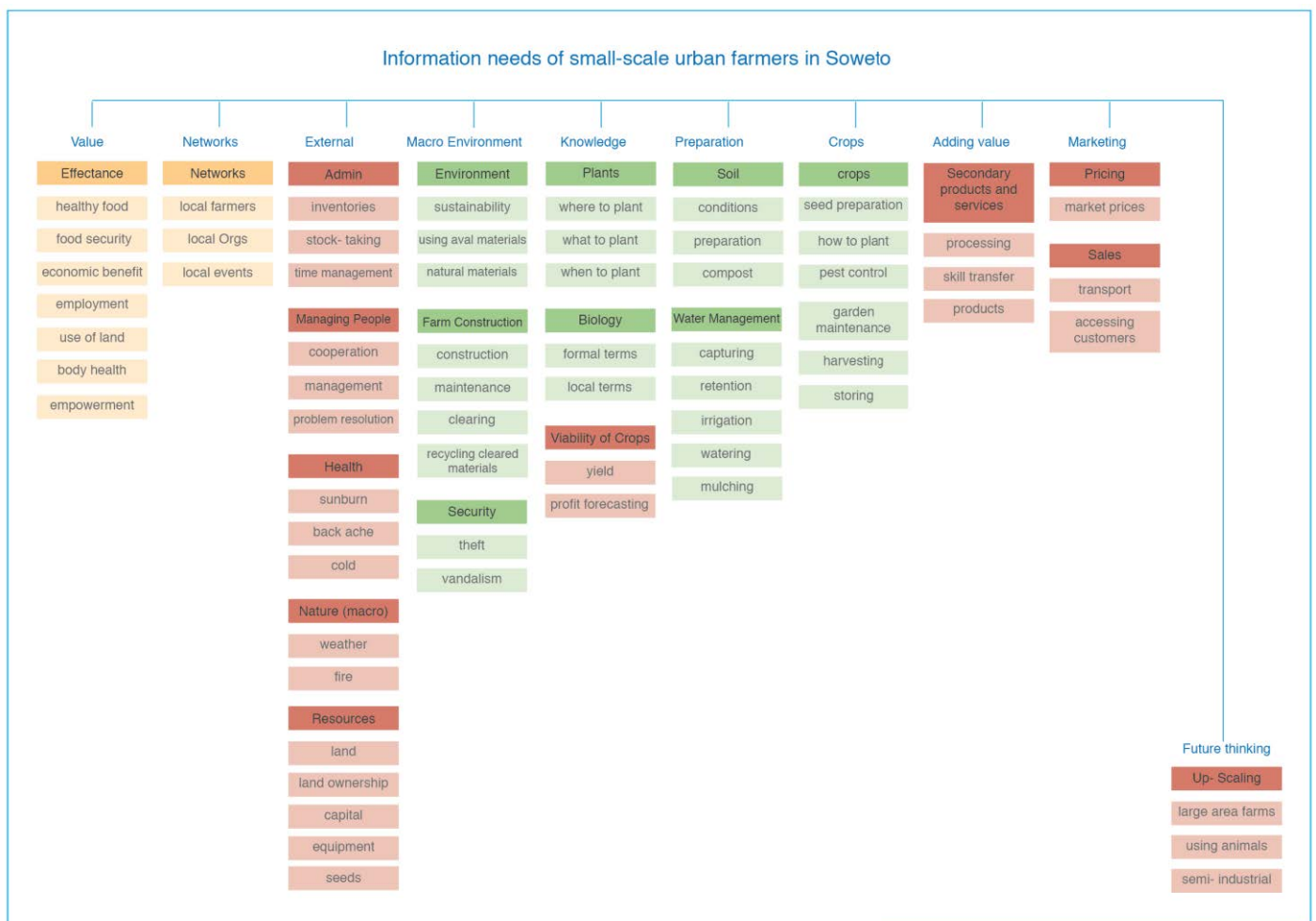
This case study applied the Affinity Diagram method in three rounds of categorisations, with each round using all the collected data to reflect a level of the *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model.

The first affinity categorisation was the *do-goals* of the model, which was determined as the ‘things farmers needed or wanted to know’. Figure 7 describes major categories and sub-categories of information identified through the analyses as important to the farmers.

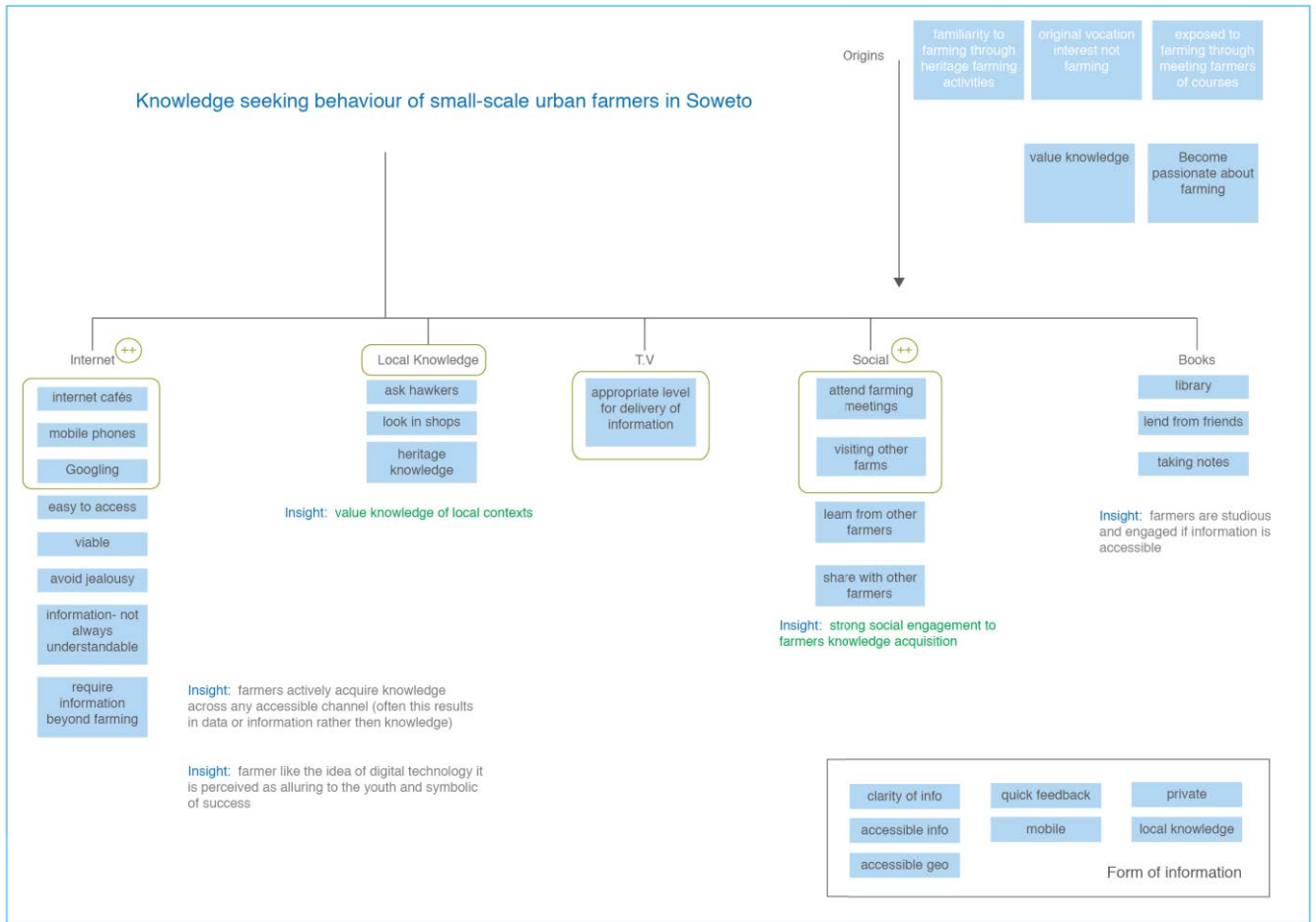
The second affinity categorization, as depicted in Figure 8 was concerned with the operational *how* goals which were determined as ‘the current behaviours or practices that farmers undertook when trying to find out information pertaining to farming and associated activities’.

Within these two affinity diagrams a bottom-up categorisation system was applied which allowed for categories to emerge organically through prevalence and association.

**Figure 7: Illustrates the categories of information identified as important to farming and associated activities**

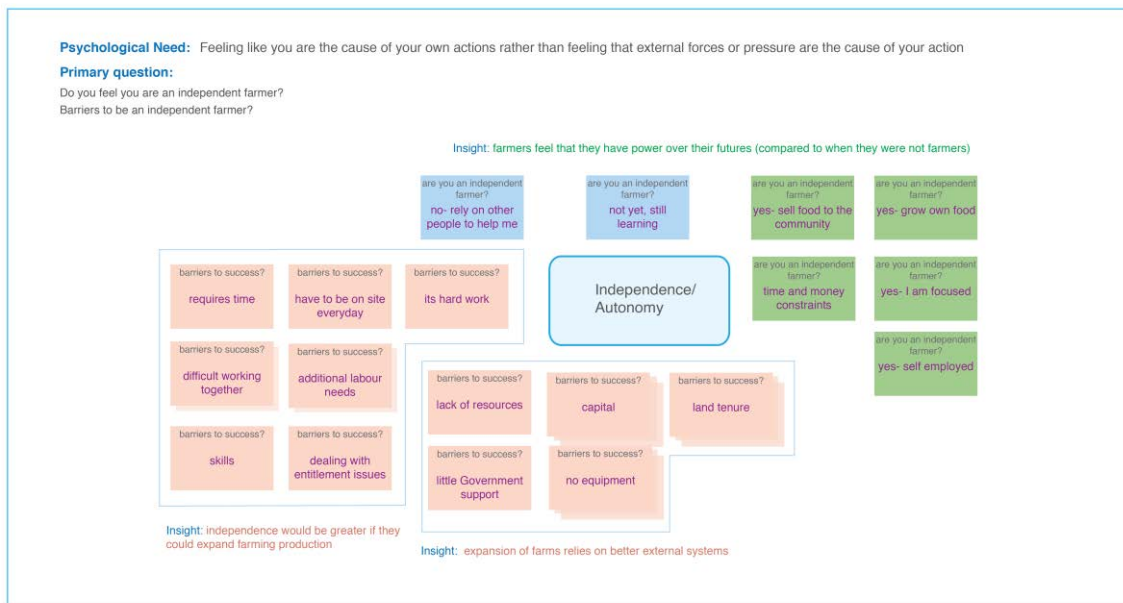


<sup>5</sup> Affinity diagrams share many similarities with commonly applied research analysis tools such as grounded theory and content analysis [ibid].

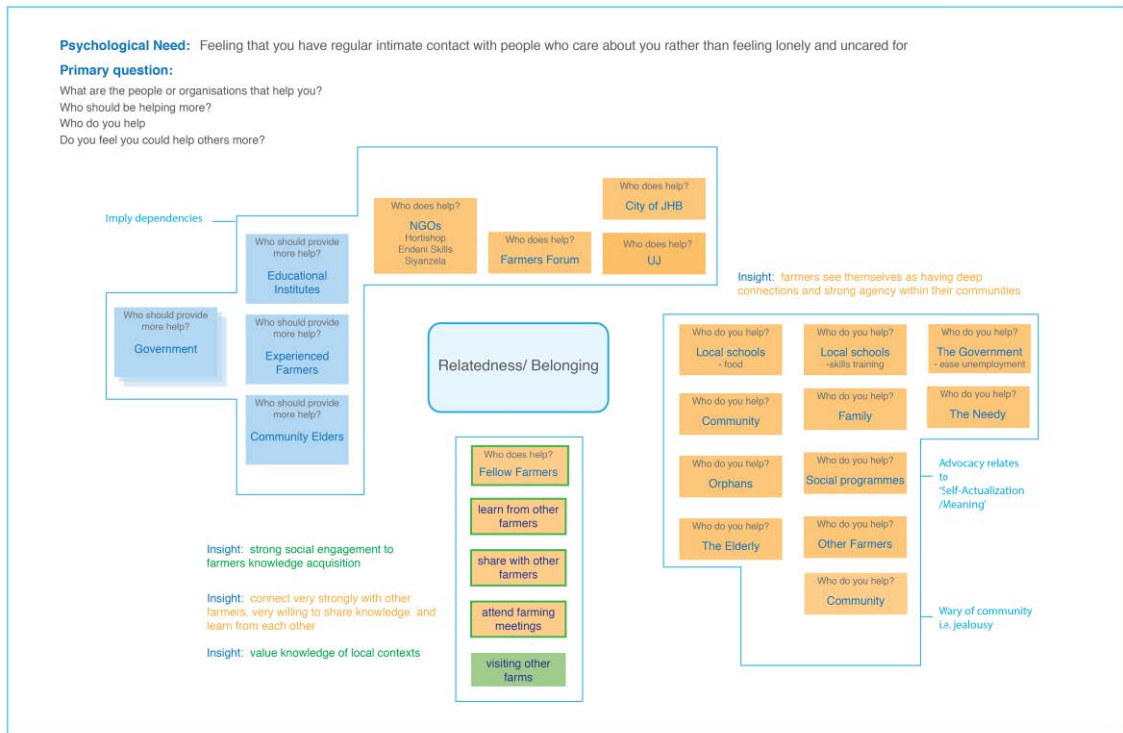


**Figure 8: Illustrates and describes the most common methods farmer in Soweto use to access information about farming.**

The third affinity diagram was a tighter, top-down ordering in which all the data points were arranged into ten categories indexed to Hassenzahl's Top-10 *Psychological Needs*. This categorisation related to the *be-goals* of the hierarchy model.



**Figure 9: Diagrammatic representation of the Autonomy/ Independence category**



**Figure 10: Diagrammatic representation of the Relatedness / Belonging category**

Figures 9 and 10 represent the categorisation of two of the ten psychological needs and their associated data points. Once all ten needs categories were completed, the included data was further organised into thematic concerns represented by one or more insights. The insights gained from the psychological needs were then further analysed to determine any thematic relationships. Three major themes emerged, as depicted in Figures 11.

Key insights	Key insights	Key insights
Insight: connect very strongly with other farmers, very willing to share knowledge and learn from each other.	Insight: farmers engage with agriculture easy but often their real problems sit outside of farming (business skills, industrial farming, HR skills)	Insight: connect very strongly with other farmers, very willing to share knowledge and learn from each other.
Insight: most farmers feel competent and in control of farming activities	Insight: their financial aspiration is for their farms to be successful sustainable businesses rather than just subsidiary income	Insight: farmers see themselves as having deep connections and strong agency within their communities.
Insight: overwhelmingly, farmers see the health value of farming	Insight: expansion of farms relies on better external systems	Insight: the perceived lack of respect farmers get from the broader community is disheartening to them.
Insight: farmers feel respected within the farming community	Insight: independence would be greater if they could expand farming production	Insight: feel threatened by the community.
Insight: farmers feel that farming has given them power over their futures	Insight: feel threatened by an unsecured future	Insight: farmers see themselves as useful and needed in the community and with in the broader South African community as well.
Insight: find farming a fulfilling activity in its own right	Insight: Derive meaning through status, economic power and ability to provide for family	Insight: farmers see themselves as belonging to the vocation of farming (just as much as a commercial farmer)
Insight: feel they can offer other farmers skills to learn.		Insight: Derive meaning through learning and sharing knowledge
Insight: value knowledge of local contexts		Insight: Derive meaning through contributing to the health of the community
Insight: strong social engagement to farmers knowledge acquisition		Insight: most farmers see the money they make from farming as valuable income
		Insight: value community activities

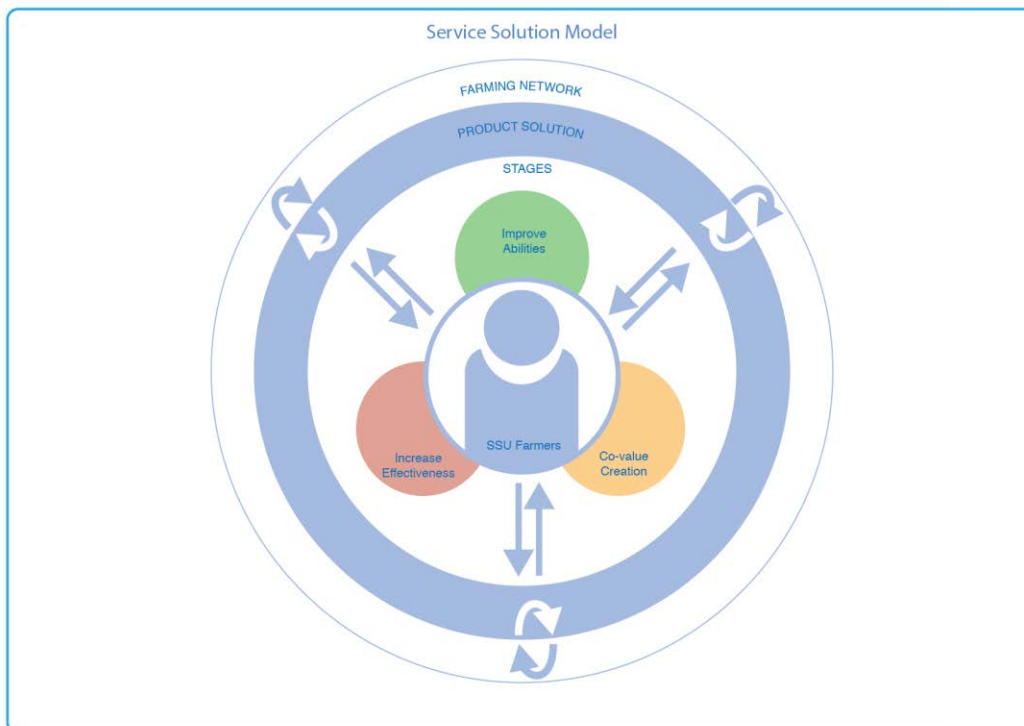
**Figure 11: The insights arranged into the final three themes**

## Modeling the solution strategy

The three themes that emerged, as modeled in Figure 11, were:

1. Improve Abilities: The need to access information in order to improve agricultural production.
2. Increase Effectiveness: The need to improve the business side of the farming business.

3. Co-value Creation: The need to enhance the value of farming as a vocation in the Soweto community and improve the esteem and confidence of farmers through utilising the existing, healthy social and community networks.



**Figure 12: The solution model for the Soweto Farmers (Small-scale Urban farmers [SSU]) Project**

The process of analysis and synthesis is always subjective, and in this case study, the role played by the farmer participants in confirming that insights were reflective and the strategy appropriate has been underreported<sup>6</sup>. However, what is important, and evident in this theoretical positioning and case study, is that the application of the *Three-Level Hierarchy of Needs Model* is a viable approach for framing human-centered research activities that address complex societal problems. The structured approach to recognizing needs presented in the hierarchy increases the likelihood of obtaining actionable insights from research activities that are directly useful for forming impactful design strategies, subsequent product solutions, as well as providing an approach to critically reflect on design product solutions.

## Conclusion

While HCD has been identified as a valuable and effective approach for design, HCD can, due to the complexities embedded within societal formations, and the indeterminacy of design outcomes, be difficult to practice effectively— particularly for novice designers.

Experience obtained through running HCD design courses with undergraduate students shows that they often do not have a considered approach to constructing research questions. The result of this lack of technique in constructing design research activities is often a barrier to obtaining rich and insightful data from research activities, which can affect the impact of subsequent understanding and solutioning.

<sup>6</sup> See Fenn (2014) for a description of this aspect of the design project

This paper presents a brief theoretical positioning followed by a case study that describes how applying the *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model to frame HCD research can be beneficial in terms of enabling:

1. That the data generated is relevant to goal-orientated design such as user-experience design, interaction design, and service design etc.
2. That the research data generated reflects user needs at a motivational, behavioural and operational level.
3. That subsequently, the model can be used to interpret the generated data in a meaningful manner.
4. That insights gained through the application of the model are actionable in terms of contributing to strategising solutions.

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# Wicked ethics in Design

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## Abstract

*Wicked problems are wicked because, amongst other things, understanding problems as existing in society, at the intersection of many possible points of views held by a variety of potential stakeholders introduces indeterminacy. Ethical frameworks in this context may also be multiple and may exist in harmony or dis-harmony alongside each other.*

*In this paper, we argue for an acknowledgement of this complexity. This acknowledgement includes recognizing a distinction between successful and good design; that design, when considering the best course of action in an ethical and pragmatic sense needs to look beyond the business and consumer dichotomy; that ethical pluralism can exist across multiple stakeholders in an ecosystem; and that our ethical judgements need to be considered within the context of socio-cultural change.*

*This paper concludes by suggesting a range of interventions and tools that could be incorporated into design curriculum to assist design students with understanding and navigating ethical complexity.*

**Keywords:** Complexity, Ethical judgement, Human-centred Design (HCD), Service Dominant Logic

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## Introduction

This paper discusses the many levels of ethical consideration that the designer has to account for. It argues that ethics, like design problems to which they are inexplicably linked, exist due to their construction within societal contexts and are thus complex, indeterminate and in need of ‘taming’.

We will discuss and argue for the position that design is required to offer the best decision that enables positive impact for the widest range of actors and environments and it is the designer who carries the responsibility of navigating ethical complexity because of their influence over the future, resources, social practices, and so on.

By drawing on a range of literature generally addressing complex societal problems in design and philosophical concerns related to moral relativism, this paper will argue a position centered around the following:

1. The need to extend the framing of design problems beyond human-centered design (HCD’s) common prioritization of the needs of users and businesses including managing conflicting ethical positions as a result of actors’ prioritization of their own relative ethical positionings
2. Accounting for the affects of change that extend beyond primary actors
3. Acknowledging the challenge of operating in contexts of ethical pluralism in general.

The authors propose that affecting change through a consideration of factors beyond the immediate and relative ethical (or other) needs of primary actors may be more effective for the sustainable resolution of complex societal problems. Furthermore, the designer is required to engage with these broader areas of concern if they are to meaningfully comprehend the potential impact of their design interventions.

This is achieved by the designer understanding the frameworks and systems related to the immediate problem space (codes of practice, policies, judicial laws, constitutional laws, acceptable practice etc.) while recognizing and reflecting on their own ethical motives. These like other aspects of wicked problems need to be understood ‘objectively’ before they can be acted on ‘subjectively’.

This paper will conclude by suggesting a range of interventions and tools that could be incorporated into design curriculum to assist design students with understanding and navigating ethical complexity.

## Recognising social complexity and ethical relativism

The idea that design should be responsive to society is not new (Melles et al 2011, p. 143). Both Whitely (1993) in *Design for Society* and Papeneck (1991) in *Design for the Real World* articulated the need for moral and socially responsible design practice (Melles et al, p. 144) to counterbalance the 'market-driven design' that goes beyond the idea of meeting fundamental human needs in the stimulation of human desires to make a profit (Thorpe & Gamman 217, p. 2011, Keinonen 2010, p. 19). However as early as 1973, Rittel and Webber (1973, p. 159) describe the resolving of design problems as an inherently complex activity located in the subjectivity of social processes and networks. Resolving these societal problems, they noted, was a complex act in itself as these problems were ill-defined (ibid: 160), elusive (ibid: 165), and indeterminate having no clear solution (ibid, p. 161). Nonetheless, Rittel and Webber contended, understanding of the characteristics of the societal problem was critical in order to determine what action, if any, the design should engage in.

These types of problems were termed by Rittel and Webber (and are now almost pervasively referred to in design) as *wicked* in the sense that before they could be solved these types of problems needed to be tamed, defined and limited. Understanding wicked problems is akin to understanding the problem-ecology - the complexity from which the problem emerges (Fenn & Hobbs 2012, p. 6). Satisfying peoples' fundamental needs is in design inextricably related to fixing problems (Keinonen 2010, p. 19). IDEO's *Three Lenses of Human-Centered Design* (2008), see Figure 1, models the concept of a problem-ecology at a meta-level. The three lenses of the model, namely Desirability, Feasibility and Viability orientate the different needs that require understanding and fulfillment in order for a design problem to be resolved.

Identifying and objectively understanding the needs of a problem-ecology has become a key area of practice in design particularly in human-centred design (HCD) with numerous methodologies and methods such as Critical Design, User-Centered Design, Contextual Enquiry, Applied Ethnography, Participatory Design (Sanders & Stappers 2012, p. 19).

An array of literature related to recognising needs in a problem-ecology has been devoted to dialogue between designers and people (Sanders & Stappers 2012, Buur & Larsen 2010, Wright and McCarthy 2010) and participatory processes in general (Visser et al 2005, Sanders 2000, Sanders & Stappers 2008, Steen 2010). While there is value in addressing needs in terms of human desires, it is necessary to recognise that need is not purely subjective to the needing individuals alone (Keinonen 2010: p19). What is *needed*, Keinonen argues (ibid), becomes a question of appreciation, values, power and resources and includes numerous other stakeholders such as political decision makers, authorities, business owners, employees, community leaders etc.

Actors of these types, the individuals in need (who themselves may offer contrasting views) as well as designers, themselves, ensure that resolving complex societal problems is always a 'political process' that involves multi-stakeholder engagement and during which stakeholders reveal "different intentions, frequently subversively expressed and very often conflictual towards each other, and that is an unavoidable part of human interaction" (Buur & Larsen 2010, p. 122).

The challenge for design is negotiating the various stakeholders' points of view and achieving a commonly agreed end result (Mattelmäki 2008, p. 65). The dilemma that this paper speaks to is that of the final responsibility for decision-making in the design process. Design is an act of envisioning the future and as such, as noted by Tony Fry (2009), has a responsibility for ensuring there is one.

While participatory design claims to negate much of the bias of the designer and instead place it on the end-user community, does it also therefore shift the responsibility of the outcome of the design

as well? If so, is this naivety at its most callous? As described earlier there are many other stakeholders that wield power and influence over what is 'needed'. Additionally larger macro-forces such as economic and broader socio-cultural objectives such as environmental concerns, the need for employment and gender equity may also influence thinking. Lastly, there is also of course, no guarantee that those directly affected by the problem will act with any concern for anybody else but themselves.

The ethical concerns emerge as such. Firstly, focusing overwhelmingly on users' needs in resolving complex problems implies that the designer suspends their own assumptions and judgments in line with a relativist approach. Moral relativism at first appears a suitable approach for HCD as it accommodates the diversity of beliefs (Dupré 2013, p. 24, Westacott) of multiple stakeholders, however as relativism approaches each belief system as equally valuable, the corollary suggests that each belief system is equally valueless. The outcome of such an ethical stance is the suspension of judgment due to the inability to identify and prioritise the needs which require resolution. Secondly, this crisis of value is further impacted by the likelihood of many of the stakeholders acting in their own self-interest, in an egoistic manner. Therefore in addition to not knowing what needs to be solved it is also unclear as to who should be preferenced in terms of need satisfaction.

The danger of making an appeal to as many ethical principles as possible is that sometimes they conflict. In analysing an action, the course of action that is suggested by one ethical philosophy might contradict the course of action that is suggested by another.

For example, Egoism focuses on self-interest. This ethical principle is used as justification when something is done to further an individual's own welfare. The principle of Utilitarianism embodies the notion of operating in the public interest rather than for personal benefit. However, an appreciation of ethics allows individuals to be aware of all possible ethical resolutions and their respective implications.

In terms of ascertaining a constructive way forward for the designer perhaps Kallman and Grillo express it best when they note:

An appropriate course of action for an individual should only be arrived at after thinking through all the implications. The intention behind an ethical analysis should not be to prescribe a particular set of ethical values for resolving ethical issues invoked by computers. But allow an individual to appreciate all the possible course(s) of action that can be taken according to the differing, and often conflicting, sets of ethical values and then make a judgement as to which is applicable for them in the real world (Kallman & Grillo 1996, p.6).

## Good design and successful design

'Good' can be understood as suitable, agreeable, pleasant, well-founded, cogent and satisfactory; or as virtuous, right or commendable (Merriam-Webster online-dictionary). In the context of this paper we use the term 'good' in the sense of the latter where it carries a moral or ethical judgement. On the other hand, the term 'successful' is applied in the prior sense of 'good' where it could also be described as successfully accomplishing the goals set out for the intended intervention, which the design facilitates.

This distinction allows an important question to be posed: is it possible that a design could be successful but not good?

Dark patterns<sup>1</sup> (a term that has arisen in the field of interface design) describe the design of elements in an interface intended to deceive users into agreeing to things that they would otherwise have

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1 For more information on dark patterns see: <http://darkpatterns.org/>

potentially disagreed to (Brignull et al n.d). This includes ambiguous phraseology and hiding detail (amongst other things) (Brignull et al n.d).

A design that employs such patterns and, as a result, successfully achieves certain business goals can be understood to be successful (in that it answers the business's goals) but not, good<sup>2</sup> (in the sense that it misleads users and removes their right to informed choice).

This distinction between successful and good, is important because it raises three perspectives from which ethical considerations operate in relation to design:

1. Is it the design that is un-ethical or the choices made by the individual (responsible for the design) and the commissioning agent who are being un-ethical?
2. How can (and should?) design resolve conflicting ethical positions between players in an ecosystem?
3. Given moral and ethical pluralism and the fact that both morals and ethics and the condition of the world change over time (Dupre 2013, p.25), what are the limits to ethical judgement?

## Who, or what, is ethical or un-ethical in design?

A designer that conceives of and/or agrees to a design that, for example, is understood to deceive an end user, would be described as acting un-ethically if they are either acting contrary to their personal ethic (that deception is wrong) or within a socio-cultural framework that deems deception to be wrong. The same would be true of a commissioning agent of such a piece of design (in this case both the commissioning agent and the designer could be said to have crossed some ethical line).

As previously noted, the design may be successful (in its use of deception) however we are unlikely to describe it as good.

But what if we could magically<sup>3</sup> alter the ethical context in which a design exists? If the same work of design that involved deceiving users was operating in a context where deceiving users was not unethical, would it make sense to then say that the work of design had become ethical? It seems that the ethical judgement is relative rather to the individual/s responsible for the design and the contexts in which they are operating rather than the work of design, itself.

At the fear of becoming overly obtuse, the authors contend that:

- a) It is the individual doing the design (and where relevant the commissioning agent of the design) that carries the ethical responsibility
- b) However, the work of design itself cannot be said to be, in-and-of-itself ethical or un-ethical. The significance of this distinction will become clear when we discuss the limits of ethical judgements of design later.

In this view the issue of ethics in relation to design is fairly clear: the individual's responsible for a design are either acting ethically or un-ethically in relation to their own personal (or organizational) code or those which exist in their given socio-cultural context.

## Resolving conflicting ethical positions

The ethically-relative position that an individual or organization behind a design may hold is not where the discussion ends. It may well be the case that conflicting ethical positions exist between any number of stakeholders in a given ecosystem in which the design operates.

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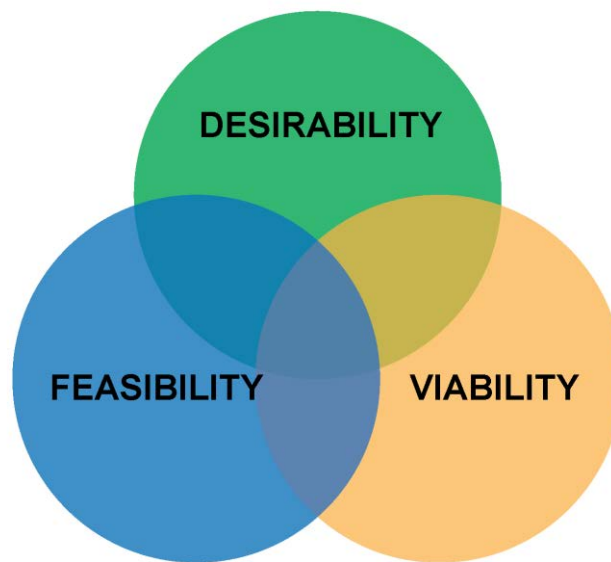
2 'Not good' if misleading users and removing their right to informed choice are ethical boundaries within a socio-cultural context

3 Time is an example of such a magical event

For example, an ethical conflict may exist between the need for a business to honour its profit obligations to shareholders where the means for achieving this involve deceiving customers.

The authors have observed that in many conversations, presentations and student project briefs with HCD, it is implied that by placing an emphasis on the end user, the 'exploitative' nature of the business or organization will be checked. This line of whimsical discourse is often compounded by the belief that if the organization was 'to only listen to the user', both parties would enter some type of fairy tale win-win situation. Thus, it is often tacitly implied that ethical considerations of a design engagement can be met by managing this tension. While valid ethical conflicts may exist in this business / customer dichotomy they often extend further to other stakeholders in any given ecosystem.

The oversimplification of the complexity of relationships in a given ecosystem, and the number and variety of relative ethical positions, in HCD practice and models is of concern. Consider for example IDEO's model for desirability, feasibility and viability in HCD.



**Figure 1: IDEO's Desirability, Feasibility and Viability model. (Based on, IDEO 2008 p. 8)**

In this model 'desirability' is defined as what people (end-users) desire, 'feasibility' as what is technically and organizationally feasible and 'viability' as what is financially viable for the business.

The business / customer (or organization / user) dichotomy can be observed at play here where feasibility and viability are largely representative of business or organizational concerns and desirability of user concerns. In this model, technology, is the only area of concern beyond the organization / user dichotomy that is acknowledged.

Consider then that a business may believe that it is acting ethically to its shareholders by reducing costs in production of a product by using a certain material however it may be considered un-ethical if that material contributes to environmental unsustainability.

And what of the potential ethical conflicts to society at large, not just niche groups within the scope of a design project (especially in heterogeneous societies)? What of economic considerations, cultural and political considerations? What of the needs of the marketplace, competitors and both the physical and technological environment?

Service Dominant Logic<sup>4</sup> (SDL) theory could offer help here: “For service systems, we define value simply in terms of an improvement in system well being and we can measure value in terms of a system’s adaptiveness or ability to fit in its environment...A service system is an arrangement of resources connected to other systems by value propositions, and its function is to make use of its own resources and the resources of others to improve its circumstances and that of others”<sup>5</sup> (Vargo et al 2008 p.149).

In this view, creating harmonies from conflicts across the ecosystem is a key driver for the success (and sustainability) of the resultant design solution<sup>6</sup>. We would further argue that value propositions between stakeholders in a service system would necessarily resolve ethical conflicts in order to be meaningful.

Furthermore, the business / consumer dichotomy is also challenged as being short sighted in SDL:

“The dominant paradigm in marketing separates the producer from the consumer in order to maximise production efficiency, but this production efficiency comes at the expense of marketing effectiveness. By pursuing a division of labour that led to the separation of parties, including the producer from consumer, a dramatic increase in efficiency resulted. This reinforced an attitude and view that the customer was someone to target and market to versus an entity to market with. The result was poorer and poorer marketing effectiveness but high cost efficiency for producers” (Lusch & S Vargo 2004, pp. 412-413).

SDL theory provides a historical argument for why ethical conflicts emerge in the business / consumer dichotomy. The ethical imperatives in the norms outlined below further suggest how a humanistic approach can resolve conflicts:

“If all firms were to:

- 1) be transparent and truthful to the customer,
- 2) be the guardian and do what is best for long-term customer welfare,
- 3) focus on selling service flows and not tangible stuff, and
- 4) continually invest in the development of human skills,

then we would argue we would have less societal ills or things that government may be prompted to address. In fact a brief journey over the last 100 years will show that the major legislation directed at marketing was largely because firms did not follow the preceding norms” (Vargo & Lusch 2004, p. 416).

While SDL, and service design in general, appear to clear a path towards looking beyond the business/ consumer dichotomy and resolving conflicts across the entirety of an ecosystem (or service system) HCD still lacks models that may assist in deconstructing these spaces to unpack the many relationships and ethically-relative positions that could exist.

## The limits of ethical judgement

We have, thus far, discussed ethical pluralism at some length. This pluralism can further be understood to exist across time. As the conditions of the world have shifted so have the socio-cultural contexts in which people exist.

For example, the petrol engine: a great idea in the early Twentieth Century to solve mass-transportation but potentially disastrous now.

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<sup>4</sup> For more details relating to Service Dominant Logic see: <http://sdlogic.net/>

<sup>5</sup> Also, note the relationship between service design and SDL and that SD can be considered due to their application of co-creation, a form of HCD (Vargo et al 2008 p.150).

<sup>6</sup> It is worth noting that this view includes product design where in SDL “Goods are [understood to be] distribution mechanisms for service provision” (Vargo & Lusch 2004 p.3).

Earlier in this paper we discussed how a work of design cannot be said to be, in-and-of-itself ethical or un-ethical and that rather, it is the individual or individuals that are responsible for the design that carry the ethical burden in the socio-cultural context in which it exists. This then suggests a limit to our critique of design from an ethical standpoint.

On the one hand it is necessary to retain the ability to remove a work of design from an ecosystem if 'it' is un-ethical but it is equally important to retain the ability to assess the success of a design if we are to learn from and apply the factors of the design that are successful but remove the un-ethical elements.

Ethically, we also stand in a space of paradox, because 1. it always remains a possibility that in the context of pluralism we may not have considered all ethical positions and 2. that we cannot know what shifts may affect our socio-cultural condition such that what was once deemed ethical or not may change.

For an effective critique of design (from an ethical or any other standpoint) it is necessary that we understand it in its most complete context within a given ecosystem. Without this we cannot start to consider all stakeholders and their associated ethical positions. A model for students and practitioners that provides a generic way to view both common and likely stakeholders in any given ecosystem would go a long way to assist with this.

If a design intervention is to be accountable it is necessary that one can trace it's logic back from point of existence (in the world, now) to the hypothesis or interpretation of the original problem space that informed the decisions made as part of its creation. In this way sustainability can be created through adjusting decisions and iterating the design. Although this is unlikely to assist across broad spans of time (from the time when slavery was acceptable to when it became unacceptable, for example) it provides an important and useful basis for the ongoing iteration of design in shorter time spans such that adjustments may be made that can consider the ethical (and other) needs of multiple stakeholders across an ecosystem.

A model that could supplement or work in tandem with the HCD method that provides traceability, accountability and therefore sustainability would also go a long way to assist our humanistic design efforts.

## Conclusion

Wicked problems are wicked because, amongst other things, understanding problems as existing in society, at the intersection of many possible points of views held by a variety of potential stakeholders introduces indeterminacy. Ethical frameworks in this context may also be multiple and may exist in harmony or dis-harmony alongside each other.

In this paper we have argued for an acknowledgement of this complexity by HCD: that a distinction between successful and good design needs to be recognised; that we need to look beyond the business (or organizational) and consumer (or user) dichotomy; that ethical pluralism can exist across multiple stakeholders in an ecosystem; and that our ethical judgements need to be considered within the context of socio-cultural change.

We have further identified that an opportunity exists for HCD to address these complexities however the field lacks effective models and tools that could assist students of design and designers in general in:

- Deconstructing and making sense of the ethical (and other) complexities that exist in problem-ecologies
- Designing solutions that strive to create harmonies across the multiplicity of views, needs and ethics of divergent stakeholders, and
- A manner of critique that acknowledges the path to solutions from original problem interpretation such that iterative change can be made within such complexity

Lastly, the objective of such models and tools (and the agenda of a humanistic approach to design) would need to consider the manner in which they assist design in providing accountability of complexity and sustainability through a critique that acknowledges this same complexity.

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# The ethics review of visual communication design research proposals: is a 'dual mandate' approach justifiable?

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## Abstract

*The majority of institutional ethics committees at South African tertiary institutions state in their standard operating procedures that the role of the ethics committee includes screening proposed research with regard to the core principles of ethics (dignity and autonomy, justice, non-maleficence and beneficence), as well as the scientific validity of the envisaged study. The first part of this paper debates to what extent such an approach is justified, as the notion of validity is primarily located in the philosophy of science and not in the field of moral philosophy. The second part of the paper illustrates some of the main points of the discussion with selected examples from the field of visual communication design research. The examples are drawn from (1) practice-based design research, where the products of the design practice are presented as inquiry outcomes, often contextualized in an accompanying written report; (2) practice-led design research, i.e. studies that investigate the nature of practice in an effort to develop insights that will contribute to new knowledge about the design practice, where the processes and products of the design practice may be used as data, but are not considered to be inquiry outputs in themselves; and (3) image-based design research, or research approaches where visual images such as photographs, drawings or video recordings form an integral part of the data collection and analysis methods. As the selected examples show, the notions of validity and ethics are interwoven and inextricably linked, but not inseparable. While recognizing that crude errors of reasoning (i.e. low validity) may in some cases ultimately lead to harm (i.e. unethical conduct), it is argued that the 'dual mandate' approach of screening for issues of ethics and validity concomitantly is not suitable for visual communication design research. Ethics clearance is a relatively recent requirement at Universities of Technology and is becoming increasingly rigorous. In the light thereof, the paper contributes to the current debates about the ethics dimension of design practice and design research, especially in a South African setting.*

**Keywords:** Visual communication design research, ethics review, validity, dual mandate

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## Introduction

This paper discusses issues and concerns relating to the ethics review of visual communication design research proposals. The paper focuses on the relationship between the core principles of research ethics on the one hand, and the notion of validity on the other hand. The background to the discussion is that the terms of reference and standard operating procedures of the majority of institutional ethics review committees at South African universities, and internationally as well, state that research proposals should be assessed both in terms of the universal principles of ethics, as well as with regard to the scientific validity of the envisaged study. The universal principles of ethics include dignity and autonomy, justice, non-maleficence and beneficence (Gallagher 1999).

This dual mandate stems primarily from clinical research in the health sciences where, as discussed in greater detail later in the paper, discussions surrounding the principle of equipoise (Miller & Brody 2007) show that in a clinical research setting a biased sample can easily lead to a situation where, if the study were to proceed, the researcher would in all likelihood waste the time of the study participants and needlessly inconvenience them. The researcher is also likely to deny the participants

access to standard treatments and therapies, and neglect the 'therapeutic obligation to offer optimal medical care to patients' in other ways as well (Miller & Brody 2007, p. 151). Transferring the concerns raised with regard to equipoise in broad terms to other types of research implies that a proposed study with a flawed research logic and inappropriately selected methods should not be allowed to proceed from a research ethics point of view. This is the case in order to prevent a situation where the researcher wastes the time of the participants with activities that will in any case not lead to valid results and will thus not contribute anything meaningful to scholarship in the design disciplines.

Based on definitions of validity by Kirk and Miller (1986, p. 80), Lather (1993, p. 673), Mouton (1996, p. 111), Reichertz (2000, p. 3) and Mayan (2001, p. 25), for the purpose of this paper the notion of validity refers to as an epistemic criterion which applies to the entire research process and deals primarily with those strategies of legitimizing knowledge which rest on the quality of fit between observations, facts or data and the conclusions based on such observations, facts or data (Gaede 2004). Using the term 'validity', and not 'credibility', in connection with visual communication design research may at first seem problematic and inappropriate. However, there have always been pleas among qualitative researchers for a move away from a 'qualitative only' way of writing and a return to the terminology used by mainstream science (see Morse et. al., 2002). In this regard, it is also important to point out that ever since the paradigm wars of the 1960s, a number of authors working in the qualitative inquiry paradigm have retained the term 'validity' in their writing all along. These include Lather (1993), who argued that '... rather than jettisoning validity as the term of choice, I retain the term in order to both circulate and break with the signs that code it' (Lather 1993, p. 674).

The remainder of this paper develops the argument that during the ethics review of visual communication design research proposals, issues of validity and ethics are invariably interwoven and interlinked, but not inseparable. While recognizing that crude errors of reasoning (i.e. low validity) may in some cases ultimately lead to harm (i.e. unethical conduct), it is argued that in contrast to the dual mandate approach commonly used in the health sciences, the emphasis of an ethics review in the visual communication design disciplines should fall fairly and squarely on issues of ethics.

## Ethics review and the 'dual mandate'

Ethics clearance for research proposals is a relatively recent requirement at South Africa's Universities of Technology and is becoming increasingly rigorous. Some institutions have multiple research ethics committees which operate alongside each other, each being separately accredited to issue ethics clearance numbers. For example, one ethics committee focuses on proposals from the humanities, one on research in the health sciences, one on research involving animals and so on. In other cases, the university has a single central ethics committee which reviews proposals from all its faculties. In addition, some universities have set up faculty-based ethics committees which can process proposals for low-risk studies, but are not in a position to issue clearance numbers. These faculty-based ethics review committees are usually monitored and audited by the university's main ethics committee or ethics review board. Smaller public universities and private tertiary institutions tend to submit their research proposals to external ethics committees for review where needed, such as to the ethics committee of the Human Sciences Research Council, or the ethics review board of the Medical Research Council. In some instances, only those projects that will be published in an academic journal where the editorial policy of the journal stipulates that an ethics clearance number by an accredited ethics review board must be submitted together with the journal manuscript are sent for ethics review, especially as ethics clearance numbers cannot be issued retrospectively.

In order to assess the level of risk and the nature of the review required, ethics review committees look at whether the proposed study will involve (1) human participants, (2) organizations, (3) animals, or (4) the environment. Based on the numerous ethics training materials available to ethics reviewers online and elsewhere, studies involving archival research or a philosophical analysis using only written sources generally do not require ethics clearance. Studies involving human participants

typically require a letter of information to the prospective participants and informed consent forms unless there are clear reasons why informed consent can be dispensed with. Studies involving organizations imply that a letter of gatekeeper permission needs to be obtained before the study commences, such as written permission from a school principal, school governing body and/or the Minister of Education to conduct research with the learners on the school premises. Prospective studies that will involve animals and the environment need to adhere to international protocols to minimize cruelty or adverse consequences to the environment. As a general rule, studies involving children, pregnant women and vulnerable participants such as prisoners require a more rigorous and detailed review, usually by co-opting additional experts onto the ethics committee where needed.

Regardless of the level of risk, the standard practice is that research proposals are first scrutinized by scholars and researchers in the relevant academic discipline, such as by a faculty-based research committee, before they are forwarded for ethics review. This arrangement means that ideally issues of validity and scholarly rigor, as well as other research quality criteria rooted in the philosophy of science, are assessed at faculty or school level, and that issues of ethics such as the risk of harm to participants as well as other considerations located in the field of moral philosophy are evaluated by the relevant ethics committee. In practice, however, the terms of reference and standard operating procedures of the majority of institutional ethics review committees at South African universities encourage the above mentioned 'dual mandate' approach whereby the role of the ethics review board is to engage with both issues of scientific validity and ethics.

As mentioned in the introduction, this 'dual mandate' approach emanates from a health research setting where the principle of equipoise (Miller & Brody 2007) plays an important role. Equipoise exists when '... a clinician has no good basis for a choice between two or more care options or when one is truly uncertain about the overall benefit or harm offered by the treatment to his/her patient' (Cook and Sheets 2011, p. 55). Equipoise links closely with issues of research sampling and measurement validity (Miller & Brody 2007). The assumption is that where a preferred care option is available based on clear evidence, further research is generally speaking not justified. In contrast, where there is no sound basis for deciding between two or more care options due to a lack of evidence, and the overall benefit or harm offered by a particular treatment is unknown, further research is warranted. The likelihood that the proposed study will, once successfully completed, directly benefit the study participants is thus very high at the outset. This implies that it may easily happen that an ethics reviewer or research ethics committee member from a health research background may require a research project from another academic field to conform to the principle of equipoise (broadly speaking) on a variety of levels. These may include the expectations that (1) the researcher has to show that the proposed project will have foreseeable benefits to the study participants before the project may proceed. If there are no tangible and foreseeable benefits, then why do the study in the first place? and (2) the researcher must clearly show that the proposed study will lead to scientifically valid results that will reduce the uncertainty surrounding the choice among two or more available options. In the event that it is known right at the beginning that the results of the proposed study will not meet these criteria, then why do the study in the first place?

It is, however, debatable to what extent the 'dual mandate' approach of assessing issues of validity and ethics concomitantly is helpful in the case of research proposals from the visual communication design field. These typically involve (1) practice-based design research, where the products of the design practice are presented as inquiry outcomes, often contextualized in an accompanying written report (see Roome 2013, for example); (2) practice-led design research, i.e. studies that investigate the nature of practice in an effort to develop insights that will contribute to new knowledge about the design practice, where the processes and products of the design practice may be used as data, but are not considered to be inquiry outputs in themselves; and (3) image-based design research, or research approaches where visual images such as photographs, drawings or video recordings form an integral part of the data collection and analysis methods (Prosser 1998). In other words, visual communication design research is primarily idiographic in nature, whereas the 'dual mandate'

approach to ethics review sits more comfortably with a nomothetic research orientation (Jary & Jary 2005, p. 290).

## Discussion of examples

In the case of visual communication design research proposals, ethical considerations primarily relate to the dignity of the human person (see Langmann & Pick 2014) as well as methods and techniques of ensuring anonymity, meeting privacy expectations and ensuring informed consent in a manner that is appropriate for data collection and analysis approaches which involve with visual images (Pauwels 2008). As far as the ethics review process is concerned, Prosser and Loxley (2008:49) point out that:

'Due the relative newness of visually orientated research, there is limited agreement among ethics committees and visual researchers on ethical guidelines and subsequent practices. It is clear that around the world funding bodies, universities, academic departments, regional and local authorities and researchers are only now beginning to consider establishing comprehensive and viable visual ethics policies (Prosser and Loxley 2008, p. 49)'

Bearing in mind that visual communication design ethics policies are still in the process of being developed, the following three examples briefly highlight how issues of validity and ethics are linked, but not inseparable:

### Example 1

As part of a practice-based research project, an artist/researcher intends to produce an exhibition of documentary photographs of the interiors of public trains as well as commuters travelling on them with a view to obtain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of commuting and to convey this understanding visually. A validity issue is that verbal explanations of the commuters about their views, opinions and experiences would meaningfully augment and contextualize the visual information and such a triangulation of methods would improve the study design as a whole. The implications for research ethics are that simply taking documentary photographs in a public train, possibly by means of a concealed camera, is a relatively straightforward matter seen from a research ethics point of view, provided that the artist/researcher does not harass or needlessly annoy the commuters, and that they remain anonymous throughout the process. Interviewing the commuters, on the other hand, would require additional measures to ensure that the universal principles of research ethics, i.e. dignity and autonomy, justice, non-maleficence and beneficence, are complied with. Such additional measures would include an information letter about the project, informed consent forms, obtaining permission to photograph and to voice record the conversation, and so. In such a case, raising the scientific validity of the study has significant implications for research ethics.

### Example 2

As part of a practice-led research project, a researcher intends to interview 15-20 of the most well-known and influential graphic designers working in South Africa at the moment about their practice, their design philosophy, working habits, etc. The intention is to offer the designers the option of participating anonymously and to voice record the interviews. A validity issue is that it is important for the readers of the completed study to know who was interviewed, in order to allow them to form an own opinion whether they agree that the selected designers are in fact among the most well-known and influential designers. The related research ethics issue is that conducting interviews and anonymizing the data is relatively straightforward from a research ethics point of view. Declaring the identity of the participant in the research report, on the other hand, would require a more rigorous approach to research ethics prior to, during and after the data collection. Such a more rigorous approach would include agreements about how the data are stored and who will have access to the data under what conditions, etc. In this particular case, the participating graphic designers may also

become annoyed when offered the option of remaining anonymous in the research report and other subsequent publications, as the fact that they are considered to be well-known and influential was the reason for their selection in the first place. While ethics review committees tend to encourage anonymization wherever possible, in this particular case anonymization would probably be counterproductive to the aims of the study as a whole.

### Example 3

A researcher intends to employ the visual research method of photo-elicitation in a project about perceptions and attitudes surrounding nudity in art to be conducted on a university campus among university students. The researcher intends to show three to four photographs relating to the theme of nudity in art to each participant at the beginning of an individual interview. A validity issue for a project of this nature is that the photographs are intended as a prompting device in order to reduce awkwardness in the early stages of the interview, i.e. to 'break the ice', which will ultimately contribute to a situation where the participants are inclined to talk more freely. This will in turn increase the likelihood of a positive communicative atmosphere and the chances of obtaining richer and deeper data during the interviews. From a research ethics point of view, a study of this nature would require, among others, an information letter informing the participants of the aims of the study, how the data will be handled, and information about the participant's right to withdraw from the study at any stage without adverse consequences. However, in order to place the prospective participants in a position where they can give informed consent in a meaningful way, they will need to see one to two representative examples of the type of images that will be used during the photo-elicitation procedure beforehand. If this were not the case, a situation could arise where the photo-elicitation interview proceeds normally up to a point where the researcher shows an image to the participant which the participants experiences as obscene or offensive. At this point the participant may choose to exercise his/her right to withdraw from the study. However, at that point 'the damage will have been done' and it would have been better if the participant had a clearer idea beforehand what he/she was agreeing to. In such a study, the process of showing the prospective participants one to two representative examples of the images to be used beforehand as part of the procedure of obtaining informed consent, and then showing a few more images in the photo-elicitation interview itself once the interviewee has agreed to participate in the study, does not significantly change the study design and does not have a strong impact on validity considerations. In other words, no noteworthy tradeoff between issues of validity and issues of ethics needs to occur.

### Conclusion

This paper discussed how issues of validity and ethics are invariably closely connected during the ethics review of visual communication design research proposals, as illustrated by means of three examples. The view adopted in the paper is that the 'dual mandate' approach of screening for issues of ethics and validity concomitantly, which is popular in the health sciences, is as a general rule not suitable for visual communication design research. The emphasis of an ethics review in the visual communication design disciplines should fall fairly and squarely on issues of ethics, and on ways of avoiding foreseeable harm.

Ethics clearance is a relatively recent requirement at Universities of Technology and is becoming increasingly rigorous. Most institutions currently ensure that postgraduate and free-standing research projects, especially if they are externally funded, undergo a process of ethics screening, but do not yet require fourth year and undergraduate projects to be submitted for ethics clearance of any kind. This state of affairs is, however, gradually changing and it is likely that in three to five years from now it will be standard practice for small-scale undergraduate projects to undergo a thorough and detailed process of ethics review.

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# Ethics in design and issues of social class: reflecting on the learning unit: Design and the Construction of Class Distinction

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## Abstract

*The second year Design Studies learning unit “Design and the Construction of Class Distinction” (BA Communication Design, Industrial Design, University of Johannesburg) introduces students to definitions of social class in terms of capitalism (Olin-Wright 2008, Goldthorpe 1980, Crompton 1998, 2003) as well as to Bourdieusian concepts of habitus, field and capital (Bourdieu 1989; Weininger 2005, Bennett, et al 2010; Jenkins 2003; Grenfell 2003). In this unit, students are asked to relate these concepts to taste, style and design through individual essay writing and, emerging from this, a small-scale, empirical research project related to their own cultural environment as students in Johannesburg. It prompts students to raise powerful questions about the ethics of design in capitalist societies and engage in complex and rich conversations about consumption in post-apartheid South Africa. The strong sociological focus on social class and inequality seemed to provide a potent catalyst for this interrogation. By drawing on the critical pedagogies of McLaren & Scatamburlo (2004), Dolby (2001), Willis (1999), Apple (2015) and the praxis of Neville Alexander (2013) I present a case for sociologically reflexive (Wacquant 1992) design theory linking this to the structure of the learning unit. I show that explorations of social class allowed design students to ask relevant and difficult ethical questions about their profession and its transformational agenda.*

**Keywords:** Capitalism, social class and distinction, taste, Bourdieu’s reflexive sociology, design theory, critical pedagogy, neo-Marxist class analysis

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## Class-based analysis and the fashioning of identity in post-apartheid South Africa

How are the self-fashionings of South African youth constructed when so much identity work is configured, both through the “historical time” of apartheid and across the global space of popular, global consumer culture (Dolby 2001, pp.7-8)? In terms of the legacy of the “racial capitalism” of apartheid (Alexander 2013, pp. 115-131) race and class may continue to structure, in potent ways, the experience of young people in South Africa.

As the reality of inequality and poverty expresses itself visibly and spectacularly through various forms of real and “symbolic violence” enacted, spontaneously on the ground (von Holdt 2013, pp.46-50) - in phenomena such as xenophobia, service delivery protests, intermittent wildcat strikes, the burning of municipal property, the defacement of historical statuary – young, marginalised people may be developing new frameworks to make sense of their lived experiences. How are students doing this? What theories do they bring to bear on their experience and what theoretical frameworks are they exposed to in their formal education that allows them to develop critical professional, political and civic agency? These are difficult issues and demand that educators, including design educators, understand, in sophisticated ways, the *habitus* of their students.

But what may this entail and how is this important for the education of designers? It may be argued that conventional class analysis, as a ‘universal’ model for understanding the modern world (Wright Mills 1962), is still very much relevant to the task of understanding the post-apartheid, South African youth habitus. However, at this historical juncture, are purely economic readings (Apple 2015) of



the social enough to producing ethical consciousness in the youth? In her analysis of the scholarship of political economy in post-apartheid South African scholarship, Narunsky-Laden (2010, p.4) asserts that this is no longer the case because “the impact of non-economic socio-cultural factors has received insufficient attention in South African socially-minded scholarship”. The failure to understand the cultural economy of domination means that, as educators, we may lose touch with young people whose identities are increasingly defined and disturbed by consumer culture. Although traditional, class-based readings still remain indispensable in understanding the economic basis of domination and inequality in the developed world globally and in the 21st century (Piketty & Goldhammer 2014) does it have explanatory power in a 21<sup>st</sup> century, post-apartheid, South African context.?

Neo-Marxist theory describes, in novel ways how various forms of social power are “intertwining” (Weininger 2005, p.113) in youth practices. Class identity may now be working in concert with a range of issues in the everyday life of young South Africans operating on multiple registers. This may be especially true with regard to self-fashioning. Combining traditional production-oriented with consumption-oriented approaches (Crompton 2003, 2008) to class analysis and identity analysis may offer young people powerful new ways of being in the world. However, this view is not without criticism. Education critics such as McLaren and Scatamburlo (2004, p.58) have criticised these non-economic, ‘postmodern’ and hybrid approaches as overly “culturalist”. As such, they draw political energy away from combatting what are primarily struggles for economic power and rights to claim the surplus for the commons (Harvey 2012, p.85) that should be fought exclusively in the political arena. With their emphasis on the symbolic in identity construction, culturalist approaches are criticised on the basis that they forget that working classness is experienced primarily as a lived, bodily suffering (McLaren and Scatamburlo 2004, p.58). This may be obfuscated by a shallow, middle-class identity politics. An over-determination of on the cultural aspects of intersectionality may valorise middle class ideas and in the process marginalise the real, but hidden experiences of working class students that are based on stratification.

What I will be arguing here is that these debates and an overall sociological approach is of special relevance for design students learning in a South African context because self-fashioning and the presentation of identity is key to the formation of their vocational identities and their vocational work. I will further argue that it is precisely because of these tensions that a Bourdieusian approach to class analysis may provide the ethical impetus to intellectualise the identities of young designers.

## Design, taste and class distinction

Exploring taste and lifestyle in sociological terms gives students in creative disciplines opportunities to explore issues of social power and self-fashioning. The focus on taste and lifestyle in the unit “Design and the Construction of Class Distinction” provided an immediate social entry point (Fairclough 2001, p.129) for students. Taste allowed them to critically examine the intersections of race, class and gender in identity work in their everyday experience. Taste is an important, but undervalued concept in both design theory and design practice. Designers require a strong understanding of it in their day-to-day work as “cultural intermediaries” whose work, under neoliberal capitalism, entails commodifying identities. As “symbolic production”, taste is central to the work of “cultural intermediaries”, such as designers, curators, marketers, advertisers. An understanding of taste is “crucial for contemporary commodification to occur” (Negus 2002, p.504). Cultural intermediaries use their understanding of taste to commodify products for identity work on the part of creative consumers (Willis 1999, p.140). As cultural intermediaries, designers “shape both use values and exchange values, and seek to manage how these values are connected with people’s lives, through the construction of markets linking a product to a potential consumer by seeking to forge a sense of identification” (Negus 2002, p.504). These are reasons why class-based analysis may be intellectually attractive to design students. It can give insight into the shifts in professional identity of creatives under, entrepreneurial, cognitive capitalism (McRobbie 2011), illuminate the performative and precarious work identities demanded by in corporate culture (Sennett 2007, du

Gay 2006) and ultimately show that the figure of the designer is enmeshed in the capitalist search for accumulation and profit.

Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* reflects a complex dialectical relationship that exists under capitalism between the positional aspects of class and the dispositional, 'meaning' aspects of identity. His oeuvre shows that the relationship between class position and identity formation is an intricate one. His project really means complexifying our understanding of class in terms of everyday practices and importantly in terms of *consumption*. The concept of taste, to which Bourdieu has devoted a major study- *Distinction* (Bourdieu & Nice 1989)- demonstrates the how *the consumerist* lifestyle spaces have become as important as traditional work and labour in defining domination. Earlier in his career, Bourdieu developed a conceptual framework of great fecundity to demonstrate how, within patriarchal societies, domination has both an economic and symbolic dimension and is linked to both production and consumption. His concepts of *species of capital* - educational, cultural, technical, and symbolic capital (Thwaites 2002) – linked to field and social space, habitus, legitimacy and legitimate culture demonstrate how social power is also invested consumption as identity formation. Applied across multiple institutional fields including higher education, the visual arts, literature, museums, photographic practices, politics, television, journalism Bourdieu employed this conceptual framework of in combination with statistical empirical techniques in order to explain the symbolic and practical dimensions of domination in everyday life. Some commentators have criticised Bourdieu's concepts as perhaps reductive in terms of their theoretical power in understanding a contemporary context (Bennett et al 2010; Buroway 2013, p.176) but also comment that it is because of this that they are good for thinking.

But good for thinking what? If it is important for designers to understand, in an instrumental, 'bread-and-butter' sense that an understanding of lifestyle, habitus and taste is important if they are to succeed as "cultural intermediaries" this is not enough for them to become *critical designers*. In a local South African context where identity is more than ever, not just a matter of lifestyle but is marked by severe forms of racial discrimination and class domination (as they are in situations of scarcity) – exploitation, ageism, sexism, racism, classism, xenophobia, language and other forms of prejudice - is it not enough for designers to simply exploit their knowledge of class and intersectionality to manipulate consumer behavior? Class-based, Neo-Marxist analytical frameworks return students to the capitalist "mechanisms of inequality" (Olin-Wright 2008, p.336) that support disparate lifestyle spaces and consumption rituals. By combining Bourdieusian approaches with traditional forms of class analysis design students may appreciate the way in which their manipulation of consumer behavior underpins class domination.

## Case Study, "Design and the construction of class distinction": reflections

The seven-week learning unit, "Design and the construction of class distinction", is offered as one of four themed units in the Design Studies 2 course (the other three units themes being "design and social responsibility", "national identity", "modernism and utopia"). This is offered to BA Industrial and Communication Design students in their second year of study and was delivered by myself, in collaboration with a highly experienced tutor. The purpose of this unit was presented as follows:

The unit gives students the opportunity to critically examine how contemporary design products produce class distinctions and class identities. Much of the theory for this unit draws on the work of late sociologist Pierre Bourdieu in particular his theories around aesthetics, taste and lifestyle. The unit introduces students to broad Marxist critiques of consumerism in relation to Bourdieu's major theoretical constructs such as field, habitus, class distinction and capital as they relate to design and cultural production. The unit gives the students the opportunity to explore, through designing a study, how design products shape consumer identities and construct class distinctions.

The unit presented framing lectures and discipline-directed tutorials. The assignment outcomes for the unit were modified to suit the needs of each department. The weekly, two hour, tutorial format gave ample time for intensive and rich interactions between lecturer and students and was flexible

enough to give the lecturer a variety of modes of engagement in the learning process. Students were encouraged to complete readings, reading and writing tasks on a weekly basis in preparation for each tutorial session so that their interactions and discussions would take place within a rich hermeneutic circle.

Given that curriculum at The University of Johannesburg is driven by prescribed, learning outcomes, classroom activities are usually directed toward the completion of standardised assignments in which the demonstration of practical and reflective competence is prioritised. Following this, in the first assignment, individual students were asked to write essays that critically discussed the concept of taste and to argue whether the Bourdieusian concepts of *habitus*, field and capital - as encapsulated in the volume edited by Grenfell (2003) - were useful in defining taste and to explore whether a relationship exists between social class and taste. In their essays, students were encouraged to use illustrative visual examples drawn from their everyday experiences of life in Johannesburg to support their conceptual explorations. These essays were then shared in groups of three to four in order to identify problems. From this the groups embarked on the second part of the assignment where they designed an empirical study about 'taste in Johannesburg', presented as a large-scale, A1 poster.

As I will show later, my facilitation was centered on drawing upon students' lived experiences into theoretical discussions about taste as well as making every effort to relate their experiences to topical and relevant events taking place at the time the unit was delivered. This included official investigations taking place into the police murder of Michael Brown in March 2015 in Ferguson, Missouri, the coverage of the Rhodes Must Fall Movement taking place at the University of Cape Town in the same month, and the xenophobic attacks that took place in inner city Johannesburg in April, 2015.

## Insights into the learning process

In what follows, I present highlights from my experience of the first four weeks of the unit, showing the learning tasks and offering brief teacherly commentary on each interaction. The narrative below should give a strong sense of how the activities were scaffolded to build an understanding of theoretical concepts so that students could then develop exploratory positions about social class, race and taste in South Africa through the design of their research projects. In this narrative, I foreground my pedagogical journey in the unit. I conclude this section by providing some examples of the research titles developed by the groups of students in response to the assignment to give a sense of the richness of their responses.

### Week 1

*Lecture: Consumerism, design*

*Tutorial: Organise yourselves into groups of three or four for the second part of the unit. Discuss your responses to the following questions that were prepared for the class:*

*What work do your parents and grandparents do? Is there a relationship between their social position and your aspirations? Do white children have better or worse life chances than black children in South Africa today? What is the difference in experience between attending a public and private high school?*

*Look at the groups that formed in the class and discuss by what criteria you organised yourselves? What criteria did you use to create your groups? Did race, gender or social class play any role in the self-organisation of the class into groups? What groups do you organise yourselves into in other design classes and other informal social contexts within the university? Discuss your responses in your groups and take a position on whether the groups should be organised differently.*

*Homework: Is the Rhodes Must Fall campaign strategy in bad taste? Conduct basic desktop research on the history of Cecil John Rhodes on SA History Online and consider this in light of the grievances and demands of the students leading the UCT campaign. Examine the interview between the SABC*

morning anchor Eben Jansen and EFF Spokesperson Mbuyiseni Ndlozi, an interview that deals with the protests and defacements taking place at historical monuments around the country in the past three days (SABC news anchor loses cool on EFF's Ndlozi, April 10, 2015). To what extent do the participants in the interview employ taste categories and binaries ('offensive', 'crude', 'vulgar', 'refined') to support their claims in terms of rhetoric? What are the implications of this in terms of the construction of 'taste groups'? Discuss these issues in your groups and report back in next week's class.

### Reflections: linking group work to social class, taste and legitimacy

A heated debate ensued about the merits of group work versus individual work in which the themes of cultural resources, *habitus* and "social closure" (Olin-Wright 2008, p.339) were explored. The outcome of the discussion was that the class agreed, democratically, to re-organise the groups to reflect gender demographics in the class. The thinking was that this approach would negate the tendency of 'friendship' cliques to form in the classroom. Black working class students in the class asserted that group work 'was good', or more ethical, because it encouraged the mutual exchange of resources and cultural capitals.

The discussion about the Rhodes Must Fall Movement and Ndlozi/Jansen interview elicited hoots of nervous laughter and dismay. Students lacked the political sophistication and knowledge of current affairs to engage in a serious way in the discussion but succeeded in recognising the extent to which taste categories were employed by both speakers to gain political legitimacy in a context of face-to-face struggle and although the class branded Ndlozi's argument as 'radical' it had greater evidentiary force and logic than that presented by Jansen.

## Week 2

*Lecture: Class analysis and class schemes*

*Tutorial: The documentary "Phakati: Soweto's Middling Class" follows the journey of Mosa Phadi, a researcher in the Center for Sociological Research at The University of Johannesburg as she attempts to understand why her respondents, come to define themselves so assertively as "middle-class". Her respondents, Soweto residents from substantially divergent economic backgrounds, include Sabelo Lukhele, a 37 year old tour guide working at JAG who lives in and owns a small house in Pimville, Zone 9; Charles Moloi a 57 year old fridge repairman and jazz aficionado living in his mother's home and supporting his unemployed nephews; Andronica Phephe, a 48 year old, unemployed woman living in Chris Hani squatter camp with her husband, child and grandchild; and the 54 year old Mpho Hilda Mkhene, the owner of two nursing training colleges, and homeowner in Diepsloot extension.*

*Follow Mosa as she attempts to develop a theory to explain why the respondents identify so strongly as "middle class". Pay close attention to the scene where Mosa introduces Andronica and Mpho and observe the tension between these two characters as they negotiate their identities and class positions. Identify the gestural, visual and verbal strategies adopted by both characters to create social distance, the arguments they put forward in their definition of 'middle-class-ness'. What legitimisation strategies do each adopt as the meal progresses in terms of appearance, manner, setting, gesture and what role does taste play in this?*

*Olin-Wright asks the question of what explains the inequalities of life chances and material standards of living. What causal mechanisms do you think contributed to each character's life chances?*

### Reflections: class distinctions in everyday life.

Students were clearly uncomfortable in discussing the documentary particularly as it related to ethics. After engaging with various class schemes such as those of Goldthorpe (1980), Giddens (1997) and Olin-Wright (1998) many students came to the conclusion that Mpho, despite her superior class status, in fact revealed poor taste and was vulgar in her outright rejection of Andronica's generosity as a host and were startled by this realisation. They remarked on the dominance of Mpho in the

lunch conversation and her patronising attitude toward Andronica, interpellating her as ignorant, as a servant and an inferior. The class began to explore the historical and economic mechanisms that led to the privileges enjoyed by both characters and many rejected the notion that Andronica was individually responsible for her circumstances. The notion of *habitus* was discussed in relation to the way that both characters referred to themselves in their conversation.

## Week 3

*Lecture: Legitimacy and power*

*Tutorial: The art and design studio crit.*

*Watch "Art School Confidential" (2006). The film tells the story of the protagonist, Jerome, an American, small town, working class student who, despite his success as an art student at his parochial high school, struggles to make it 'big' as an artist in college. He is dismayed to find that his peers and professor find his realism and verisimilitude tepid and mock his many attempts to develop and experiment stylistically. Only when Jerome is (falsely) found guilty as the campus serial killer does his work become 'important' and ironically it is only as a convict that his work gains in value.*

*Comment on the power play in the three art critique scenes in the film. Who has power and why? In terms of Bourdieu's concept of 'species of capital', what capitals do the various participants in the critique possess? How do art works come to gain value in the field of power in which the art students in the film are participating?*

*What is your experience of critiques held at The Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture. What kind of art and design is deemed legitimate in your department? Why?*

### **Reflections: the unseen class distinctions in the learning space.**

The students recognised in their group discussions, that the film reveals in comedic terms that cultural commodities such as artworks, on their own, have no intrinsic value. Rather through complex, situational practices of consecration and negotiation they come to gain value on a market, always in relation to other artworks, and various social actors (other artists, academics, agents, gallerists, critics, buyers, collectors and so on) that play in the field. Artworks act as indices of social power, conferred upon agents through complex consecratory practices. Through a discussion of the film, the students consolidated their understanding of Bourdieusian theories. Interestingly, working class students in some groups spontaneously identified with the character of Jerome confessing that frequently, in studio crits they 'had no idea what was going', felt ignorant about what good design was about, and struggled to understand how value came to be assigned to their work from one lecturer to another. In plenary the students broached the topic of whether taste plays an important or unimportant role in the academic success of a student at The Faculty of Art, Design and Architecture linking notions of cultural capital to ethics.

## Week 4

*Lecture: Constructing an argument: evidence and warrant in research*

*Tutorial: At this stage you are in the process of developing a research study based on 'taste in Johannesburg'. You will need to defend your study and think about how claims become valid.*

*Find sources that show The University of Johannesburg's response to the xenophobic attacks of 2015. What kinds of claims are at work in these documents? Look specifically at the pamphlet advertising The University of Johannesburg's Convocation against xenophobia'. What sorts of claims are favoured over others? How would one go about establishing the validity of these claims?*

*Carefully consider the SABC footage of the xenophobic attacks in Jeppestown. Whose realities are represented in the coverage –whose perspective? What kinds of assertions are associated with these*

*perspectives? What assertions are being made about the causes of xenophobia and the way it should be responded to? How would one go about establishing the validity of these assertions?*

### Reflections: reality constructions

From their comments in this discussion, students were asserting more confidently that value, power and claims were socially constructed. There was an awareness in the session that the ontological stability of phenomena that they were exposed to in the unit required serious interrogation.

This created an opening for the groups to begin exploring the main themes of the unit in the development of their own research studies based on 'taste in Johannesburg'. Below, I outline some of the themes for their proposed studies to give a sense of the rich and situated learning that took place in the unit:

- Taste and status: the experience of bursary girls in prestigious private schools in South Africa.
- Self-representations and representations of transgender in the 21<sup>st</sup> century Indian society.
- Conspicuous consumption and destruction in Izikhothane status groups.
- The role taste plays in the depiction of feminists in the media.
- The tyranny of taste on social media platforms: the experiences of 20 year-old women on Instagram.
- The role of lecturers' taste in the assessment of student design work.
- Born frees versus the struggle generation in the townships: comparing tastes.
- The legitimisation of local graffiti: a disruptive form of expression?

### Conclusions: intellectualising designers' professional identities.

The first four weeks of the unit provided design students with many and diverse opportunities to theorise their experience, to think the real "relationally" (Wacquant & Bourdieu 1992, p.243) to relativise and humanise (Berger 1963) the world by practicing sociological imagination. This provided the ground upon which to generate collaborative research interests and questions. Although the learning seemed to allow students to develop an awareness of the impact of social class on practice and identity and, at the same time developed strong interests and potent inquiries about consumption, it was not enough to develop critical and ethical designerly dispositions. This would require more concerted pedagogical action where students carried out their research proposals in collaboration with other social science disciplines and, based on their findings generated creative, human-centered design solutions. This would require developing a coherent curricular strategy on the part of the Department and Faculty.

My experience of the unit led me to ask if the business-as-usual approach to the education of the designer, as is so prevalent in 'industry-oriented' curricula is sufficient in a context where critical engagement, one attuned to the complexities of the social, is not 'a nice to have' but a moral imperative given the condition of humanity in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Putting ethics and critique at the forefront of design education promises to inject a much-needed disruption into the professional identities of designers, one that I believe should redefine design as an intellectual undertaking, a discourse that must be retrieved. If we do take this brave step forward, what analytical frameworks can we provide so that students can articulate the heterogenous social phenomenon that they encounter on an everyday basis in a context as fraught as contemporary South Africa? Is class analysis worthwhile in describing self-fashioning and social power? My experience of teaching the unit provoked me to ask if we need to challenge the notion that designers are merely cultural intermediaries working in the service of capital, and agents of instrumental reason. Can we imagine design students as more than future professionals but as utopian intellectuals and scholars, designing social futures and "imagining alternatives to capitalism" (Hahnel & Olin-Wright 2014) based on their analyses of class-based societies?

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# Mr Paterson's rounded testimony: ethics, intersubjectivity and the interview

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## Abstract

*As the interview as a method of data gathering has gained in popularity in the disciplines of art and design, templates of consent letters are generated in their hundreds, and the absence of a duly signed document — in a research output using humans as a source of data — usually renders the undertaking unethical and invalid. However, in the rush to protect the institution and its agents against litigation, it is perhaps forgotten that the signing of the obligatory letter is only a first, technical, step in a personal encounter between individuals.*

*An important function of the interview is its role in life-story research, that despite the need to record the experiences of designers that constructed and shaped the country's design culture, is not yet a wide-spread methodology in design research in South Africa. However, the term 'interview', if it is associated with 'history', loses its journalistic intent; when the purpose is to collect memories and personal commentaries of historical significance, the interview is escalated to the level of oral history.*

*Oral historian Lyn Abrams notes that participants in an interview interact to produce an effect called intersubjectivity, a three-way conversation: the interviewee with himself/herself, with the interviewer and with culture. Therefore, after the obligatory letter of consent has been signed, subtle — and even unmentionable — relations of power come into play that can empower, but also disempower and disturb.*

*My paper identifies and reflects upon three aspects of intersubjectivity that are likely to be absent from an institution's ethical clearance form but that are important to acknowledge and address with regard to the potential experiences of novice interviewers, namely*

- *the effects (and opportunities) of gender differences on interpersonal relations in an interview*
- *the challenges of interviewing individuals whose political agendas are 'unsavoury, dangerous, or deliberately deceptive', and*
- *academic hubris and the pursuit of truth and factuality in an interview.*

*Drawing on my own experience, and that of other researchers such as Hilary Young, Daniel James, Kathleen Blee and Kate Altork, I argue that the occurrence of intersubjectivity in a research undertaking is itself an intriguing, but elusive, area of investigation in the discipline of design.*

**Keywords:** *interviews; oral history; intersubjectivity; gender; factuality; ethics*

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## Introduction

In 2013 I embarked upon a project that has as its aim the documentation of the construction of visual identity in South Africa in the period 1948-1990, and specifically in the formative role of a prominent design studio during this period. At the start of the project, the recorded evidence deemed necessary to supplement an analysis of graphic design artefacts was tabled as a discreet set of five business-like interviews with the erstwhile director of this studio. The interviews were ring-fenced by an ethically-approved list of questions, and scheduled to take place every fortnight; the encounter between questioner and respondent would be videotaped to ensure a transparent record of the proceedings.

However, this bold plan disintegrated from the very first interview as the interchange drifted into uncharted regions: information was redirected, rationed, repeated or deliberately withheld. When the planned two-month process had not reached an end point after a year, it became clear that, as an aspirant design historian, I had to think in a more 'distinctive' way about oral evidence.

Several aspects of the interview situation presented challenges. The interviews were conducted in the subject's home, and were preceded with the conviviality of tea and cake; while this arrangement made for an amicable atmosphere, it was, from the start, difficult to manage the moment when small talk became interview, or factual answer intimate confession. The subject is an energetic and natural showman; he would set the stage beforehand, preparing artefacts and even donning attire that funneled the topic of conversation. This performativity was delightful, but time-consuming, and difficult to control.

In addition, while certain experiences had been crystallised into well-honed anecdotes, dates never featured in these narratives. The interviews, once they got underway, therefore served a limited purpose with regard to empirical information-gathering, a complication I had not anticipated. The presence of the subject's partner inserted an additional layer of complexity, as did the presence of dogs, cats, pigeons and a hysterical cockatoo. Very soon, familiarity with the respondent and his household eroded, if not scholarly objectivity, at least neutrality; I migrated from *interviewer* to *confidante*, a position both useful and precarious.

However, due to the timeframe under investigation, the real elephant in the room was the subject's implied complicity with the ruling order in South Africa in the years 1958-1990. There were questions too awkward to ask, and statements too difficult to challenge. Throughout, the need to retain trust outweighed the imperative to confront the subject with the possibility that he had accepted commissions that tacitly supported an unequal society. The respondent's understandable wariness of being judged as the accomplice of an oppressive regime required a non-judgmental and patient interviewer. But, merely by engaging with this history — or perhaps by *avoiding* aspects of it — I felt that I, too, might be morally compromised. Yet, because it is precisely this dilemma that has discouraged researchers from engaging with individuals who contributed to the 'official' landscape of design in South Africa prior to 1994, the need to persevere seemed that much greater.

Beset by these concerns, and as a researcher straying from artefact analysis into history writing, I undertook to investigate my position, and the validity of my study, as it articulated with the theory of interviews as a primary source of data. I also realised that, as a teacher, I encouraged students to utilise interviews as a means to extend artefact analyses but that these novice researchers (much like myself) were largely ignorant about both the process and the interpersonal dynamics between parties that inhabit different subject positions.

What is more, life-story research is not yet a wide-spread methodology in design research in South Africa; a certain urgency therefore exists to record the experiences of designers that shaped the country's current design culture. Consequently, my aim — within the limitations of this paper — is to open a window onto selected aspects of the process and provide students with a taste of the literature in the field.

To this purpose I address the following points:

- Oral history as a source of data
- Intersubjectivity, and
- Empathy and ethics in oral history interviews.

## Oral history as a source of data

Applying myself to the literature, the first point that struck me was that the term ‘interview’, if it is associated with ‘history’, loses its journalistic intent.<sup>1</sup> When the purpose is to collect “memories and personal commentaries of historical significance” (Ritchie 2003, p.19), the interview is escalated to the level of *oral history*. Thus Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth (1983, p.4) define oral history as “information transmitted orally, in a personal exchange, of a kind likely to be of historical or long-term value”.

‘Oral history’, therefore, presents itself as an appropriate methodological framework for that portion of design-based research that gathers ‘information transmitted orally’ and transforms it into a ‘history’ (for example, of graphic design). However, while it is absent from most definitions, what soon came to light is that, from the 1970s onwards, a key aspect of ‘oral history’ was its concern with ‘history from below’. This approach articulated well with the feminist aim of conducting an egalitarian research process since it enabled the perspectives of “the poor, the under-privileged and disenfranchised” (Abrams 2010, p.156) to be activated for social change. During the last decades of the twentieth century, historians also had to address the concern that archival documentation “reflected a discredited government rather than the resistance against it” (Ritchie 2003, p.23).

Consequently, as one text after the other stressed this “socialist perspective” (Thompson’s 2000 [1978], p.vi;xii), the legitimacy of my project appeared increasingly at risk. Interviewing an individual that had, 50 years ago, risen to the top of his profession was accorded the pejorative descriptor of ‘elite’ oral history, which endeavour was made distinct from and inferior to ‘oral history’ proper. Moreover, not only was my informant not one of the ‘underprivileged’, but his voice, many might argue, represented the archetypical ‘discredited government’. My purpose was to rescue a marginalised life from oblivion, but in doing so I was, seemingly, going against the grain. However, in choosing this route, I was also acting upon personal imperatives, that might be open to question.

In this regard, oral historian Lyn Abrams (2010, pp.54-55) points out that,

The interviewer as well as the narrator is present in the creation of the oral history; there can be no pretense at neutrality or objectivity [...] memory stories are manufactured in an interview environment pulsating with influences ...

However, Abrams (2010, p.9) observes that few historians write candidly about interview experiences, yet the interview is a communicative event, and deserves theoretical reflection. In the following sections, I summarise selected studies of researchers in the field as these relate to my own experiences. Although I provide some reflection, the reader must conclude how these texts answered to the challenges outlined in the introduction to this paper.

## On being elite

The first organised oral history project was that of Allan Nevins at Columbia University in 1948 (Ritchie 2003, p.22); notably, Nevins’s interest was in living Americans who had led “significant lives”. According to Michael Frisch (2005, p.32), Nevins’s work profoundly shaped interest in oral history in the 1970s, but in a “largely negative and reactive way”. However, despite this agitated response, historian Paul Thompson (2000 [1978], p.vi), after stating his own belief in a socially conscious oral history, agreed that “a telling case could equally be made, from a conservative position, for the use of oral history in perserving [*sic*] the full richness and value of tradition”.

More recently, Abrams (2010, p.161) has argued that power does not reside solely amongst the people *en masse*; it is also located amongst elite groups in positions of authority and therefore “oral history research must engage with these groups”. Three texts that specifically address the topic are

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<sup>1</sup> Not all historians agree: Robert Dallek, when asked why he relied more on manuscripts than interviews, retorted: “I am not a journalist” (in Ritchie 2003, p. 25).

Seldon and Pappworth's *By word of mouth: elite oral history* (1983), Eva McMahan's *Elite oral history discourse: a study of cooperation and coherence* (1989) and Charles Morrissey's 'On oral history interviewing' (2005 [1970]).

Seldon and Pappworth's treatise surveys "an area of oral history hitherto neglected", namely accounts of "those who rose to the top of their chosen occupation" (Seldon & Pappworth 1983, p.6). The authors present several case studies and, notably, examine "some ways in which oral evidence can illuminate understanding of artists and their work" (Seldon & Pappworth 1983, p.181). McMahan, on the other hand, presents a technical treatise that focuses exclusively on interviews with American male elites. At the core of her analysis is the 'transactional' nature of the interview; McMahan (1989, p.81) demonstrates a set of previously agreed-upon constraints that interviewer and interviewee adhere to as a consequence of their 'shared vision' and the goal-related nature of the interview: the implication is that these 'performances' can be measured.

In contrast to the scholarly tone of McMahan's text, Morrissey's paper, first published in 1970, presents a down-to-earth account of interviewing American male elites as part of the John F Kennedy project, for example:

When there were tough questions to be asked, we learned to postpone the tough ones until the interview was well under way ... Also, if you chicken out in an interview and don't ask the tough questions you can always ask them when you send the transcript back to be edited (Morrissey 2005 [1970], p.112).

Of course, in McMahan's paradigm, 'chickening out' never occurs since everyone agrees beforehand to play nicely, yet the 'tough question' is often at the heart of oral history. Donald Ritchie (2003, p.96) refers to 'embarrassing' lines of enquiry: he recommends quoting a public source that has issued a statement about the interviewee, and then asking the latter to comment upon the reportage. However, this strategy presupposes that the interviewee is celebrated enough to warrant mention in the media. With regard to 'the poor and underprivileged', Ritchie (2003, p.96) provides an example in which "gentle and persistent prodding" cajoled interviewees to talk about difficult topics.

Although the "remorseless detective" (Butterfield, cited in Seldon & Pappworth 1983, p.81) appears to be the domain of the elite oral historian, Ritchie (2003, pp.23-24) points out that the fierce debate about the respective merits of 'elite' versus 'non-elite' interviewing has tapered off. More recent texts play down the distinction between the two approaches. As Abrams's (2010, p.162) argues:

Though there is a distinct literature on elite oral history interviewing, it is important to also consider how undifferentiated is the act of interviewing supposedly 'powerful' people. The assertion of power is equally possible from an elderly widow from a working-class home as it is from a politician or banker.

In summary, what one can take from the literature is a sense that interview situations differ, but that the difference is not necessarily that of 'elite' versus 'non-elite' interviewing. One point on which most theorists agree is that the story told is a *product of communication between two individuals*, and that these participants interact to produce an effect called *intersubjectivity*. The next section explores the nature and effect of this idea.

## Intersubjectivity

Intersubjectivity refers to "the interpersonal dynamics between ... two parties and the process by which they cooperate to create a shared narrative" (Abrams 2014, p.97); Abrams posits that "a three-way conversation takes place in the interview: the interviewee with himself/herself, with the interviewer and with culture". The individual internalises the structures of the external world, and these structures form a *habitus* — a "disposition" (Abrams 2010, p.57) that conforms to the boundaries of these structures. This *habitus* is never fixed, neither for historian nor interviewee.

Thus, since the 1990s, oral historians encouraged self-reflection on the interviewer's own identity starting with an awareness, of the historian, of her/his own subject position (Abrams 2010, p.58). Similarly, individuals can only narrate their 'experience' of the past by using existing discourses and linguistic formulations (Abrams 2010, p.57). Memory stories are therefore not intended to be repositories of an objective truth; they are "creative narratives shaped in part by the personal relationship that facilitates the telling" (Abrams 2010, p.58).

Abrams provides several instances of how intersubjectivity may influence a narrative; her examples focus on the role of the female academic in an interview situation. On the one hand, she demonstrates that a female interviewer can liberate women's voices from patriarchal discourses, but points out that the approach is "not without its problems" (Abrams 2014, p.98). Abrams (2015, p.96) has, for example, found that when female respondents assume she is a feminist they tailor narratives to fit "neatly with the emancipatory discourse of modern feminism", and falter when their story cannot conform to this agenda.

Women interviewing men present a different scenario.<sup>2</sup> Abrams (2014, p.98) offers only one example, that of Hilary Young's interviews with elderly Glaswegian men, and suggests that here the intersubjectivity is likely to be unsympathetic, and even belligerent, due to the interviewer being female, "modern, [and] liberated". Abrams, to make a point, notes that one of Young's interviewees refers deprecatingly to her research and blames educated women for undermining the traditional role and machismo image of the working-class male; the impression is created that female academics might face a difficult time interviewing older, non-elite males.

However, if one takes the trouble to engage with Young's (2007) text itself, 'Hard man, new man: re/composing masculinities in Glasgow: c1950-2000', several things come to light. Young — who was a student at the time — did not only interview men, but rather two married couples and one divorced man. It is the latter who refers to Young's study of "sissies" (Abrams 2014, p.98), but the conversation is more nuanced than Abrams implies. The respondent in question, Mr. Paterson, was, in fact, very cooperative and only registered "some regret and loss at changing masculinities" (Young 2007, p.77), which he ascribes to a "growing electronic and technological job market that required an education that perhaps [many men] did not have".<sup>3</sup>

What is of interest in Young's article (but ignored by Abrams) is how the responses of the married couples differ when interviewed together, and then alone. In the case of the Irwins, married in 1951, Mrs Irwin, although uninvited, was determined to construct a 'manly' subjectivity for her husband; when he was later interviewed alone, Mr Irwin attempted to realign the discourse on gender. The point that Young (2007, p.80) makes is that "[p]ersonal subjectivities of the narrator, interviewer and whoever else may be present can shape any particular interview". So far so good; what is absent from both Abrams's and Young's accounts is a consideration of the sexual tensions that may exist when a woman interviews a man.

In referring to Young's study, Abrams (2010, p.62) advises that, "The intersubjective dynamics within the interview situation should always be acknowledged honestly". But how 'honest' can, or should, the interviewer really be? Within the context of the title of her article, how does Young interpret Mrs Irwin's eagerness to reiterate (to a young, attractive female interviewer)<sup>4</sup> that her husband was never 'soft'? Conversely, when left alone with the interviewer, why does Mr Irwin confide his commitment to 'the role as a father' to the younger woman? Young (2007, p.75) guesses that her

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<sup>2</sup> The dynamics of lesbian and gay intersubjectivity is addressed in Kulick and Wilson (eds)(1995); for the sake of brevity, I restrict the signification of 'male' and 'female' to fixed heterosexual categories, although I acknowledge the problematics of these terms.

<sup>3</sup> Abrams thus distorts Young's findings, suggesting a bias with regard to male informants to which aspiring interviewers should be alert. Notably, oral historian Valerie Yow (2005, pp.173;174) reports that in her own experiences most male narrators have "genuinely wanted to be helpful", and were open with their feelings.

<sup>4</sup> Judgments of physical beauty are, of course, value-laden; see Hilary Young (2015).

assumed feminist views enabled the man to feel less shame about preferring child care to repairing guttering, but is this all that is going on here?

The Irvins were known to Young; Mr. Paterson, on the other hand, contacted Young after reading about her project — and seeing her photograph — in a newspaper (Young 2007, p.81).<sup>5</sup> As an active trade unionist in the printing industry, he had knowledge of employment issues that had an effect on gender roles, and seemingly Paterson approached Young as a man who knew he had something to offer. Whereas the married couples talked to Young in their homes, Paterson met Young in a pub: the interview therefore took on the quality of an assignation. From the outset Paterson, who at 62 was “a confident, larger-than-life man” (Young 2007, p.77), seemed to be showing Young what she, as a ‘new’ woman, was missing, namely a ‘hard’ man, who could take charge, and leave her well satisfied. Young (2007, p.78;79), who might (or not) be aware of the erotic tenor of her account, describes her experience with Paterson:

Mr Paterson's testimony as a whole was rounded. It has an introduction, middle and conclusion ... The respondent tied up everything ... and left no loose ends [...] [I], a younger female, who was less experienced in the 'ways of the world', was passive within the traditional discourse ... The narrator achieved subjective composure when he acknowledged at the end of the interview 'that should get you passed'. This emphasized his pride in the value and authority of his testimony.

Young (2007, p.79), despite stating that Paterson “dominated the interview”, remains curiously neutral in her response to the encounter, so that the ‘honesty’ goes so far, and no further.

Ritchie (2003, p.100) only briefly acknowledges that differences in age and gender may influence both questions and answers. However, Valerie Yow (2005) reflects in some detail on the effect of gender differences on interpersonal relations in an interview. Yow (2005, p.171-175) first outlines standard theories on how men respond to female interviewers; she then deals with the topic of ‘sexual attraction’ (Yow 2005, p.175). Male narrators that are pleased to have a younger woman show interest in them appear, for Yow, to be the most typical of these situations;<sup>6</sup> Yow points out that merely by being a good listener a female interviewer may arouse sexual interest in male interviewees, but speculates that the same is probably true for female narrators. Yow (2005, p. 175) asks: “Does this affect the course of the interview? Probably. But the ways that this sexual ‘chemistry’ is manifested vary with the individual”.

Yow (2005, p.176) cautions that if aspects of the encounter become physical, “don’t linger”, but concedes that in a confidential, one-on-one situation such as in-depth interviewing it would be naïve not to acknowledge the potential for “sexual action” (Yow 2005, p. 137). However, until the 1990s, the erotic interest between interviewer and informant either did not exist, or could not be mentioned (Yow 2005, p.138); more recently, though, Yow notes, there has been “a lot of discussion” around the topic and refers to Amanda Coffey (1999, p.78), who points out that,

There is a long tradition of describing the sexual availability, erotic pleasures and sexual lives of other people ... By contrast it is far more unusual to represent fieldwork ... as sexual, erotic, pleased or desiring. And yet the fieldworker ... cannot help but have a sexual positionality.

Coffey (1999, p.78) sets out to demonstrate how “a contemplation of the sexual and the erotic is epistemologically productive”, but in Yow’s opinion (2005, p.138) an interviewer must exercise restraint: “Make the boundaries clear and respect them: this is a professional relationship”.

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<sup>5</sup> Young makes a point of the fact that Paterson knew what she looked like before the interview took place.

<sup>6</sup> Yow (2005, p.175) relates how she was ‘felt up’ by a ninety-two-year-old man, who asked her, “You’re not married are you?”.

Not everyone agrees: a passionate (if not altogether mainstream) argument exists for the complete immersion of the fieldworker in her/his subject's life, and for the acknowledgment of this sexual intimacy in anthropological texts.<sup>7</sup> Yow (2005, p.138) alerts her readers to this "different slant", but also offers Kate Altork's (1995, pp.81-105) study of Californian firefighters as a way to "integrate emotions and intellect"<sup>8</sup> while maintaining boundaries. It is not, therefore, merely a question of 'having sex in the field', but rather the recognition of an erotic intersubjectivity that is always/already present in much in-depth interviewing.

Sexual tension may very well be triggered by the *habitus* of academia as it intersects with the disposition of the subjects of research. In the case of anthropology, the exoticism of the other exercises a powerful mystique, but even where participants share a national culture, researchers are unlikely to embrace the 'disposition' of their non-academic interviewees. Young and Altork encountered paternalism and sexism in their informants, but this otherness is not limited to working-class respondents: as Morrissey (2005 [1970], p.109) points out, "Many people in Washington don't like academic people". Often, this alternative perspective may be the primary reason for a study, but it also poses a challenge.

## Empathy & ethics

In the rush to defend oral history — as opposed to consulting lifeless documents— it is perhaps forgotten that, occasionally, the historian may feel that it would be preferable if her subjects, too, were dead. Choosing to write up the biography of a deceased narcissist, bigot or legendary womaniser presents challenges, but finding oneself in an intimate, face-to-face conversation with such an individual raises even more flags.

Kathleen Blee (2005, p.333) remarks that "romantic assumptions" about history presuppose that members of the elite are, by definition, wielders of unequal power and should be treated with caution, whereas non-elite interviews should be authentic and reciprocal. However, these perceptions are difficult to sustain when studying ordinary people who are intolerant and bigoted; consequently, historians have tended to avoid life stories of the non-elite whose political agendas they find "unsavoury" (Blee 2005, p.333). Yet, Blee (2005, p.341) argues, a need exists to understand the historical attraction of ordinary people to such politics. To this purpose, Blee interviewed former female members of the 1920s Klu Klux Klan.

Firstly, although Richie (2003, p.105) warns that an interviewer should never be too quick to presume that an interviewee is lying, Blee (2005, p.334) asserts that right-wing extremists have a "desire ... to distort their own political pasts"; not only are narratives biased by the narrators' need to appear acceptable to an oral historian, but informants' memories have also been shaped by subsequent public censure. Secondly, Blee (2005, p.336) found that many interviewees held complicated attitudes toward gender, race, and nationalism, blending occasional progressive views with unquestioning adherence to dogmas of nationalism, and racial hierarchies. Blee's informants felt little need to obscure their political beliefs: "[N]one expressed any consciousness of having done wrong" (Blee 2005, p.337).

The lack of reflectivity in these interviews, Blee (2005, p.338) maintains, is a result of both the acceptability of white supremacist beliefs at a specific time and of a "conscious effort by partisans to deny the consequences of their political efforts". Blee (2005, p.339) therefore suggests that, contrary to the general rule, encouraging empathy in oral histories of ordinary people can be problematic. Blee made few efforts to avoid the 'tough question': she expected her informants to be wary of her, but this was not the case: "These elderly informants found it impossible to imagine that I ... would not agree, at least secretly, with their racist and bigoted world views" (Blee 2005, p.339).

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<sup>7</sup> In addition to Coffey, see Don Kulick and Margaret Wilson (eds) 1995.

<sup>8</sup> Yow is being a bit coy: Altork's affective response was not 'emotional'; it was powerfully sexual.

But Blee's preconceived ideas about her interviewees were also distorted: far from being the abhorrent characters of popular portrayals of Klan members, many of the people she interviewed were "interesting, intelligent, and well informed" (Blee 2005, p.339). Blee (2005, p.341) concludes that the trajectory of institutionalised racism is not propelled by pathological individuals; rather, it lies deep within educated, mainstream communities. But, whereas oral historians often have to rely on the use of pauses and silences to construct meaning (Abrams 2010, p.128), it was the lack of silence and the ease of communication that revealed the views of these women (Blee 2005, p.340). Although fraudulent, this type of empathy, Blee cautions, can be "surprisingly, and disturbingly, easy to achieve in oral history interviews".

The point that Blee (2005, p.340) makes is that although feminist ethics require that researchers level the inequality between researcher and subject, the hazards of empowering a political vision of racial and religious bigotry are clear. An analogy therefore exists between the dangers (and opportunities) of intellectual and sexual empathy; although it is unlikely that Blee felt erotic desire for her elderly informants,<sup>9</sup> her experience is not that different from that of Altork (1995, p.86), who confesses that even as she struggled to analyse her male subjects' 'fire language', and to situate it as a language of power and appropriation, she felt herself "seduced" by it — an experience both "uncomfortable and intriguing".

While Altork and Blee were beguiled by their informants, Daniel James's experience of interviewing a militant Peronist in Argentina is devoid of empathy. Abrams (2010, p.10) cites James as "one of the few historians who has written candidly about his own sometimes difficult experiences as an interviewer"; his description of the Argentinian encounter reveals the "symbolic violence that [can] result from the insistence on the professional ideology of the historian" (James 2003, p.136). The bitterly cold, gloomy house and haunted wife of the informant set the scene for what James (2003, pp.130, 132) repeatedly refers to as a "deeply disturbing" experience: James, craving empirical information, found himself overwhelmed by an agitated informant who transformed the fact-finding interview into an emotional confessional of personal disillusion, error, and redemption.

James (2003, pp.131-132) finds that he cannot enter into this "bargain", and leaves. The reasons for his inability to show empathy are not clear to James, who reasons that the simplest answer might be that the man's right-wing Peronism repulsed him. However, James (2003, p.133) also confides his distress at his role of voyeur; he concludes that in pursuing the Western requirements of "truth and factuality", an oral historian may intrude upon intimate human dramas in a manner that can be equated to an act of physical violence.

Thus, like the erotic, violence is always/already present in the 'unequal power' present in the interview situation, although whether the interviewer or interviewee holds the balance is not always clear. James (2003, p.129) is unusually honest in that he confesses that he took it for granted that he was "smarter" than his informant, discovering, too late, his error; this is perhaps an unspoken assumption of all researchers, even when interviewing prominent individuals — both Altork and Blee remark upon the 'intelligence' of their informants, as if this quality surprised them. James thus highlights academic hubris as another always/already inter-subjectivity present in the interview situation.

## Conclusion

Read together, Young, Altork, Blee and James present thoughtful reflections with regard to interviewing individuals that inhabit different subject positions; their texts also ask questions about what should be perceived to be more useful: a 'successful' interview — one that produces a 'nice

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<sup>9</sup> But not impossible. Gloria Wekker (2006) writes about her sexual relationship with an eighty-four-year old woman who was Wekker's main informant in her study of women's sexual culture in Suriname.



coherent and fluent narrative' (Abrams 2010, p.11) — or the 'difficult' interview, in which information is secondary to the personal relationships that intertwine with the telling of stories.

While none of the scenarios reviewed in this paper duplicate my own study, what emerged was that many of my concerns were not without their counterparts in other scholars' work. However, neither were there ready answers. While heeding the warnings and directives in the literature, perhaps the most salient observation that one can communicate to young design researchers is that the oral history interview is not a quick-fix-for-facts, but rather a methodology that explores the nature of memory and its recall as the latter is constructed within the 'pulsating influences' generated by the three-way conversation between researcher, human subject and culture.

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# Future fit, socially responsible fashion designers: The role of fashion education

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## Abstract

*The multifaceted and complex phenomena of ethics and accountability have relevance for the current discourse of fashion design. This is evident in the choice of materials used, the conditions under which clothing is produced, as well as how designers think about and implement the practice of fashion. Fashion practice has environmental and ethical impacts that ultimately connect human wellbeing and society with sustainable practice.*

*In this paper, the scope of ethics in design is positioned within the context of social responsibility in fashion design practice and fashion education. The author borrows Sterling's (2011) future fit framework for teaching and learning for sustainability in higher education and applies this notion to fashion design practice and education. Future fit fashion designers reflect dedication, responsibility and moral duty. However, evidence suggests that fashion students seldom engage in ecological thinking and socially responsible practices in design, instead succumbing to the notions of design for seasonal fashion trends, and egotistical and financial desires (Szenasy 2009, pp. 170-171). In order to develop more socially responsible fashion practice, the role of fashion education perhaps requires a shift towards fostering future fit, socially responsible fashion designers in support of ethics and accountability in design as opposed to design for personal indulgence. This paper responds to this challenge in a two-fold manner.*

*First, the author theoretically contextualizes social responsibility in fashion design praxis. Adopting a desktop method, the author draws on theoretical perspectives on the constructs of sustainability, environment and ethics in the practice of fashion design. Linking these theoretical constructs to the educational context, the paper explores the role of fashion education in fostering future fit, socially responsible fashion designers.*

*Thereafter, the author pursues a qualitative research design employing questionnaires so as to gather data from fashion design students at a South African Higher Education Institution. The questionnaires aim to obtain the perspectives of fashion students in relation to: 1) how fashion education can create a culture and awareness of social responsibility in design and 2) the fashion curriculum content and didactics required to cultivate future fit, socially responsible fashion designers. Theoretical contextualization may provide significant evidence but fashion students are important stakeholders in the educational context as they constitute the 'next generation' of fashion designers. As such, the perspectives of fashion students are taken into account through empirical data collection. To analyse the questionnaire data, content analysis is used to categorize raw data into themes.*

*This paper is relevant to the fields of both fashion design practice and design education. In an attempt to foster more socially responsible, future fit fashion designers, this paper makes a significant and valuable academic contribution pertaining to social responsibility in fashion design and fashion education. Given these contributions, the paper aligns with the overarching theme of ethics and accountability in design.*

**Keywords:** social responsibility, fashion design, fashion education

## Introduction

Ethics and accountability are multifaceted, complex phenomena that have relevance for the current discourse of fashion design. Social responsibility in fashion design is one aspect of ethics and accountability that has gained increasing awareness. This is relevant to the practice of fashion design in terms of the choice of materials used, the conditions under which clothing is produced, as well as how designers think about and implement fashion practice. Fashion practice has environmental and ethical impacts that ultimately connect human wellbeing and society with sustainable practice. Fashion designers can reflect dedication, responsibility and moral duty in their work, or they can be indifferent to social responsibility and sustainability.

Fashion education is crucial in fostering a 'next generation' of future fit designers with a sense of dedication to social responsibility and sustainability. The author borrows the notion of the future fit designer from Sterling's (2011) future fit framework for teaching and learning for sustainability in higher education and applies this notion to fashion design education and practice. Evidence suggests that fashion students seldom engage in ecological thinking and socially responsible practices in design, instead succumbing to notions of design for seasonal fashion trends, and egotistical and financial desires (Szenasy 2009, pp. 170-171). In South Africa, fashion education appears to focus principally on job-related practical skills training and professional industry knowledge where theoretical aspects fundamentally comprise of "trade theory" (Smal & Lavelle 2013, pp. 197). Fashion education may give some consideration to social responsibility in praxis, but further emphasis could be beneficial in fostering future fit, socially responsible fashion designers in support of ethics and accountability in design and socially responsible practice. This paper responds to this challenge in a two-fold manner.

Firstly, the paper theoretically contextualizes social responsibility in fashion design praxis. Such theoretical contextualization serves as an important input within the educational context. However, fashion students constitute a 'next generation' of designers and are, as such, important stakeholders in this endeavor. For this reason, this paper also gathers empirical evidence from fashion design students in relation to: 1) how fashion education can create a culture and awareness of social responsibility in design, and 2) the fashion curriculum content and didactics that may be required to cultivate future fit, socially responsible fashion designers.

I argue that the scope and awareness of social responsibility in fashion practice may improve if fashion education can enhance its role in fostering future fit, socially responsible fashion designers and if curriculum content and didactics give further consideration to socially responsible practice.

This paper is structured such that it begins with a theoretical discussion of social responsibility in fashion practice elucidating the concepts of sustainability, environment, ethics and user needs. Thereafter, gaps in the educational context in both international and local contexts are discussed. Following this, the author delineates the research design and methods employed, and discuss the research results under three themes: i) participants' perspectives on social responsibility, ii) creating a culture of social responsibility and iii) recommendations for fashion education in terms of curriculum and didactics. The paper concludes with discussion of a way forward for fashion design education.

## Social responsibility in fashion design: A literature survey

This section theoretically positions social responsibility in fashion design practice by reviewing the literature on issues such as sustainability, environmental concerns, ethical issues and user needs. Each of these is discussed in turn below.

## Sustainability

Questions of sustainability impact upon the ecological cultivation of textile fibres and the materials produced in terms of their renewability, biodegradability, recyclability, production and processing, as

well as in the consumption of water and energy, and generation of chemicals and waste (Fletcher 2008; Black 2011; Fletcher & Grose 2012).

Fletcher and Grose (2012, pp. 44-48) call attention to the emergent debates in design-for-sustainability. They argue for waste reduction by incorporating surplus pieces of materials into patchwork clothing and recycling discarded materials into new yarns. Additionally, Black (2011, pp. 11, 14) observes that the current focus of fashion design and sustainability coincides with commercial factors since society now consumes “one third more clothing than even four years ago”. The increased demand by consumers for low-cost, fast fashion promotes a “vicious cycle” because fashion is becoming disposable due to growing consumption (Black 2011, pp. 14).

Although discussion of sustainability often pertains to environmental concerns, human wellbeing remains at its core because people are the locus behind the practice of fashion design. Social issues pose key sustainability dilemmas (Fletcher 2008; Jenkyn Jones 2011), bringing about significant challenges in terms of the environment and human wellbeing. Fashion design practice gives consideration to human wellbeing and, as such, this discussion now proceeds to consideration of environmental and ethical issues and user needs.

### Environmental issues

To materialize fashion products, enormous amounts of chemicals, energy and resources are consumed in service of processing textile fibers and materials, and washing and dyeing (Fletcher 2008; Jenkyn Jones 2011; Fletcher & Grose 2012). Fletcher and Grose (2012, pp. 13) argue that fashion practice has to find ways of responding to calls to reduce carbon emissions. In doing so, environmental factors and human wellbeing come into play as sustainable practices in fashion production may lend themselves to a healthier society.

The use of organic cotton is one way to respond to the interplay between environmental and social challenges. The differentiation between organic and conventional cotton cultivation lies in the use of “chemical pesticides, fertilizers, insecticides and herbicides ... and in soil quality” (Black 2011, pp. 115). Such chemicals, in mainstream cotton cultivation, are both harmful to the environment and present health risks to farmers. In contrast, organic cotton agriculture bans the use of synthetic chemicals, reducing health risks and carbon emissions (Jenkyn Jones 2011, pp. 34).

Renewability poses further possibilities for sustainability and human welfare. Fletcher and Grose (2012, pp. 16) highlight two key priorities in renewability debates. These scholars argue for the use and reuse of clothing and the utilization of low-impact renewable fibers. With new Sustainable Manufacturing and Reuse/Recycling Technologies (SMART), pulping and felting of worn fibers from old clothing are applied in order to develop new fibers (Jenkyn Jones 2011, pp. 35). Further possibilities, such as nanotechnology, fabricate new fibers such as vegetable leather to produce clothing (Jenkyn Jones 2011, pp. 35).

As can be seen, there are various possibilities that can be pursued in order to address environmental concerns, but ethical considerations are equally relevant to fashion design practice.

### Ethical issues

Ethical fashion is “clothing that takes into consideration the impact of production and trade on the environment and on the people behind the clothes we wear. At its core, it rests on the principles of sustainability and responsibility” (Intel cited in Tseëlon 2011, pp. 5). Unethical fashion practices present the industry with various challenges. In the late 1980s, the manufacture of fashion products saw a shift from local production to outsourcing to lower-wage countries (Jenkyn Jones 2011, pp. 33). Fletcher (2008, pp. 57) argues that the growing demand for lower labour costs left manufacturers competing for market position which placed downward pressure on labour rights and ethical working conditions. Scholars (such as McIntyre & Ramstad 2011; Ross 2011) concur that exploitative labour and the “sweatshop system” constitute unethical practice within the fashion industry. To certify ethical working conditions, several agencies such as the Asian Floor Wage Alliance, the Fair Trade

Foundation and Labour Behind the Label were founded (Jenkyn Jones 2011; Black 2011). With the establishment of these organisations, a shift towards ethical fashion production is evident.

### User needs

Fletcher and Grose (2012, pp. 132-133, 144) draw a clear distinction between designing fashion with users and for users. Designing with users is what these scholars refer to as co-design where users and designers are active, engaged and collaborative participants in design activities. In opposition, design for users addresses specific user needs.

Drawing from the South African context, the 2015 Nedbank Cup Football Fan Fashion Challenge positioned both co-design and user needs at the core of design practice. This challenge brought together collaborative participation between 16 football super fans, each representing one of the 16 teams competing in the 2015 Nedbank Cup, 16 South African fashion designers and 16 fashion design students from three selected local higher education institutions (Nedbank n.d.; Alzheimers 2015). By way of a selection process, each football super fan was affiliated with a designer and a fashion student to collaborate, engage and co-design football inspired products to address the specific user needs of the super fans (Nedbank n.d., Alzheimers 2015). These user needs included, amongst others, colours, iconography and elaborate head accessories that represented the respective football team (Nedbank n.d.). This example is one example of the juncture between designer, user and fashion education.

### Educational context of fashion education

International scholars agree that design students tend to design for themselves with little or no consideration of user needs and that fashion design students lack ability with regard to ecological thinking and socially responsible design. Newstetter and McCracken (2001, pp. 67) affirm that “design students do not place their designs in the context of the environment in which the design will reside. They ‘arrogantly’ ignore the constraints of the user (whether that is a machine or a person). They often design for themselves”. At the Parsons School of Design in New York, Szenasy (2009, pp. 170-171) found that fashion design students’ initially rebuffed “ecological thinking” about values, responsibility and good intentions in favour of being “slaves to seasonal trends and fickle consumers ... [who] need to figure out how to make money, how to become stars”. Subsequent to a semester of alternative curriculum content, pedagogical approaches and developing a culture and awareness of alternate frames of references such as responsibility, moral duty, and obligation to human wellbeing, these fashion design students began to see responsibility, sustainability and duty in design through a different lens (Szenasy 2009, pp. 171-173).

In South Africa, the higher education curriculum for fashion education is vocational in scope focusing principally on job-related practical skills training and professional industry knowledge where theoretical aspects primarily comprise of “trade theory with focus on the chronology of dress” within historical paradigms (Smal & Lavelle 2013, pp. 197). Considering this, fashion education in South Africa may have shifted its current scope towards social responsibility in fashion design practice but further consideration in this regard may well be needed.

### Research design and methods

This research was conducted at the Department of Fashion Design at a South African Higher Education institution. Permission was granted from the Department of Fashion Design to conduct this research but no ethical clearance was sought at an institutional level. For that reason, the name of the institution will not be mentioned. At this particular department, a number of initiatives and integrated student projects underpinned by a philosophy of social responsibility in fashion design praxis are implemented. Academics at this particular department are responsible for curriculum development and facilitation of teaching and learning but student reflections are important considerations and provide significant input for educational refinement. Given the limitations of scope for this particular paper, student opinions alone are considered herein. However, in a follow-

up paper, further research will be reported upon which considers the perspectives of academics regarding this discussion.

A qualitative research paradigm was deployed in which questionnaires with open-ended questions were used to collect data from a purposive sample of participants at a South African Higher Education Institution. The participants included 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> year fashion design students. Students are important stakeholders in fashion education, and their perspectives can provide evidence for educational enhancement. This is in opposition to the view that academics' viewpoints are the relevant inputs for curriculum content and teaching and learning. Although the sample included students across three years of study, the intention was to obtain students' general opinions and not to compare these opinions across levels of expertise, knowledge or to gain advice on curriculum content and delivery. Of 91 fashion design students, 51 volunteered their participation after receiving verbal and written information regarding the scope of the research.

The questionnaires were constructed and administered by the author so as to obtain the perspectives of fashion design students in relation to three core questions, namely: 1) participants' perspectives of social responsibility, 2) how fashion design education can create a culture and awareness of social responsibility in design, and 3) recommendations for improved fashion design curriculum content and didactics to cultivate future fit, socially responsible fashion designers. To analyse the data from the questionnaires, the author adapted Merriam's (2009, pp. 178-191) step-by-step process of qualitative analysis. Table 1 illustrates the author's process of content analysis.

<b>Author's Analytical Process</b>
Digitization of questionnaire hard copies
Repeated reading of questionnaires
Development of tentative themes, based on the three core questions
Assignment of a discrete colour to each theme
Colour-coding of raw data by highlighting extracts from participants' questionnaires
Determination of patterns in the data
Re-reading of highlighted extracts in order to ensure accuracy
Placement of highlighted extracts into respective themes
Re-reading highlighted extracts under the respective themes and clustering extracts with a view to preparing the discussion.
Finalization of themes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participants' perspectives on social responsibility</li> <li>• Creating a culture of social responsibility</li> <li>• Recommendations for fashion design education curriculum and didactics</li> </ul>

**Table 1: Content analysis process followed**

## Findings and discussion

Discussion of the findings takes into account student perspectives on this matter and is presented under the three emergent themes: 1) participants' perspectives on social responsibility, 2) creating a culture of social responsibility and 3) recommendations for fashion design education in terms of curriculum and didactics. Since qualitative research focuses on interpretation of multiple realities, to support interpretations and to differentiate between researcher and student voices, evidence from the raw data is italicized both in the main text and in tabular representations.

## Participants' perspectives of social responsibility

The findings suggest that social responsibility was underpinned by environmental factors and that design practice and production methods should exercise an ethos of environmental consciousness. Students' words, such as *using environmentally conscious methods of clothing production that have less effect on the environment* along with *designing with the environment and humans in mind*, support this interpretation. The need to design for human wellbeing with less effect on the environment aligns with Jenkyn Jones's (2011, pp. 34) argument for organic cotton cultivation which could reduce health risks and environmental challenges. Improved sustainability of resources, reducing carbon footprint and environmental protection were students' conceptions of environmentally friendly practices in design and production. This is illustrated in table 2. These findings are in line with environmental arguments put forward by scholars such as Fletcher (2008), Fletcher and Grose (2012) and Jenkyn Jones (2011) as were described in the literature survey.

Finding the methods to improve sustainability of resources
Using natural materials and recycling
Responsibility to adhere to the needs of the environment
Lowering your carbon footprint

**Table 2: Students' rationale for environmentally friendly practices**

Design for social good, societal problem solving and ameliorating living conditions appeared as key social responsibility considerations. The findings demonstrated that knowledge and skills training initiatives for underprivileged community members presented opportunities for societal enhancement. Students reflected that *giving back to the community with the skills and knowledge by providing training skills to woman - to provide for their families* [in order to] *improve the standard of living*. Locally produced goods that relied upon indigenous skills and enhanced employment opportunities for economic sustainability appeared as another dimension of social responsibility. Students were of the opinion that *fashion has importance for job creation and economy by employ[ing] local people*. This finding supports the South African case of Wear Only ZA (ZA is an acronym for South Africa) (WOZA). A number of Cape Town fashion designers, under the auspices of the WOZA campaign, promote the ideology of locally-designed and produced clothing, using local skills and resources where the design and production occurs partially or completely in South Africa (WOZA 2011 n.d.). Initiatives such as WOZA have the potential to contribute to job creation, growth of human capital in terms of skills development and the capacity to improve society's living standards.

## Creating a culture of social responsibility

Enthusiasm for creating a culture of social responsibility and elevate levels of awareness was apparent. Students suggested a *dedicated day, in the institution's* academic planning for socially engaging *community projects that could benefit communities in need*. These suggestions appear to materialize at the London College of Fashion (n.d.) given that students and academics work "with charities and foundations in schools and prisons offering fashion education and opportunity and raising social awareness". Socially responsible design campaigns such as *recycling clothing drives, re-using to re-invent* new design solutions and an *eco-friendly fashion show* were further student propositions. Eco fashion shows are in line with international trends with New Zealand hosting an eco-fashion week and Vancouver hosting its 9<sup>th</sup> show (Eco Fashion Week n.d.; New Zealand Eco Fashion Week n.d.). Some students were of the opinion that such proposals may well come to fruition if jointly supported by all academic staff, curriculum content and teaching and learning.

Zest and motivation for joint social responsibility amongst academic staff were noted as a concern. Students were of the opinion that some academic staff did not place ample emphasis on social responsibility in teaching and learning. If this is the case, it raises concern as to how it may be

possible for fashion design education to create a more profound awareness of the notion of shared social responsibility and value. In support of this latter statement, a number of student reflections are presented in Table 3 below.

Combined effort with all lecturers
If all lecturers are more concerned about it perhaps the students would be to
Issue is not stressed enough
Teaching should be encouraging and place emphasis for students to be socially responsible
Lecturers to give more opportunity to understand the importance of social responsibility

**Table 3: Students’ reflections on academic staff**

The scope of fashion education and didactics could perhaps be underscored by the ethos of design for social change, *responsibility; community engagement* and *active participation with users* as opposed to notions of *popular culture, consumerism, trends* and the *vanity associated with fashion*. *Deeper understanding of user needs, user environments* and social problem-solution co-evolution may well enhance the current culture and awareness of social responsibility. Design for social good, community engagement and sustainability appear as the ethos in education at international institutions such as the London College of Fashion (n.d.) and Royal College of Art (n.d.).

### Recommendations for fashion design education curriculum and didactics

This theme explores how current fashion design education curricula and didactics may be improved so as to develop more socially responsible agents. Perhaps a more integrated approach to curriculum content with design projects concentrating on indigenous contexts and local social problem solving coupled with a research driven approach may deepen understanding and support investigation into social problems for application to tangible fashion solutions. Table 4 foregrounds students’ evidence for recommended curriculum content.

Curriculum that focuses on more local contexts
Need for projects that pertain to real existing problems specifically on social problem solving
Modules that teach us how to identify and investigate social problems and apply those into fashion solutions
Research that involve socially responsible projects
A social responsibility factor incorporated into all projects in the curriculum

**Table 4: Recommended curriculum content**

The current scope of problem solving appears to be more *theoretically* orientated but it is necessary to consider the possibility that more *opportunity for practical application in society* could shift the scope towards social problem solving. Perhaps *more community based projects with solving real world social problems* and human-centeredness could be the cornerstone for future curriculum projects.

Proposed curriculum content for fashion design programmes may include topical issues such as *sustainable design management*, the broader scope of sustainable design and production methodologies, and environmentally and ethically sound design, production and business practices. Embracing *a green culture in learning material* could possibly *allow them to be more socially responsible* and might enhance socially responsible fashion design practices. Content on *eco-friendliness and sustainability, social responsibility* and *green design from design, manufacturing and businesses strategies, with more content on fair labor practices* are students’ inputs that may perhaps enhance socially responsible fashion practices. Students’ also advocated the need to revisit the current textile studies content. Students’ proposals such as the need to *include content on*



*environmentally friendly textiles*, and the suggestion that students may *learn more if curriculum content provides alternative ethical and eco-friendly textiles* endorse these findings.

Teaching and learning could perhaps allow for further self-growth and exploration. Students were of the opinion that current practices allowed for limited self-growth and exploration. *Expectations of perfection* in fashion solutions and the culture of moulding to fit stereotypical boxes were noted limitations that may hinder exploration. Students were also of the view that teaching and learning methodologies could foster more cohesion between studio space and real world settings.

Opportunities for *community engagement and interaction with tangible users in real world social contexts* may also possibly enrich teaching and learning. *Physical interaction with people and users may enable a deeper understanding of design problems to foster more socially responsible learning*. Table 5 below highlights students' views regarding teaching and learning.

Opportunities for students to explore and not fit into the same box
Not attempting to control the students and giving self-control
Place less emphasis on perfection
More integrated programs
Teaching could support real life situational case study
Teaching that allows for interaction with the social environment and users
Teaching that creates more engagement with communities and working with people from the outside
Teaching that allows for engagement with the real world

**Table 5: Ratifications for teaching and learning**

## Conclusion

Theoretically and empirically, design for social good, social problem solving and human and environmental wellbeing appeared as key social responsibility considerations. However, a heightened and shared culture of social responsibility may be required at an educational level. Students' were enthusiastic about creating a culture of social responsibility and elevated levels of awareness but it may be possible that some academic staff do not sufficiently emphasize the importance of social responsibility in teaching and learning.

Fashion education may have repositioned itself from being a predominately vocational field of study scope to adopting a stance in favour of design for social change, human-centeredness, responsibility, community engagement and active participation with users but this could be intensified and should be seen as the predominant vehicle through which to better position students as future fit, socially responsible designers in a changing world. An integrated research approach to curriculum content and design projects with a core focus on indigenous contexts and local social problem solving is perhaps one way to develop such an ethos. Theory directed towards socially responsible practice in fashion design could be another means. The contribution of this paper may deepen thinking in this regard, but further research is required so as to align the argument of this paper with the perceptions of academics regarding this phenomenon.

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# The Firma Model: A Tool for Resolving Complex Societal Problems

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## Abstract

*As the focus of design broadens to include problem solving located in complex societal systems the emphasis in design education must shift accordingly. Knowledge of and competence in conducting research within the scope of design practice, and using insights gained from research to conceptualise appropriate solutions is a necessity that design students urgently require. In support of this need, this paper will introduce and describe the Firma Model, a meta-framework that spans the human-centered design process, which aims to assist the design student and educator in grappling with complex problems.*

*The first section of this paper presents a description of the Firma Model, which is supported by a theoretical rationale. This description explains how the model can be applied to frame design research, orientate design strategy and evaluate solutions. The second section provides an account of how the Firma Model evolved as a teaching tool and how the model has been applied in two different educational contexts. This second section concludes with a critical reflection of the application of the Model in our teaching practice over the last eighteen months. This reflection details concerns that arose, considerations for use, as well as a brief discussion of how lessons learned will be incorporated into future teaching activities using the Firma Model.*

**Keywords:** design, models, research, strategy, critique, ethics

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## Introduction

Societal problems are often complex, illusive and subject to societal agreement (Rittel & Webber 1973, p 165). Societal agreement itself has many nuances related to the beliefs and practices of the various actors who comprise a society, as the term wicked problems (Rittel & Webber 1973, Buchanan 1992), used to describe them, implies. Furthermore, it is possible that multiple and conflicting ethical positions may co-exist in society (Gowans 2012, Westcott n.d.).

The emergence of problem-ecologies is intrinsically linked to the notion of complexity and indeterminacy in design (Fenn & Hobbs 2012, pp. 7-9). Using a simple analogy, a problem-ecology can be viewed as the natural habitat of the wicked problem. Therefore in order to solve a wicked problem, the designer first needs to ensure that they are interpreting the wicked problem accurately and this involves understanding the environment from which the problem emerges.

As problem-ecologies are invariably societal, most often the focus is on the human experience of the problem. However one can argue that understanding the problem-ecology - in order to find resolution in a manner that provides most benefit for the widest range of actors and environments - demands more than subjective interpretations of societal reality. Thus, in conjunction with understanding the human experience, the research exploration should include more macro forces such as economy, politics, the sustainable environment, technology, market forces and so on.

Further to the challenge of comprehending this complexity is the burden on the student designer (and designers in general) to resolve the pluralism of perspectives, needs and ethical frameworks held by multiple stakeholders within problem-ecologies.

As Kallman and Grillo state: 'The intention behind an ethical analysis should...allow an individual to appreciate all the possible course(s) of action that can be taken according to the differing, and often conflicting, sets of ethical values and then make a judgement as to which is applicable for them in the real world.' (1996, p. 5)

Of course, this places a heavy burden on the designer and even more so the student designer. Design, as Donald Norman (2015) states, is called upon to examine the complexities of our times yet does not adequately prepare people for this need as design in tertiary education is still very much stuck in disciplinary silos 'that no longer suffices to deal with large, complex problems that involve multiple disciplines, technology, art, the social sciences, politics, and business' (Norman 2014).

We argue, that while there is immense value in engaging with complexity in order to design solutions that are appropriately ethical to the widest range of stakeholders and most appropriate to those that need it most, there is an additional burden on design educators to prepare students for contemporary practice. This preparation, we believe, involves adding knowledge, skills and abilities related to problem-resolution to complement design students' disciplinary knowledge. Thus, we concur with Norman (2014) who states:

'Problems are more volatile than ever before, and information often changes faster than it can be validated. This is why we need a new research tradition to explore the issues involved in models of education as well as models of practice.'

In order to support the transfer of knowledge pertaining to design research and assist design students in engaging with complex societal problems, this paper introduces the Firma Model, explains its conceptualization and briefly exemplifies the application of the model in two educational contexts.

## Section 1: The theoretical context of the Firma Model

The conceptualization of the Firma Model draws on a variety of sources and has been influenced by a tendency in models for HCD (Human Centered Design) to tend either towards overly broad and generic or overly narrow in the extent to which they consider the problem-ecology and further, assist the designer and stakeholders in understanding and solutioning for it. Examples of the former include IDEO's desirability, feasibility and viability model (2009, pp. 8-9) and Steen's model of HCD methods (2011, p 48); and of the latter, McCarthy & Wright's (2004, p. 79) *Threads of Experience*, Marc Hassenzahl's *Three Level Hierarchy of Goals* (2010, p 44) and Yanki Lee's *Three modes of Participation* (2008, p 33).

Additionally, the authors have drawn on the *PEST* model (Yingfa & Hong 2010, p. 563) for macro-environmental analysis (perhaps better known in the fields of strategic management and marketing than design) and earlier work of their own describing the social complexity of data gathered in researching problem-ecologies (Fenn & Hobbs 2012, p. 4).

In the context of this research the Firma Model has emerged with three primary aims:

1. To provide a generic research framework that can be applied to broadly and deeply explore and define problem-ecologies.
2. To identify key areas of concern within the problem-ecology and thus assist in articulating the design strategy (i.e. how should the areas of concern be changed).
3. And lastly to, provide the basis for critiquing the resultant design solution based on a knowledge of what the problem was and the desired change.

In achieving these aims we believe that the Model can play a role in assisting designers and students of design in recognizing the multiple viewpoints (of an ethical or other nature) that may be held by the many stakeholders within the problem ecology and thus provide a basis for their resolution.

## The areas of concern

The Model is based on a conceptualization of a variety of generic factors that may be at play in any given problem-ecology. These we refer to as the 'areas of concern' and are categorized into immediate, contextual and paradigmatic concerns:

IMMEDIATE CONCERNS	CONTEXTUAL CONCERNS	PARADIGMATIC CONCERNS
<p><b>The organisation:</b> usually the commissioning agent for a design project which could include businesses, government bodies, not-for-profit organisations, etc</p>	<p><b>Environment:</b> the context of use, spaces and places where the problem manifests that span both physical and digital environments. In this Model, technology is understood and explored as a facet of environment</p>	<p><b>Economy:</b> the macro- and micro-economic conditions at play that affect or are affected by the marketplace and organisation / s engaged with the product or service (this can include governmental policies, approaches, plans and the bodies responsible for managing and or implementing strategies, such as regulators)</p>
<p><b>Users:</b> the end-users of products and services</p>	<p><b>Society:</b> the societal context in which the product or service, organisation and marketplace operate (including norms, values, types, etc)</p>	<p><b>Politics:</b> both the broad framework of governance (and its associated values and goals) and the particular strategies, policies and bodies that exist in relation to the product or service, the organisations, market place and society that they serve</p>
<p><b>The marketplace:</b> providers of the same or similar products or services, generic alternative products and services, the supply chain for the delivery of products and services and other immediately affected organisations and places for the operational delivery and experience of the product or service</p>		<p><b>Culture:</b> the beliefs, norms, values and behaviours of a society at large, the interplay of cultures within a society and sub-cultures as they relate to the product or service, the organisations and marketplace in question</p>
<p><b>Legacy:</b> The apparent framing of the problem from a historical perspective in the context of the organization, users and marketplace (why is this a problem now?)</p>		<p><b>History:</b> the broad historical context (and possibly contended views thereof) that inform an interpretation of the economic, political, cultural and societal status quo, as well as an understanding of the immediate environments, marketplace and organisations related to the product or service being explored</p>

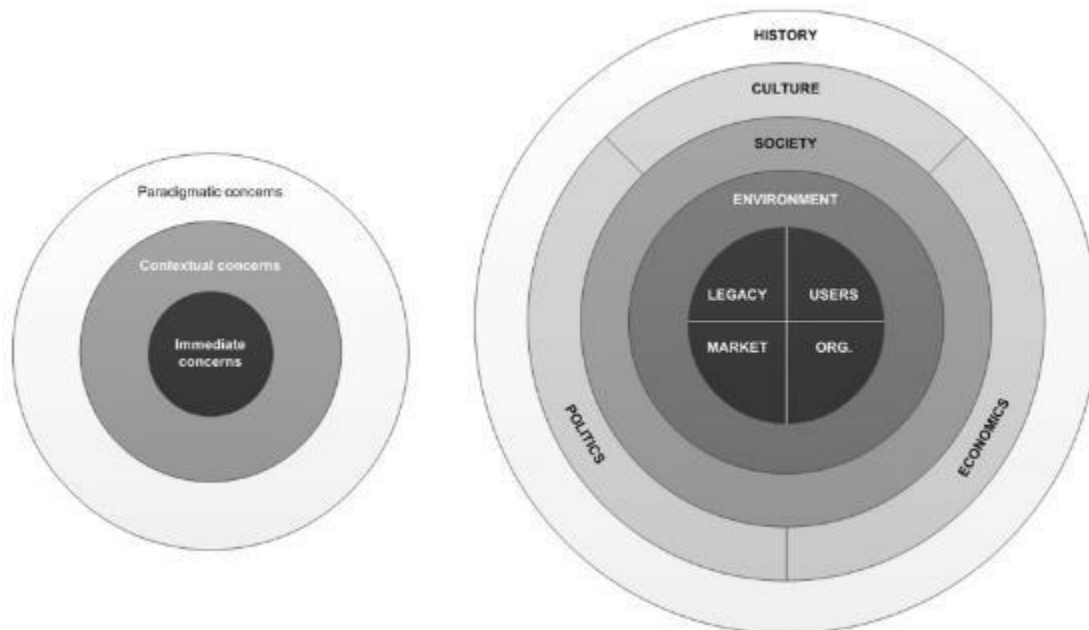
**Table 1: The areas of concern employed by the Firma Model**

Important notes regarding the logic of the areas of concern:

- No one concern is more important than another and as such there is no intended or implied hierarchy in the categorisation or ordering of the areas of concern.
- The lack of hierarchy is critical to developing sustainable solutions: if the multiple needs of the ecology cannot be resolved in relation to their inter-dependencies then the forces at play are likely to work against the design solution over time.
- The areas of concern aim to guard against assumption: first, in assuming a particular understanding in a particular context and second, in acknowledging when insufficient data exists for a particular area of concern.

### Applying the areas of concern

The aims of the Model (to assist in making sense of the problem-ecology, determining the solution-ecology and providing a basis for critique of the resultant solution) are made possible by re-applying the same set of concerns at different stages of the HCD process. Initially and prior to starting the research process the Model is applied to identify the types of research and data required. For the purposes of guiding and validating ideation key areas of concern, identified in the research and synthesis processes, are identified as requiring change. This, in essence, is the design strategy. Lastly, with a framework in place, the Model can then extend to assessing the impact of the design based on a set of criteria that both continue to exist at the generic and specific levels<sup>1</sup>. It is in this sense that the Model acts as a meta-framework to the HCD process and may be represented in diagrammatic form as follows:



**Figure 1: At left we visualise the categories of the areas of concern as radiating outwards from Immediate to Contextual to Paradigmatic (where the Contextual areas are in the middle as the environment and society are understood to be where the influence of immediate and paradigmatic concerns play out). At right, the complete Model is visualized with the detailed content of the areas of concern within.**

<sup>1</sup> By 'specific level' we mean with reference to those areas of concern identified in the design strategy. By 'generic level' we mean the generic set of areas of concern that should be revisited (much as in the first phase when embarking on researching the problem-ecology) for the purposes of critique (1) because the nature of such interlocking systems means it is difficult to always predict outcomes, (2) because over time conditions in the ecosystem are likely to change, and (3), because unintended consequences of design interventions can lead to new knowledge.

We will now briefly explain the application of the Model as it relates to its aims to assist in research, strategy and critique.

### **Applying the Model for research**

In research, the areas of concern act as a guide to assist the designer in considering multiple perspectives from which to understand the potential breadth and depth of a problem across an ecology. The areas of concern include multiple stakeholders, environments and perspectives intentionally, so as to be true to the potential complexity that resides in ecosystems.

In research, the Model should be applied in assisting to build a relational logic between the areas of concern. This is how one forms the hypothesis of the problem-ecology. The word ecology is used precisely for this reason because we are attempting to understand the multiple factors at play in the existence of a problem and how they affect each other. For this reason, the cross analysis of data and insights from multiple areas of concern is crucial.

Furthermore, the problem-ecology is a hypothesis and is arrived at through a synthetic process in design where understanding the problem is to formulate a solution (Rittel and Webber 1973, p. 161, Nigel Cross 2006, pp. 78, 80) arrived at through multiple rounds of exploring hypotheses. The aim of the Firma Model here is to ensure that all possible areas of concern have been addressed as inputs into the synthetic process such that the designer can have confidence in the breadth and depth of data and insights being explored for understanding the problem.

Two points are worth noting:

- The Model presents no requirement for the application of any particular research types or techniques. In application the designer would look to choose appropriate methods per area of concern; multiple research techniques may be applied for the purposes of exploring a particular area of concern; and a certain research technique may be applied to more than one area of concern.
- If an assumption is required to be made regarding the content of a particular area of concern it needs to be acknowledged as such. Acknowledging assumption is crucial a. because if a hypothesis has a strong reliance on the assumption it should signal concern and b. should the solution not produce the desired impact it is easier to trace the process back and determine if an assumption was the cause of a misreading of a problem.

### **Applying the Model for strategy**

An effective design strategy requires that it articulate the purpose of the design effort and the desired outcomes of the intervention. To this end, the design strategy should emerge from an understanding of the problem-ecology as this defines the purpose of the design effort at large.

The Firma Model applied for research provides a definition of the problem, the areas of concern at play and the affected stakeholders in the problem-ecology. It follows then that articulation of the manner in which these areas of concern (their stakeholders and relationships) should change and move from a problem-ecology to a solution-ecology, is made available.

Furthermore, ideation is guided and enriched by the explicit relationship that is provided by the use of the Model between the design strategy and research. For example, it would provide context for facilitated co-design workshops and assist in providing the appropriate context for prototype testing.

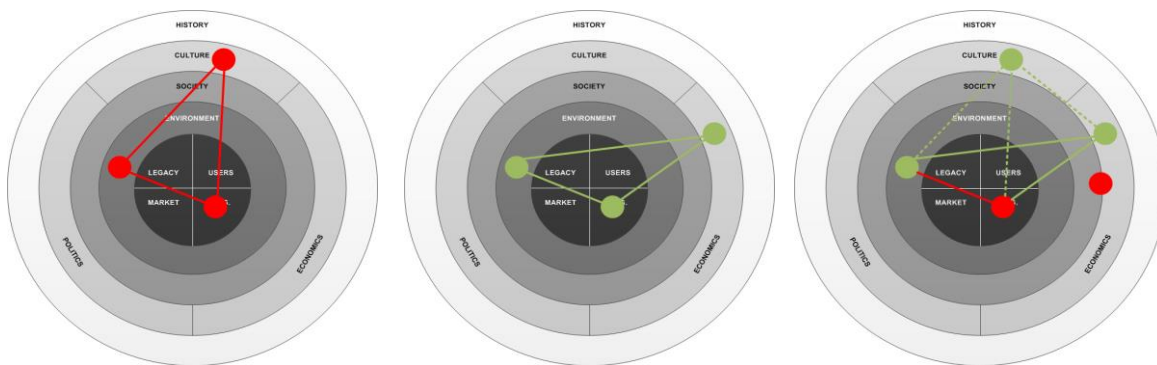
### **Applying the Model for critique**

Knowing which areas are of concern, and how they (and others) should change, makes knowing where to look to understand impact, a logical progression.

Many measures already exist to understand change within the fields and disciplines interested within individual areas of concern and all may be applied in conjunction with the Firma Model. Where we believe additional value is offered through the use of the Model is:

- In understanding the impact across multiple areas of concern (the systemic dimensions of the problem / solution-ecology),
- In providing a framework and research that spans areas of concern such that a broad view can be taken to observe and identify unintended consequences of change, and
- Having provided a solution hypothesis, if the change required does not occur (or occurs with new problems) it is possible to trace the thinking back to the initial understanding of the problem-ecology to revisit either its interpretation and / or the solution upon which it evolved.

Understanding is required for critique and critique is required for understanding. In this sense the application of the Model at the start and end of the design process provides for a continuous logic through the process that offers an important level of accountability in what is otherwise a difficult space to determine impact (both because of the levels of complexity present and because of the potentially radical forms of transformation that occur in HCD and synthetic processes).



**Figure 2: At left, a hypothetical example of how three factors across the areas of concern could be displayed to define a problem-ecology. Centre: an example of how, based on the example at left, we may demonstrate the solution-ecology. At right, an example of how, based on the example in the centre, we may demonstrate the manner in which certain interventions were or were not impactful during critique.**

## Section 2: Applying the Firma Model in Design Education.

The following section discusses the application of the Firma Model in our teaching practice over the last 18 months. The discussion provides an account of the evolution of the Model, describes two examples of the Model applied in teaching activities and lastly provides a critical reflection outlining concerns, considerations and future intentions drawn from our experience of using the Model.

### Case study: Department of Multimedia, University of Johannesburg (IXD students)

We first introduced the Firma Model into our teaching practice in the 2014 academic year. Our initial version of the Model was as a series of thematic categories that we provided to 3<sup>rd</sup> year interactive design (IXD) students to help them frame secondary research related to a design problem. After the initial success of this exercise (which increased the students' awareness of the broader contexts and interdependencies of singular problems) we decided in 2015 to use the categorical framework in a visual form.

Our initial application of the Firma Model in February 2015 was with 4<sup>th</sup> year IXD B-tech and Honours students in the Department of Multimedia at the University of Johannesburg. In the 4<sup>th</sup> year of study



students are expected to conceive of, design and develop a self- motivated project. Students with an IxD focus are expected to identify a problem, ranging from the mundane to the hedonistic, that effects people and resolve the problem in a human-centered design manner. As the problems students solve are societal, they tend to be complex and indeterminate.

It is worth noting that the majority of the students (10/12) had been exposed to the model in its previous form the year before and nearly all the students (11/12) had been taught or had work experience in design projects that were complex in nature although this experience was predominantly in group projects with a high degree of lecturer facilitation. This point is worth noting as we have learned in other HCD student projects that student who have had no experience of 'finding' design problems in the world and have only experience of applying design briefs with determinate problems can become very anxious and disconcerted when faced with complex indeterminate problems.

Figures 3-4, are two examples of the 4<sup>th</sup> year students' Firma Models which were used here as initial framings of the problem that were attempting to understand so as to resolve. Figure 3 addresses the everyday concerns of dog owners. Figure 4 describes the problem of navigating the notoriously disorganized Bree St, Taxi rank in central Johannesburg.

## Problem Statement: Looking after dogs

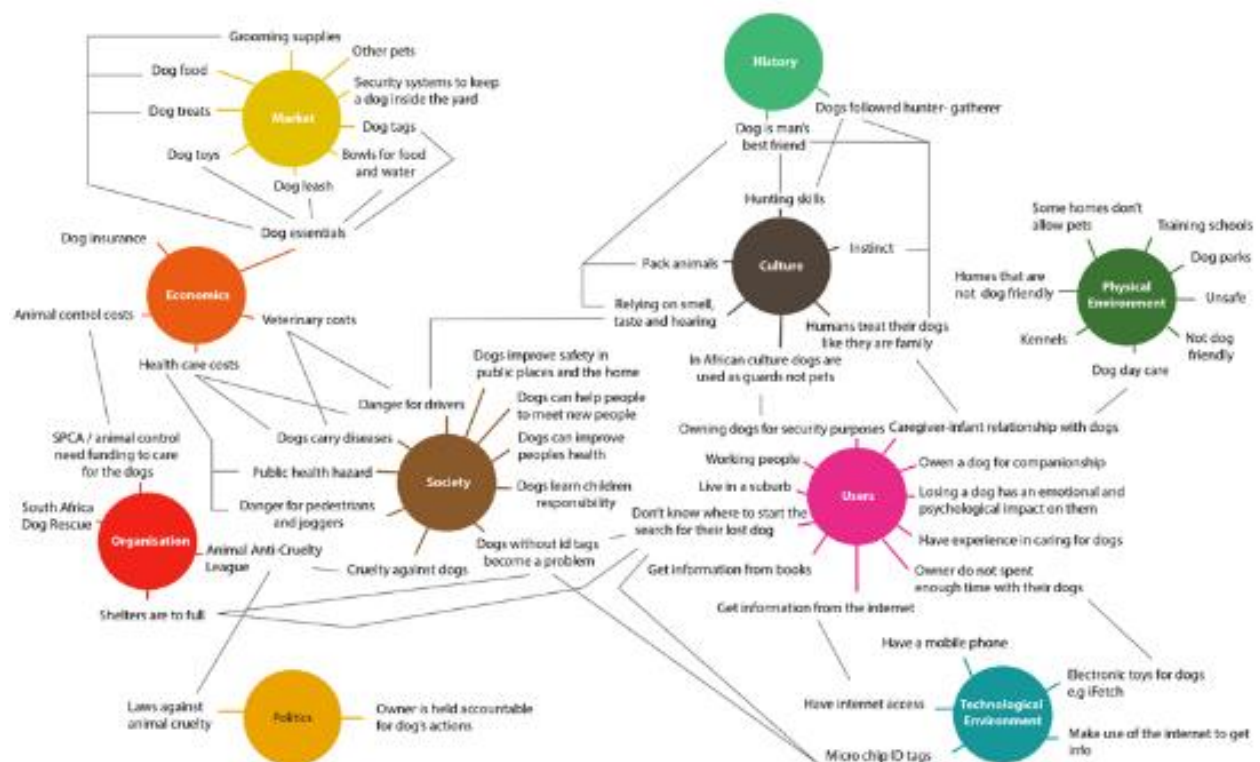
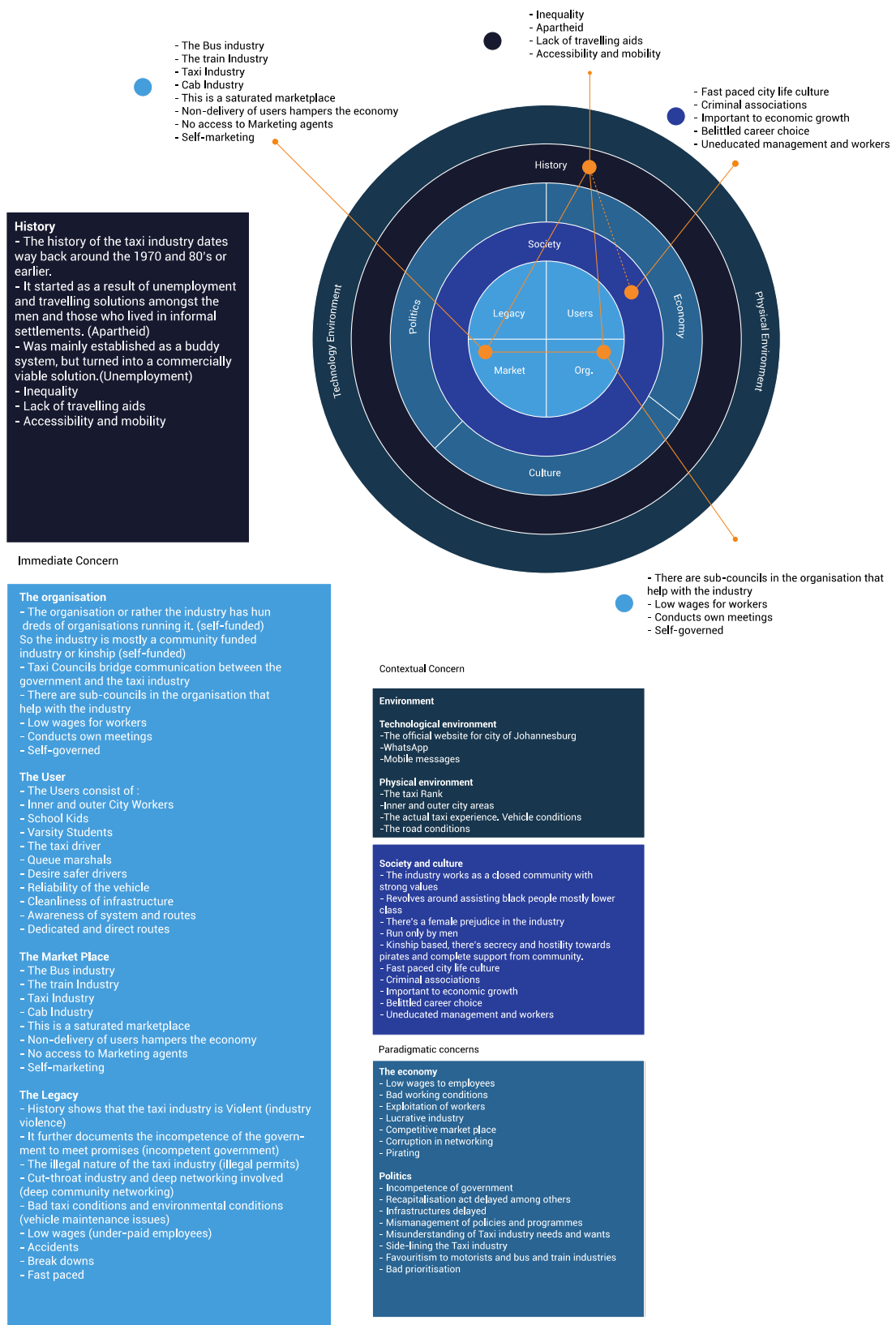


Figure 3: Firma Diagram describing the problem-ecology associated with suburban dog ownership (Image courtesy of A. Pienaar)



**Figure 4: Firma Diagram describing the problem-ecology associated with Bree Street Taxi Rank, Johannesburg (Image courtesy of K. Mokhari)**

The first goal that the Firma Model achieves is in allowing students to visually represent their collected data. A visual representation of the data in the model performs three immediate functions:

1. Through addressing the topic requirements of the particular categorical lenses, students are guided towards viewing problems from positions they may not have considered.
2. Students are forced to assess what they consider the most pertinent insights for each lens to be. This act of criticality helps to not only select the most relevant data but also helps to reduce the cognitive load of accounting for all the data found relating to the problem when attempting to consider solutions.
3. By visualizing the research insights, the act of research can become dialogical in the sense that other contributors (such as lecturers and classmates) can engage with students over their interpretation of the problem.

The ability to assess the students thinking concerning their problem-ecologies in the early phases of problem framing was valuable to the lecturing staff as it enabled (in a very dynamic and accessible manner) the demonstration of reframing in the context of the student's own problem-ecology. This reframing occurred by shifting the consideration of the problem to another lens in the same level. For example, how taxi users and taxi drivers could view Bree Taxi Rank differently. Alternatively, the reframing could occur by shifting the problem to a lens at a higher level. For example, understanding the chaos of Bree Taxi Rank (environment) as directly impacted by poor municipal service delivery (society).

The impact of the Firma Model on strategic thinking was evident in the formation of the student's design concepts. Developing the strategy by engaging with complexity deeply effected most of the students thinking.

One example of this mature consideration of a complex problem is the design project illustrated in Figure 6 that originally intended to resolve the chaotic environmental graphic design of Bree Taxi Rank. By reframing the problem as a service delivery issue the student conceptualized a digital application that allowed citizens of the city to voice which services / infrastructure they felt the city should provide. Each submitted suggestion could then be seconded and voted for, with the intention of presenting city management with a clear democratic voicing of concerns. A second example of the use of the model to reframe initial consideration was a design project that explored drug abuse in Kagiso, in the West Rand of Johannesburg. The design student identified that drug use was often a result of boredom and a lack of opportunities. As a result, the solution strategy shifted from drug education (where there were already many existing players) to helping the Kagiso youth connect with positive activities such as sports, cultural groups and skill workshops.

### Case study: Metaphase staff workshop (Japan)

On the 14<sup>th</sup> of July 2015 Jason Hobbs conducted a workshop with 21 design staff members from the company Metaphase in Tokyo, Japan as part of the Summer 2015 UX Strategy Forum, hosted by Sociomedia (also a design company based in Tokyo).

The workshop began with a presentation by Hobbs describing the theory and application of the Firma Model. This was followed by the explanation of a problem that the workshop attendees would use the Firma Model to address.

The theme of the problem was 'Aging in Japan' and had been researched in advance of the workshop by Hobbs using sources available on the Web. Twenty individual data points had been prepared. A few examples follow:

- Japan has the highest proportion of elderly citizens: 33.0% are above age 60, 25.9% are aged 65 or above, 12.5% aged 75 or above, as of September 2014
- Herbivore men (草食(系)男子 Sōshoku(-kei) danshi): Japanese men who do not desire

- marriage or having a girlfriend. This is viewed as a leading cause of the declining birth rate.
- Encouraging the elderly to leave Tokyo could stimulate rural economies

Three tasks were set for four groups: First, map the data points into the Firma Model and the areas of concern; second, synthesise the data and develop solutions to the problem of 'aging in japan'; and lastly, to provide examples of how they might use the model to form the basis of a critique of their solutions<sup>2</sup>.



**Figure 5: Participants of the workshop mapping data points into the Firma Model**

With regard to the first task (and although there is no rule to the correct allocation of data points into areas of concern) a positive outcome was the debate generated between participants regarding where data points should be allocated. This prompted a deeper interrogation of what the data points meant, both on their own (does this insight belong in one category or another) and in relation to one another, as more were added. This was viewed as successful as it indicated that participants were engaging with both the complexity of data and building a relational logic that would begin to form the hypothesis of the problem-ecology.

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<sup>2</sup> The workshop provided three hours for the completion of these tasks and only the first two tasks were able to be completed in the time provided



**Figure 6: Participants developing a relational logic between data points across the Firma Model**

For the second task participants began ideating potential solutions. Two immediate and significant outcomes were that (1) multiple solutions were being explored and that (2) the participants were intuitively evaluating their solutions against their problem-ecologies. Again this was viewed as a positive outcome as it indicated that, in the first instance, the participants remained engaged in the complexity of the problem by considering a solution-ecology that built upon the relational logic of the problem-ecology, and in the second instance, their progression from problem analysis to synthetic solutioning contained within it the process a reference backwards that would facilitate traceability and therefore accountability.

All the groups were successful in being able to develop solutions and then articulate both their problem- and solution-ecologies to the other groups ending the second task and due to time constraints the workshop as a whole.



**Figure 7: Participants presenting their problem- and solution-ecologies to other groups**

## Conclusion

This paper has presented the Firma Model as a tool to assist design students with the framing of complex problems, developing strategy that is orientated by problem framing and lastly, to evaluate solutions in a holistic and meaningful manner. A theoretical account of the Model has been presented as well as the manner in which the Model provides traceability, accountability and sustainability.

Lastly, we have attempted to contextualize its application through an account of its evolution and by providing two case studies. In both instances it was observed that the level of engagement between facilitators and learners, as well as learners and their peers, resulted in rich and meaningful considerations around research, insights and possible strategy. In conclusion we would like to offer the following critical reflections:

1. Using the model to track the development of a research study is perhaps the strength of the model rather seeking to present only a summary of research findings.
2. Not all lenses are equally relevant in every design study. Some lenses will, depending on the context, attract more data than others.
3. A first draft of the model should be constructed purely from the researcher's assumptions of the problem. This act makes the assumptions apparent as well as, when compared with later drafts, can be used to track what has been learned.
4. Initial research drafts should capture easily accessible information most often available from secondary research. This framing would generally describe the paradigmatic and contextual levels of the Model and would help define the focus of subsequent field research.
5. It is often the case that certain data points could potentially exist in more than one area of concern although this is discouraged as critical debate regarding the meaning of the data is stimulated when one is encouraged to pick one or other area of concern.
6. We have been unable to report on the use of the Model for critique as in the first case study students had not completed their full projects by the time of writing this text, and in the case of the second the workshop ran out of time.
7. While other existing models were used to inform the Firma Model additional areas of concern are expected to arise and may require inclusion into future iterations of the Model.

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# Interior design's occupational closure: an ethical opportunity

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## Abstract

*In March 2015 the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP) announced its intention to register new professional categories for interior designers. This will provide statutory recognition for the professional status of the interior design occupation and it will allow interior design occupational closure, a state where both the practice and title of the occupation will be regulated.*

*To reach this milestone interior design's practical and scholarly endeavour was focussed on the professionalisation of the discipline; a lacuna was produced in which the discipline did not adequately consider a separate identity for interior design. The pursuit of a stronger discrete identity could provide a stronger professional identity (Breytenbach, 2012).*

*If interior design reaches the professional status it pursued it faces two consequences: firstly the discipline arrives at an ethical dilemma; secondly energy previously spent in the pursuit of professionalisation would be at large to deliberate discrete knowledge areas.*

*The ethical dilemma is located in professionalism itself. When an profession reaches occupational closure it succeeds in establishing a monopoly of service which is based on its technical authority which links skill and practice to provide services to the public which are uniquely trustworthy. Professions are technical and adhere to norms and standards. These norms and standards have an ethical dimension: they must service the greater public good (Wilensky, 1964).*

*As an industry, the interior design occupation must focus its intentions, efforts and influence toward 'that which ought to be'. This represents a normative position for interior design in which the discipline must clearly state what its obligation to society is, and how it will be met. Currently interior design is offered the opportunity to redirect its scholarly endeavour in the pursuit of ethical and discrete knowledge areas. This paper will argue that interior design can face both consequences simultaneously, and that these can be addressed through its mimetic production.*

*During this emergent and developmental phase interior design can expand its practice and scope of expertise in an ethical manner. This paper aims to present some of these opportunities: interior design is uniquely placed in the built environment to denote occupation, inhabitation and identity; further, interior design is a tangible vehicle for the expression of intangible cultural practices that are expressed as public rituals (e.g. casual encounters and the conducting of conversations and other opportunities of exchange). Interior design contributes to the establishment and expression of identities which could support social cohesion; this is relevant in the establishment of a principle-driven and human centered profession. The professional accountability and social responsibility lies in interior design's contributions in the cultural realm.*

**Keywords:** Ethics; Interior Design; Profession; Social Compact

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## Introduction

It is, after all, for Humanity, our ultimate client, that we design. We shape the spaces that shape the human experience. This is what we do, what we create, what we give. It



is how we earn our place at the human table. It is why our work is important to our clients, to our societies and to ourselves. It is the difference we make and why we choose this noble profession, IFI Interiors Declaration (IFI 2011).

Since its emergence as a specialised occupation in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> Century (Massey 2001) the interior design occupation's intellectual endeavour was aimed at professionalisation, this included establishing academic programmes, academic accreditation, apprenticeship, and self-regulation through professional organisations (Anderson, Honey & Dudek 2009).

In March 2015 the South African Council for the Architectural Profession (SACAP) announced its intention to register new professional categories for interior designers (South Africa 2015). This will provide statutory recognition for the professional status of the interior design occupation and it will allow interior design occupational closure, a state where both the practice and title of the occupation will be regulated. This intention is the latest development in a process of engagement between representatives of interior design and SACAP since the creation of the statutory body in 2001 by an Act of Parliament.

Since the traditional model of professionalism places emphasis on autonomous expertise (Wilensky, 1964, p. 137), the interior design occupation's professional efforts were aimed to establish and illustrate this autonomy. In South Africa's legislative context it was specifically necessary to illustrate how interior design is differentiated from its sister discipline, architecture (König, 2010). However, during this emergent stage the discipline did not adequately consider its social compact to do good (Anderson *et al*, 2009:v). Since interior design's practical and scholarly endeavour was focussed on the professionalisation of the discipline; a lacuna was produced in which the discipline did not adequately consider a separate identity for interior design. The pursuit of a stronger discrete identity could provide a stronger professional identity (Breytenbach 2012). I will argue in this paper that interior design's professional development is dependent on its ethics, and that these are linked to discrete knowledge areas in the cultural realm. The ethical responsibility of a profession cannot be solely met through the codes of ethics of its professional bodies (Anderson *et al*, 2009, p. vii); a deeper social compact is required which is addressed through the discipline's ontology. Through literature review and heuristic enquiry I will illustrate that one of the ways in which the occupation services the public good is by enabling inhabitation and the temporary establishment of territory in the public realm in meaningful ways.

## Professionalism and the ethical compact to 'do good'

The social compact to 'do good' is an ethical aspect that lies at the core of professionalism itself. Wilensky (1964, p. 138) opens the definition of a profession by stating that, in order for an occupation to establish professional authority, it must find a technical basis, assert exclusive jurisdiction, link skill and jurisdiction to standards of training, and it should convince the public that its services are uniquely trustworthy; this would establish the profession as a carrier and agent of knowledge. In addition to higher education, professions are those occupations which are organised into institutions that control the conduct and commitment of its members, implying a form of social control of professional behaviour (Freidson, 1986, p. 26). After World War II the theory of professions developed out of an effort to provide a coherent definition for professions where expertise was the central construct (Freidson, 1986, p. 28-29). In the academic treatment of professions the aspect of power became an important consideration from the 1960's onwards. Writers emphasised that monopolistic professional institutions treated knowledge, skill and ethics as an ideology to preserve the status and privilege of the professions (Freidson 1986, p. 29). Professions are occupations which have managed to establish and maintain monopolies in the labour market for expert services; by introducing service monopolies they strengthen occupational hierarchies and exacerbate socioeconomic inequities (Sciulli, 2005:917). Social criticism of professions state that they reduce competition and that they prohibit entry into the labour market (Carpenter 2007, p. 26). It is to gain these service monopolies, autonomy and exercise of expertise that occupations pursue

professionalisation; the benefit to society in return for this privilege lies in the profession's ethical compact to do good.

If interior design reaches the professional status it pursued it faces two consequences: firstly the discipline arrives at an ethical dilemma in which it must clearly voice its social compact to do good; secondly energy previously spent in the pursuit of professionalisation would be at large to deliberate discrete knowledge areas.

The ethical dilemma is located in professionalism itself. When a profession reaches occupational closure it succeeds in establishing a monopoly of service which is based on its technical authority which links skill and practice to provide services to the public which are uniquely trustworthy. Professions are technical and adhere to norms and standards. These norms and standards have an ethical dimension: they must service the greater public good (Wilensky, 1964). For interior design this greater public good lies in answering one of the two normative questions: *what ought to be?* This is the utopian question and in its answer professionals can consider their contributions to the greater good. As an occupation, interior design has adequately answered the other normative question: *what is interior design?* This is the ontological question; its answer brought the discipline the opportunity to reach occupational closure.

At this juncture the occupation is offered an opportunity. As an industry, the interior design occupation can focus its intentions, efforts and influence toward 'that which ought to be'. This represents a normative position for interior design in which the discipline must clearly state what its obligation to society is, and how it will be met.

### Interior design's social compact to do good

Interior design cannot address the utopian question by focusing on health, safety and welfare since this issue is addressed by all environmental design disciplines and does not adequately differentiate the discipline (Anderson *et al*, 2009:viii-ix).

The International Federation of Interior Architects/Designers (IFI) undertook an initiative to define interior design and to reach a form of consensus regarding the procedures and responsibilities of the discipline as a practice and a profession. The Design Frontiers: Interiors Entity project (DFIE) culminated in the (unanimous) adoption of the *Interiors Declaration* (IFI 2011) by the DFIE Global Symposium which was held in New York, 17-18 February 2011. The *Interiors Declaration* can be considered as a normative statement based on seven tenets (value, relevance, responsibility, culture, business, knowledge, and identity). This declaration can be considered as interior design's social compact to do good, specifically as it answers the call by Anderson *et al* (2007:xi) to design human-centered "interior spaces that physiologically and psychologically support and enhance the quality of life".

This implies that the interior design occupation fulfilled its professional requirements, the occupation is able to define a discrete area of practice and it has stated its ethical obligations to society. This achievement currently offers the occupation the opportunity to redirect its scholarly endeavour in the pursuit of ethical and discrete knowledge areas. Interior design can face both consequences simultaneously, and these can be addressed through its mimetic production.

Like others (Anderson *et al*, 2009; Breytenbach 2012) I believe that interior design will only reach full professional legitimacy when it embraces its unique ethical and cultural contributions; specifically those that relate to the discipline's unique artefacts, interior spaces. There is a need for interior design research focus to move away from professional identity towards a larger ontology aimed at an informed community of designers capable of leading change (Perolini 2011, p. 173). In other words it becomes necessary to not only understand interior design's power and responsibility, but to use it with care in leading change. The evolution of the profession is dependent on the identification and development of the theoretical underpinnings of interior design (Clemons & Eckman 2011, p. 31). A

greater understanding and a variety of approaches must be developed for interior design (Perolini 2011, p. 170). When building theory in interior design the research process must not only be analytical but must include creative processes (Clemons & Eckman 2011, p. 32).

During this emergent and developmental phase interior design can expand its practice and scope of expertise in an ethical manner. This paper aims to present one of these opportunities: interior design is uniquely placed in the built environment to denote occupation, inhabitation and identity. Further, interior design is a tangible vehicle for the expression of intangible cultural practices that are expressed as public rituals (e.g. casual encounters and the conducting of conversations and other opportunities of exchange) (Königk 2015, p. 5).

### **Inhabitation and the expression of self**

Public interiors are commissioned by clients, conceived by interior designers, executed by contractors and finally inhabited by their users. Interiors are made to be inhabited, since the occupation and inhabitation of these spaces is the ultimate purpose of interior design it is likely that the social compact to do good may be found in this process.

When individuals inhabit or take possession of interiors they do so by ascribing personal values to the objects in the interior (Rice 2004, p. 277). In the architectural sense “the first meaning of a building is what one must do in order to inhabit it,” (Eco, 1980, p. 20). Inhabitation therefore implies complying to the operational purpose of a space (what one must do to inhabit it) and in assigning personal meaning to that space (what the place means). Bunt (1980, p. 421) introduces the opposition between the ‘expressive’ dimension of architecture and the ‘experiential’ dimension which the individual will encounter when inhabiting the actual artefact. These dialectic dimensions of inhabitation are easily navigated in the private realm, where privacy itself affords the user the ability to occupy a territory. In the public realm this occupation is most often temporary, and must be mitigated against the occupation and territorial behaviours of others. A building reflects the duality between its inhabitants and strangers. Since they are made to be inhabited, all built spaces identify at least one ‘inhabitant’ (Hillier & Hanson 1984, p. 146). Interior designers solve problems to enable humans to use and inhabit a space (Perolini 2011, p. 172). This must be done in ways ‘that physiologically and psychologically support and enhance the quality of life’. Since the interior design occupation was pre-occupied with its drive towards professionalisation, it could not adequately address fundamental theoretical and human issues such as these.

The theoretical consideration of the inner self as distinct from the rest of the world is applied in interior design in the contemplation of enclosure and the differentiation between the self and the world. Interiority establishes the interior as a discrete realm and moving into the interior is a movement from the public arena to a space which can express the idiosyncrasies of identity (Hillier & Hanson 1984, p. 144-5). Interiority is the philosophical concept which examines the innerness of interior design as a locus for feeling and projection in which the interior environment is experienced via the body (as a ‘culturally lived organism’) (Taylor & Preston 2006, p. 11).

In the public domain, it is specifically the combination and placement of found objects in close proximity to produce meaningful patterns (such as ensembles, constellations, and symbolic motifs) which facilitate territorial behaviour and the mediation between the self and others through signifying inhabitation. These actions allow inhabitants of crowded spaces a sense of belonging, of knowing where one belongs, and having a sense of how to navigate the space. This is important for the occupation since the interior must provide its inhabitants with a sense of belonging and identity (Perolini, 2011:164). Although the aesthetic realm plays an important role in the creation of the interior artefact it is not the only determinant. The interior is created through the manipulation of volume and material with an identifiable purpose of inhabitation.

The presence of objects in space acts as indicators of inhabitation (Taylor & Preston 2006, p. 11). This places ethical responsibility on the interior designer when choosing these objects and also in the

combination of them. The synthetic assembly of use objects and loose artefacts is an indication of the presence of an inhabitant. The inhabitant is connoted through the implication that she is responsible for the selection and combination of objects. In the private realm the selection of these objects are within the power of the inhabitant, in the public realm that power is exercised by the designer on behalf of the occupant. The interior designer can only exercise this power with adequate care if she is sufficiently aware of the implications and motivations in denoting occupation and inhabitation on behalf on another.

In the public realm this mechanism is illustrated when the designer isolates smaller areas of inhabitation within a larger interior or space, for example the provision of private seating areas for groups, or seating at bars or against walls for individuals in nightclubs. In restaurants the use of constellations (e.g. a dining table with chairs) allows occupants the ability to claim a portion of the larger space and indicate inhabitation (although it is only temporary). The act of inhabitation is noticeable when occupants rearrange loose objects in their environment.

In public interiors occupation is expressed through the temporary occupation of a portion of the interior. Through this action inhabitation of a space is articulated as a timely and temporary indication of the presence of that inhabitant, the inhabitant's claiming of ownership, and marking of a territory. Once a territory is occupied temporary inhabitation can be signified through the use of objects and ensembles or the visual placement of personal items. This temporary inhabitation is dependent on two factors: 1.) the existence of territory that can be occupied; 2.) utilising ways to indicate inhabitation. (e.g. occupying a space and claiming it as personal in the public domain). It is again within the power and responsibility of the interior designer to enable this process on behalf of another, and to do so in a way which will support and enhance their quality of life. This is important since inhabitation and the peaceful expression of territorial behaviour influences social interaction.

The designed interior is a vehicle for the dissemination of meaning, as example a restaurant acts as a form of communication which enables a patron to make informed assumptions about price, food, quality and level of service on entering, in more subtle ways the restaurant may also have intertextual references to other interiors or cultural connotations to other artefacts, all of which constructs the restaurant's identity. Interior designers must understand how users evaluate an interior and how meaning is conveyed (Perolini 2011, p. 164-165). Social space is the vehicle for the cultural life of society to take place (Perolini 2011, p. 167). Social space is produced by and influences cultural interaction. Space encourages or discourages certain behaviours and interactions and gives form to social structures and ideologies (Perolini, 2011:168). This is an account of the recursive relationship in which cultural practices inform place-making, while place-making, in turn, construct and maintain cultural practices. Interior design offers the tangible cultural spaces which serves as vehicle for intangible cultural practices (e.g. a restaurant acting as vehicle for a waiter serving dinner, with associated meanings of servitude and social position and additional connotations of commodity and expense). Developments in feminist and geographic studies investigate the relationship between particular bodies (such as male bodies and female bodies) and their environment; as a specific body is located its capacities and desires are expressed and (re)produced by specific spaces (Taylor & Preston 2006, p. 10-11). This supports the notion that an inhabitant chooses to consume a specific interior as an expression of their self-identity. The consideration for inhabitation could be expanded to include theories that are sensitive to human beings as embodied psychological phenomena, rather than living, physical objects (Hewlett in Perolini 2011, p. 169).

I want to support this argument through the use of an analogy with fashion design. As fashion is a method to convey our identity through the external signs on display; and as it serves as a method to mark membership within groups (Adamo 2011) so does the choice of interior to inhabit. My argument here is that in a similar manner as when clothing is chosen, when a person decides to enter an interior, they consume that interior through that choice. This implies that the user established a positive association between themselves and the interior. In their affinity with certain spaces or types of spaces the user can express themselves. As clothing is an effective and established method

to establish and convey an individual's gender (and societal role) publicly (Adamo, 2011) so are some interiors gendered (male, female, or neutral) which allows their inhabitants to establish associations between an interior and its product offering. Their consumption of the interior plays a similar role. This correlation between identity, product, and place is established through associations (between product and place, product and identity, and place and identity). The interior must provide its inhabitants with a sense of belonging and a sense of identity (Perolini 2011, p. 164).

The analogy between individual identity and the identity contained in the interior can be further expanded: in commercial interiors the constructed place identity must find correlation with the personal identity of the individual who chooses to consume the interior by inhabiting it. This inhabitation is expressed when the individual occupies the interior temporarily. When the individual chooses to occupy an interior they indicate that interior as an outward extension of their personality. In this instance the interior functions as a signifier for personal identity. This merely indicates an association between the identity of the inhabitant and the place, and not a shared identity. This personal expression can be considered analogous to the use of fashion to construct or extend personal identity. Interior design fashions identity through artifice and participates in the staging of individual identities (Sanders 2006, p. 304-5). If the identity of the inhabitant is in correlation with the place-identity of the interior then the interior can be used by the inhabitant to project, construct, express, or inform their own identity. There is a connection between individual identity, and the identity of a place. In commercial interiors this constructed place identity must correlate with the individual identity of the person who chooses to consume an interior. The individual's identity 'meets' the place identity of the interior and may converge in a shared identity. If an affinity between the tangible identity of the place and the intangible identity of the user exists, it will establish connections in the mind between these identities. This facilitates the consumption of the interior as a meaningful and ontological device which facilitate the expression of personal identity through inhabitation.

## Opportunities

Interior design contributes to the establishment and expression of identities which could influence social interaction; this is relevant in the establishment of a principle-driven and human centered profession. The establishment and expression of identity is a cultural activity which finds expression in territorial behaviours and the temporary occupation of spaces found in the public domain. The interior design occupation's professional accountability and social obligation lies in the discipline's contributions to the cultural realm.

When these opportunities are considered it must be remembered that the 'interior' is traditionally conflated with the domestic interior (which is produced in a vernacular fashion by amateurs) and that this does not adequately address the public nature of commercial interior design (Lees-Maffei, 2008, p. 3). Interior design's commercial focus was established after the Second World War as interior designers increasingly worked in non-residential settings (Massey, 2001, p.142). It may be argued that this conflation with domesticity contributed to the difficulty the discipline faced when it tried to establish its social utility during the pursuit of professionalism. How can a profession be established if it exists in the realm of the amateur homemaker which includes activities such as "cooking, childcare, cleaning and maintenance of the home," (Lees-Maffei, 2008, p. 11)? If in contrast the commercial and public nature of the discipline is considered it supports both the discipline's specialist knowledge and its utility.

As a commercial practice in the public realm interior design may be theoretically equipped to consider the human being in a concrete environment (where aspects of public health and safety or environmental sustainability are in play), but also as a lived entity with abstract personal qualities (where aspects of wellness and socio-cultural wellbeing are in play).

Currently the interior design occupation in South Africa may be offered the opportunity to close the occupation. At this juncture it is up to individual interior designers, the discipline's professional institutions and the academy to consider this opportunity, its implications, and the power, role and responsibility of the interior design occupation. This transformative moment can be expressed as the need to transform "what is taught in creating an understanding of interiority, inner minds and inner dwellings, the working of consciousness and cultural difference," (Perolini, 2011, p. 166).

Once interior design reaches occupational closure the discipline will have greater opportunity to create environments of connected people, objects and spaces in which the interior no longer functions as a mere container for people and objects, or as a small-scale mitigation between architecture and human inhabitants. To do so the focus of the discipline should move away from professionalism, but it must do so in a way which maintains professionalism. The discipline must develop a larger sense of self and an understanding of the discipline within a larger world system:

We need to depend more on theory to be able to think critically in order to bring new understanding to how we practice. While any change seems threatening, it is necessary. The world in which we live, how we live, confront many and major challenges. We can not [sic] continue to be and be as we are. How we are, how we dwell, how we live are all implicated in interior design, (Perolini, 2011, p. 173).

## Conclusion

At the point of occupational closure the implication for interior design that is implied here is that the meaningful and cultural components, such as the expression of self and inhabitation, become a primary professional concern for the discipline. This challenges the role of the interior designer as a technologist who is primarily concerned with the production of a physical object which protects the health and safety of the inhabitant. The physical construction of the interior is relegated to a secondary professional role. This has implications for the establishment of interior design as a profession; the professional ground shifts to a concern with cultural aspects. A professional concern with the meaningful aspects of the built-environment and the subsequent relegation of the spatial aspects (or at the least a counterpoint to the spatial bias of architecture) provides a greater ontological separation from architecture and interior design is no longer 'a little bit of architecture'; it establishes a discreet practice. The interior design occupation, as a profession, should place greater emphasis on the theoretical underpinnings of its practice. Individuals must employ methods to denote occupation, inhabitation, and identity to mediate the boundary condition between themselves and others in the public domain. This practice has ethical implications since it affects the physiological and psychological quality of life. The professional practice of interior design is the best located occupation to facilitate this process in the public domain.

## Acknowledgement

The research was completed as part of the requirements for the degree PhD (Interior Architecture). I completed the research with financial assistance in the form of a scholarship and bursary. The views expressed in the paper are mine and not necessarily shared by my employer.

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# The ethics of tastemaking: towards responsible conspicuous consumption

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## Abstract

*The systemic nature of cultural production implies that designed objects are made desirable (or acceptable) by tastemakers who endow objects with forms of social distinction. Social distinction highlights or diffuses status and reveals self-perceptions of consumers' identities. In this way, design becomes a form of tastemaking, invested in the construction of identity and is therefore a form of cultural production rooted in consumption. The role of the designer in facilitating conspicuous consumption is therefore critical in the context of social distinction, cohesion and identity.*

*This practice is potentially unethical when cultural production is undermined as a cyclical fashionable commodity in which conspicuous consumption is utilised to indicate who is 'in the know'. This may lead to a wasteful practice.*

*While conspicuous consumption may be perceived as unethical and superficial, or at least contributing to environmental and social degradation, the ethical contributions of design in this context cannot be disregarded. The aspirational nature of conspicuous consumption is evident when individuals in developing economies are pressured to indulge on aspects of consumption before their basic needs are met; the implication is that consumers in all classes and incomes have the desire to express or improve their social status (O'Cass & McEwen, 2004:29). It may be argued (following Mangold, 2014) that socially responsive design prioritises the user's needs over the aesthetics; however the role of aesthetics in tastemaking reinforces social patterns.*

*Tastemakers are individuals who attained enough cultural capital to empower them to determine which new novel ideas, artefacts, or creative acts are recognised as valid and made available for cultural production at large. Their decision making has the potential to influence cultural ethics on a larger scale.*

*In this understanding, consumerism is explored as having the potential to be a meaningful and viable means of generating identity. It is here that the ethical responsibility of the tastemaker becomes relevant.*

*The paper will, through a focus on the links between consumerism and design, attempt to disrupt the perception that conspicuous consumption is a superficial practice to indicate that consumption can be an ethical practice.*

**Keywords:** *Conspicuous Consumption; Cultural Production; Ethics; Tastemaking*

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## Introduction

When the ethical responsibility of design is pondered, a consideration of the role of meaning in design production and its consequent contribution to society at large is necessary. Design is active in the system of production and its products are consumed by users who find correlations between their identity and the embodied meaning of consumer objects.

In this manner individuals can form and express their identities through the consumption and display of goods. Conspicuous consumption may be defined as the process of consuming goods for the purpose of expressing one's status and social standing (Braun & Wicklund, 1989, p. 162). Conspicuous consumption is a social behaviour that is motivated by the desire for social acceptance by compensation for current or perceived social status (Rucker & Galinsky, 2009, p. 550). The act of consumption due to compensation is rooted in a concern with identity (Braun & Wicklund, 1989, p. 164). In "Exploring consumer status and conspicuous consumption", O'Cass and McEwen (2004, p. 26) describe the dominance of consumption as an intrinsic habit of culture:

[Consumption is a] central component of almost all daily events, influencing what and where people eat, the clothing they wear, the furnishing they decorate their homes with, how they communicate and inherently the very nature of their thinking.

These consumption choices can be considered in the larger cultural realm as a contribution to the establishment and reconstruction of the cultural system. In *Cultural Expression, Creativity and Innovation* Isar and Anheier (2010, p. 5) define culture as "the social construction, articulation and reception of meaning". Culture involves representation and enactment which is expressed through the creative lived experiences of individuals.

In this paper, we will illustrate that while conspicuous consumption could be considered as a detrimental practice (socially and environmentally), it is intrinsic to the process of tastemaking, and therefore design. We will consider the designer as a tastemaker. Tastemakers are recognised individuals who are influential in determining whether new ideas, products or creative acts are legitimate for consumption and repetition (Baudrillard 1998, p. 100-102). In determining popular taste, the tastemaker plays a critical role in shaping conspicuous consumption. We will substantiate the practice of conspicuous consumption in tastemaking, by identifying and elaborating on the ethical implications of this practice.

## Consumption in the cultural system

Culture is the produced context in which human behaviour takes place (DFIE 2011). Isar and Anheier's (2010:4) definition is further convenient since it represents the confluence between meaning and capital. Although culture in itself is not a commodity it may be considered as the domain where goods attain social capital and increase in value. Culture thus has the ability to increase the economic value of commodified goods. Culture is a collective product; 'cultural expression' specifically puts emphasis on the expression of a joint group identity or on the position and status of the individual within the collective. Cultural expression supplies the human contribution to the cultural economy:

Culture is the system in which goods are created; or the sphere where creativity can take place. This may be compared to a monetary system which is the locus of wealth; but not a form of wealth. Wealth can be owned individually while a monetary system cannot. In this way culture is the background of our institutions, understanding and creative output (DFIE 2011).

Design thereby creates meaning associated with product value and generates opportunities for social distinction. Isar and Anheier (2010, p. 4) summarise Csikszentmihalyi's systemic perspective of cultural production as such:

[T]he interactions between, first, the creative person, second, the domain (a specific cultural symbol system) and third, the field (defined as made up of domain gate-keepers such as art critics, gallery owners, star performers, etc.) are what determine the emergence and in particular the recognition of a creative act or product. The creative individual takes information in a domain and transforms or extends it; the field validates

and selects new ideas and methods; the domain then in turn preserves and transmits creative products to other individuals, societies and generations.

In other words, cultural production is a circular system of selection, curation, synthesis, preservation, and transmission. Cultural production is an iterative, collaborative project which is dependent on individual creative acts which are collectively mediated. Consumption choices are moral judgments which may determine the evolution of culture (Douglas & Isherwood 1979, p. 37).

It becomes arguable that cultural production cannot be seen as a static process, neither is it remade every day. Culture is reproduced by daily activity through which cultural practices are conveyed and repeated between individuals. In this manner it is a traditive process. In addition, through individual creative acts and artefacts or through collective innovative acts and artefacts, novelty is introduced in the cultural system. Novel acts and artefacts are either rejected, after which they are no longer available for further reproduction, or they are accepted into the cultural domain and subjected to further iteration. Cultural production is thus a traditive, innovative and iterative process which is mediated. To subvert this culture may be considered as a medium of agency and power. Its potential as a hegemonic instrument is visible in the process whereby cultural capital is passed from person to person.

The systemic nature of cultural production implies that designed objects are further made desirable (or acceptable) by tastemakers who endow objects with forms of social distinction. Social distinction highlights or diffuses status and reveals self-perceptions of consumers' identities. In this way, design becomes a form of tastemaking, invested in the construction of identity and is therefore a form of cultural production rooted in consumption. The role of the designer in facilitating conspicuous consumption is therefore critical in the context of social distinction, cohesion and identity.

In *The Consumer Society. Myths and Structures*, Baudrillard (1998, p. 27) offers a description of the 'drugstore' which illuminates this context:

The drugstore (or the new shopping centre) achieves a synthesis of consumer activities, not the least of which are shopping, flirting with objects, playful wandering and all the permutational possibilities of these ... In the drugstore the cultural centre becomes part of the shopping centre. It would be simplistic to say that culture is 'prostituted' there. It is culturalized. Simultaneously, commodities (clothing, groceries, catering etc.) are also culturalized in their turn, since they are transformed into the substance of play and distinction, into luxury accessories, into one element among others in the general package of consumables.

Baudrillard's view of a drugstore highlights the role of a consumption environment as one that is a nexus for cultural production. His notion that culture is culturalized during commodification and that this facilitates the culturalization of consumer commodities emphasises that design is critical in that it influences social distinction. During this culturalization process, goods must be recognised as 'valid' or 'valuable' to be made available for further dissemination.

This practice is potentially unethical when cultural production is undermined as a cyclical, fashionable commodity in which conspicuous consumption is utilised to indicate who is 'in the know'. This may lead to a wasteful practice in which culture is diminished in the service of mass consumption recycling (Baudrillard 1998, p. 100-102). For Baudrillard, cultural recycling is the new cultural product and it is used to reflect the cultural consumer's ability to be 'in the know' and to 'know what's going on'. In this case, culture is perceived as a cyclical, fashionable commodity that needs to be updated continuously. This is in exact opposition to the traditional definition of culture which is conceived as an inherited legacy of works, thoughts and tradition and the continuous dimension of critical and theoretical reflection (Baudrillard 1998, p. 101). This new cultural capital is obtained by showing that you are informed and up to date; that you know what is new. Cultural

recycling is bound in the 'cycle' of fashion in which individuals are expected to 'recycle' themselves on a seasonal basis (Baudrillard 1998, p. 100).

An object intended for cultural recycling is not made to last (Baudrillard, 1998:101) and obsolescence is designed into the object. This is specifically evident in fashion design and ITC technologies. The electronic gadget must be the ultimate contemporary example of cultural recycling and it did not exist in Baudrillard's time. It is the superficial forces of cultural recycling which lead to consumers sleeping in line waiting for the latest iPhone.

Since elements of cultural recycling are clearly visible in the production of design, Baudrillard's criticism of cultural recycling must be taken seriously. He states that cultural recycling is "arbitrary, transient, cyclical, and adds nothing to the intrinsic qualities of the individual" (Baudrillard 1998, p. 100). This is the attainment and application of cultural capital in the most banal and superficial ways. Lane (2009, p. 63-64) discusses the 'new temporality' that emerged in which people live their lives as the successive consumption of objects; this is in contrast to the previous era where objects were timeless and made to outlive their users (e.g. ceremonial chalices, cathedrals and monuments).

While conspicuous consumption may be perceived as unethical and superficial, or at least contributing to environmental and social degradation, the ethical contributions of design in this context cannot be disregarded.

Cyclical cultural production, although critical to the creation of meaning that is involved with identity construction, results in a by-product of displaced commodities which are no longer 'new' or desired. This is ethically problematic as consumption could contribute to social degradation (distinction according to status and the highlighting of privilege) and environmental decay (waste or disposal of resources that are no longer fashionable, but still useful). The desire of consumers to elevate their social standing can contribute to unsustainable economic demand and social distinction which is based on the superficial notion to avoid negative social status, rather than actual value:

While a signalling effect is also at work in the present approach, the price of the good signals the quality of the consumer rather than that of the good. In some circumstances, a price increase triggers such an increase of the signalling value of the conspicuous good that its market demand grows. Interestingly, it is the desire to avoid social ostracism, rather than the search for prestige, which may lead to an upward-sloping demand curve (Corneo & Jeanne, 1977, p. 56).

The aspirational nature of conspicuous consumption is evident when individuals in developing economies are pressured to indulge in aspects of consumption before their basic needs are met; the implication is that consumers in all classes and incomes have the desire to express or improve their social status (O'Cass & McEwen 2004, p. 29). It may be argued (following Mangold 2014) that socially responsive design prioritises the user's needs over the aesthetics; however the role of aesthetics in tastemaking reinforces social patterns.

The purpose of cultural reproduction is to duplicate existing norms although variation may be allowed between iterations. The acceptability of the variations is dependent on the creativity of individuals or on a group's inherent conservatism (DFIE 2011). In this realization, consumerism is considered to have the potential to be a meaningful and viable means of generating identity. It is here that the ethical responsibility of the tastemaker becomes relevant.

## Tastemakers

Tastemakers are included in this discussion since they play a particularly important role in the mediated process of cultural production. Tastemakers are those individuals who have attained enough cultural capital to empower them to determine if new artefacts, novel ideas, or creative acts

are recognised as valid and made available for future iteration. In *The Tastemakers* Millard (2001, p. 13) describes the art establishment as it used to be:

Culture was dull. It cost a lot, but that didn't matter because no one ordinary bought it. It was sold to institutions, most likely banks or galleries. It was unconcerned with popularity, so the populace was unconcerned with it.

This changed when young British artists became "concerned with ease of comprehension rather than perplexing intelligence" (Millard 2001, p. 25). In their essence, cultural goods can be considered for their role as communication devices. The discussion of *grand art* is applicable to the more mundane practice of conspicuous consumption since cultural production is not only dependent on cultural 'pinnacles', but on the everyday (Craig-Martins in Millard 2001, p. 135). It is implied that cultural production takes place in a hierarchical fashion, but it is assumed that culture moves up and down the hierarchy. In Isar and Anheier's account (2010, p. 5) creativity and innovation emerge at the intersections of social, cultural and political forces. They continue that the margins and boundaries are often more productive than the centre of the system and it is impossible to judge what is current and to predict their future importance.

It is the role of the tastemaker to act as an arbiter or mediator in this process. The tastemaker must provide validity to novel artefacts and practices. In essence, it is the tastemaker's responsibility to move marginal artefacts to the centre. Tastemakers are authoritative; their authority is dependent on the accumulation of cultural capital. The accumulation and synthesis of cultural capital was described by Bourdieu (1984, p. 326) in *Distinction. A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. In Bourdieu's account the process of transcribing cultural capital between different levels of the hierarchy is not a one way process. It is promiscuous and subversive, it takes that which does not belong together and mixes it; this is a process of selection of memes from the cultural repository and their synthesis. It would be simpler to imagine this as a one way process where cultural capital moves either 'up' or 'down' the social hierarchy. Douglas (1996, p. 56) summarises Miller's theory of emulation as such:

According to the theory of emulation, the envious lower classes keep copying the upper-class styles, and the upper keep trying to distinguish themselves, so the style for luxuries seeps down ... First happiness goes up as design travels down the social scale, then the upper class begins to be unhappy because its designs are no longer distinctive. It adopts a change, to outpace low-class emulators, and the emulators' happiness goes down, until they gradually catch up again.

Bourdieu (1984[1979]4, p. 323) stated it differently:

This middle-brow culture (culture moyenne) owes some of its charm, in the eyes of the middle classes who are its main consumers, to the references to legitimate culture it contains and which encourage and justify confusion of the two.

Phillips (2005, p. 217) sums up the role of the 'tastemaker' as such:

In Bourdieu's terms, the figure of the tastemaker can be understood as indeed a significant conduit for the formation of popular tastes, but in no way one that is democratic.

In all three accounts, design acts as a form of communication or a carrier of information which is used in the process of cultural (re)production. It is utilized in the Marxist sense to differentiate social classes (or as a form of distinction). The tastemaker acts as an agent of change since this individual is empowered to translate cultural capital between classes and to make emergent practices acceptable, or to reject them.

As the creative individual acts within the field, so the field acts within the domain. The field is the metaphorical space in which institutions, practices and discourses can be identified (Webb *et al*,

2002, p. 86). Bourdieu (1993, p. 162-165) defines the field as an autonomous social universe, with its own laws. This 'universe' is inhabited by its particular institutions and particular forms of capital can be accumulated. The field has specific struggles particularly in defining questions about knowing who part of the field is. Change is introduced in the field by the intermediary or creative person who challenges the status quo:

The speaker who can 'take the liberty' of standing outside the rules fit only for pedants or grammarians – who, not surprisingly, are disinclined to write these games with the rules into their codifications of the linguistic game – puts himself forward as a maker of higher rules, i.e., a taste-maker, an arbiter elegantium whose transgressions are not mistakes but the announcement of a new fashion, a new mode of expression or action which will become a model, and then modal, normal, the norm, and will call for new transgressions by those who refuse to be ranked in the mode (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 255).

Tastemakers carry designations such as *virtuoso*, *connoisseur*, and *expert* to indicate a lifestyle freed from basic and material needs to which 'vulgar' people are sacrificed (Bourdieu, 1996, p. 293). This lifestyle is geared towards aesthetic appreciation and expressions of 'good-taste'. Bourdieu (1996, p. 294) continues that this is geared (along with philosophical investigations into the knowledge of objects) towards the social construction of the object. During the historic consideration of capital the emulation of upper class taste and attitudes was considered as important: taste is established at the highest social level and it is attenuated and filtered down through the social strata (Girling-Budd, 2004, p. 27). Taste is considered as an inescapable social aspiration (Millard, 2001, p. 246). Although it is clear from the descriptions above that tastemakers carry hegemonic agency, they also provide a valuable role as cultural producers in their mediation between producers and consumers of cultural capital. It is through their selection, recognition, and dissemination of the new that validity is provided to cultural capital. This in turn makes it available for production on a larger scale. They are influential in determining popular taste and utilise fascinated media to disseminate ideas and to influence culture in general (but visual culture specifically) (Millard, 2001, p. 27).

If creativity is more fruitful at the margins of the disciplines, (or when established norms are deliberately questioned), the tastemaker has a cultural function as an arbiter of acceptability. The tastemaker establishes the model for further emulation. Isar and Anheier's (2010, p. 4) account (*above*) of mediation in the cultural domain implies that not all novel ideas and artefacts are considered as valuable. Although taste may be referred to as unique to the individual, it is linked to social stratification (De Certeau, Giard & Mayol 1998, p. 182). Taste is acculturated. Once novel ideas or artefacts are validated by the tastemaker, they become acceptable and are made available to others.

In summary, tastemakers are individuals who attained enough cultural capital to empower them to determine which new novel ideas, artefacts, or creative acts are recognised as valid and made available for cultural production at large. Their decision making has the potential to influence cultural ethics on a larger scale.

## Ethical conspicuous consumption?

The digital age creates a solipsistic and individualized world mediated by screens and digital communication. The hegemonic power of this may suppress the political and social (Leach 2002, p. 232-234). This is a dangerous situation of which designers must take note. Design can be considered as a form of tastemaking in which the relationship between design and consumerism is influenced by and influences cultural ethics. In this realm the consumer artefact is considered as a component in a 'complex super-object' which involves the consumer in a series of complex motivations within the social production system (Baudrillard 1998, p. 27).

The political economy of the sign is a synthetic structure which results from the convergence of the bourgeois vulgate (and its emphasis on 'culture') and the Marxist vulgate (which is ideologically

aligned to economics); these vulgates are dependent on the transcription of content into either of these forms (i.e. meaning or capital) (after Baudrillard 1976, p. 112). The political economy of the sign therefore represents the attempts of 20<sup>th</sup> Century theory to reach synthesis between these facets. In his criticism of *The Consumer Society*, Lane (2009, p. 38-39) states that Western culture is dependent on its objects to construct its identity; but it can be taken so far as suggesting that these objects must be destroyed (particularly through in-built obsolescence) in a continuous sequence of cultural recycling. The consumer society represents the synthesis between capital and meaning through its driven need to generate meaning and to indicate expenditure, status, and identity through conspicuous consumption.

Baudrillard (1976, p. 113) states that the commodity value of any object is not 'added on' as a message but is itself set up as a total medium of communication which governs all social exchange. The primary function of the consumer object is then to contain a message which can be consumed; its operational purpose, or use, in this case can then be relegated to being a mere container for meaning. Baudrillard further asserts that whether the 'material contents of production' or the 'immaterial contents of signification' are considered matters little. The object exists as a sign-form in which the code of the political economy reduces symbolic ambivalence. The tangible and intangible aspects are synthesized into a single construct. When consumer goods are considered as such conflated objects in which their material contents and immaterial signification can no longer be differentiated, their value as meaning-carrying objects destined for interpretation is elevated; the medium is the message.

Culture is subject to the same expectations to be 'up to the minute' as material goods (Baudrillard, 1998, pp. 101-102); it is therefore inevitable that the 'acculturated' signify their cultural capital by being in the know. This is a characteristic of culture in a post-global world and the dangers of living in a period of rapid cultural change must be accepted. Designers (and researchers) express their 'up-to-the-minuteness' as a method to display innovation by proxy. In the same vein that the media indicates happiness by showing people who are happier because of their possessions (Lane 2009, p. 69) the publication of 'good' design artefacts indicates design fulfilment. When designers consume novel design through its publication, it enables them to imbue their own work with an artificial sense of innovation and relevance. This points towards an assumption held by many which can be summarised in the aphorism "the more you know, the more you have to design with".

Objects of consumption have social meaning such as status, prestige, fashion etc. Like the Saussurian sign they function differentially and arbitrarily through their relations with other objects (Lane 2009, p. 72). They exist firstly, as object of mass production; and secondly, as mediators between small scale and mass production (after Bourdieu).

Whereas conspicuous consumption and cultural recycling may be criticized as wasteful practices, they offer designers the opportunity to make ethical decisions by introducing, or promoting ethical choices, and 'consuming' these choices in conspicuous ways. McCloud (2010:236-269) discusses a series of ethical consumption choices which extends from the physical activity of shopping (as a consumptive experience) and includes branding, repurposing existing items, supporting crafted or place-bound objects, suggesting preference in cars based on their interior experience, etc.

## Conclusion

While conspicuous consumption could be a detrimental process which highlights social divide and creates environmental waste, it is a process that supports the cultural identity of those who associate with or aspire to associate with its products. Conspicuous consumption is impacted by popular culture.

The designer is a tastemaker who accumulates cultural capital and synthesises it into that which is popular. This is achieved through the use and display of consumption and its products which are deemed worthy for dissemination and reiteration by the tastemaker. Tastemakers accumulate and

validate that which is popular, playing an active role in deciding what should be consumed. Therefore, conspicuous consumption is an inevitable by-product of tastemaking in design.

Conspicuous consumption is especially evident in the fashion and gadget technology industries where cyclic iteration of goods is prominent. Designed-in obsolescence of goods is a valid practice in that, although wasteful, allows consumers to demonstrate their identity and subscription to popular culture through consumption intermittently.

The opportunity for tastemaking to influence popular taste in this cyclic way highlights the repeated impact design could have on defining popular culture and deciding what is taste-worthy for consumers. This creates the prospect for design to embrace its responsibility in impacting rapid cultural change and promoting innovation. The potential for practicing ethical tastemaking in conspicuous consumption also arises in the designer's ability to deliberately exercise discretion in the type of cultural capital that is selected for consumption and the frequency at which it is consumed.

## Acknowledgement

The research was completed as part of the requirements for the degree PhD (Interior Architecture). I completed the research with financial assistance in the form of a scholarship and bursary. The views expressed in the paper are mine and not necessarily shared by my employer.

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# Research Ethics for Practice-Led Research Methodologies in the Creative Disciplines

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## Abstract

*Research in the creative arts for qualification purposes has developed since the late 1980's to include creative practice as aspects of both methodology and outputs. The nature of the creative process, and what has been deemed as useful to artist/designer academics, has resulted in many research projects driven by a single researcher, addressing problems of practice from a subjective perspective, with the researcher and the researcher's actions becoming both the object and subject of the research. This kind of research does not involve other participants and is therefore seemingly precluded from ethical discussion. When applying for ethical clearance for a research project, it is usually automatically assumed that the research will be conducted with academic integrity and that the knowledge produced will be of value to the research community. In the visual arts, however, these assumptions cannot be made without justification, because the nature of creative research is often in opposition to some of the (still dominant) mores of scientific enquiry. In this paper I am specifically concerned with the ethical categories of academic integrity; responsibility to the discipline as well as the value of knowledge in relation to the communal and general good, pertaining specifically to the ethics of research in the creative disciplines. This paper aims to examine frameworks within which such research could be structured to adhere to specific research-ethical requirements mentioned above. While many other frameworks have been used successfully in creative research projects, I focus on two frameworks (activity theory and the participatory research paradigm) which conceptualize the interrelation of the researcher as subject and object in similar ways. Building on this discussion, I explore postphenomenology as an experimental framework, focusing on the implications of postphenomenology for research concerned with the making of objects, and the ethical implications thereof.*

**Keywords:** Research Ethics, Activity Theory, Practice-Led Research, Postphenomenology, Participatory research paradigm

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## Introduction

Research in the creative arts for qualification purposes has developed since the late 1980's to include creative practice as aspects of both methodology and outputs. This development has given academics who teach creative practice the opportunity to develop research that would contribute to not only the theoretical understanding, but also to practical knowledge and know-how as well as the integration of these. The nature of the creative process, and what has been deemed as useful to artist/designer-academics, has resulted in many research projects driven by a single researcher, addressing problems of practice from a subjective perspective, with the researcher and the researcher's actions becoming both the object and subject of the research. While PLR methodologies are well established and have been for at least a decade, this approach to research is still emerging in South African institutions (Marley 2015, p. 124). As a case in point I write this article from an individual perspective.

The kind of research that I am concerned with here does not involve other participants and is therefore seemingly precluded from ethical discussion. When applying for ethical clearance for a

research project, it is usually automatically assumed that the research will be conducted with academic integrity and that the knowledge produced will be of value to the research community. In the visual arts, however, these assumptions cannot be made without justification, because the nature of creative research is often in opposition to some of the (still dominant) mores of scientific enquiry. In this paper I am specifically concerned with the ethical categories of “academic integrity and responsibility to the discipline” as well as the value of knowledge in relation to the “communal and general good” as described by Darren Newberry (2009), pertaining specifically to the ethics of research in the creative disciplines.

Research Ethics in arts and design domains is still underdeveloped (Munro 2011, p. 154). In an effort to build on Munro’s prolegomenon article published in 2011 (Ibid.), this paper aims to examine frameworks within which such research could be structured to adhere to specific research-ethical requirements mentioned above. While many other frameworks have been used successfully in creative research projects, I discuss three frameworks that seem particularly suitable for practice-led research in the creative disciplines. I initially focus on two frameworks (activity theory and the participatory research paradigm) which conceptualize the interrelation of the researcher as subject and object in similar ways. I subsequently introduce a third framework (postphenomenology) to the discussion in terms of the implications thereof for research concerned with the making of objects, and the resultant implications for academic integrity, responsibility to the discipline and the value of the research as contribution to a community.

## Background

The precise naming of research in the creative disciplines remains problematic, as there are a myriad approaches that can, and have been, employed to incorporate some form of creative practice into the research design, either as method, data, or outputs. Artist-scholar Ian Marley, suggests the use of practice-led research as an over-arching term that would incorporate various approaches, henceforth referred to as PLR. Marley describes PLR with reference to Sullivan (2011, p. 99), Farber (2010, p. 2) and Borgdorff (2011, p. 45-47), as “an exploratory journey during which the artistic production and related creative process are contextualized. This process of contextualization utilizes both the tacit and explicit knowledge modalities. It is the artefact and the contextualization thereof that make a collective contribution to knowledge”. This description acknowledges the three concerns inherent in PLR, namely the idiosyncratic, the processes or methods and the presentation of results and outputs (Munro 2011a, p. 160). Research Integrity in these three aspects will structure the discussion of the frameworks later on in the paper.

PLR is generally characterised by a strong emphasis on the idiosyncrasies of the researcher: The researcher working alone or in collaboration with other artists/participants, immersed in his/her practice and in the relevant theories, dealing with very specific practical problems in specific contexts.

The act of making and the results of this making, form a central part of the research process and the outputs of the research. Due to the interaction of practice and theory, multiple disciplines outside the arts are brought to bear on the specific domain and field. PLR is also characterised by vague objectives that are refined and become more focused as the project develops. The initial problem is also often very vague with the researcher discovering the true problems through engagement with practice and theory. Above-mentioned characteristics make PLR controversial and difficult to write up as convincing research proposals.

In a developmental milieu such as South Africa, it is important that research projects are in line with the National Research Foundation (NRF) mandate to “promote and support research through funding ... and thereby to contribute to the improvement of the quality of life of all the people of the Republic” (NRF 2015), with “passion for Excellence; world-class service; people-centered; respect; integrity and ethics; accountability” listed as NRF values (Ibid.). Due to the nature of PLR described

above, it is often difficult to convince funders that such a research project will indeed benefit others and produce research of high integrity and ethical values.

Research in the creative disciplines is furthermore often perceived, and in some cases, consciously conducted, as subjectively self-serving, as Robert Nelson states, “[t]he largest gap in anyone’s conspectus is the personal motivation of the artist—even when altruistic—caught in a jealous economy of ambition: competitive, tense and fraught” (2009:181). The motivation for conducting PLR is often firstly the benefit of the researcher and then possible knowledge contributions that will benefit “people of the Republic” (NRF 2015). Graham Sullivan softens the accusation of selfish motivations somewhat by proposing that the motivation for PLR arises from an ambivalence about identities as artists, teachers and researchers (2009:25), with PLR presenting researchers with the opportunity to develop their artistic careers; practical skills and know-how, while at the same time advancing their field of practice and developing their teaching repertoire.

Within this context, inadequately formulated justifications might lead to perceived clashes with traditional notions of scientific or scholarly enquiry. Of particular relevance to this paper are the following selected characteristics of scientific knowledge:

- “Scientific inquiry is based on the collective experiences of members of the research community as opposed to the observations and experiences of an individual;
- Science is not based on personal authority, the only authority that is accepted is the ‘authority of the evidence’” (Gaede 2004, p. 2).

In conflict with these values, Nelson discusses artistic vision as essential to the creative process. Individual artistic vision in arts production seems unavoidable and even desirable but is arguably problematic in the research context because it is “unique to a person, an artist, and embodies the charm and force of that person’s make-up, desires and education at its most communicative” (2009, p. 182). While the creative process can be contextualized and reflected on as part of a rigorous methodology, the actual production of creative works cannot and should not be done without artistic vision. It stands to reason that favouring objective, impartial knowledge generation (as opposed to individuated, subjective knowledge) will affect discussion in that it alters the perspectives from which art and design are practiced and interpreted, if not the nature of practice itself” (Caseauz 2003, p. 9-10).

In support of subjective enquiry, Sullivan (2009, p. 12) cites Richard Panek’s description of a modernist perspective that, “to the scientist fell the purely objective, the masses and motions that led to universal laws; to the artist, the purely subjective, the individual responses that spoke to universal truths” (1999, p. 1). The modernist position and notions such as universal truths have, however, been challenged by postmodern critique and subsequent developments, resulting in complex and productive research paradigms that allow for reconceptualised subjective and objective enquiry to co-exist. The value and validity of artistic research has been discussed, challenged and defended for more than two decades, with the debate becoming gradually more mature with an ever growing number of research projects to refer to. As part of this debate, philosopher Michael Biggs and Ian Marley respectively propose two frameworks that provide maps for the negotiation of the subjective nature of creative production within a research context. What follows is a brief discussion of both frameworks with the aim of showing how they relate and could be useful in developing PLR projects with ethical integrity and validity. This discussion then leads to an experiment with postphenomenology in the same context.

## Activity Theory

Biggs (2014) proposes activity theory (AT), originally developed in the context of psychology, as a framework for research in the creative disciplines as a holistic system of activities. Within this framework, activities are central to knowledge-production because an activity is a set of actions structured for a specific purpose, that combine together to construct our reality (Biggs 2014, p. 2)

and therefore bridges the gap between the individual subject and the social reality. Biggs explains that, in terms of AT, research methodologies are defined as “value and belief sets that provide an interpretative framework” (Ibid.) for understanding the impact and significance of activities, which Biggs in turn parallels with methods in a research context (Ibid.).

Activity theory therefore functions in the social-constructivist paradigm in that the validation of knowledge production is situated with “interpretive communities” that assess whether the methods and activities of a research project were appropriate and effective in producing outputs and results that effectively address the research question (Ibid.). The effective solving of the research question further implies acceptance of the creative artefacts that form part of the research outputs, as contributing to the specific field of practice, by the same community. Appropriate research questions are necessarily relevant to the specific field of practice that is addressed in the research, meaning that in the field of photographic practice, questions that relate to the practice of photography drive the research.

This notion of community endorsement of research and knowledge production relates to the ethical perspective of social ethical relativism in which the situational differences between research fields and research paradigms produce differing conclusions regarding what constitutes good research. The measure of good research is, however, whether it contributes to a specific knowledge community, and who better to assess this than the members of that community? Even though the research is conducted by a single researcher through individual artistic vision, the contribution to the field is constructed in a social context.

AT therefore provides a way of ensuring research integrity through the logic of the system of activities and the validation of the contribution by a community that forms part of that system. In spite of what Biggs contends, AT seems to go beyond constructivism in that it does acknowledge and value tacit knowledge and what it offers to the understanding of the creative process. AT could therefore be seen to venture into the participatory research paradigm introduced by Heron and Reason (1997).

## Participatory paradigm

Marley contends that visual arts researchers struggle to justify their research projects because they are confused about the research paradigms they believe their projects to fit into and often choose the wrong paradigm for the project. In his doctoral dissertation, Marley provides a refreshingly lucid overview of the four research paradigms namely, positivism, post-positivism, critical theory and constructivism, initially listed by Guba and Lincoln (1994). Marley, however, follows Heron and Reason (1997) in adding the participatory paradigm, which he argues is the most suitable paradigm for PLR, rather than the social-constructivist paradigm proposed by Biggs. For each of the paradigms discussed, Marley deals with epistemological, ontological and methodological questions. Of particular interest to this paper is Heron and Reason’s addition of the axiological question that is “concerned with the value of knowledge in the participatory social construct” (Marley 2015, p. 103).

The participatory paradigm offers a holistic inclusion of experiential, presentational, propositional and practical knowing and explicit knowledge modalities (Marley 2015, p. 133). These inclusive modalities thus allow for reflective practice and creative production to be included as aspects of the knowledge contribution of a research project. Ontologically it is based in experience. We are aware of reality through experience of ourselves, objects and other subjects as well as the relations between these. Importantly, the participatory paradigm allows for the integration of action with knowing, which relates to Biggs’ application of activity theory within the PLR context. Within the participatory paradigm, practical expertise and “knowing how to flourish with balance of autonomy” (ibid.) is an end in itself and is intrinsically valuable.

Heron and Reason (1997), however, extends the notion of participation, beyond the materials and interpretive community, to participation with fellow researchers and research participants. Marley

also advocates for multiple researcher projects in PLR. In the context of single researcher projects, I however contend that the participatory paradigm is equally applicable to managing knowledge creation that is rigorous and transferable, provided that the researcher builds some form of interaction with the interpretive community as well as materials and technologies into the research design.

## Postphenomenology

Postphenomenology offers a framework for this incorporation of interaction with materials and technology into PLR. While material thinking (Bolt 2007) offers similar ideas regarding the role materials<sup>1</sup> in the creative process, Postphenomenology extends these ideas to technology specifically and draws from the rich body of knowledge in the philosophy of science to formulate a non-alienating approach to human-technology interactions. In his writings on the postphenomenological philosophy of technology, Don Ihde argues for the primacy of specific, situated contexts in the analysis of human-technology-world relations (Ihde 2009). Ihde's methodology is to import aspects of American pragmatism into a phenomenological approach, frequently using autobiographic anecdotes based in individual experience, to formulate his analyses. Ihde's focus is however not necessarily on the value of individuated subjectivity, but rather on the importance of situated context specificity. According to Sobchack, Ihde demonstrates that 'the personal' is neither synonymous with nor reducible to 'the individual' and that instead, it provides the very intersubjective basis for further investigation of more general forms and structural variants of lived experience" (Sobchack 2006, p. 14).

Verbeek builds on Ihde's work and emphasises the agency of technological objects, and the role they play in shaping our being and understanding of reality. Verbeek also goes on to draw on the ideas of Bruno Latour, specifically his notion of 'actant-network' interactions. While Verbeek does not fully adopt Latour's (1993, p.95) notion of symmetrical relations between humans and objects, he does concur that objects need to be viewed as possessing agency in shaping experiences, and co-constructing knowledge in the network of interrelations (Verbeek 2010, p. 102). This notion ties in with AT but cannot be seen as social-constructivist, because it acknowledges the agency of objects' relations to each other, independent of the social.

The postphenomenological framework highlights the importance of objects in the knowledge creation economy, and is highly pertinent in the context of PLR which is more often than not engaged in the making of objects and the use of, or rather collaboration with, technological tools to facilitate this making. A deep understanding of the interrelations between conscious subject and the way technology co-shapes our being in the world, as well as the meaning we can gain through our experience of reality, or put differently, the ecology of knowledge creation, becomes an ethical necessity. In this context, knowledge emerges as a product of "interaction between humans and nonhumans in a network involving definitions, problem-setting, experiments, and observations" (Verbeek 2010, p. 103). This inclusion of the making of and collaboration with objects in the knowledge creation system, expands the AT framework and provides a research-ethical motivation for the exploration of creative practice through practice per se.

## Conclusion

In this paper I focus on the problems surrounding the prevalence of individuated, subjective perspectives in PLR, which is necessary for the creative process that forms part of the research methodology. In order to navigate around the apparent lack of validity of such perspectives, I draw on the frameworks proposed by Biggs and Marley respectively. These frameworks, although situated

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<sup>1</sup> Artist-Scholar Louise Hall (2013) has recently completed a PhD in Drawing practice, making use of material thinking (amongst other theories) as framework to structure the theorising of her practice.

in different research paradigms, have similarities and augment each other. They also lead into a discussion of postphenomenology as a possible, as yet experimental framework for PLR that needs further development. Through this discussion I have argued that the subjective idiosyncratic approach of PLR is not only essential to the creation of useful knowledge in the visual arts, but also ethically desirable when one considers the making of objects as part of the ecology of knowledge creation. As Caseauz states: “Any claim to knowledge has an ethical component since, in order for something to be counted as knowledge, there has to be the acknowledgement by members of the relevant community, e.g., physicists in the case of physics, sociologists in the case of sociology, etc., that the new claim can be accepted, where acceptance amounts to compliance with agreed standards and conventions.” (2003, p. 6).

I, as individual, subjective researcher, situated in a specific context, therefore need to acknowledge that my research is a product of a network of human and non-human relations. In my research I need to understand this network (Ecology) in order to produce ‘good’ research.

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# Team mentoring – a vehicle to foster and encourage ethics and accountability in design education

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## Abstract

*As design educators it is imperative that we make informed decisions for which we should be held accountable as we influence our students and their potential careers. Our students should feel that they are living a life that matters and one of the ways in which we can make this happen is for the team (graphic design educators) within our department, to feel the same way. For this reason, we chose the theory of team mentoring to help foster and encourage collaboration and accountability.*

*The concept of ‘team mentoring’ is one that has been utilised in various disciplines and involves several faculty members, perhaps even an entire department, who act as the mentors to support the development of new faculty member(s). There is a formal organisational commitment to the development of the mentees as well as the fostering of a climate that is supportive of mentoring relationships and professional development (Hanover Research, 2014).*

*Furthermore, Kaye and Jacobson (1996) suggest that in team mentoring, a formal mentor does not always lead members, rather members provide mentoring to each other. That being said, Wenger (1998) postulates that community of practice requires leadership (even if this leadership is informal) in order for real progress to take place. The research suggests that team mentorship requires community of practice as a guide to promote direction and focus and this ultimately provides the mentors and mentees with an environment in which their learning can flourish (Knouse, 2001).*

*Taking this into account, we focused on a post-modernist approach as highlighted by Kilgore who suggested that the learning within this approach is based on the fact that there is not, “one kind of learner, not one particular goal for learning, not one way in which learning takes place, nor one particular environment where learning occurs” (Kilgore 2001). Therefore it is vital to realise the importance of the individual even when dealing with an institution because the establishment requires the buy-in from their staff in order to function as a cohesive unit in attaining goals.*

*The team of graphic design lecturers therefore functions together in providing a fair platform where ideas, thoughts and experiences are shared, thereby creating a safe environment to foster a human-centred design culture within the institution. This network of creativity allows for the co-creation of a shared design ethos which essentially strengthens the core values of the institution and filters through to the students who are facilitated by this team.*

*Our research began with a small team through which we utilised the methodology of action research in which to test our theories. Initial findings suggest that design educators are more prepared to sharing ideas and experiences when placed into the informal setting of team mentoring – so long as they feel safe and equal within the team-mentoring relationship.*

*In this paper we investigate how introducing team mentoring in a design education faculty creates an environment of mutual agreement where design educators are encouraged to collaborate and be accountable for their actions.*

**Keywords:** *Team mentoring; post-modern education; collaboration; professional accountability; community of practice; graphic design*



## Introduction

This paper aspires to reveal that introducing team mentoring in a design education faculty, will lead to positive contributions within the department. Furthermore, we investigate whether it creates an environment where design educators are encouraged to collaborate and be accountable for their actions.

Within our context, design education involves a close-knit group of lecturers and students, who come from various multi-cultural backgrounds, with differing socio-economic environments. It becomes imperative that a definitive foundation of ethics is created, and the aspect of accountability fostered, within our lecturing unit so that we are able to create a holistic environment in which this is dispersed among the learners.

As lecturers who facilitate 21<sup>st</sup> century students, we believe that this is essential in forming a new generation of ethically accountable designers. These designers should possess a solid academic foundation in order to understand why we do what we do within our field of expertise. In order to achieve this, we needed to research and investigate a potential mode or vehicle in which to foster these desirable traits. We postulated that using the concept of mentoring (specifically team mentoring), we would be able to examine and explore the individual core values that each of the lecturers possess and use this information to build a foundation of shared experiences and beliefs. We would then use this foundation to grow from; specifically in terms of creating a base of ethical considerations in line with those of the institutions.

This paper therefore, focuses on the exact definition of team mentorship rather than considering other similar approaches to team interactions - such as coaching or group work - which we felt would not benefit the individuals within the team due to the lack of personalisation. Team mentorship is therefore more suited due to the fact that it acts as a methodology for facilitating the learning of a team where together, the individuals define mutual learning goals and work simultaneously to guide each other through a process to facilitate their learning. The team essentially learns from each other's experiences and knowledge (Zachary 2015). The culture of mentorship also enhances how each employee relates to each other within the whole of the institution and ultimately how they connect with the institution itself. A mentoring culture can be described as one in which the following appears; accountability, alignment, communication, demand, education and training, infrastructure, multiple venues, role modeling, a safety net and ultimately, value and visibility (Zachary 2002).

## Literature Review

### Design Ethics

As professional designers, first and foremost, each member of the mentoring team originates from a background steeped in design theories, practices and beliefs. These beliefs have developed from experience within the world of design as well as from those who influenced each of us as emerging designers. While no hard and fast rules have existed in terms of ethics and accountability, a professional who works in the field of creative design is expected to adhere to the societal accepted principles of integrity. Furthermore, it is expected that through this integrity, we respect those around us, whether they are other designers, clients, consumers or society at large (MacAvery Kane 2010).

As integrity is imperative to our careers as designers and ultimately design educators (sharing our beliefs with our students), we look to organisations and forums that are able to help define a set of guidelines in which we can remain true to the fundamental principles of this honesty we strive for.

One such organisation is AIGA, the professional association for design<sup>1</sup> that has developed a set of standards for professional practice. The following guidelines identify the designer's responsibility towards the public and resonate with our faculty's approach towards a designer's responsibility to the public. AIGA (2010) describes the designer's responsibility to the public as follows;

1. "A professional designer shall avoid projects that will result in harm to the public.
2. A professional designer shall communicate the truth in all situations and at all times; his or her work shall not make false claims nor knowingly misinform. A professional designer shall represent messages in a clear manner in all forms of communication design and avoid false, misleading and deceptive promotion.
3. A professional designer shall respect the dignity of all audiences and shall value individual differences even as they avoid depicting or stereotyping people or groups of people in a negative or dehumanizing way. A professional designer shall strive to be sensitive to cultural values and beliefs and engages in fair and balanced communication design that fosters and encourages mutual understanding".

As designers and facilitators who share our experience and design knowledge not only with each other, but with our students, we identify with these guidelines of professional practice. Furthermore, as design educators it is imperative that we make informed decisions for which we should be held accountable as we influence our students and their potential careers. For this reason, we chose the theory of team mentoring to help foster and encourage collaboration and accountability within the department.

The problem lies in that the concept of ethics in design, as a whole, tends to be very subjective. Melissa Gillard (2012) further iterates this in her article titled, *Business Ethics & Graphic Design* in which she notes the issues we encounter when dealing with ethics in design. The three main issues that we face, as designers, are the aspects of morals and ethics, the lack of accountability, and the lack of control we have over work we produce for clients. Her first point is outlined as follows: "*Ethics are subjective. Morals are personal. So we cannot determine an ethical standard for everyone to follow when we all have our own belief systems. If that were the case, it would be law not ethics*" (Gillard 2012).

This is profound and when you have a number of individuals working together, teaching another set of individuals and each individual comes with a unique set of ethics and morals, it can lead to an unsteady framework, based on this uncertain foundation, from which to work.

Taking this into consideration, we believed that the concept of team mentoring would present a unique post-modern opportunity to share, build and provide change within the department and ultimately positively influence the program offered to students. This would ultimately start with taking our unique individual backgrounds into consideration and begin to create a shared ethical understanding in order to provide the basis for an ethical culture that we could all adhere and aspire to.

## Mentoring

In terms of our team of lecturers, it is imperative to ensure that each member is a unique individual who remains true to themselves and they offer something dynamic to the relationship of the group in order for the team's overall success. In order to understand this better, let us consider the term, *Mentorship*.

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<sup>1</sup> Although the association was founded in 1914 as the American Institute of Graphic Arts the association's website (<http://www.aiga.org/about/>) firmly states that AIGA is today simply known as "AIGA, the professional association for design".

Mentorship as a concept originated in the Greek mythology. In the ancient tale, Odysseus went to war with the Trojans and left his son Telemachus under the guidance of his friend Mentor, who with his wisdom and character guided and took good care Telemachus. Ever since, Mentor's name has since become synonymous with someone who guides, teach, and encourage a less experienced person (Hansman 1999).

Mentoring thus describes a process whereby a more experienced person acts as a guide to a less experienced mentee within a reciprocal relationship. A mentor will typically provide the mentee with appropriate and relevant knowledge; advice; challenge; counsel; and support about career opportunities and help to develop the mentees potential through a facilitated process (Agunloye 2000). We notice these types of relationships emerging within our department throughout the process. However, it is important to remember that each character remains true to themselves and they individually learn from each other within the team relationship.

Mentoring relationships can be formal or informal. Formal mentor relationships are usually organised in the workplace where an organisation matches mentors to mentees for developing careers. Informal mentor relationships usually occur spontaneously and are largely psychosocial; they help to enhance the mentee's self-esteem and confidence by providing emotional support and discovery of common interests. In the context of higher education mentoring relationships can be one-on-one or even a team identified to work with new faculty members for the purpose of networking, professional and personal development (Premkumar 2007). Traditionally, one-on-one mentoring is the most common form of mentoring, however it is not always possible or the best solution. Alternative mentoring models should be considered such as team or group mentoring that offers some unique benefits to both the mentors and mentees.

## Team Mentoring

In team mentoring several faculty members, perhaps even an entire department, acts as the mentors to support the development of new faculty member(s). In team mentoring there is a formal organisational commitment to the development of the mentees as well as the fostering of a climate that is supportive of mentoring relationships and professional development of everyone involved (Hanover Research 2014).

The multiple mentor approach within team mentoring holds several benefits to all involved. The unique skills of many individuals can be shared and capitalised on, which in turn fosters the spirit of teaching and sharing to enhance development. Team mentoring therefore supports team building and mutual competency development within a group (Ambrose, 2003). Furthermore, the roles of the mentors closely relates to the roles of a good educator. These roles include the mentor being an advisor, guide, peer, friend and teacher (Premkumar 2007). Taking this into account, we, as lecturers of graphic design, took to the principles of academia in the 21<sup>st</sup> century to compare it to our own situation. In this post-modernist educational environment, particularly within a higher education context, the educator would have to facilitate a variety of learning style preferences to enable the development of each individual (Du Toit 2013).

It thus seemed logical that the same principle should be applied in mentoring.

Furthermore, this team or multiple or collaborative action research approach is seen as a beneficial and contemporary mentoring method in which the benefits have been documented by many researchers such as Beaulieu, Lemke & van Helden. By providing the platform for a strong team mentorship approach, the foundations could be laid for collaboration within the action research. This has been said to *"support teachers' professional development, help teachers increase their level of self-efficacy and also develop their intellectual capacities, in order to cope with the demands of everyday classroom life."* (Manesi & Betsi 2013). This shows that through the team interactions, reflection can take place which affords the individual lecturers the opportunity to continually assess their own performance, within the team mentorship environment, share these experiences and

thoughts with their peers and then make further connections to enhance their performance and teaching strategies (Wenger 1998; Wenger 2006; Gannon-Leary & Fontainha 2007).

## Ethics in Team Mentoring

According to the Centre for Clinical and Translational Science (CCTS), ethics becomes apparent within the dynamic of the mentee-mentor relationship in that mentors have the responsibility of being teachers and role models who should exude the appropriate ethical behavior and practice this as academic professionals. The mentor's ethics would involve the adopting of reasoned and moral judgement in examining a subject's responsibility in specific situations (CCTS, 2015). Therefore, as design educators in the team mentoring dynamic, note that it is imperative that as a mentor, we realise we have a moral obligation in guiding mentees about responsible conduct through ethically sound decisions within the realm of higher education, as well as the larger world of design. Furthermore, it is expected that both the mentee and mentor are responsible for behaving ethically within the team mentor relationship by respecting each other's opinions and valuing the input from all parties (CCTS 2015).

Furthermore, the following advices as highlighted by the CCTS (2015)<sup>2</sup>, are required to foster ethical behavior in the mentee-mentor relationship:

- **Promoting mutual respect and trust** – The two mentors acted as team members throughout the process by sharing their own goals, fears, ethical dilemmas and more rather than enforcing an air of superiority on those mentees. This promoted the creation of a safe environment where each member felt respected and was able to trust the other members within the team mentorship dynamic.
- **Maintaining confidentiality** – In order for us to adhere to this element, we chose to utilise the mentorship agreement and began the process with this imperative document.
- **Being diligent in providing knowledge, wisdom and developmental support** – A structure of using meetings, interviews, and video footage, external learning opportunities with regard to overall teaching excellence, peer assessment and both verbal and written feedback was used to provide this support.
- **Maintaining vigilance with regards to the boundaries of the mentor-mentee relationship** – This is protected through the use of the mentorship agreement as agreed upon by all members of the team and was kept professional by limiting meetings to institutional facilities during working hours.
- **Acknowledging skills and experiences that each brings to the mentee-mentor relationship** – Each lecturer, despite the level of experience as a design educator, was included in all aspects of curriculum development and other module building opportunities.
- **Carefully framing advice and feedback** – Mentors provided written documentation and recorded meetings for mentees to keep and use for further reflection (CCTS 2015) .

## Ethical Behavior is grounded in Community

As highlighted above, we as educators and mentors first, and secondly, as designers, have a responsibility in being ethical in our day to day decisions. This ethical behavior that we possess is further influenced by our individual morality; grounded within each of us and largely built on the beliefs and values entrenched in our communities, culture, and society at large. It is important to

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<sup>2</sup> The aspects presented above were adapted by the CCTS with permission from the Institute for Clinical Research Education Mentoring Resources, University of Pittsburgh [www.icre.pitt.edu/mentoring/overview.html](http://www.icre.pitt.edu/mentoring/overview.html) and the Oregon Clinical and Translational Research Institute, Oregon Health & Science University <http://www.ohsu.edu/xd/education/schools/school-of-medicine/faculty/mentoring>.

remember that while ethics can be taught, as noted by Piper, et. al. (1993), ethical behavior involves many aspects of who we are as human beings that ultimately affect our belief of “the self” in relation to those around us. These aspects involve attitudes, values, thoughts, feelings, and actions and help us to relate, connect and respond to others around us. This essentially influences the responsibility we have and feel for others, providing a sense of caring which ultimately allows for one to act in an ethical manner in order to achieve a sense of integrity as we reach for that which we feel responsible (Noddings 1984). Furthermore, if someone or something exists and is part of our community, it is likely that it will be more difficult to inflict harm upon them (Weathersby & White, 2004).

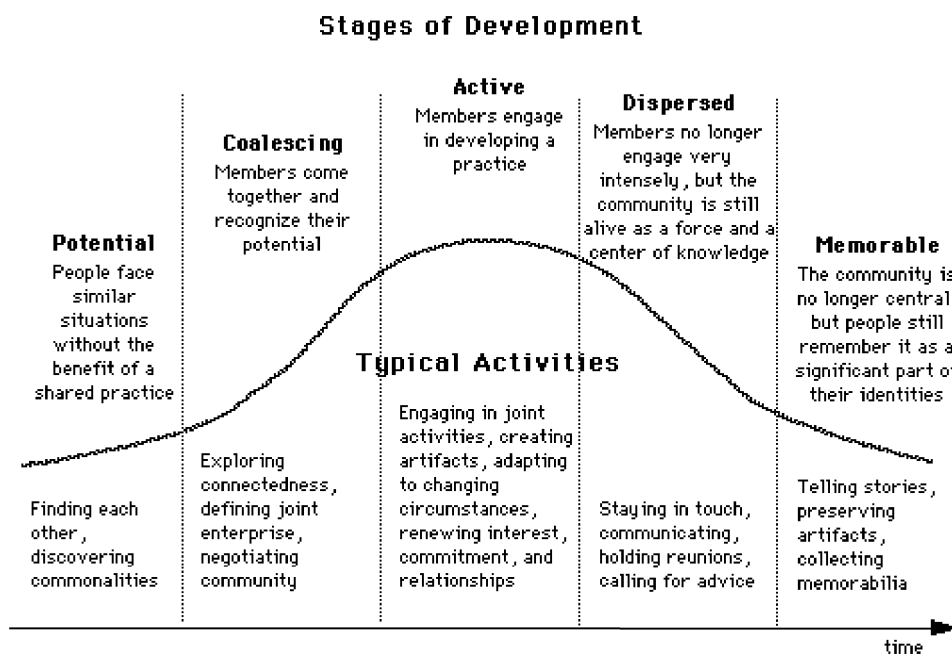
While curriculum revision is part of the solution, as a faculty we need to recognise that while students may learn what we teach, they also learn from who we are and how we act in the milieu of the academic workplace. “Our values, attitudes and beliefs are conveyed to students whether we are conscious of it or not. Students learn from what is omitted as well as what is emphasised” (Weathersby & White 2004).

For these values and attitudes to influence our students, we need to first realise the impact of professional ethics in the classroom environment as well as our interactions with the students themselves in that same setting. Additionally, we need to focus on curriculum design in order to maintain and model the high standards of ethics we wish to instill in our students (Weathersby & White 2004).

## Community of Practice

The concept of a community of practice provided the team mentoring approach with direction and purpose. Wenger (1998) suggests that we all belong to communities of practice, sometimes without realizing. He suggests that we are all informally bound by what each member of a particular ‘community’ or group does together due to the shared practice. This practice is further represented by common goals, a collective understanding and shared vocabulary.

He further iterates that there are various stages of development within the constructs of communities of practice which are highlighted in the graphic shown below:



**Figure 2: Stages of Development – Communities Of Practice (Wenger E. , 1998)**

As the four main members (graphic design lecturers) of this study, the mentors and mentees share these commonalities due to our experience of design in the real world. It is from this basis that we are able to find common ground on which to build this community of practice. Further development within this construct allows for internal reflection and more importantly reflective practice between each other.

Furthermore, other members of the institution's development team were also included into aspects of our Team Mentoring structure to enhance the abilities that a community of practice could offer the study. While the two other members did not share the background and experience of design, they did provide a platform for our shared experience of being educators. This allowed the members to focus on the educational pursuits of our practice in line with our pursuits as designers.

The following excerpt from one of the mentees' reflections, best describes this, *"My understanding of e-Portal over the past 10 months was very minimal. I simply used it for what I had to use it for. After the meeting with Monique (Education Innovation Consultant) my mind was blown away. I had no idea how powerful it was and how closely linked it was to my other goals"*.

Currently, the team find ourselves situated at the 'active' stage, where each member is contributing to the development of a new curriculum. There is trust and all members are actively engaged in the process.

However, it is imperative to note, that while the concept of communities of practice gave the team purpose, the 'active' stage would only have been achieved at a later stage had it not been for the Team Mentoring approach. Wenger (1998) states that, "No community can fully design the learning of another; but conversely no community can fully design its own learning".

Team Mentorship therefore provides a space in which informal leadership can assist in developing mentees and their own. He postulates that this is because a community of practice, though fluid in its construct, does require a level of leadership in order to develop. He further proposes that while a community of practice will naturally self-organise, they will "flourish when their learning fits with their organisational environment". Wenger (1998) believes while providing a focus on institutional responsibilities, ethics and accountability.

## Research Approach

### Action Research

This study made use of action research as a research approach to study how introducing team mentoring to the authors' mentoring practice could create a safe environment in which collaboration could take place. This type of research design lends itself to the incorporation of both qualitative and quantitative methodologies. (Hughes 1997) sees action research as being action and research in the same process. Action research does not result in action for research (doing in order to increase understanding), nor is it research for action (increasing knowledge in order to be applied in a later stage), but action research is the coming together of the two purposes of action and research in a single project or process (Hughes 1997). The aim of this study is to apply action and research together, to bring about a positive contribution to the personal and professional development of both mentees and mentors.

In Ear-Slater's (2002) view, action research has the potential to generate genuine and sustained improvements in practice because it can offer greater feelings of ownership of action and of analysis. Action research offers insight into real life issues, constraints and solutions as well as new opportunities to reflect on and assess work. McNiff (2002) takes the idea of action research further in that she describes it as 'practitioner based research', a form of self-reflection that reveals a process the practitioner has gone through in order to achieve a better understanding of oneself, so that one can continue developing oneself and ultimately one's work thereby promoting accountability.



**Figure 1: Action Research Cycle (McNiff, 2002)**

### **Participants**

The participants of this study are:

**Mentors:** Two senior lecturers (also the authors of this study) from the Creative Arts and Communication faculty at Midrand Graduate institute

**Other mentors:** Two MGI Education Innovation Consultants from the Research and Eduvate division who provide learning opportunities for furthering one’s teaching practice

**Mentees:** Two junior (new) lecturers from the Creative Arts and Communication faculty at Midrand Graduate institute who require mentoring in the context of their teaching practice and professional development.

### **Data Collection**

Action research can be seen as a strategy to gather information and is not limited to one single method. For the purpose of this study a combination of quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gather data.

#### **Quantitative methods included:**

##### **Questionnaires**

Questionnaires were provided to the four graphic design lecturers who make up the core of the team mentoring unit. First, the two mentors completed the tests and showed the mentees what the tests entailed. Thereafter, taking confidentiality into account, the mentees were presented with the choice to complete these tests and/ or share the outcomes with the team. As mentioned in our literature review, team mentoring supports team building and mutual competency development within a safe environment and due to this, members of the team did not feel uncomfortable with sharing information within the confines of this study. Furthermore, the results of these questionnaires guided us in understanding each other better but were by no means an integral part of the study. Had a member requested to not share information, for instance, they would still engage in the informal discussions in which we used the questionnaire results as guidance. That being said, however, having the members of the team engage in these tests and feel comfortable with sharing the information, assisted us tremendously in guiding the study forwards at a quicker pace.

Since no member felt violated or threatened by the types of questions and/ or implications (direct or perceived) of sharing these results, they were then used to determine the learning style preferences, brain dominance and multiple intelligence of the mentees and mentors.

The following online tests were utilised:

1. Marc Accetta Personality Test - <http://marcaccetta.com/personality-test.php>
2. Character Strength Profile Test - <https://www.viame.org/survey/Account/Register?>
3. Team Building personality test - <http://www.humanmetrics.com/hr/business/staffdevelopment.aspx>
4. Team Roles test - <http://www.123test.com/team-roles-test/>
5. Fun A Team test (to compare to the serious tests) - <http://www.qfeast.com/personality/quiz/19401/What-A-Team-character-are-you-most-like>

Self-assessment questionnaires were also used to determine the respective readiness of the mentors and mentees in conjunction with student assessment of mentees' teaching.

### **Qualitative methods included:**

**Observation** of the mentees during their facilitation of a learning opportunity - observing the mentee in their work environment as they dealt with students and course material. This provided the foundation for more thorough feedback sessions that enhanced the mentees understanding of their role as a facilitator within the classroom environment. This led to further feedback sessions regarding setting up learning opportunities to incite certain evoked knowledge within the classroom. We predominantly used informal techniques of discussion and interviews with students to ascertain specific knowledge regarding planned lessons and lecturer interaction.

**Reflection** - Reflection occurred on a weekly basis. We asked our mentees to provide an informal journal of commentary based on their weekly tasks as set out in their work schedule. We then asked them to answer specific questions in the form of reflection after class visits or discussions with the mentors. These "teaching journals" acted as an additional source of information for us as mentors to take note of the day-to-day issues faced by new (younger) lecturers. The reflection assisted in further discussion through interviews, as to how these issues were or should be dealt with in the future, in a more thorough manner.

### **Recording of mentorship sessions**

We used recording devices such as video and voice recorders as well as note-taking for these sessions. We asked our mentees to take notes as well so that we could compare what we found to be interesting and informative versus their own expectations. This assisted both us, as the mentors, and our mentees in seeing both viewpoints on a continual basis.

### **Mentees personal development plans**

The mentees were initially asked by the mentors to complete certain tasks and to provide them with this information so that the development of the individuals could be discussed and further suggestions could be made on how this related to the development of the team as a whole. This resulted in interviews, team discussions and the use of informal methods such as email, Whatsapp, Facebook and our tablets to provide information between the mentors and mentees. The informal methods provided an open platform for discussion and communication which benefits the team relationship.

The use of qualitative data was imperative in our research as the team relied on the individual resources and traits that each member brought to the unit as a unique member responsible for their own development, as well as the overall development of the whole. The individuality is highlighted by having used various methods of research acquisition namely; technology, social networks, interviews and discussions.



## Conclusion

The present paper proposes how introducing team mentoring in a design education faculty creates an environment of mutual agreement, where design educators are encouraged to collaborate and be accountable for their actions.

Having looked at the murky waters of ethics in design, we can see why the prospect of working within the team mentoring dynamic is of the utmost importance as it provides for the opportunity in creating a shared ethical culture. Additionally, team mentoring fosters leadership and accountability through the shared ethos provided by the team members. Sharing of information and experience can assist the lecturers to cultivate an individual and professional expectation of ethics and accountability. This collaborative milieu develops a strong sense of community of practice which ultimately helps to enhance the team.

When we look back to the reflective notes acquired within the confines of our study, we notice that mentors and mentees both acquired, shared and grew from this knowledge. We concluded that before the start of this team mentorship process, each of us had always focused on the end result rather than to realise and take opportunity in the journey of our educational endeavors.

Having learned from this experience, the recommendations for other team-mentoring opportunities would be to meet consistently (both formally and informally), discuss relevant issues and provide feedback. Furthermore the aspects of scheduling, documenting and tracking progress is of the utmost importance so as to make it a meaningful process, as this is where the true learning and development lies.

As four lecturers who work hand in hand, in daily activities, and more importantly, in developing a brand new curriculum being launched in 2016, this exercise and research was influential in creating a syllabus that looks at the core of our students. It is a syllabus that will not only teach the principles and elements of design, but will instil within our new students, the imperative ideals that a 21<sup>st</sup> century designer needs to truly succeed in the real world. Furthermore, it will provide them with the ability to decipher between right and wrong. The ability of the team to work together with a common goal, irrespective of our diverse backgrounds, provided the founding footsteps for growth; growth in each of us and more importantly, in each of our students and the faculty at large.

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# Beauty (Lie)s In The Eye Of The Beholder

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## Abstract

*This paper explores the relationship between Indian aesthetics, ethics and performance art by engaging in the process, the cultural influences and application of aesthetic judgments on performance artists. A predominantly western aesthetic judgment is applied to artworks created and the application of an alternative as rasa aesthetics in terms of ethics will be discussed.*

*In the context of philosophy and in the search for beauty the West has always focused on the individual by searching outside oneself through research and analysis whilst, the East searches for what is inside you and becoming part of the universe, the truth is given and does not have to be proved. Thus the aesthetic experience of beauty is defined by a state of mind that has a certain focus on a particular object, which engages and fascinates and everything else is excluded from this consciousness to achieve the desired goal.*

**Keywords:** ethics, aesthetics, theory of rasa, performance art

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## Introduction

Western critical and aesthetic theory has been a major source in the interpretation of artworks in a post-imperial, technologically advancing world, which deals with ethical issues by implementing a Western stance on how and if any artworks can provide moral knowledge. If so then ethics is a branch of aesthetics and aesthetics is the critical examination of art, than nature and culture is a part of human conduct and beauty is something that is measured by our values. As humans, we have an innate appreciation for beauty whilst aesthetics and ethics concern the relationship between art and morality, both having seeds in the mind. Rasa implies aesthetic emotion, which is the foundation of Indian aesthetics, a theory that is also related to nature, life, art and drama, which deals with human perception and inspiration associated with the aptitude of the mind. In my view the theory of rasa is attractive today as it conveys the aesthetic experience as a state of expanded consciousness into the human reservoir of lived emotions of individuals in terms of latent impressions by emphasizing basic and permanent emotions as love, anger, and fear.

This paper will further engage with the theory of rasa as an alternative to Western theory where philosophers like Locke, Hume and Immanuel Kant identify beauty as lying in the eye of the beholder rather than in the object, and how the theory of rasa can be used to make meaning of lives, practices and understanding behaviors.

## Beauty from a Western perspective

Beauty is a term that first appeared in the 3rd century BC in Greece. Plato first explicated beauty with the imitation theory by distinguishing the difference between appearance and reality. Whilst the German philosopher Baumgarten claims that beauty is a human experience which is experienced both logically and aesthetically. In terms of logic if one-steps on something sharp it will harm you, this can be viewed as something ugly or painful and if one gazes at a beautiful sunrise then one is able to have an aesthetic experience and appreciate the sense of beauty. Our understanding of beauty has changed during the course of history and the notion of beauty has taken varied values. In

the quest of fulfilling the experience of ecstasy nothing is ugly or distasteful since it is a flection of beauty. The concept of beauty has been diversified to focus and adapt to diverse forms of aesthetic satisfaction.

According to Berleant (2012) the pheonomy of beauty involves three conditions which are intertwined, firstly it is one of a perceiver, secondly it is the focus of perception, and thirdly it is the environment in which the experience takes place. Hamilton (2009) believes that beauty is slippery and allows the perceiver to slip past their state of mind at any given moment, this emotional experience allows one to engage with the moment which creates the shift from the present to the future which also relates to daily task of meaning making. These emotions or feelings are not strictly divided by thinking and feeling or between body, mind and soul as in the European sense but have an integration between the heart, mind and spirit of things according to the Eastern sense. And if beauty is the subject of emotion, than the object of emotion and the situation is abstract and beyond measure and comparison as expressed by rasa.

## Rasa Aesthetics

Bharata composed the *Natyashastra*, between the 6th and the 2nd century BCE of which the theory of rasa is discussed as a key to the treatise. It was promoted, enriched and propagated mainly by Anandavardhana, the most prominent interpreter of the theory of rasa from the 10th century and by his disciple Abhinavagupta. Rasa is closely related to poetry and elevates the elements of beauty and it expresses that human nature is unchanging and our essence is found in our unique individuality in appreciation of the higher faculties of the mind.

“Love of beauty is taste. The creation of beauty is art.” - Ralph Waldo Emerson

Western scholars are generally influenced by the subjectivity of defining what good art is and this is replaced by the subjectivity of defining what beauty is. They further argue that beauty lies or does it (lie) in the eye of the beholder and not in the object itself. Rasa, which is equated to a juice or essence, is a nectar that gives bliss to the mind. Rasa and post -vedic aesthetics rely heavily on the theory of Brahmin, since Brahmin is the essence of all metaphysical entities and the locus of beauty lies in the object and not just in the mind Mohanty (2000). Thus, if each rasa is an emotional energy drawn from our life force than we are able to express this in a certain way. This energy is coloured by our desires, this desire in turn takes on a particular appearance or form through our reaction towards an object Maharajh (2013).

Rasa emotions are further classified in the following way (1) pleasure or delight (*rati/sringara*), (2) laughter or humour (*hasya*), (3) sorrow or pain (*soka*), (4) anger (*krodha*), (5) heroism or courage (*utsaha*), (6) fear (*bhaya*), (7) disgust (*jugupsa*), (8) wonder (*vismaya*), and (9) peace (*shanta*). These emotions, which the human consciousness deals with on an everyday basis, can be something, which is pleasant or unpleasant, desirable or undesirable. These are dichotomous feelings however, rasa is an aesthetic taste, which goes slightly above and beyond the mundane feelings. Thus the ontology is that since “*rasa*” is unique and it is felt it means that it does exist. Rasa emotion is further classified and associated with different colours. These colours also complement emotions and take on a deeper meaning: *sringara* (light green), *hasya* (white), *krodha* (red), *utsaha* (light orange), *bhaya* and *jugupsa*(blue/black), *adbuta* or *vismaya*( yellow) and *shanta*(golden). Thus the rasa emotion and colour associated with it are reflected in the art and design either directly or on a subliminal level in the mind of the viewer.

## The process of rasa aesthetic judgment and Performance art practice

Rasa is made up of three important elements, which are known as *bibhava* the cognitive state represented by words, gestures and internal feelings, *anubhava* is the actual sensing, and *vyabhicharibhava* are subsidiaries that accentuate the experience.

With keeping rasa aesthetics in mind the focus then flows to the three main aspects of art making and in terms of rasa these are form, experience and meaning. The expression of the artists through rasa is able to involve the three different major states of rasa, the *vibhava*, the stimulus potential parallel in the western aesthetic as form are the catalyst emotions, *anubhava* are the emotional reactions or involuntary reaction being the experience in the western aesthetic and *vyacharithbhava* are the transient or voluntary reaction parallel to meaning in the western aesthetic. The *bhava* (emotion) and the *sthayibhava* (unconscious meaning) that it is not a direct experience but one experienced by the mind from a memory or an instinct these are the minor states of rasa that are permanent foundational emotions experienced on the inside. This emotion that becomes the rasa as explained by Deutsch (1975), which can be further speculated as a phenomenological moment or experience. Through rasa, Bharata established the fundamental relationship between those that create and those that contemplate artwork or a performance.

Performance art practice includes all the visual arts which include fine art, multimedia, graphic design, photography dance and live performance. The work of art created can vary from works on paper, to living structures as dance and drama, or any other physical and tangible structure as painting and sculptures. As an artist engaged in the process of making art the environment creates a space to deal with that emotion or to act out a role, it allows the artist to draw or write about a traumatic or joyful event, which cannot always be verbalised. This process allows the artists to overcome their fear (*bhaya*) and increase the level of risk taking which leads to *atbhuta* (wonderment) and an ultimate feeling of transcendence together with being one with creation. Jenkins in Norton (2008) writes that there is a joy in expressing one's uniqueness or individuality and in being self-directed, which valid art experiences allow in a constructive manner and creating something new by weaving the spiritual, physical and emotional aspects together.

Artworks are able to create a myriad of emotions from joy to sorrow, disgust, anger, love, humour, wonder and even peace which reflect on human lives and make it rich and varied. Emotions also enhance a different kind of awareness and are universal in nature across cultures and through rasa these mental states are experienced and analysed for both the artist and spectator. Art making is not just about prompting self-awareness, self-confidence and self-expression but also participate in this community and feel privileged about your purpose in life. The process of connecting and knowing with your intuitive self and reflecting on the process is very much the concept of becoming one with Brahmin the ultimate reality. At this point experiencing a rasa goes beyond the mundane experience and creates a more meaningful engagement with making "beautiful things". This emotional energy projects a rasa drawn from our inner most being which fuses with our desires and conditioning to acquire a definite form.

Brahman that is the elevated state of consciousness is achieved when the artist who is the creator of the action and the aesthetic, and the perception, are brought together. The culmination of the two can be classified as the aesthetic experience of rasa the sap or juice as an ultimate metaphysical experience.

This is further articulated, when the State of Being merges with the Supreme Reality and the role of the artist is to then bring the viewer of the object closer to the experience of merging with the supreme consciousness. According to Gomez (2009) the fourfold cognitive states of Vedic epistemological assumption are waking, dreaming, dreamless state and the transcendental state. These four levels of experience or consciousness depend on the permanent mental state that form the basis of rasa or aesthetic emotion and emerge in an appropriately stimulated experience. Therefore the link between the different levels of experience and the individual sense organs redefines and awakens the inner sense organs that allow the experience of beauty to be sensuous on a metaphysical level.

Gomez (2009) comments on the "I- consciousness" which is the limiting concept, if there is the integration, an immersion of the "I" and the object then there is no limitation between the aesthetic

and the metaphysical experience. However disinterest and disengagement can come from both the object and the viewer in terms of the work being defective in nature of its construction, lacks clarity of expression, disproportionate, and so forth and in terms of the viewer the object can be totally alien to one's own being and this can be interpreted on an entirely personal emotional point of view. This is the reason why the aesthetic experience is considered to last as long as the viewer is engaged with the artwork whilst the mystical experience transcends and continues through a period of time.

## Aesthetics and Ethics

Aesthetics from a western context and Hegelian point of view is actually meant as the "philosophy of fine art" and the study of beauty is the study of art or nature. Theories of imitations, illusion, and idealised representation represent a study from the artist's point of view whilst the theories of cognition, inference and mysticism represent the study of the spectator's point of view. In the context of *rasa*, Indian aesthetics is concerned with the science of philosophy and originality of art and the technique involved in making art since they are intertwined. So how does one determine what art is and further explain what is good art? Different criteria are used to determine this by an informed or uninformed mind however; people still make an aesthetic judgment in terms of the space it occupies within the established practice of the art world (galleries, museums and exhibitions).

When the criterion of beauty is used to evaluate a selected artwork or design the subjectivity of defining what is good art and what is beauty comes into play. Some work would display a positive aesthetic whilst some work tends to display a negative impact on the viewer. An artwork's aesthetic value and judgment can only be determined by a summation of the required criterion with each criterion having its own degree of impact on the aesthetic value. In terms of ethics human morals, values and principles are specific to certain human behaviors, cultural beliefs and norms. Ethical values are conceptual entities since they are essentially ideas. However, they also decide how people behave in relation to each other. Beauty is considered to be part of the physical world and not every physical property has aesthetic relevance whether it is solid or hollow, empty or full it makes no difference. Beauty is in the skin of things making beauty just skin deep.

## The influence of western aesthetic judgment on an artwork

Western perspectives according to Blocker (2001) are intellectual frameworks used to analyse and judge implementing terms such as aesthetics, ethics, metaphysics and even philosophy since most scholars use a European approach to understanding basic life goals, norms and knowledge amongst other assumptions and presuppositions in applying theory. The concept of aesthetics stems from the notion of taste. This concept of taste and style drew much attention during the Eighteenth century and emerged as a corrective to rationalism, beauty and the rise of egoism. During this period the judgment of beauty was considered to be the judgment of reason by reasoning it out and applying concepts.

When I look at the process of creating art or dancing my entire body is aware of it the surface, the space and environment responding kinesthetically and almost automatically to the sight and sounds. The idea of being enraptured by the flow of movement the hand is followed by the gaze, where the eye goes the mind follows diligently. The flow continues in that where the mind goes emotions arise and where there is this *bhava* (emotions) there will be *rasa*. This action of body consciousness is the process of aesthetic engagement, which, the West identifies as the form (*vibhava*), meaning (*anubhava*) and experience (*vyacharibhava*). The movement or artwork may not be perfect but being totally immersed in the moment is the beauty, not perfect but rich and irreplaceable, the feeling of being in unison with the universe. This experience of beauty involves a multitude of aspects namely the artists, the viewer and the artwork, this triangulation constitutes the very nature of *rasa* where the object is capable of evoking perceptual and associated responses and creates a situation to experience the beautiful. The question then is, is this synonymous in any situation or in most of our

experiences of beauty? Thus if beauty or aesthetic value is a result of any situation or experience that involves the artist, the object and the viewer does it mean that the focus of perception be beautiful.

Our sensitivity to natural and built environments changes and as Berleant (2012) states that we are blinded and betrayed by beauty and our exclusive worship of economic values. Is beauty a foreign concept and should it be re-conceptualized in terms of the contemporary historical situation of the environment it belongs too. Beauty in the Western tradition is considered to be a metaphysical object readily identified with the truth and reality whilst Indian aesthetics do not consider beauty as an objective reality but with the perception of the beautiful Chaudhury (1965). Having said these emotions are then social phenomena and have deeper significance in context of its cultural meaning. These cultural perspectives have an impact on individual behavior and on the practice of the self in terms of psychological approaches to decision-making, emotions and cognition. Works of art act upon their audiences with reference to the choice of material in terms of perceptual and experiential experiences. Art has the potential to induce its audience to experience something without having to act accordingly as expressed by Van Gerwen (2015). In rasa theory the bodily experiences of basic bhavas or emotions are located centrally in the body and during a performance or creation of an artwork these basic emotions of love, anger or disgust can be observed by both the performer and reproduced in heightened form for the audience.

The 'Mona Lisa' painted by Leonardo da Vinci between 1503 and 1507 is unremarkably one of the most famous paintings in human history. This painting was never signed or dated and there are multiple controversies associated with it namely, who is the mystery portrait off, to whom does the painting belongs too, or is it a self-portrait of da Vinci and so forth. However, the most mesmerizing aspect of this painting is the smile a hallmark of Leonardo's style, which can also be seen in his other, works an upturn on the left side of the mouth. The shadow of the lips and eyes on the face of the sitter creates the effect of allowing subtle yet strong emotions in the viewer of the painting, and one has to decide if the smile is in her eyes or her lips. This emotion can be closely identified with sringara (love) the king of rasas that embodies the notion of, laughter (hasya), and even anger (krodha).

The 'Mona Lisa' creates plethora of emotions in the viewer, is she mocking the viewer, or is she looking at a lover and smiling at him in a sacred, and placid way giving pure pleasure which is an aspect of 'sringara'. The delight that the viewer shares upon gazing at the painting, is also one of deep-seated connectedness and inner perception, which, is self-knowing. Thus self-reflection is prominent in rasa as Gnoli in Sundarajan (2010) states that aesthetic enjoyment is tasting of one's own consciousness, and is a source of pleasure, endowed with extreme pleasantness or beauty which is embodied in the 'Mona Lisa'. It emerges that Leonardo seemed to be so self-absorbed in the painting that he appeared to connect with his spirit and extend on his mental fields of removing all the clutter of ornamentation and detail and just focusing the mind and creating a peaceful atmosphere in his work, a sentiment enjoyed by the viewer as well.

This painting is also unique in displaying the celestial bhava 'shanta rasa' of peace and transcendence. The ultimate goal of an aesthetic experience is abolishing the limited personality of the spectator that is removing the maya or illusion. When the viewer is totally immersed in the object and in this case the painting he or she is experiencing a rasa anubhava (emotional or involuntary reaction) and an eventual sthayibhava (unconscious meaning). This immersion in the work of art as drawn by Sundarajan (2010) that immersion in the aesthetic experience is an expression of transcendence, liberation from the mundane reality. The smile of the 'Mona Lisa' can be conceived from a dialectical angle and based on the philosophy of rasa of self-reflexivity by further looking into the idea of the self and non-self.

## Conclusion

In conclusion the function of ethics is to promote beneficial action, responsible behavior, commitment to community and communion with the sacred. Rasa is not just a sensory or emotive

response but a transformative cognition and the knowledge that is gained through that response, it is not a *rasa* if it does not leave one transformed. Once the artwork is created it enters art practice by conforming to accepted art forms and if there is a lack of artistic merit it's considered to be having lacking the respect of its audience van Gerwen (2015). When approaching the eastern theories one should not look at it as a platform that can be easily manipulated or by romanticising it but also looking at it as modern communication and technology. Chakrabarty (1992) claims that third world historians need to refer to works in European history, however historians of Europe do not feel the need to reciprocate and write Indian histories, even though these may be produced in the third world. Dallmayr (1994) positions the third world as an already bruised society because of decades of colonial domination and confrontation which results in an identity crisis, whilst the west enjoys a 'cushion' of complacency because of the position they occupy. He further explains that historical background cannot be ignored but the conceptual and theoretical contribution has to be recognised.

Thus *rasa* aesthetics can be studied through literary criticism, theatre, history, sociology, psychology, neuroscience, philosophy religion and art with each area revealing a different aspect of *rasa*. *Rasa* can be experienced through subjective and objective waves of *bhava* in a particular context. Grenz (1999) Art criticism has made us somewhat cynical in appreciating taste and beauty but *rasa* allows the noble ideal to evolve critical appraisal virtues of personalities of ethics and aesthetics.

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# Appropriate pedagogy for practice, the ha-ha in the higher education landscape

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## Abstract

*In this paper I argue that appropriate methods and approaches in university teaching require an ongoing ontological and epistemological debate. A pedagogic orientation implies a framework for educational decision making and participation that can result in strategic educational failure if it is poorly understood.*

*Pedagogy is a universal educational concept and is part of every constructed educational endeavour. From my perspective as an educator in a vocational educational setting, the understanding of educational concepts is generally scant. Educational terminology is rarely used amongst the educators and words such as pedagogy are ambiguous and foreign to the practitioner educator. Maybe educators fear being wrong educationally, not adhering to the rules of education and therefore not engaging constructively with the concepts. This paper might not demystify the topic completely, but an attempt will be made to narrow the gap, or the ha-ha in the applicable landscape. The educational reference in the paper is that of a University of Technology (UoT) within the Higher Education (HE) setting in South Africa, and will be briefly contextualised.*

*The ha-ha<sup>51</sup> is metaphorically applied to illustrate the possibility of similar hidden landscaped illusions in higher educational settings. Accountability therefore lies with the architects of the HE landscape and their influence on the educational approach, as well as the teacher-academic who needs to facilitate individual learning towards economic sustainability.*

**Keywords:** Pedagogy, teaching practice, Higher Education, ontology, epistemology

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## Introduction

*“I have looked across the ha-ha till I am weary” - Jane Austen*

In this paper I argue that appropriate methods and approaches in university teaching require an ongoing ontological and epistemological debate. A pedagogic orientation implies a framework for educational decision making and participation that can result in strategic educational failure when it is poorly understood. In order to contain the vastness and complexity of this topic I will confine and direct the discussion and suggestions through the following themes:

- The ha-ha as metaphor in Higher Education
- Accountability in a university of technology context
- A discussion on the origins and developments around pedagogy
- Appropriate knowledge and learning
- Possible consideration for a pedagogy for practice

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<sup>51</sup> The ha-ha was a 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century English landscape design feature, a kind of deep but empty ditch surrounding an estate which served the same purpose as a fence, but was not easily visible.

Pedagogy is a universal educational concept and is part of every constructed educational endeavour. From my perspective as an educator in a vocational educational setting, the understanding of educational concepts is generally scant. Educational terminology is rarely used amongst the educators and words such as pedagogy are ambiguous and foreign to the practitioner educator. Maybe educators fear being wrong educationally, not adhering to the rules of education and therefore not engaging constructively with the concepts. This paper might not demystify the topic completely, but an attempt will be made to narrow the gap, or the ha-ha in the applicable landscape. This paper emanates from a larger investigation into the pedagogic considerations for teaching a creative practice. The propositions made at the end of the paper form part of a work in progress and are meant to invite participation and stimulate constructive debate.

The educational reference in the paper is to that of a University of Technology (UoT) within the Higher Education (HE) system in South Africa, and will be briefly contextualised later in order to understand the educational setting of the discussion. However, the discussion is mostly principle-driven and can stimulate reflection on educational practice in any teaching and learning environment.

This paper is part of a personal journey into educational and philosophical theory in an attempt to understand my teaching experience of the past 26 years in retrospect. An attempt will be made to illustrate the complex environments that educators, sometimes unknowingly, deal with every day. The methods and approaches of the educational act ascribes to an embodiment characterised by the Hedeggerian “being in the world” of education. This ontological stance positions me, purposely, towards appropriate action.

## The ha-ha in HE

However tempting, the reference to the word ha-ha in this paper is not a reference to some educational joke. The ha-ha, a 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century English landscape design feature, is metaphorically applied to illustrate the possibility of similar, hidden landscaped illusions in higher educational settings. Accountability therefore lies with the architects of the HE landscape and their influence on the educational approach. Good academics are very clever and ingenious. They find their own way of constructing their piece of academic landscape within the larger HE domain. As active participants they become accountable for the educational setting that they control. The ha-ha was constructed to create an invisible blending between the cultivated estate and the uncultivated wilderness surrounding the estate. The one-point perspective, from the estate, created a seamless blend with the untamed.

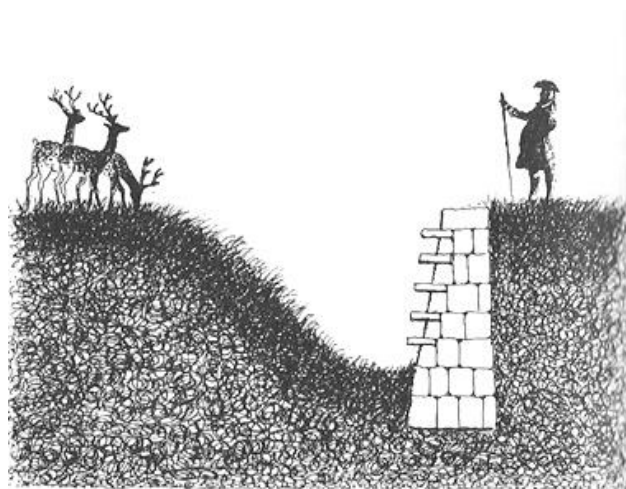


Figure 1. The ha-ha wall

The ha-ha prevented animals from encroaching on the more elegant and refined part of your estate (Wakefield 2010). The estate that I am specifically alluding to is that of HE, specifically UoTs that teach creative design practice. The metaphor can apply to any educational setting and can be critically unpacked in multiple ways. Its application in this paper is that of a construct that creates a hidden barrier between the cultivated (through education) and the uncultivated wilderness. It therefore seems as if the estate extends into the wilderness, but from another perspective the divide is obvious. It is a barrier to access. The access that I am referring to is not political, but educational. It refers to the epistemological access using well-considered methods and approaches to what needs to be learnt.

Learning remains the core business of education. Learning theory and strategies remain an on-going debate and field of study in all education sectors. The multiplicity of leaning strategies debated over centuries provides the “researcher on education” (Elliot 2006) with enough material for endless abstraction. My interest in education in this paper is towards what Elliot refers to as “educational research”, which he explains as the “practical intention to realize educational values in action” (Elliot 2006, p.169). This makes me a participant researcher. The paper draws on literature within the broad interconnected domain of HE in an attempt to view a real setting through the thinking of others.

## The University of Technology

The UoT, previously known as a technikon, was referred to as a “glorified high school” by a prominent academic theorist in South Africa. On reading that statement for the first time I felt an evangelical pull towards the ‘univer[sal]sity’ light, away from the ‘tech’ affiliation. The pull was not strong enough, and twenty-six years later, I am not closer to the ultimate academic light. Instead, more ambiguity than clarity ensued when the term university was attached. Before the restructuring of the higher education landscape in South Africa technikons were quality controlled by the Certification Council of Technikon Education (SERTEC) nationally. Accountability then seemed remote and secondary. The then traditional (academic) universities established the Quality Promotions Unit (QPU) to prepare themselves for the establishment of the Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC) (Reddy et al. 2000).

From the technikon perspective the new national HEQC would provide an institutional autonomy that filtered downward to course level, affecting not only the course structure, but also the approach to teaching course content, and therefore more accountability. One of the main focusses of the technikons, as institutions, was to provide a professional workforce to industry. They fulfilled this commission very successfully, mostly because of the clear mandate given. The current UoTs had to grow up. The industrially relevant commission was complemented with another commission - applied, problem-solving, technology driven, world-class research (Du Pré 2009). Du Pre states: “What UoTs then need to become are centres of technology excellence, and not try to duplicate what traditional universities are so good at, and are geared to do” (Du Pré 2009, p.17). What were UoTs geared to do, other than what they were good at for decades? The up skilling proved to be a challenge, resulting in an epistemic-import management model. This model employed as many doctoral candidates from traditional universities as vacancies and money allowed. The result was epistemic drift, away from the ‘first commandment’ (industry) and towards the ‘eleventh’ (world class applied research).

The epistemic drift influenced the teaching of industry practice in the classroom, not in curriculum, but in approach and methodology, in pedagogy. Jansen echoes the need to look elsewhere when he states that there is “no shred of evidence in almost 80 years of curriculum change literature” of a direct correlation between the change of curriculum and the positive influence of that on the economy (Jansen 1998). I suggest that deep introspection is done from the ground up. I am sure that we will also not find any shred of evidence where educational governance decisions affected the economy positively.

## The Pedagogue

Whereas curriculum remains the core content indicator of the syllabus taught, pedagogy addresses the holistic learning and teaching environment. Our students need confidence when they enter the world of work. Learning a creative design practice hones an ability to make and perform with authority and demands an educational environment that encourages the learning of this ability. As the transformational agenda keeps on rolling ahead, it brings with it the possibility for re-evaluating how we are going to educate.

Gravett (2001, p.23) refers to our frame of reference that needs to change. She refers to two concepts that Mezirow coined; “meaning perspectives (frame of reference) and meaning schemes... the habitual orientation and expectations”. According to Mezirow our meaning perspectives, “if left unquestioned”, will lead to “cognitive imprisonment” and need to undergo a “transformation”. Mezirow refers to CSRA (Critical Self-Reflection on assumptions) which will “free” the learner “from coercion and distorting self-deception” leaving the learner with a “desire to fit the new perspective into the broader context of one’s life” (Gravett 2001, p.27).

Education is a “drawing out” that requires a fitting educational methodology. This approach and method of leading one to learn is referred to as pedagogy. We are so bombarded with the terms teaching and learning that we can easily forget about the important process that makes this possible. Historically, the *paidagōgos* were both “leaders and custodians” (Longenecker 1982, p.53) for Greek families. There is a clear distinction between the notion of pedagogy (the pedagogue) and that of didactics, the latter referring to teaching (the teacher) and what had to be taught (Smith 2012). Smith refers to Hilgenheger (1993: 651-1) differentiating between education, as “shaping the development of character with a view to the improvement of man(sic)” and of teaching, as that which “conveys fresh knowledge, develops existing aptitudes and imparts useful skills” (Smith 2012).

With the reference to etymology earlier, it is important to note that although pedagogy is commonly referred to as “the art of teaching”, “the craft of teaching” or “the science of teaching”, it still refers to the context of a child.

In the field of higher education we need to understand the idea behind this notion of education and how this is educationally separate or specialist in the broader context of education (Barnett 1990). Learning the higher stages of skill can thus also be linked to higher education, with skill referring to a higher or more sophisticated and critical ability to do and think. In this instance, higher, means a specialist approach to the learning that the student will engage with, not only in the form of a specialist field that will foster depth as opposed to generalist education, but also at the cognitive level of university education.

Barnett refers to a “conceptual difference between primary and higher education” (Barnett 1990, p.7) which provides occasion for differentiating between the “method and practice of education” (Dictionary, 2006), or pedagogy, at primary and higher education. The more modern term pedagogy, originates from monastic schools in Europe before the 12<sup>th</sup> century, with Greek origins meaning “leader of” (agogus) the “child” (paid) (McAuliffe et al. 2009; Regelski 2002). Knowles (1973) is quoted explaining the literary meaning of pedagogy “as the art and science of teaching” (Holmes & Abington-Cooper, 2000, p.50; Simpson & Weiner, 1989 in Forrest III & Peterson, 2006; McAuliffe et al. 2009). It should also be noted that the word art is used in conjunction with science to describe the meaning of pedagogy. For me, the emphasis in this is not so much on pedagogy but on the realisation that educational practice includes an aspect of artful skill and care, which should complement the rationality of science in the conceptualisation of an educational theory. Knowles also highlights “assumptions about the characteristics of learners (that) did not fit the more adult characteristics encountered after school” (Holmes & Abington-Cooper 2000, p.51; Gravett 2005, p70-71). The term andagogy appeared in 1933, used by a German teacher Alexander Kapp, to “describe the educational theory of Plato” (Holmes & Abington-Cooper 2000, p.51).

It must be noted that terminology can sometimes confuse instead of clarify. A century after German fellow John Fredric Herbert rejected the term, it appeared again in Europe and was widely used in France, Holland and Yugoslavia in the 1960s. During this time a Yugoslavian introduced the term to Malcolm Knowles who developed his interpretation of the term as “the art and science of helping adults learn” (Davenport 1987 in Holmes & Abington-Cooper 2000, Simpson & Weiner 1989 in Forrest III & Peterson, 2006). It must also be pointed out that the term andragogy today has different meanings globally. Gravett makes reference to additional, but related terminology, from European literature namely, andragogics and andragology. The same literature refers to andragogy as “intentional and professionally guided activity which aims at change in adult persons”, with andragogics being the “methodological and ideological systems that governs the process of andragogy” and andragology being the study of both andragogy and andragogics. A further complication is the use of the term andragogy in Holland meaning, “overall study of social work, community organisation and adult education” (Gravett 2005, p.71).

The interesting notion here is that there was awareness in, and accommodation of, learning processes and strategies that considered the learner, whether young or more mature. The authors agree that the term adult can be definitively problematic (Barret 1986, Gravett 2005, Holmes & Abington-Cooper 2000, Forrest III & Peterson 2006). Cultural and ethnic viewpoints provide for even more considerations, as African philosopher Credo Mutwa explains:

Under the African traditional law there is no “coming of age” for a child, as it is known in western tradition, when a child reaches its twenty-first birthday and is to be henceforth regarded as an adult with full control over his or her life. Under African tradition you remain a child under the full control of your parents for as long as they are alive. (Mutwa 1989, p.54).

The sobering thought by Pratt (1993:21) in (Gravett 2005, p.71) provides us with clear directive to continue our critical search for application in our specific context:

...its [andragogic] contribution to our understanding of adult learning is not as grand in substance as it is in scale. The widespread and uncritical adoption of a particular view of adults as learners should not be the only measure by which we assess andragogy’s contribution... Further, while andragogy may have contributed to our understanding of adults as learners, it has done little to expand or clarify our understanding of the process of learning. We cannot say, with any confidence, that andragogy has been tested and found to be, as so many have hoped, either the basis for a theory of adult learning or as a unifying concept for adult education.

My vested interest here is not to prove or disprove andragogy over pedagogy but rather to critically evaluate all possibilities. This notion is supported by Forrest III & Peterson (2006) who highlight the differences in the two teaching philosophies in the following table (Forrest III & Peterson 2006, p.115):

<b>TABLE 1</b>		
<b>Pedagogical Andragogical Learning Assumption</b>		
	<b>Pedagogy</b>	<b>Andragogy</b>
<b>Self-Concept</b>	Learners are dependent on external sources such as an instructor to assess and provide their needs.	Learners are aware of themselves and their needs and bring this knowledge to the educational activity.
<b>Learner's Experience</b>	Learners bring little experience to the educational activity and thus experience is not used in the learning process.	Learners bring a wealth of usable experience and knowledge to the educational activity, thus experience is used in the learning process.
<b>Readiness to Learn</b>	The need to know develops from external forces; often an instructor mandating the learning process that should take place.	The need to know develops from an internal need to better address roles and responsibilities the learner faces.
<b>Learning Orientation</b>	Subject or Teacher Centered	Problem or Performance Centered

**Figure 2. Pedagogical Andragogical Learning Assumption (Forrest III & Peterson 2006).**

These authors also refer to Knowles's set of assumptions "regarding teaching and learning transaction" with keywords such as "a self-directing personality", "wealth of experience", "come to the learning process ready to learn", "immediate application of the learning knowledge" (Forrest III & Peterson 2006, p.116). However encouraging these assumptions sound, as an educator, we know that the above-mentioned assumptions remain just that. Students don't always arrive with a self-directed personality, the wealth of experience is not necessarily relevant or applicable, they are definitely not always ready to learn, and they might not be able to immediately apply their knowledge. This might mean that we then do not really teach the adult that they define.

I would describe our learners at university as mostly young adults in undergraduate and mostly adults in postgraduate studies. The dilemma with this description is that the respective lecturers that teach on under-graduate and postgraduate levels need to change their teaching strategy depending on who they are teaching at the time. However, this is not a foreign concept because good educators should always adapt their teaching approach to the needs of the students, whoever they might be.

Maybe we need a new term. Knudson (1980) suggested the word humanagogy because it "takes into account the development of the whole human being from birth to death" (Forrest III & Peterson 2006, p.53), a logical combination of the best of both worlds. The strength of a term such as humanogogy lies in the generic nature of the referent. This generic nature and all-encompassing term now allows for subdivision and categorisation, not to create another term, but to narrow the options to the specific need. This might add chaos and complexity, something we normally avoid, but can rarely escape.

	<b>Pedagogy</b> <b>Children's learning</b>	<b>Andragogy</b> <b>Adults learning</b>	<b>Heutagogy</b> <b>Self-directed learning</b>
<b>Dependence</b>	The learner is a dependent personality. Teacher determines what, how and when anything is learned.	Adults are independent. They strive for autonomy and self-direction in learning.	Learners are interdependent. They identify the potential to learn from novel experiences as a matter of course. They are able to manage their own learning.
<b>Resources for learning</b>	The learner has few resources – the teacher devises transmission techniques to store knowledge in the learner's head.	Adults use their own and other's experience.	Teacher provides some resources but the learner decides the path by negotiating the learning.
<b>Reasons for learning</b>	Learn in order to advance to the next stage.	Adults learn when they experience a need to know or to perform more effectively.	Learning is not necessarily planned or linear. Learning is not necessarily based on need but on the identification of the potential to learn in novel situations.
<b>Focus of learning</b>	Learning is subject centred, focussed on prescribed curriculum and planned sequences according to the logic of the subject matter.	Adult learning is task or problem centred.	Learners can go beyond problem solving by enabling pro-activity. Learners use their own and others' experiences and internal processes such as reflection, environmental scanning, experience, interaction with others, and pro-active as well as problem-solving behaviours.
<b>Motivation</b>	Motivation comes from external sources – usually parents, teachers and a sense of competition.	Motivation stems from internal sources – the increased self-esteem, confidence and recognition that come from successful performance.	Self-efficacy, knowing how to learn, creativity, ability to use these qualities in novel as well as familiar situations and working with others.
<b>Role of the teacher</b>	Designs the learning process, imposes material, is assumed to know best.	Enabler or facilitator, climate of collaboration, respect and openness.	Develop the learner's capability. Capable people: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know how to learn</li> <li>• Are creative</li> <li>• Have a high degree of self-efficacy</li> <li>• Apply competencies in novel as well as familiar situations</li> <li>• Can work well with others.</li> </ul>

**Figure 3. Pedagogy, Andragogy, Heutagogy compared**

Another appropriate model of learning is that of heutagogy (the management of self managed learners). Figure 3 illustrates some differences between pedagogy, andragogy and heutagogy. Hase and Kenyon suggest that complexity theory which is underpinned by notions such as “emergent nature of change”, “agent interaction”, “inherent unpredictability”, “feedforward and feed back”, “autopoiesis”, and “non-linearity” (Hase & Kenyon 2001, p.3; Hase et al. 2006) needs a learning theory to enhance learning at work, drawing on experience. Systems theory, which predates complexity theory (Hase & Kenyon 2001), speaks to the relationships between systems that can “potentially create dramatic effects” (Hase & Kenyon 2001, p.3). In chaotic, volatile and complex situations a learning strategy is necessary where self-determined learning can take place, “the curriculum, as it were, was in the hands of the learners” (Hase & Kenyon 2001, p.3).

Lee and McCloughlin suggest a Learner Context Model that enables the student to enter a “self regulated” state, considering the “what and how” of learning. In this context they combine the pedagogic approach of “developing a learner’s understanding of a subject”, with the andragogy approach of “the teacher directed by the learner”, with the heutagogy approach, shifting the “what and how” to the learner (Lee & McCloughlin 2008).



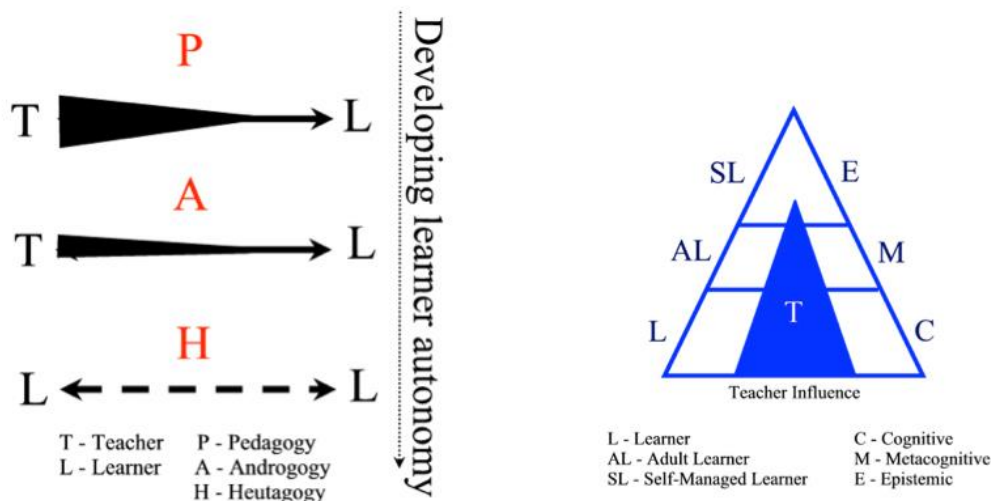


Figure 4. Combined Pedagogy, Andragogy and Heutagogy model (Source: Lee & McCloughlin, 2008).

They continued by enveloping this self-regulatory state of the student with “obuchenie”, a Russian word meaning teaching and learning, used in Vygotskian thinking and resulting in their “Obuchenie Context Model”. The ideal is that “at any moment, teacher may be learner, learner maybe teacher and both may become mutually conditioned co-learners” (Lee & McCloughlin 2008). The self-regulatory state goes beyond scaffolding to a new stage to what Cahill points out as enabling the learners to “come to think for themselves and make their own choices about how to choose” (Cahill n.d., p.178).

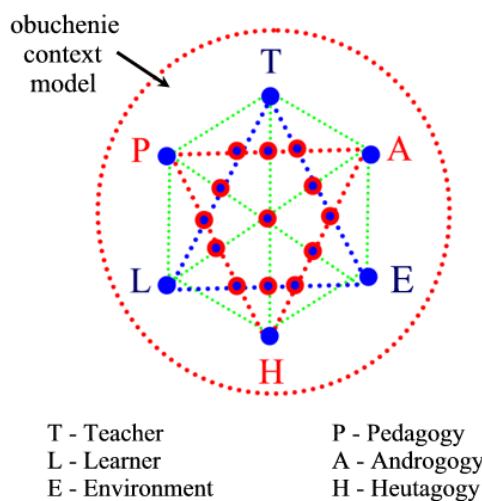


Figure 5. The Obuchenie Context Model (Lee & McCloughlin, 2008)

## Knowledge and learning

The focus of these pedagogical models is mainly to provide a space for the student to learn. The notion of the co-learner seems educationally current but pedagogically vague. Traditionally, educational research introduced episteme knowledge, consisting of a broad range of situations that the student might encounter, and phronesis knowledge, which is an understanding of specifics. Both of these concepts are classified as conceptions of judgement (Coulter & Wiens 2002, p.15). Appropriate judgement became the considered context accountability. Coulter and Wiens (2002) elaborate on this notion of accountability by “linking the actor and spectator” in the context of

judgement. They emphasise the commonly known fact that much of the research on education, that I alluded to earlier, is removed from the practice of education, resulting in a divide [ha-ha] between teaching practice and research knowledge on teaching. The ethical dilemma is in the resulting unclaimed accountability. We have seen how quickly the same divide develops, almost naturally like erosion, when undergraduate and postgraduate pedagogy develops separately. A typical example is that of the epistemic-drift mentioned earlier, when undergraduate poiesis knowledge, focusing on practice as craft, is negated, in favour of *sophia* or theoretical knowledge (Coulter & Wiens 2002).

Knowledge construction through learning is illustrated by Gravett's triad (Gravett 2001, p.36) of learning (Figure 6.), a simple illustration of the dialogue between the student (learner), the teacher (educator) and the learning content. The decentralisation of the three role-players who become responsible for learning enforces appropriate dialogue between them, as well as shared accountability towards learning as outcome. The pedagogy is therefore dominated by learning as the driver.

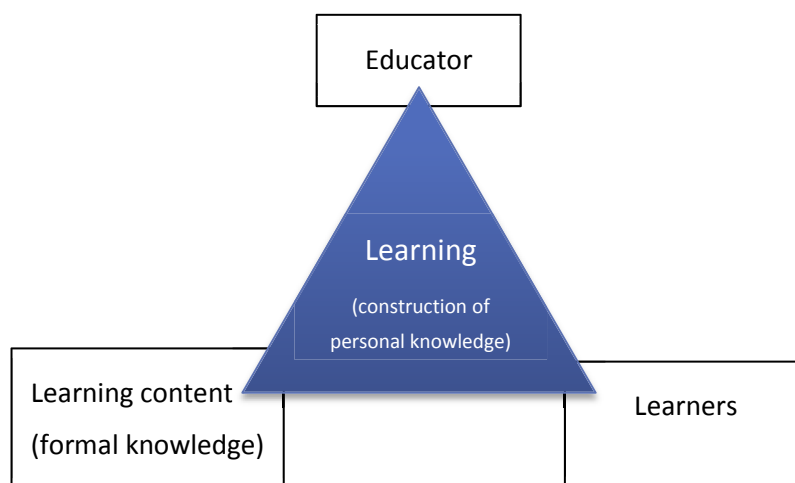


Figure 6. Learning model (Gravett 2001)

The actors and spectators that Coulter and Wiens refer to also apply in this context. With learning as dominant proposition and outcome, the role-players are relegated to collaborative dialogue instead of binary opposites fighting for voice.

At this stage we realise that the developments in pedagogical models tried to bridge some identified separations. However, none of these models focuses on vocationally focussed education with praxis as a core ingredient. It needs to be noted here that vocational courses conceptualised at UoTs are contained within departments and controlled by the departments. Let me illustrate this concept through an example of a photography programme's subject composition and the different knowledge fields that have to be consolidated.

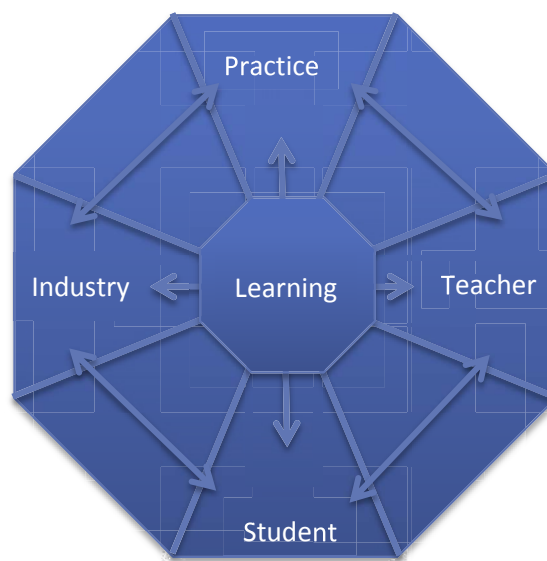
In a specific UoT photography course we find four major subjects consisting of the following:

- **Visual Communication**, a theoretical subject that can include visual literacy, aesthetics, genres, history, contemporary practice, etc.
- **Theory of Photography**, a technical theoretical subject that can include related scientific and technical aspects of photography
- **Professional Practice**, a theoretical subject that deals with concepts around the business practice of the entrepreneur
- **Applied Photography**, a practical subject that deals with the creative output, or making of photographs

Academic staff within such a photography department are responsible for at least two to three of these subject components each, normally a mix between practice and theory. The luxury of academic specialisation is therefore replaced by the notion of the academic bricoleur focussing on a discipline of field of practice. Ensor refers to this scenario as a disciplinary discourse that ensures “cognitive coherence” (Ensor 2004, p.342) and favours “skilled graduates for employment in the workplace” (2004 p.240). There are complicating factors here that need consideration towards pedagogy that favours practice. Shulman suggest a signature pedagogy that is directed towards specific fields (Shulman 2005), in this case, photography. For simplification purposes I will replace the word signature with photography. The photography pedagogy as a practice-based vocational orientation requires the consideration of four main role players, practice, industry, the teacher and the student. Practice, and the focus of the orientation of practice as an applied art are debatable and contentious. The notion of photography as fine art will be underplayed here in favour of an industry focus that the qualification orientation demands.

### Towards a pedagogy for practice

The practice orientation is guided by the industry orientation where the student will seek employment. Ensor refers to this outward focus as a “professional discourse” that favours framing over selection in the curriculum, away from the more “therapeutic discourse” (Ensor 2004, pp.345-46) that favours selection. A reiteration to what was alluded to earlier is that the undergraduate pedagogy and curriculum structure should promote epistemological access to postgraduate studies. The current focus shift from Mode 1 to Mode 2 research thinking can add an additional side force to contend with in an already complex scenario. This paper will not be able to address the influences of Mode 2 (collaborative, interdisciplinary, etc.) research in any detail.



**Figure 7. Influencers for the Practice Pedagogy**

From a photography discipline perspective (as with any other applied design), I would argue that the therapeutic and professional discourse that Ensor identified should be reconsidered within a less exclusive discourse. This strong separation that is applied to the context of UoTs can, according to my understanding, only be fully aligned with the hard-core science disciplines within UoTs. These scientifically dominated disciplines require less description of meaning, or interpretation, which locates them in a strictly professional domain. Photography as a medium requires technical scientific tools as well as a therapeutic discourse to interpret the world subjectively. The subjective interpretation, in the case of a creative practice profession, also requires a deep understanding of

the professional industry in which the practice will manifest. This deep understanding of the profession is necessary when relevance in the curriculum is required.

Educationally, the pedagogic influencers in Figure 6 require a deep understanding of practice, the practitioner and the industry where the practice will manifest as a profession. Practice epistemology then needs to dominate the pedagogical conversation. Importantly, my interest here is practice in a dual application. In my capacity as creative-practitioner-educator, agency emanates from the act of creative practice as well as that of educational practice. In the capacity as creative-practitioner-educator I fulfil all three classifications of agency namely, Individual, Proxy and Collective agency (Hewson 2010, pp.12-13). Agency within an epistemology of practice, in all the roles mentioned, requires constant reflection in action. Raelin suggest that learning “that is acquired from reasoning and sense making” happens “in the midst of action itself” (Raelin 2007, p.67).

I cannot but agree with all the literature supporting mutual learning, in the context of dialogue, between all the participants in the learning triad illustrated by Gravette as well as the pedagogical influencer’s illustration in Figure 7. Practitioner-academics within UoTs were/are employed for their mastery of a particular practice within a related field. However, these practitioners do not necessarily possess the educational qualification or acumen that might satisfy the educational practice domain. They are normally inducted into the language and practice of educational mastery through a variety of strategies including in-house workshops, a Postgraduate Diploma in HE, experience and peer assistance. The creative practitioner can relate to this form of “critical reflective practice” (Raelin 2007) because of the nature of learning within the creative practice that continuously evolves.

## Concluding remarks

In conclusion, I suggest a pedagogy (an approach to teaching and learning) that fosters collaboration between all participants towards the generation of new personal knowledge. The notion of reflection embodies the desire to critique and to be criticised, constructively, in order to improve. The concurring notion of constructionism enables this process of critique, not to arrive at an ultimate answer, but to provide agency through “exact fantasy” (Crotty 2012, p.48). Susan Buck-Morss (1977, p.86) suggests that the emphasis here is on a “dialectical concept which acknowledged the mutual mediation of subject and object without allowing either to get the upper hand” (ibid). The impression here could be that the responsibility for ‘pedagogic judgement’ becomes an inability. Allowing the collective desire for learning to surface as the dominant driver in agency might assist in establishing a pedagogical space that takes collective responsibility for accountability. A space where not only the student learns, but a space where the practitioner educator also learns as he/she engages with the creative practice as well as the evolving educational practice.

Since ancient Greece the separate roles of the pedagogue and teacher have collided, resulting at present in a teacher dominant construct. The collision happened during a period driven by industrial, modernist and capitalist and unethical self-centred domination. Within the context of sustainable consciousness, the time might be at hand to forefront the pedagogue again; re-establishing a satisfactory teaching and learning environment that is ethically sensitive and accountable. Aristotle agrees, referring to “now time” (Sadler 1996) as a transition point between the past and the future, providing an ideal opportunity for action; because now matters. I am not arguing with Aristotle.

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# The perception of registered design protection in the South African Jewellery Industry

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## Abstract

*The aim of this paper is to examine the perception and validity of commercial design protection in the South African Jewellery Industry and to convey the general consensus regarding the registration of commercial designs. This exploratory study employs quantitative research and information was collated through a questionnaire that was distributed by the Jewellery Council of South Africa. The questionnaire gauged, inter alia, whether South African jewellers are aware of the Designs Act, the design registration process and which commercial designs are registered.*

*Over the years, it has become increasingly important for jewellery companies and individual designers to protect their original commercial jewellery designs from being reproduced. A company can create specific commercial designs to represent the image of their company, such as the case of Browns Jewellers' Protea collection and Shimansky's Millennium ring design. The most common practice to protect mass-produced commercial jewellery designs in South Africa is to register a design at the South African Design office. According to the section 1 (1) of the Designs Act No.195 of 1993 (South Africa), a commercial jewellery design can be registered as an "aesthetic design", which mainly refers to the visual protection of the pattern, shape, configuration or ornamentation of the article.*

*Some local jewellery companies have registered commercial designs according to the Designs Act (South Africa) and over 140 designs are currently recorded in the jewellery domain. Yet, such designs and other protected jewellery designs are still reproduced in South Africa. Conversely, many designers underestimate design protection and do not realize that designs are important intellectual property that is a valuable asset for any business.*

*The paper discusses the findings of the questionnaire and based on the results, the perception of commercial jewellery design registration in the Jewellery Industry becomes evident. These perceptions would be used as a guideline in the dissemination of information pertaining to design registration and would aid in a greater understanding and awareness of protected designs and the design registration process.*

**Keywords:** commercial jewellery, design registration

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## Introduction

On a global scale, the product of design industries, such as in the jewellery sector, could compete both with imported goods, as well as enhance export potential, if the proper incentives regarding design protection are in place (Reichman 1992, p. 284). This is confirmed by Schmidt (2005) who notes that design creates an "added value" to the highly competitive jewellery market and enables companies to create brand recognition through unique jewellery designs. In discussing the impact of the global recession and the high cost of precious metals on commercial jewellery designs, Snyder (2013) notes that consumers are leaning towards more unique designs and that jewellery designs need to conform to these consumer demands. In his study on consumer perceptions in the jewellery field, Jokinen (2011, pp. II, 21-23) reaffirms that the main drive in consumer behaviour is design, price and trust, where design outweighs the purchase decision.

With some local jewellery companies focusing on creating original commercial designs, the protection of designs become an increasingly important factor, as the exploitation of such designs, apart from being ethically unsound, can lead to a direct loss of income. However, the reproduction of original commercial jewellery designs is not only a local phenomenon. Weinmann (2011) notes that jewellers in Australia face the same problem as numerous designs are copied and comments on the naivety of jewellery designers regarding the protection of their designs. As a possible solution, Feder (cited in Weinmann 2011) recommends that the best protection for unique commercial jewellery designs would be the registration thereof.

Although design protection is discussed at length in the seminal works of Reichman (1983, 1992), Brown (1987), Magliocca (2003) and many others, the academic discourse on design protection specifically pertaining to South Africa and even the jewellery industry in general, is wanting. Prominent South African jewellery companies often employ intellectual property legal experts to assist them with design protection, but smaller companies and micro businesses, are possibly uninformed or limited in their knowledge or resources to ensure the protection of their unique commercial designs. Currently, there is no dissemination of this information in the Jewellery Industry and there is no indication whether South African jewellers are aware of design registration or what design registration protection entails.

As a means to assess this situation, questionnaires were distributed to the South African Jewellery Industry for two reasons; first, to gauge the perception of the industry regarding design protection and the design registration process, and second, to create awareness of these matters. The anonymity of the questionnaires encouraged an unbiased view from the industry, and as such, resulted in more credible responses from the participants. The findings of the questionnaires are conferred and possible solutions to assist the Jewellery Industry with design protection and design registration, are proposed.

## Conceptual and theoretical perspective of intellectual property protection in South Africa

'Intellectual property', defined by Sherwood (cited in Warwick 1999, p.3) as the product of ideas, inventions and creative expressions, is protected through various legalities and Acts. In South Africa, there are four structures that protect intellectual property, namely patents, copyright, trademarks and design registration. Although this paper will focus specifically on the design registration process, Magliocca (2003, pp. 846,867) notes that commercial art, such as jewellery can be also protected through the other three structures, which is briefly outlined.

Patenting is usually prescribed to protect an invention or very specific ideas that are innovative or have an industrial application (Raj 2012, p. 7). Patents protect conceptual features and are not often used to protect jewellery designs, unless the design includes an improved or newly developed technical component. In fact, Magliocca (2003, p. 851) explicitly notes that patents are "not suited for regulating [aesthetic] designs and present applicants with a high burden of proof".

Brown (1987, p. 1344) states that copyright protection has been developed through cases, regulations and statutes. Although most copyright Acts, including the South African *Copyright Act no. 98 of 1978*, provides protection for original artistic works and technical drawings, it does not protect the idea, or concept of the piece (Raj 2012, p. 6; Magliocca 2003, p. 854). Unlike patents, trademarks and registered designs, copyright is automatic once the article is created. Under section 1 (1) of the South African Copyright Act, jewellery articles are listed under "artistic works" and must be an original work produced by the author's own creativity and labour. Copyright infringements occur when the core identity of the article remains identifiable, even if the piece is aesthetically altered. The main problem with copyright is that it does not offer much protection for designs and that the originality of the design must be proven. Copyright is also not intended to protect mass-produced artistic works, specifically if articles, such as jewellery, are produced through an industrial process such as casting and stamping.



Trademarks protect a specific brand, unique name or symbol associated with a specific company or product. Jewellery designs can be protected through trademark registration, but the design must extend to the company's brand identification. Most fashion houses, such as Gucci, have trademark protection – as their logos are applied as design motifs in their accessories and jewellery collections. A jewellery company is also allowed to trademark a name or slogan related to a jewellery collection. A case in point is the Guardian Angel collection of the local jewellery company, Browns Jewellers. E Clark (2015, pers. Comm., 15 July), from the Legal Department of Browns Jewellers, elucidates that “before a collection [viz. Guardian Angel] can be trademarked a search in the relevant class must be completed to ensure that the name is available for use”. According to the *Trade Marks Act 194 of 1993* (South Africa) jewellery falls into Class 14 which is defined as “precious metals and their alloys and goods in precious metals or coated therewith, not included in other classes; jewellery, precious stones; including diamonds, horological and chronometric instruments”.

## Design registration from a legal context

For commercial protection, i.e. designs that will be mass-produced by an industrial process (usually over 50 copies of a specific design), the most common practice is to register the design. The registration of designs could either protect the aesthetic or functional aspect of an article. Jewellery designs and articles typically fall under ‘aesthetic design’ category, which refers to the shape, form, appearance, pattern, ornamentation and configuration of an article, or the combination thereof (Designs CIPC IP Online n.d.). According to section 14 (1a) of the Designs Act (South Africa), an aesthetic design can be registered provided it is new and not previously disclosed or used in South Africa, or distinctive, where the design is dissimilar to any design previously published, including the Internet.

Design registration only protects the form and visual appearance of the article from being copied. Section 20 of the Designs Act (South Africa) states that the registration of the design further protects the design from being manufactured or imported into South Africa for the purpose to be sold. A person is also not allowed to sell, hire or otherwise dispose of such an article; use or keep the design or article for the purpose of trade and authorize another person to sell, hire and otherwise dispose of such an article. According to section 22 (1) of the South African Designs Act, the protection of a registered aesthetic design is only fifteen years. Magliocca (2003, p. 847) notes that, compared to other forms of protection, design registration is limited because of this short protection period. However, because South Africa is a member of the Paris Convention, the protection of locally registered designs also extends to the countries which are co-signatories.

In addition, registered designs are grouped into 32 different classes, restricting the registration of the design to the other articles falling in the same class (Designs Act). Alternatively, according to section 15 (4) of the Designs Act (South Africa), a design can be registered in more than one class. Consequently, a registered design is protected in a much narrower and more specific scope than with a patent protection.

In order to register a design, photographs or drawings of the final design must be submitted and various views of the design must show the decorative elements of the design. Browns Jewellers only register their most important, signature collections such as the *Protea* and *Queen of My Heart* engagement rings (Clark, E. 2015, pers. Comm., 15 July). However, it is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that the design is new and does not infringe existing intellectual property rights.

Once the design is registered, it is advertised in the official journal and open to public inspection. All registered designs are listed electronically on the Companies and Intellectual Property Registration Office (CIPRO) website. However, registered jewellery designs are listed under various titles, which makes the search for a specific design problematic. On investigation, one design is listed under “jewels”, 60 under “adornment”, 67 under “jewellery”, 2 under “juwele”, 9 under “bracelets” and 7 under “necklaces (CIPC - Public design and patent search n.d.).

Design infringement is subjective and is decided by the courts, based on statutory provisions and precedent. There is no percentile difference stated between that of a reproduction and the registered design and prosecution can only happen if the copying is substantially identical. In discussing jewellery design infringement, contemporary jewellery designer, Geraldine Fenn (cited in Searle 2010) notes that “another designer can change the colour or material or dimensions without technically infringing the copyright”. This is supported by Magliocca (2003, p. 852) who agrees that design simply involved the rearrangement of elements into a new pattern, making the protection of a design difficult.

## Research methodology

In order to gauge the perception of the Jewellery Industry on design registration, the methodology used in this exploratory research was conducted through an online questionnaire. The questionnaire was emailed to the 191 members of the Jewellery Manufacturers Association of South Africa *via* the Jewellery Council of South Africa. The participants remained anonymous and had the opportunity to add additional comments to the questionnaire. The participation was voluntary and they were allowed to withdraw at any stage. Although survey response rates to email questionnaires are of a general concern, the response from the Jewellery Industry participants yielded an acceptable response rate for email surveys (Shih & Fan 2009, pp. 27, 31). This methodology was also applied as email survey was the fastest and most effective method to obtain data from participants all over the country.

The questionnaire was designed in order to establish the participant’s perception of design registration and subsequently structured into four sections. The first section obtained general data from the participants, specifically where their business is situated and how long they have been in the industry. The second section focused on the commercial jewellery design process and approach of the participants and the next section dealt specifically with the participants’ understanding of the design registration process. Proposed recommendations and the awareness of registered designs were gauged in the remainder of the questionnaire.

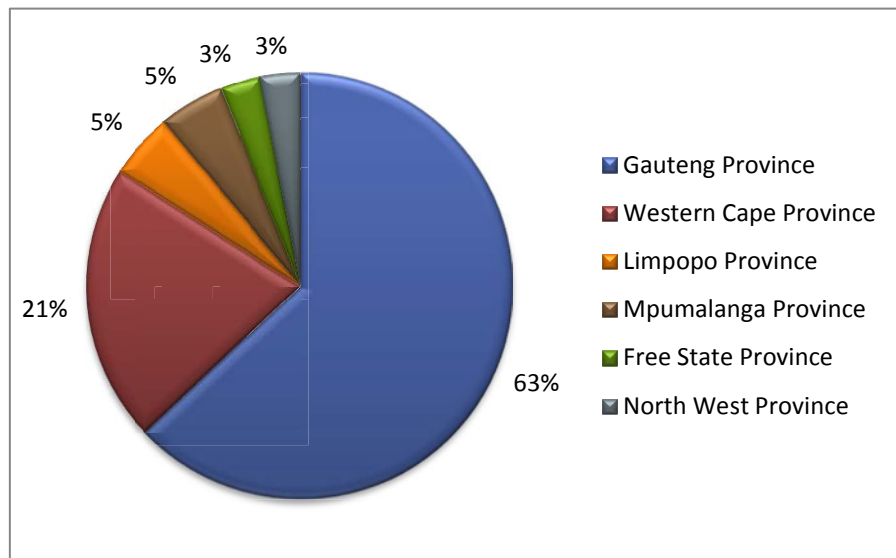
The data obtained from the questionnaires were translated into percentages, in a graph format, which visually illustrated the results of the various questions. This made the data easier to interpret and aided in the collation of all the information.

## Data presentation and analysis

### General information

The majority of the participants were based in Gauteng (63%), followed by the Western Cape (21%). The remainder of the participants were from the Limpopo, Mpumalanga, Free State and the North West provinces. This geographical distribution is seen in Figure 1. No questionnaires were received from Kwa-Zulu Natal or from the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape. Although not an ideal participation level, the general distribution of provinces, as well as the high percentage feedback from the Gauteng region, gave a general representation of the South African Jewellery Industry sector on a small scale.

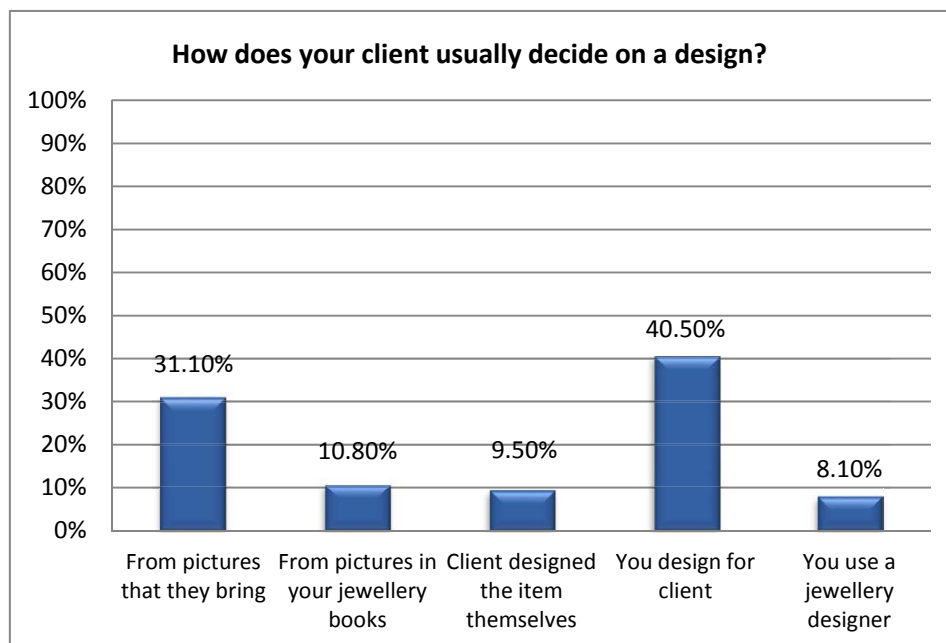
The participants were evenly distributed in terms of their experience in the Jewellery Industry. Although there was no dominant section in this question, the majority of the participants were in the industry for over 20 years (28.2%). This even cross-section of participants’ experience, gave the study a good general consensus regarding the knowledge and perceptions of the industry.



**Figure 1: The geographical location of the participants.**

### Commercial jewellery design process and approach

Before gauging the participants' perception of commercial design registration, it is first necessary to understand the process in which the participants designed for their clients, and how important they viewed unique commercial jewellery designs. Devon and Van de Poel (2004, p. 466) notes that decision-making in design are made by various stakeholders, such as the project leader, the design team, the client, or a combination of people. This was taken into consideration, and, as seen in Figure 2, various approaches to design were asked. Most participants chose more than one method, and one participant noted that the "client brings ideas in pictures, then I design something new based on pictures". This indicates that the client also has an input in the design in some cases.

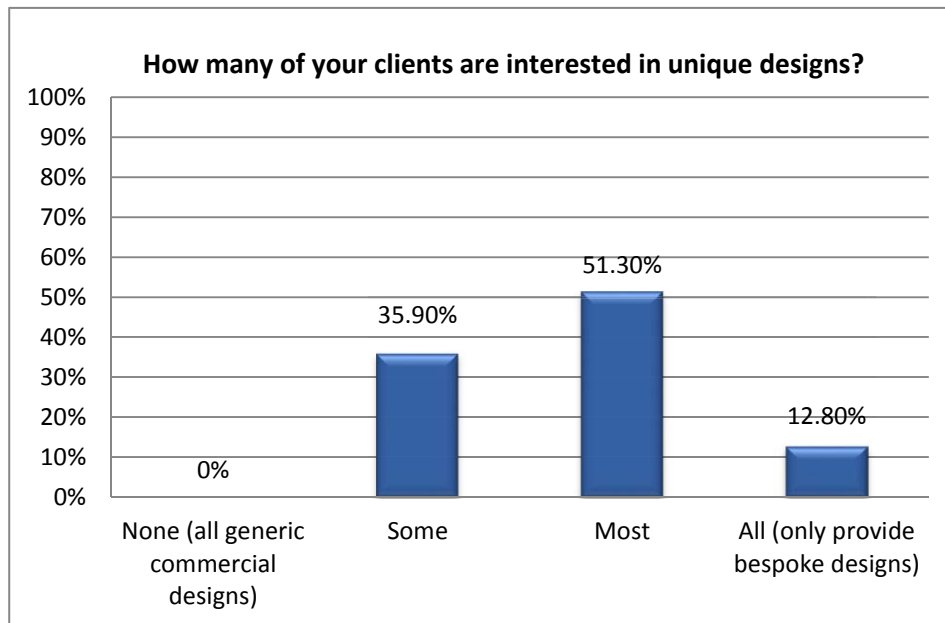


**Figure 2: Methods on how clients decide on a jewellery design.**

When confronted with an image that a customer presents (31.1% of the time, as seen in Figure 2), nearly half of the clients (47.5%) insist that the image be copied exactly. This is regardless of whether or not the jewellery design is protected through design registration or general copyright law. However, most participants (62.5%) noted that they alter a commercial design when presented with

an image of a jewellery piece, 27.5% indicated that they sometimes do and 10% indicated that they do not alter the design. This demonstrates that the client has some control over the direct copy of the jewellery design, although most industry members try to alter the design.

Figure 2 also indicates that unique jewellery designs are created through the client (9.5%), by the participants themselves (40.5%) and by the employment of a jewellery designer (8.1%). This automatically implies that unique commercial designs are created in nearly 60% of the time. One question asked if clients are interested in unique designs and the results, seen in Figure 3, seem to confirm that most clients do. According to the participants, over half of their clients preferred unique designs and even 12.8% of the participants provided only bespoke designs to their clients.

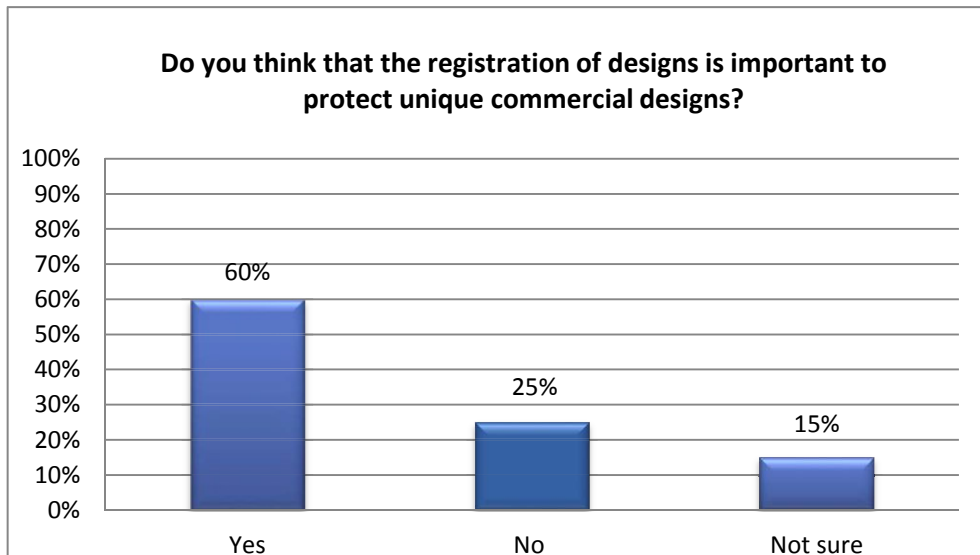


**Figure 3: The results from the participants indicating if their clients are interested in unique commercial designs.**

In reference to the demand for unique designs from the clients, when asked whether the participants consider unique commercial designs important to the trade, 82.5% agreed that it was important, 7.5% of the participants were not sure and 10% noted that it was not. This high percentile confirms that the demand for unique commercial designs is high, and that the protection of such designs become increasingly important.

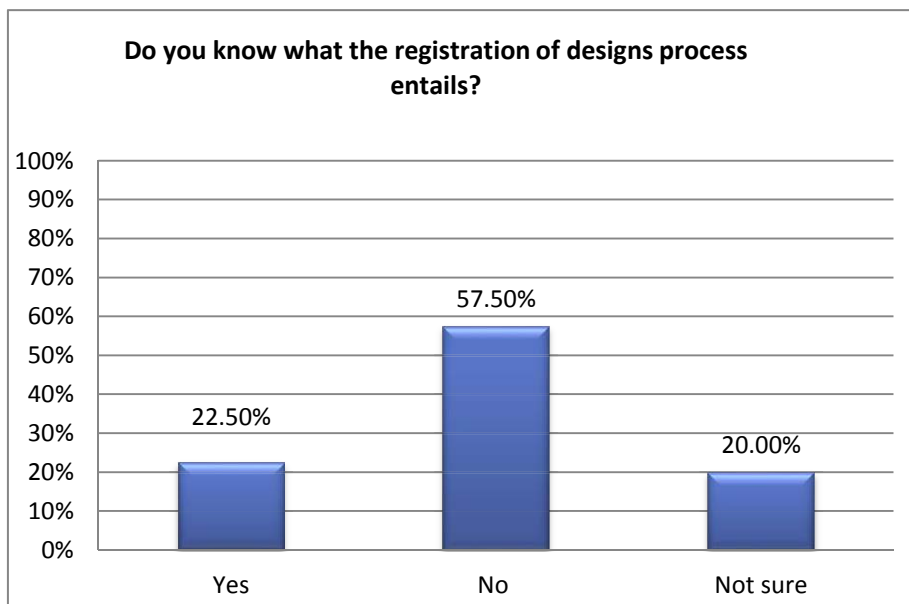
### Design registration process

This section of the questionnaire investigated whether the participants think that the protection of unique commercial designs are important, what the registration of designs entail and their knowledge of designs registered currently in South Africa. Figure 4 shows the results when the participants were asked if they think that the registration of designs is important to protect unique commercial designs.



**Figure 4: The results showing that most of the participants thought that the registration of designs is important to protect unique commercial designs.**

The results show that most of the participants were in agreement that the registration of designs is important, opposed to 25% who did not agree. However, one participant noted that the registration process is “too complex and any part of a design can be changed”. When asked if they knew what the design registration entails, over half of the participants did not know and 20% were not sure (Figure 5). A participant also commented that the registration process is “far too complicated and expensive. We tried to register a design but ended up simply registering its name”. Another participant commented on the uniqueness of current registered designs, noting that “I don’t think it will be fair for a company to patent a classic design, or one that has been in Europe/USA a few years before – just because they are the first to patent it (in SA), doesn’t mean it is their design and therefore they have exclusive rights”. This concern was echoed by another participant, “Another problem is that you will once again have companies registering common designs like tension set rings and three stone rings and then claiming that they came up with the idea, giving it nice names”.



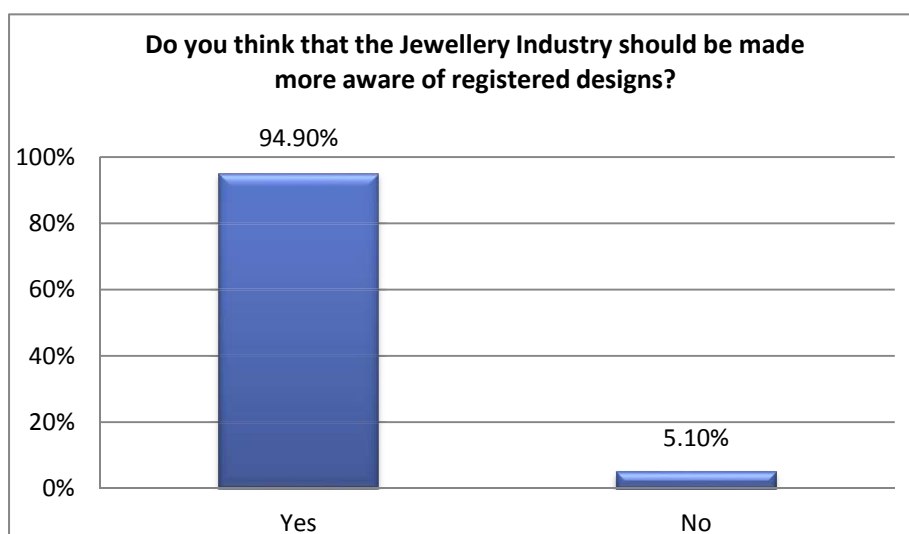
**Figure 5: The results of whether the participants are familiar with the design registration process.**

Other questions in this section shed light on jewellery designs that are registered and the awareness of the industry regarding these designs. Of the participants, only 5.1% currently have commercial designs registered with the South African Design Office. Fewer than half of the participants were familiar with any registered designs and 12.5% of the participants were not sure. However, when asked if the participant would copy a design if they knew it was registered, 87.5% stated “no” with the other 12.5% noting that they were not sure. No participants answered “yes” to this question. One participant commented that “I may be influenced by them”, indicating a reluctance to reproduce an existing registered design. This, together with the high number of participants that specified that they do not replicate a registered design, indicates a high level of professional ethics from the participants.

### Participant proposed recommendations

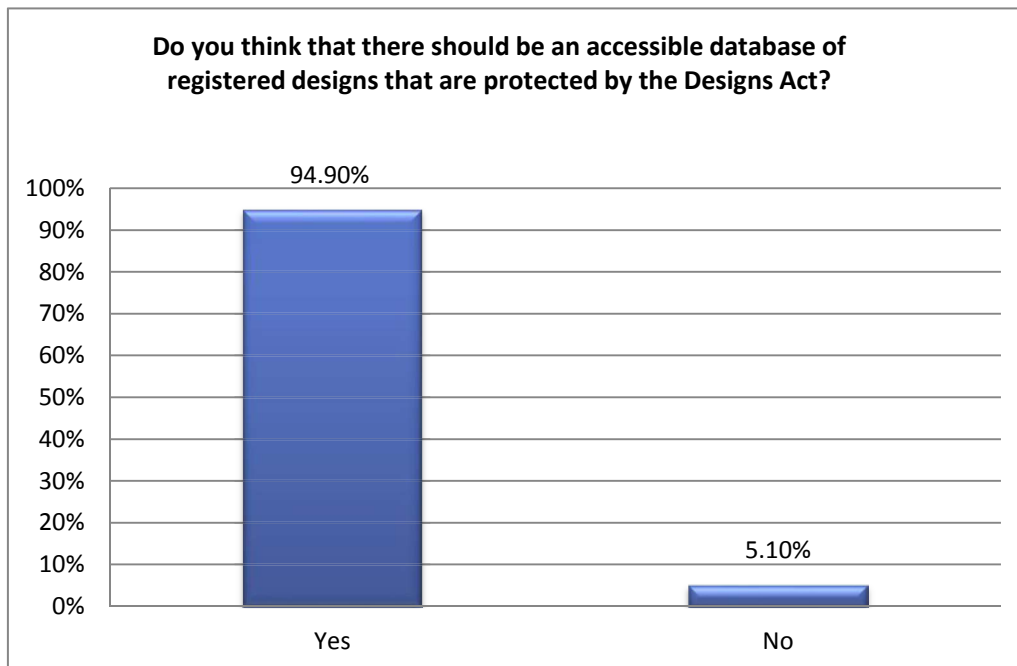
This section mainly gauged the participants’ perception regarding proposed measures that can be put in place as to make the industry, as well as the public, more aware of registered designs. The first questions dealt with the current knowledge of the design registration process. When asked if they would like to know more about the design registration process and design protection, the majority of the participants agreed and 72.5% of the participants further showed interest in having their unique commercial designs registered.

When referring to Figure 6, it is evident that nearly all of the participants agreed that the Jewellery Industry should be made more aware of registered designs. One participant commented on the importance of this awareness: “They have to be [made aware] otherwise who will know. I have seen numerous ring designs of our protea, all very similar”. Nearly the same response was echoed when the participants were asked whether the Public should also be made more aware of jewellery designs that are protected, although a participant commented that “it is a very complex issue because of marginal differences”. Another participant noted that “We should find a way to educate the public and especially the industry so that they would not want to make someone else’s designs, but rather take pride in doing their own designs”. The high demand could relate to the predicament jewellers face when a client insists on the reproduction of a registered design (in reference to the 47.5% of clients that insist that a design be copied exactly as the original). Fenn (cited in Searle 2010) agrees with this sentiment and states that “I think ultimately the public needs to be educated enough that they can spot a copied piece of design and care enough about originality not to buy it”. Fenn adds that the media should also play a role in educating the public about local original design which should help reduce the need to copy existing designs.



**Figure 6: The graph shows that nearly all the participants agree that the Jewellery Industry should be made more aware of registered designs that are protected by the Designs Act.**

In conjunction with the aforementioned results, the creation of a registered jewellery design database was proposed. Once again, nearly all of the participants agreed that this database would be beneficial to the Jewellery Industry (Figure 7). A total of 89.7% of the participants also agreed that this proposed database should display images of registered designs. The creation of a database is supported by Magliocca (2003, p. 886) who notes that the benefit of have a dedicated registry of intellectual works is that other peers can note what has been done, and so avoid duplication. However, one participant cautioned that “I think that it should be irrelevant whether or not a design is registered, it is protected by copyright. It becomes a problem, when something is not on the design database, many might think that it is okay to copy the design because it is not registered, forgetting about copyright”.



**Figure 7: The majority of the participants agree that there should be an accessible database of registered designs that are protected by the Designs Act.**

## Conclusion

Design registration offers protection to the industry as a whole and should be considered vital in the growth of the industry, as it was developed to support the increase of new products, create competition and to stimulate economic development. Although other forms of intellectual property protection exists, this paper mainly focused on design registration, as it is mainly applied in the protection of mass-produced commercial designs. The main aim of the paper was to gauge the perception of design registration in the Jewellery Industry, as an attempt to raise awareness on the process and on the companies and individuals who have registered designs according to the Designs Act (South Africa).

Although the low response rate can be seen as a limitation of the study, the questionnaires did give a clear indication of the Jewellery Industry’s perception regarding design registration. The comments added by some participants also indicated that there was a need for a platform to voice opinions on the matter.

The results of the questionnaire show that various approaches to design are applied in the Jewellery Industry. One of these approaches includes the client presenting an images of a commercial design to an industry member. This creates an ethical dilemma as in some insitences, a direct representation is demanded from the client, thus creating potential design infringement by the industry member. Nonetheless, the participants noted that unique designs were regularly created

for their clients and the overall perception showed that unique commercial designs were considered important by the participants, as well as the majority of their clients.

Central themes emerged in the answers of the participants with regard to the protection of unique designs and the design registration process. Although pragmatic considerations must be given before a design can be registered, the responses indicated that most participants agreed that the registration of unique designs were important in the Jewellery Industry. Although concerns were raised regarding the uniqueness of certain registered designs, the overwhelming majority of the participants stated that they would not copy a registered design.

It also became clear that more information regarding design registration was found wanting by the participants. This leads to the suggestion to develop of a database, which could be accessible to members of the Jewellery Industry. Because designs form part of the public domain, the protection thereof is often overlooked. Also, accountability rests on the public, the majority of the participants agreed that the database should also be accessible to the Public.

It is important to ensure that the South African Jewellery Industry is informed on design registration, and this responsibility lies with various role-players within the industry. The perceptions of the Jewellery Industry regarding design registration indicated that the protection of designs is an important ethical obligation and is the responsibility of both the industry, as well as the public to uphold.

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#### **Legislation**

*Copyright Act No. 98 of 1978* (South Africa).

*Designs Act No. 195 of 1993* (South Africa).

*Trade Marks Act 194 of 1993* (South Africa).

# Corporate social responsibility: An exploration of initiatives in clothing brands

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## Abstract

*Ethics and accountability in design appear to have increased momentum as individuals and corporations are increasingly conscious of the detrimental implications of immoral business practices. The accountability and responsibility of both individuals and organisations are significant to business practice. This has become increasingly apparent due to the role business must play if humanity and the environment are to thrive in future. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is mounting in emphasis within corporations, as identified through various bodies of research. This paper positions ethics and accountability in design practice from the lens of CSR initiatives.*

*CSR is a corporation's level of focus on the wellbeing of its employees, society and contributions to charitable causes. Many clothing corporations strive for a CSR stance as research shows that CSR adds value to a corporation's image and brand. Research suggests that the reputation of clothing brands, impacted by their CSR initiatives, or lack thereof, could subsequently affect the stakeholders' level of trust in a corporation. This view fortified the proclamation of CSR disclosures, which enables the public to follow the CSR initiatives of clothing brands.*

*As part of a Magister Technologia (MTech) study in Fashion Design which focuses on the role of branding in corporate social responsibility, this paper aims to draw on relevant literature grounded in CSR to contextualise three South African clothing brands and their CSR initiatives. The authors begin with a theoretical positioning of the stakeholder theory and explore the notion of CSR. The stakeholder theory emerges as a means to understand the motivating factors of CSR activities in organizations. The paper then shifts to conceptually analysing the three South African clothing brands and their CSR initiatives as a means to potentially gain a broader perspective on CSR within a South African context. The authors adopt a desktop methodology, to review the stakeholder theory, define CSR and explore the CSR initiatives of three South African clothing brands. This paper contributes to the overarching themes of ethics and accountability in design practice given the scope of CSR initiatives of the three selected South African cases.*

**Keywords:** *Corporate social responsibility; clothing brands; CSR initiatives*

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## Introduction

Ethics and accountability in design appear to have gained momentum as individuals and corporations are conscious of the implications of immoral business practices. The obligation, moral principle, accountability and responsible actions of both individuals and organisations are significant to business practice and humanity. Corporate social responsibility (CSR), a position of ethics and accountability in design practice, appears to be mounting in emphasis.

CSR concerns the actions, contributions and influences of corporations in bringing about global change and social development (Dahlsrud 2008, McElhaney 2009). Owazuaka and Obinna (2014, p. 221) describe CSR as the continued obligation put forward by a company to "behave ethically and to contribute to economic development while improving the quality of life of the workforce and their families as well as of the local community and society at large". CSR is applicable to various

categories, namely, the environment; programs for affirmative action; equal employment opportunity policies; community development; product safety; policies toward South Africa; energy policies and social responsibility disclosure (Roberts 1992; Pomeroy & Dolnicar 2007).

Edward Freeman (cited in Laplume, Sonpar & Litz 2008; Stieb 2009) posited the stakeholder theory in 1984. The stakeholder theory is a means to understand what or who the motivating factors are behind CSR activities within an organization (Freeman 1984; Roberts 1992; Campbell 2007). The term “stakeholder” is defined as “any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of an organization’s purpose” (Freeman 1984, p. 53; Campbell 2007, p. 947). Freeman (1984, p. 54) argues that organisations that neither recognize their stakeholders, nor take into account the influence of these stakeholders, will ultimately jeopardise the corporation’s ability to deal with the concerns of stakeholders.

The stakeholder theory is three-tiered. The first level focuses on the company’s attempt to make a favourable impression on and build strong relationships with its stakeholders via socially responsible endeavours (Roberts 1992; Babatunde & Akinboboye 2013). The second level foregrounds the aim of a corporation’s management strategy to tactically position itself through active involvement with socially responsible endeavours (Roberts 1992; Basu & Palazzo 2008). The third level relates to the company’s financial standpoint. A company should provide evidence, to investors and stakeholders, of sound economic positioning to contribute to social responsibility (Tsoutsoura 2004; Campbell 2007). McWilliams and Siegal (2001:120) presume that organisations that actively support CSR are more dependable.

CSR is applicable to any field including fashion practice. Literature foregrounds CSR initiatives of global clothing brands but a gap is evident within the South African context. Adopting a desktop method and forming part of a Magister Technologia (MTech) study in Fashion Design, this paper aims to conceptually analyse the CSR initiatives of three South African clothing brands namely, 46664 Fashion, Impahla Clothing and Earthchild. The conceptual analysis of the three South African Clothing brands follows. The paper then concludes with recommendations for further studies.

## 46664 Fashion

Established in Cape Town, South Africa, 46664 Fashion is a clothing brand that positions itself in CSR and ethics (46664 Fashion 2015). The CSR stance of 46664 Fashion is based on the iconic inspiration and values of the late former South African president, Nelson Mandela (De Kock, n.d.).

The prison number 46664 was allocated to Nelson Mandela in 1964 upon his incarceration at the Robben Island prison facility in Cape Town (Cohen & Battersby 2009; 46664: Global Campaign for Change n.d.). In 2002, Mr Mandela authorised the use of the number 46664 as the name of a campaign to create awareness for the human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) and acquired immune deficiency syndrome (AIDS) epidemic (Hoon 2005; Cohen & Battersby 2009; 46664: Global Campaign for Change n.d.). The death of the former president’s son Makgatho Lewanika Mandela as a result of HIV/AIDS led to the emergence of the 46664 HIV/AIDS campaign (Parker 2014, p. 30). The loss of Mr Mandela’s son was described as “the most poignant moment of his plight in raising awareness [of HIV AIDS]” (Parker 2014, p. 30).

To position the 46664 campaign on a global platform, musical performances by notable artists such as the Eurythmics, Bono and Beyoncé were staged in South Africa and in other countries, such as Spain, Norway and the United Kingdom (Brownell 2003; Cohen & Battersby 2009). Fundraising for the 46664 HIV and AIDS campaign served as the core goal of these performances (Brownell 2003; Cohen & Battersby 2009). The audience of these performances were encouraged to make a financial pledge and a number of celebrities responded favourably in support of the 46664 HIV and AIDS campaign (Brownell 2003; Cohen & Battersby 2009). The 46664 HIV and AIDS campaign resulted in the development of the 46664 Fashion label as a means to contribute financially to the 46664 campaign (46664 FAQs 2011; Brady 2012).

The 46664 Foundation collaborated with Brand ID, a brand development house, and Deneb, an investment company, to develop the 46664 Fashion label in 2012 (46664 2011; Brady 2012; 46664 2015). Based on the vision and philosophy of the 46664 Foundation, Brand ID were selected as preferred partners (46664 2011; Brady 2012). In 2012, the 46664 Fashion label was launched to generate additional revenue for the 46664 Foundation and to promote the philanthropic philosophies of its founder, late former president Mandela (46664: Global campaign for change n.d.). Approximately 7% to 9% of the revenue generated from sales of the 46664 clothing is donated to the 46664 Foundation (46664: Global campaign for change n.d.).

46664 Fashion produces trendy clothing discernible by its design, quality, and its imprinted quotations and phrases by late former president Mandela (Mandela's 46664 clothing line debuts 2011). Figure 1 illustrates the logo of 46664 Fashion as distinguished by a hand, known as the 'hand of Africa' symbol (Mandela's 46664 clothing line debuts 2011). The symbol of the hand resonates with the notion of hope in Africa, conveying the message or intention of 46664 Fashion (Impressions of Africa n.d.).



**Figure 2: 46664, it's in our hands logo (46664 Fashion 2015)**

When 46664 Fashion was launched in 2012, the designers in the clothing label included the design director and head of men's wear, Chris Vogelpoel; head of woman's wear, Barbara Tosalli; and South African designer Craig Native, head of T-shirt design (46664 FAQs 2011). 46664 Fashion manufactures 60% of the clothing locally and 40% in Mauritius, however the company ultimately intends to manufacture 100% in South Africa (De Kock n.d.). This intention is driven by the desire for the brand to position itself as a South African fashion label with locally manufactured and distributed products. Secondly, the intention is to place South Africa as a thriving fashion hub in the globally competitive fashion industry.

Taking into consideration that their clothing is manufactured both locally and internationally, 46664 Fashion endeavours to ensure that ethical working practices and legislature are implemented (46664 Fashion n.d.). Ethical working practices remain an imperative ethos of the 46664 Fashion brand to ensure social responsibility with the application of ethical codes in manufacturing practices (46664 Fashion 2015).

### **CSR initiatives of 46664 Fashion**

46664 Fashion aims to fund many charities and projects. In 2012, 46664 Fashion invested in the Mandela Day Library Project by funding three libraries for under-privileged schools in South Africa (Brady 2012). Additionally, in 2014, 46664 Fashion supported two Cape Town-based children's homes with the intention of continued support (46664 Fashion 2015).

The late former president, Mr Nelson Mandela, stated that "children are the rock on which our future is built" and believed that education should be accessible to all (Cohen & Battersby 2009, p. 217). With this value in mind, 46664 Fashion aspires to make societal contributions to the wellbeing and education of children in South Africa. In another socially responsible initiative, 46664 Fashion supports the 20 Degrees South Run (46664 Fashion 2015). This is an expedition which crosses 3000

kilometres of Africa from the West to the East Coast (O’Hanlon n.d.). The 20 Degrees South Run aims to raise awareness about the shortage of clean water in Africa and the diminishing numbers of Sub-Saharan elephants (O’Hanlon n.d.). These CSR initiatives of 46664 Fashion aims to promote sustainability within the continent of Africa (46664 Fashion 2015). 46664 Fashion continues to expand its CSR position with international partnerships. At the beginning of 2015, 46664 Fashion announced its collaboration with the American fashion brand, Gap (Gap 2015; 46664 Fashion 2015). This collaboration permitted Gap to sell the 46664 clothing online and donate a portion of the revenue to the Nelson Mandela Children’s Fund (Gap 2015; 46664 Fashion 2015). Moreover, Gap made a \$100 000 donation to the Nelson Mandela Children’s Hospital (Gap 2015; 46664 Fashion 2015). The collaboration between Gap and 46664 Fashion aims at increasing the 46664 Fashion brand’s awareness and vision on a global platform (Gap 2015; 46664 Fashion 2015). In an interview with a member of 46664, the authors established that 46664 Fashion will be available for consumer purchase at Gap stores in the United States in 2016.

## Impahla Clothing

In 2004, William Hughes, a Zimbabwean immigrant, relocated to Cape Town, South Africa and discovered a Cape Town-based t-shirt manufacturer on the brink of closure (Kaye 2010; Hardisty 2015). He purchased this corporation along with the existing staff, which resulted in the launch of Impahla Clothing in 2004 (Kaye 2010; Hardisty 2015).

Within the first year, Impahla Clothing began manufacturing sportswear for clothing brands such as Puma, Adidas, New Balance, Levis, and Cape Union Mart, and subsequently for Asics and BLK (Kaye 2010; Hardisty 2015). For the 2010 FIFA World Cup, Impahla clothing, sponsored by Puma, manufactured the soccer team kits for four African countries namely, Ghana, Algeria, Ivory Coast and Cameroon (Kaye 2010). In 2012, Impahla Clothing capitalized on an opportunity to manufacture socks and merge with textile manufacturer Tomotex, thus establishing a textile division at Impahla Clothing (Hardisty 2015). As a result of the incorporation of a textile division, the products manufactured by Impahla Clothing largely contain cotton-based and polyester textiles, and they import other textiles (Hardisty 2015). Impahla Clothing (cited in Hardisty 2015) states that they strive to import excellent quality textiles and trims that are not harmful to the wearer.

### Impahla Clothing’s CSR initiatives

In 2006, Puma, a major client of Impahla Clothing, issued a mandate to its manufacturers and corporations to practice “transparency in the supply chain” (Kaye 2010). Impahla Clothing responded to this mandate in a two-fold manner. Firstly, they adopted a sustainable business strategy and secondly released sustainability reports as a means to promote transparency in their supply chains (Hardisty 2010; Kaye 2010; Kaye 2013).

William Hughes affirms that the dedicated team strives to align to the vision of the company and best practice regarding transparency in supply chain (Hardisty 2010; The story of Impahla Clothing 2015). He takes on the position that supporting the values of respect, needs and human rights of employees is of utmost importance (Hardisty 2010; Kaye 2010; The story of Impahla Clothing 2015). The enforcement of labour laws at Impahla clothing coupled with above national employee remuneration has resulted in an employee growth of 390% between 2005 and 2012 (Hardisty 2010; Kaye 2010; The story of Impahla Clothing 2015). Even though labour charges from subcontracting neighbouring countries were substantially cheaper, Impahla Clothing opted to utilise local subcontractors (Rea 2009; Hardisty 2015). William Hughes (cited in Rea 2009; Hardisty 2015) states that indigenous available resources and skill sets should be utilised in support of local economic growth and development as a means for “responsible option”.

Impahla Clothing strives to address environmental challenges (Rea 2009). Since 2008, the clothing brand has achieved the status of South Africa’s first carbon neutral clothing manufacturer (Kaye 2010). Impahla Clothing acknowledged the emittance of large quantities of greenhouse gasses as a result of their manufacturing practices and subsequently planted indigenous trees to counteract this

situation (Rea 2009; The story of Impahla Clothing 2015). By 2012, the company planted 2374 trees across the Western Cape in areas such as schools and parks (Impahla Clothing – Textile manufacturer 2013).

In 2008, as part of the Western Cape’s administrative strategy, under the auspices of Premier Helen Zille, the 110% Green initiative was implemented in an attempt to make the province Africa’s Green Economic Hub (About 110% Green 2015). This initiative calls for 110% commitment for sustainable and green practices with the aim of encouraging the ethos of sustainability amongst corporations (About 110% Green 2015). A corporation that responds to this call is regarded as a “Flagship” and is listed on the 110% Green’s website (About 110% Green 2015). Impahla Clothing joined the 110% Green initiative and is recognised as one of the Flagships. Since then, Impahla Clothing has obtained financial support from the government through the Industrial Development Corporation in order to fulfil its pledge to sustainability (Impahla Clothing 2013; About 110% Green 2015; The Story of Impahla Clothing 2015). A total of 131 solar panels were installed at the premises of Impahla Clothing in 2012. Impahla Clothing aims for 25% of their energy usage through solar panels, but has currently only achieved 9.2% of the target (The story of Impahla Clothing 2015).

In light of the above, the business and marketing strategies and CSR ethos of Impahla Clothing is located within the scope of ethically sound working conditions, sustainable manufacturing practices and local economic development (Impahla Clothing – Textile manufacturer 2013; Kaye 2013). This is reinforced by William Hughes’ statement (cited in Rea 2009):

This is not a branding or PR [public relations] exercise for Impahla. We don't have the personnel, time or money to bother with such things. This is about repaying our debt to both society and the natural environment in which we have been given an opportunity to live and work. We MUST do the right thing. We MUST do whatever we can to ensure that we are operating our business in a manner that ensures a shared responsibility for all of us.

## Earthchild

Founded in 1992 by Jonathan Katz, Earthchild is a clothing brand specialising in children’s wear (Pitman 2011; Earthchild 2014). Jonathan Katz launched the Earthchild flagship store at the Victoria and Alfred Waterfront in Cape Town, and six months later opened a store at Hyde Park Shopping Centre in Gauteng (Pitman 2011). Following the success of Earthchild, Jonathan Katz founded Earthhaddict, focussing on quality leisurewear for women (Kew 2014).

According to Pitman (2011) and Earthchild (2014), the Earthchild clothing brand appears to assume a three-fold vision, namely; 1) the company manufactures quality clothing, 2) implements environmental and ethically sound manufacturing practices and transparent supply chain, 3) supports environmental responsibility through the use of 100% organic cotton in the majority of clothing products.

Earthchild clothing is primarily manufactured using organic cotton and natural fibres (Earthchild 2014; Ndweni 2014). Earthchild attempted to manufacture clothing in South Africa but this was found to be unsuccessful and the company now outsources to the Southern African regions of Madagascar and Mauritius (Pitman 2011). Jonathan Katz believes that manufacturing should remain within the borders of Southern African regions to contribute to and promote local productivity (Earthchild 2014).

### Earthchild’s CSR initiatives

Janna Kretzmar, a social anthropology and psychology graduate and a qualified yoga instructor, approached Jonathan Katz in 2006 to collaborate on a project aiming at social responsibility in rural areas (Pitman 2011; Janna Kretzmar Founder and Director EarthChild Project n.d.). Taking into consideration the CSR ethos, vision and ethical positioning of Earthchild, Jonathan Katz funded Kretzmar’s proposed venture entitled Earthchild Project (Pitman 2011; Earthchild 2014). Earthchild

Project supports underprivileged schools by providing extra mural activities such as yoga lessons, environmental education, hiking expeditions and sustainable vegetable gardening skills (Earthchild Project 2011; What We Do Earth Child Project 2015). The activities are aimed at educating and creating awareness amongst learners with regards to respect and responsibility for themselves as individuals, humanity and the environment at large (Kretzmar 2014; Earthchild Project 2014). In 2008, the Earthchild Project, as the selected community project making a positive impact to society, was the recipient of a R750 000 donation put forward by the Airports Company South Africa and Cape Town International Airport (Developing our communities 2008: ACSA Company profile n.d.). The Earthchild project currently works with eight schools in Cape Town but managed to secure further sponsors and donors due to its recognised CSR initiatives (Our Donors Earthchild Project 2015).

In 2011, Seane Corn, a qualified celebrity yoga instructor, and Suzanne Sterling, founders of the 'Off the Mat, Into the World' (OTM) project which aims to combine yoga with activism, recognised the Earthchild Project as an investment opportunity (Earthchild Project and yoga 2011). OTM donated \$20 000 to Earthchild Project to build a 10m x 7m classroom at Sakumlandela Primary School in Khayelitsha, Cape Town, for yoga and life-skills lessons (Earthchild Project and yoga 2011).

The growing success and recognition of Earthchild Project's positive CSR initiatives paved the way for iCAN, an environmentally conscious team developed under the Earthchild brand (Community Projects and Youth Programs 2014). The philosophy and motto "iCAN make a difference" aligns with the Earthchild brand of environmental and social change through an ethos of ethical consciousness and sustainability (Community Projects and Youth Programs 2014).

The iCAN team, comprising employees from Earthchild, facilitates socially and environmentally responsible initiatives within communities (Earthchild 2014). The iCAN team assumes additional projects such as beach clean-ups and the Santa Shoebox initiative (iCAN beach cleanup 2014; iCAN team Santa Shoebox 2014). For the Santa Shoebox project, the iCAN team packages and distributes shoeboxes with gifts and daily necessities to underprivileged communities during the Christmas period (iCAN beach cleanup 2014; iCAN team Santa Shoebox 2014).

In 2014 Truworths, one of South Africa's apparel and accessories retailers, announced its purchase of the Earthchild brand (Kew 2014; Murad 2014; Ndweni 2014; Burmeister 2014). In 2015, this purchase was finalised and evident on Earthchild's website (Earthchild 2015). Truworths stated that the purchase of Earthchild was to enhance their children's wear department (Kew 2014; Murad 2014; Ndweni 2014).

## Conclusion

Corporate social responsibility is a position of ethics and accountability in design practice that appears to be gaining increased momentum in the clothing sector. This manifests in the obligation, moral principle, accountability and responsible actions of both individuals and organisations. This paper set out to conceptually analyse the CSR initiatives of three South African clothing brands namely, 46664 Fashion, Impahla Clothing and Earthchild.

The conceptual analysis describes how three South African clothing brands are engaging in CSR initiatives. Common CSR threads are evident amongst these three South African clothing brands. These include societal contributions, education, environmental and economic sustainability, ethical business strategies and transparency in supply chain. Despite this, the authors recommend further research to compare the conceptual analysis with empirical data in relation to the CSR initiatives of these three clothing brands. Further research in CSR may add value to the scope of ethics and accountability in fashion design practice. Truworths' acquisition of the Earthchild brand may also serve as an area of further research to explore whether Truworths maintains the social responsibility initiatives started by Earthchild.

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# OgilvyEarth: is this what a future communications agency looks like?

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Red and Yellow School of Logic and Magic

## Abstract

Viktor Papanek, in his seminal book about ethics and design, *Design for the Real World: Human Ecology and Social Change* (1971, revised 1984) declares that designers share responsibility for humankind's environmental mistakes, by all the products and tools that they have sold and created, either by bad design or by turning a blind eye (1984, p. 56). He is very critical of design that only measures its success against market growth. He talks for example about designers who create – and then win industry awards for – beautiful intricate packaging in order to sell what he calls ‘worthless’ goods at inflated prices (1984, p. 223). However harsh this may sound, the truth is that the definition of an advertising agency is that they offer a service: that of creating, planning, and handling advertising and other forms of promotion for its clients and their products and services (BuisnessDictionary.com), and in the past this has mostly been done indiscriminately. But in recent years it can be argued that many advertising agencies have become more socially and environmentally aware and responsible. One such an agency is the WPP-owned Ogilvy group, which a couple of years ago launched OgilvyEarth, to focus on issues of sustainability. In 2009, just after the election of President Obama, OgilvyEarth published its white paper to launch what they call “The Dawn of the Age of Sustainability.” Their website claims that they “believe sustainability is the growth opportunity of the 21st century, but it’s not just about being green. It’s about aligning revenue goals with responsible operations, to create an organization that better serves all of its stakeholders, from shareholders and employees to customers and others influenced by its progress.”

This paper is a case study of the Cape Town branch of OgilvyEarth, based on personal interviews. The study will investigate whether they have been able to stand by their beliefs in their dealings with South African clients, what strategies they employ to drive the sustainability agenda and what their challenges and successes have been so far. The paper will use the OgilvyEarth case study as a framework to investigate the changing role of advertising and more specifically of a designer working in advertising today.

**Keywords:** OgilvyEarth; advertising; sustainability communication; goodvertising; sustainable communications; future advertising agency; changing role of designers; human-centered design.

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## Introduction

The research question posed in this paper is to ascertain if and how advertising agencies have changed because of the sustainability agenda, and more specifically to investigate if the role of the designer/art director in the agency has changed as well.

Traditionally advertising agencies have a notorious reputation in terms of ethics, selling customers products ranging from cigarettes to mouthwash *Mad Men*–style: indiscriminately (AMC TV series 2007 - 2015). As Nelson (2009, p.112) postulates, using the hypothetical example of a new product, a cellular phone for children: “So there is an ethical dilemma in the design and production of such devices and their dissemination by means of advertising. By and large designers look at such arguments but restrict themselves to the design of the phone and let others argue about the rights

and wrongs of it". In this context the role of the designer or art director is firstly to create a 'big idea' (mostly in conjunction with copywriters) to sell the product in a memorable way, and secondly to use their skills to make these commercial messages look appealing to consumers.

The current norm in advertising agencies is that the creative team (copywriter and art director) embarks on the ideation stage as a team, which is informed by marketing strategy compiled by brand strategist or agency planners. Consumer research forms a substantial part of what influences the strategy. Sean Duffy, a brand strategist, explains his role as such: *"Most brands have a compelling story to tell the world. But often the relevance and product advantages get obscured in the marketing process so that consumers never really understand. This can be because the brand focuses its communication on the wrong messages, because it uses the wrong communication channels, because it has lost touch with the real wants and needs of its target group, or all of the above"* (Firehead.net).

The First Things First manifesto, a manifesto in which concerned graphic designers declare what kind of work should be a priority, the first edition of which was published in 1964, and the second in 2000, (signed by a different set of designers), states the following: *"Designers who devote their efforts primarily to advertising, marketing and brand development are supporting, and implicitly endorsing, a mental environment so saturated with commercial messages that it is changing the very way citizen-consumers speak, think, feel, respond and interact."* These are damning words indeed, but what would a more ethical advertising or graphic design agency look like? London-based graphic designer, and one of the signatories of the First Things First manifesto, Lucienne Roberts (2007), writes that there are two ways in which designers can be more ethical: the first is the clients they work for, or, what the message is they promote on behalf of their client (ie. the compelling story). The second is in terms of production methods, e.g. using responsibly sourced paper, inks that are better for the environment, being less wasteful and so on.

The 2000 edition of the First Things First manifesto proclaims that graphic designers should focus their time on designing "cultural interventions, social marketing campaigns, books, magazines, exhibitions, educational tools, television programmes, films, charitable causes and other information design projects" i.e. better messages for more ethical causes and clients. In recent years it seems as if advertising and design agencies are moving towards more ethical storytelling, but is this at the request of their clients or of their own volition? Thomas Kolster's popular book 'Goodvertising' (2012) showcases many brand and advertising messages for social initiatives, charities, and so-called "good" products. (It is important to note that "good" can mean a wide range of things, such as healthy, organic, GMO-free, environmentally friendly, socially responsible, resourced according to fair trade methods, etc.)

Kolster says in the introduction of his book: "Advertising has got us neck-deep in today's climate and humanitarian crisis, but this just makes me more confident that advertising can get us out of it. Nobody knows consumers, brands and the market better than those of us in the advertising industry and we need to take on the challenge."

Mike Schalitt, former Chief Creative Director of advertising agency Net#work BBDO in South Africa was among the people interviewed in Kolster's book. He claims that Net#work BBDO "will never knowingly lie or create false promises, or deviously manipulate or pollute" (p. 117). The solar-powered billboard they created for their client, local financial banking services Nedbank, still provides power for a local school's kitchen. This billboard/power source, created in 2007, is an excellent example of a trend that Jason Xenopoulos, CEO of NativeVML explains in *Why Advertising Agencies are now creating products instead of advertising (2015)*, namely that advertising agencies are now creating useful products instead of advertising. He says that at the 2015 Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity there was a clear shift from creating "disruptive, innovative advertising" to "innovation in the business itself." He cites the example of Volvo producing a can of glow-in-the-dark spraypaint to keep cyclist safe at night instead of producing a traditional print

advertisement to market them. This is to give consumers something they would deem as having “real value”. He continues to explain that lines have also been blurred “between clients and agencies.” New York-based agency R/GA launched their own set of start-up businesses, and Crispin Porter & Bogusky want to “expand the role of creative agencies” and are developing and launching their own products. The directors of Crispin Porter & Bogusky explain that they handle product development, brand building and strategic direction at the agency, “but find partners for operations and business management”. They say that this new business model is in response “to the marginalisation of the ad industry’s craft and talent by the business world” (Swift 2015).

This shift in what advertising agencies do is not universally embraced: Thomas Kolster (2015, pers. comm., 10 August) recently tweeted: “The ad world is in an identity crisis: they’re storytellers, but want to be entrepreneurs: stick with your trade, Spielbergs Of Ad land” (@thomaskolster July 14). He says that advertising agencies aren’t entrepreneurs or start-ups and shouldn’t act as such (2015, pers. comm., 10 August).

What is clear is that many advertising agencies are not acting to the definition given to them by the dictionaries of the world any more, and that their role is changing.

## Research methodology

I used a case study, OgilvyEarth, the sustainability arm of the well-known advertising agency Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide, which has branches in most big cities. Firstly I analysed all the information they have made public on their website, as well as secondary information about them. Consequently I interviewed a designer and a strategist employed by them with their permission, specifically about the research questions posed at the beginning of the paper. I also had several informal conversations with various staff members of Ogilvy, who have asked to remain anonymous.

## OgilvyEarth – Global and local practices

OgilvyEarth was launched in 2009, as Ogilvy’s global sustainability practice which promises to help brands in what they call the ‘Age of Sustainability’. The widely accepted definition of sustainability or sustainable development as penned by the Brundtland Commission is as follows: “Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs,” (Our Common Future 1987, p. 16). The sustainability model that is most commonly used is the so-called Triple Bottom line or the three pillars of sustainability: to protect the environment, to strive for social equality, and towards economic growth, especially in the countries that need it most.

Ogilvy & Mather Worldwide is owned by the multi-national marketing communication services holding company WPP. WPP owns about 400 companies. Although it is not clear in public press exactly where OgilvyEarth fits into the corporate structure (it isn’t listed as an individual company on the WPP website (<<http://www.wpp.com/wpp/>>), the OgilvyEarth website calls themselves a ‘mash-up’ of sustainability marketing experts from various companies in the Ogilvy group including Ogilvy & Mather, OgilvyOne, Ogilvy Public Relations, OgilvyAction and OgilvyEntertainment (<<https://www.ogilvyearth.com/why-ogilvyearth/network/>>).

OgilvyEarth published a white paper titled: “2009: A pivotal year and the dawn of the Age of Sustainability” in which they proclaim that brands should make the most of the new sustainable economy using the services OgilvyEarth offers. The language in the white paper as suggested in the title verges on the evangelical: they refer to the ‘sustainable economy’ as a ‘new world order’ and Sir Martin Sorrell, the Chief Executive Officer of WPP calls it ‘the new industrial revolution’. He also states that the importance of economic opportunities in this ‘new age’ should be highlighted.

The paper states that joining the sustainability movement is a good idea because it is driving new wealth creation; and that sustainability is now ‘mainstream’ and is becoming a legislated reality.

They suggest that brands should 'own the conversation' by planning initiatives based on sustainability thinking; to 'lead' consumers on sustainability issues and gain their trust by being open and optimistic; to show consumers tangible and accessible paths to sustainability; and to do all of the above, as soon as possible. They also mention 'The Big Ideal' which is Ogilvy's trademarked strategic process. The 'Big Ideal' is described as a way to connect a brand's 'best self' to an 'emerging cultural context or insight' by using techniques such as completing the following sentence: "(Brand/company) \_\_\_\_\_ believes the world would be a better place if \_\_\_\_\_." (2010 <[https://assets.ogilvy.com/truffles\\_email/redpaper\\_june2010/The\\_Red\\_Papers-\\_What's\\_The\\_big\\_ideaL\\_Page.pdf](https://assets.ogilvy.com/truffles_email/redpaper_june2010/The_Red_Papers-_What's_The_big_ideaL_Page.pdf)>)

After studying the white paper, I started investigating the OgilvyEarth website. During the last six months in which I have accessed their website regularly, the same five case studies are listed. (<https://www.ogilvyearth.com/case-studies/hopenhagen/>). The first of the case studies is Hopenhagen, a 'climate movement' created for the 2009 UN Climate Change Conference (COP15) in Copenhagen. This seems to be the first project that OgilvyEarth completed using the tools and processes listed on their website, which will be explained later.

The next case study is the naming, brand identity and communication strategy they created for Coca-Cola's Plantbottle, a recyclable PET bottle made partially from plants. The third case study is for Dupont. The website describes how OgilvyEarth, together with Ogilvy Entertainment, created awareness about DuPont's involvement, using their new 'green' building technologies in rebuilding Greensburg in Kansas after a tornado destroyed it, creating America's first green town.

They also cite their work for the Environmental Defense Fund in New York, in which they commissioned artist Joshua Allen Harris to create polar bears from white plastic trash bags. The plastic bears are attached to air vents, and inflate as the subway rushes past underneath, and then slowly collapse afterwards. The message was "Ride Don't Drive" to encourage people to use public transport. A Public Service Announcement of this artwork was created and widely distributed. The last case study is for Qantas Airlines where they created the 'mybegreen' initiative to encourage Qantas employees to be more involved in the company's environmental programmes.

The website also states very specific processes and tools which help them to do business differently. The process is described in three steps: 'Discovery', (in-depth research into the brand's target audience, competitive brands, trends and company culture) from which insights are gained, 'DNA' (the ideas or solution phase) and 'Activation' (when the solutions and ideas are implemented). This is in essence the same process that agencies normally follow when receiving a client brief, and is a very similar process to that, for example, described in Ideo's field guide to human-centered design, called briefly 'Inspiration', 'Ideation' and 'Implementation'. This process is commonly referred to as design thinking.

The tools they list begin with a 'Landscape Audit' – to find out what is being said by news media about the areas of sustainability relating to the brand, then an 'Eco Audit' which is described as in-depth interviews with key stakeholders relating to sustainability and the brand in question which could lead to brand insights.

The next tool is the 'Three Pillar Employee Survey' where the organisation's employees are engaged around the three pillars of sustainability, (environment, social and economic) which then should lead into a communications strategy. 'The Lab' is a workshop in which a sustainability-based vision is decided upon. 'Expert Network' is when leaders, (not employed by Ogilvy) in the respective area of sustainability are approached to help with the brand's challenges, 'IQ Mapping' occurs when key influences are identified to help with the organisation's entry into the sustainability conversation.

The last tool they cite is the 'Global Ogilvy Network' with which they collaborate depending on the challenge, for example with Ogilvy Entertainment when they created a short film about DuPont's involvement in rebuilding Greensburg. Again, the tools are not new per se, except for their focus on

the topic of sustainability. It does seem that, if these tools are used as per the description on the website, a thorough strategy of where a brand could potentially be more sustainable or communicate about their sustainability stories, could be created.

Locally OgilvyEarth launched in Cape Town, South Africa in 2010 and is currently trading out of the offices of another local Ogilvy subsidiary, Zoom Advertising. (<<http://www.zoomadvertising.co.za/services/>>). The Managing Director of OgilvyEarth Cape Town is also the Managing Director of Zoom Advertising. When OgilvyEarth Cape Town first launched, they published a hardcover book called 'The Conscious Industry' (Figure 1) which offers information about sustainability principles. The book was designed using a children's book aesthetic. An illustrated character represents a brand that comes to have a conscience after seeing all the destruction it has caused. During the course of this basic narrative, ideas are introduced including life cycle analysis, pollution, waste management, adherence to labour laws in order to prevent practices such as child labour, renewable resources, wasted wood & paper and more responsible packaging design. This book offers a concise and clear summary of basic sustainability practices. These hard cover books were distributed to Ogilvy's existing clients. It isn't clear what response this book garnered.



Figure 1: OgilvyEarth Cape Town hardcover book - 'The Conscious Industry'

The current list of clients bearing OgilvyEarth's name in Cape Town include the South African National Biodiversity Institute (SANBI), the Newborns Groote Schuur Trust, Volkswagen, WWF (The World Wide Fund for Nature), FairTrade, Endangered Wildlife Trust, Matlapeng Housing, and Sustainability Week. Some of these clients, such as Volkswagen and WPP, are also Ogilvy Worldwide's clients. Most of the clients listed are socially conscious, 'green' or sustainable in terms of what the business does already. It seems as if the 'green' agency attracts mostly clients who are inherently 'green' too.

In my interview with a senior designer at OgilvyEarth he explained to me that they mostly do work for clients who have already taken steps in the right direction (regarding 'green' issues), but that OgilvyEarth would have the function of telling their stories better, in a truthful and honest way. He believes that sustainability initiatives should come from the client side, and not from the agency's or designer's side of the relationship. (2015, pers. comm., 22 July).

When the senior designer was asked if he had had the opportunity to deliver more input in his clients' business (perhaps co-designing with them or educating them) he said, "Obviously we try and get our clients to work a certain way, using recyclable paper and sustainable resources." He also indicated to me that OgilvyEarth needed more clients, and that currently he still spends most of his time designing for Zoom Advertising clients (2015, pers. comm., 22 July).

The creative team consisting of a designer and copywriter recently created a promotion for OgilvyEarth in the hope of gaining more business for OgilvyEarth. They created a set of posters packaged together, each spoofing a brand category in which greenwashing is rife. (“Greenwashing is the practice of making an unsubstantiated or misleading claim about the environmental benefits of a product, service, technology or company practice, and can make a company seem more environmentally friendly than it really is.” *(WhatIs.com)*). The copy on the posters read: *“Need help backing up your sustainability claims? There’s more to being a sustainable brand than just claiming to be one, and although many brands are making great progress in this space, many still fall into the trap of making broad claims that discredit the work that they do. At OgilvyEarth our mission is to help brands communicate more authentically in the sustainability space so that they can truly affect change. Let Us Help You Tell A Better Sustainability Story For Your Brands.”* It is clear from this quote that the service that Ogilvy is offering is a “better sustainability story” (Figure 3 & 4).



**Figure 3: Series of posters developed by OgilvyEarth**



**Figure 4: Awareness poster by OgilvyEarth**

For the production of the direct mailer they used materials that were sustainably sourced. It was locally produced and printed on recycled materials, using vegetable and eco digital inks and other eco-friendly production techniques such as eliminating the use of glue. In addition the entire piece was completely biodegradable. The carbon footprint of the communication was offset using a company called Credible Carbon.

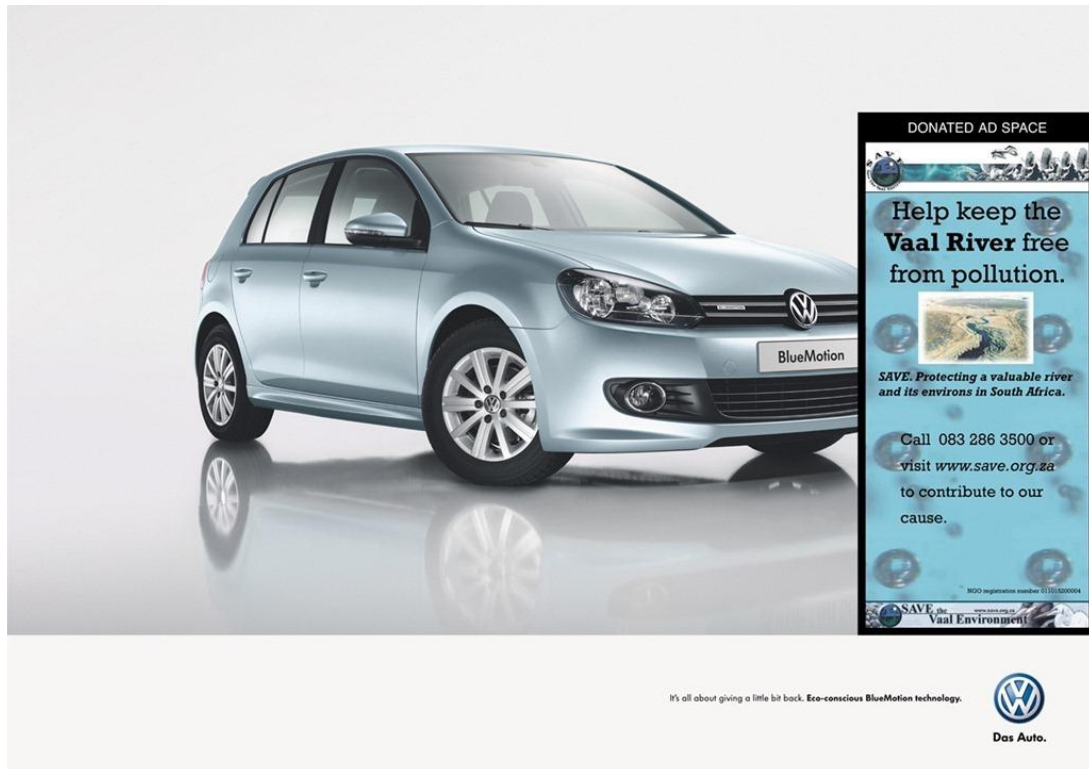
Ten or eleven of the poster sets were handed out to Ogilvy staff, in the hope that they would in turn pass on the OgilvyEarth message to their existing clients. In the senior designers opinion the promotion was not a success. He seems to think that some of the Ogilvy staff might have felt ‘attacked’ or criticised by these posters (2015, pers. comm., 22 July). When I asked various staff members at Ogilvy about the OgilvyEarth direct mailers, none of them had put the posters up, or even knew where the communication was. It seems evident that the staff at Ogilvy didn’t embrace the OgilvyEarth message, and weren’t aware of the eco-friendly production methods used for the piece, and therefore it is unlikely that the message was relayed to their clients.

When asking a few Creative Directors at Ogilvy about working with OgilvyEarth, they didn’t quite seem to understand exactly what they were offering. They added that many of their clients had their own sustainability initiatives, for example long-standing client Volkswagen and their Bluemotion technology, and that they were creating their own ‘goodvertising’ stories for these clients ‘anyway.’ They also mentioned their pro-bono clients such as the District Six Museum, the National Sea Rescue Institute, and The World Wildlife Fund.

Ogilvy art director Prabashan Pather and copywriter Sanjiv Mistry created a series of print advertisements for Volkswagen Bluemotion (Figure 5) in which their idea was to donate some of the advertising space they bought for the advertisement to a charity or cause that wouldn’t be able to



afford the advertising space themselves. The advertising campaign won a Black Eagle award, (2011, <<http://www.blogilvy.co.za/tag/bluemotion/>>) and is an example of using the ideation skills that agency creatives are famous for, to create a better message using a traditional media choice. Ogilvy also created an initiative called “Things to do in the dark” for the WWF to promote Earth Hour, by giving people a host of entertaining activities to do and events to attend in the dark (2013, <<http://www.blogilvy.co.za/tag/ogilvy-cape-town/>>). Both of these campaigns were executed for clients who are also on the OgilvyEarth client list. It is clear that Ogilvy Worldwide are telling “better sustainability stories” for their clients themselves. My personal deduction is that Ogilvy Worldwide creatives just don’t understand what OgilvyEarth would offer to clients that they aren’t already doing themselves.



**Figure 5: Prabashan Pather and Sanjiv Mistry Volkswagen Bluemotion Donated AD Space**

Designing for sustainable change is not just about creating pro-bono work, or advertising clients’ Corporate Social Investment initiatives. Those stories have to be told, but in my opinion sustainable design is fundamentally about understanding all aspects of a client’s business, encouraging them to be transparent, and possibly inputting on other levels of their business and product life cycles, and not just on the promotion side. In other words, using design thinking to identify problems and offer possible solutions. As Hannah Jones of Nike Sustainable Business and Innovation states: “It goes beyond collaborating with the marketing department – sustainable business and innovation is integrated into every aspect of the business at Nike” (cited in Kolster 2012, p. 99).

### Is the role of designers and art directors in agencies changing?

Papanek (1972, p.151) says that “Frequently the designer will ‘discover’ the existence of a problem that no one had recognized, define it, and then attempt a solution”. Papanek was an industrial designer himself, but why can’t this statement be true for graphic designers and art directors working in advertising agencies as well?

Looking at specifically the tools described on the OgilvyEarth website, there is ample opportunity for designers to become more than ideators, storytellers and the persons that make communications aesthetically pleasing. Internationally much has been written about designers taking on the role of

initiators and authors (Wood 2007, p. 111), facilitators and co–designers together with both their target audience and their clients. In a telephonic interview with a director at OgilvyEarth in London, whose background is in marketing strategy, he confirmed that at this stage the Tools described on the OgilvyEarth website are the “ideal journey” they would like to take their clients on, and whenever the tools are being implemented, it would be by strategists such as himself.

He explained to me that the designers being involved in the research tools depended on the client and how much they are willing to financially invest in the process leading up to the ideation phase, and what their expectation of the role of the designers and the agency were. He also explained to me that the creative work that OgilvyEarth in London needed was at this stage still being executed by creative teams at Ogilvy Worldwide (pers. comm., 21 September). When I asked the senior designer in Cape Town (2015, pers. comm., 22 July) if they used the processes and tools listed on the OgilvyEarth website, he said that I should rather ask the OgilvyEarth strategist about them. The co-authors of Ogilvy’s ‘Big Ideal’, (2010) Colin Mitchell and John Shaw, are both planning directors. It does seem as if the strategists have been the main drivers of the sustainability communication processes at OgilvyEarth.

Yet in the internationally burgeoning field of service design the designer’s role in the process is crucial. In the seminal textbook for this emerging field “Service design thinking” (Schneider & Stickdorn 2011), the authors include graphic designers as an essential team members on the multi-disciplinary teams required to successfully design a new service. The role of both branding design and information design are crucial in explaining new concepts or systems to users. “Every kind of visual positioning in the branding of services and service organisations, needs the experience and expertise of professional designers” (Schneider & Stickdorn, p. 77). They make a case for graphic designers to be involved in the service design process from the very beginning, when strategy is being decided upon, and not just at the end when they have to make the ‘Implementation’ look good, as it seems is still the case in advertising. This is because of designers’ well developed visual imagination, good understanding of target markets (or ‘end users’ in service design terms), good mock-up, prototyping and visualising skills (Schneider & Stickdorn 2011, p. 78).

I believe that the problem also lies with the fact that designers are not confident enough, or lack the skills to assume these new roles required in design for sustainability. “Co-design requires designers to foster new skills. Designers must become or improve their abilities as enablers, catalysts, activists, facilitators, connectors, arbitrators, storytellers, visualizers and scenario setters.” (Chapman & Gant 2007, p. 47). In the Richardson report on Design and Sustainability compiled in 2005 for the UK Design Council, they clearly state that sustainability modules are not yet included in design schools curricula, (it might have changed since then) but there was also (at that stage) not much demand for these services. Their research determined that more than 30 skills were required to practice sustainable product design. Some of these skills (including facilitation skills, people-centered skills, knowledge of manufacturing techniques and understanding of material and environmental impacts) can also be translated into graphic design (Richardson, Irwin & Sherwin 2005, p.10). Currently, these are not the skills advertising agencies are looking for in the designers they hire, or skills that designers are trained in once they start working for OgilvyEarth for example.

## Conclusion

Fuad-Luke says that on issues of sustainability “designers lack skills, hold little influence with decision makers and receive inadequate support from business and government” (2007, p.26). This seems to be the case at agencies like OgilvyEarth, and therefore graphic designers are not in a position to solve problems that are more complex than telling a ‘better story’. At OgilvyEarth in Cape Town and in London, strategists and account planners seem to take the lead in terms of sustainability initiatives and have the skills to implement the tools described on the OgilvyEarth website, that really could be used effectively by both strategists and designers.

Graphic designers could be much more informed about the issues surrounding sustainability and what it actually entails, which would give them more confidence in contributing solutions beyond communication to their clients. Designers and art directors need more skills from educational institutions, and new ways of engaging with other specialists as well as with their clients, in order to change their function in advertising agencies.

At this stage good storytelling is being done by agencies about the changes for sustainability in their clients' businesses, however big or small. And even though any change for the better, no matter how small, is good, why not encourage clients or brands to make even bigger changes and help them in the facilitation thereof? As Chapman & Gant say " ...if you embrace consumerism then a role is set up for the designer as a facilitator of objects and experiences that through their existence stimulate and steer real sustainable progress" (2007, p.7).

Agencies like OgilvyEarth and Ogilvy Worldwide are well versed in the art of 'goodvertising' or telling their clients better stories, but agencies seem poised and ready to go further than storytelling. Clients are certainly more conscious of what they are promoting and the impacts thereof than in the *Mad Men* era, or even when the last First Things First manifesto was published in 2000, but could learn to expect more from their agencies and the creatives who work in them. But then creatives need to be equipped with the skills and knowledge in order to be prepared to go further than compelling storytelling.

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# Cultivating voice through personal manifesto-making – a strategy for developing accountability, ethics and integrity in tertiary design curricula

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## Abstract

*There has never been a better time for tertiary curricula to provide a learning framework for the development of personal as well as professional ethics and accountability. Research shows that tertiary education today should address the development and transformation of the self (Mezirow 2000), as a whole person with an individual voice (Covey 2004), towards producing self-determining graduates and civic-minded critical thinkers (Cadle 2011). However, teaching ethics and accountability in tertiary curricula presents challenges in a postmodern context. In the South African context, it would be unwise to prescribe an absolute set of ethics for individuals, rather curricula should engage the spirit of constitutional freedoms that demand a democratic and accountable practice.*

*World leaders such as Nelson Mandela have bestowed the highest responsibility of all on education. It is well understood that a certain type of education will generate a certain type of generation. Education must respond pro-actively to the challenge of supercomplexity (Barnett 2000). Self-aware, self-determining, responsible, creative (Jackson 2006) and critical citizens (Barnett 2000) is what a university education should foster, not only for the world of work, but also the world of being. To this end, if curricula engage students' life-world by validating their individual autonomy, values and beliefs, the development of authentic leaders (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber 2009) will ensue. In line with employing learning strategies that promote a more intrinsic (Davies & Reid, 2000), self-driven approach (Pink 2011), this paper outlines the merits of introducing the practice of personal manifestoing into design curricula, with the aim of facilitating opportunities for self-reflection (Schon 1983), aiming (Nelson and Stolterman 2012), personal development (Jackson 2006) and personal integrity required for authentic leadership.*

*I propose that cultivating and training the student's voice is key to meeting these outcomes. To this end, I will outline the concept of an individual voice as presented by Covey in his 8<sup>th</sup> habit. Furthermore, I propose that developing the voice can find expression in writing or designing a personal manifesto. The parallels will be explored, showing how they can work synergistically in an education environment.*

*It is worth understanding and explaining the function and evolution of manifestos (Danchev 2011) to appreciate the wisdom and effectiveness of appropriating the method and the culture towards personal development at a tertiary level. There is little research done on the theory of manifestoing, despite it being conspicuously present in the worlds of politics, leadership, corporate identity and commerce. The fact that it has become a staple ingredient for business and corporate entities calls for its counterpart in tertiary education. This however has not yet filtered down into tertiary design education in South Africa. In light of this lacuna, manifestoing is presented as a self-reflexive practice that meets outcomes for life-long learning, ethics and accountability (SAQA 2000). Parallels between branding and manifestos make it especially suitable for design students, as both require the formulation of a vision, character, values and personality.*

**Keywords:** curriculum development, moral knowledge, wisdom, voice, autonomy, ethics and accountability, desiderata, manifesto-making, benchmarking, whole person, authentic leadership, self-reflexivity, character

## Introduction

It has been claimed that universities are suffering from a lack of wisdom (Bitzer 2011) due to an overemphasis on knowledge production, economic responsiveness and exploitative/instrumental methodologies. In this scenario, industry-oriented productivity and skills-based pragmatism have ousted the more idealistic, humanitarian and holistic aims of classical education, such as liberation, critique and ethics. This has resulted in concerns that the “marketization and managerialism of HE ...and entrepreneurial forms of academic capitalism” have become “the current benchmark of institutional innovation” (Muller and Subotsky 2001, p. 173).

This research presents one way to counter this colonization of the curriculum by market values (Lockett 2011, p. 51) and introduce wiser learning opportunities into the curriculum, namely: to cultivate students’ voice by creating an educational culture and practice around manifesto-making. I argue that this strategy develops high levels of reflexivity and drives intrinsic motivation that enables learners to integrate their own values, ethics and social responsibility (CHE in Lockett 2001: 50) into the learning process. This creates a foundation for personal accountability and ethics and as such, it meets four of Barnett’s (2000) six purposes for higher education, namely democracy, self, critique and emancipation. Making manifestos is democratic because it honours individual ideals and values, it centers around the learner’s sense of self, it encourages critique by allowing learners to set up intrinsic and personally meaningful criteria for judging extrinsic scenarios, and it emancipates learners to freely choose a meaningful direction and personal vision for themselves and others. This paper proposes that if implemented wisely, manifesto-making should develop the well-rounded, self-reflexive, self-driven and accountable learner envisioned by global trends and national policies alike.

## Moral knowledge, character and consciousness raising

The quest to include personal development and self-reflexivity in tertiary design curricula is supported by cross-disciplinary research that asserts the need for cognitive criteria to be supplemented with moral knowledge, and consciousness-raising strategies. In order to understand the importance of this shift, educators can draw from numerous theoretical frameworks, such as Consciousness Studies (Russell 2007, Zohar 1999), Integral Theory (Wilbur 2000), the science of oneness (Hollick 2010), whole person theory (Covey 2004), and deep ecology (Naess in Fox 1990), all of which concur that human potential can only be fulfilled when body, mind, heart and spirit operate integrally. In the field of education giants like Sir Ken Robinson, Howard Gardner, Jack Mezirow, Paulo Freire and Norman Jackson have validated learner-centered pedagogies, introducing a rich pluralism, and an ethics of inclusivity, emancipation and personal agency in the form of studies on multiple intelligences, types of mind, learning styles, personal development, self-realisation and learner transformation. The types of thinking or ‘minds’ typically associated with the creative arts are increasingly being heralded as crucial tools for the new millennium, but it’s clear they need to be balanced with moral knowledge and wisdom.

## Right types of minds

This global trend in education, commerce and culture at large is identified by Pink (2005), Gardner (2009), Friedman (2005), Codrington (2008) and numerous others. Pink’s studies on right-brained competencies (2005) and intrinsic motivation (2011) are important sources, because they serve to highlight and correct entrenched biases toward left-brain skills by reviving flagging motivation levels with new opportunities for emotional and even spiritual self-expression, through developing right-brained aptitudes, such as imagination, play, inspiration and creativity. Pink (2000) re-positions right-brained aptitudes axiomatically in what he terms the conceptual age. In this context, he argues that while technology can increasingly simulate and execute typically left-brained aptitudes, the more uniquely human abilities to design, to play creatively, to act and think empathically, to synthesize

and symphonise, to seek and find fulfillment in purpose and meaning are fast becoming valuable human resources.

Gardner (2009, p. 10) applies a similar methodology in a pedagogical context. His seminal work on multiple intelligences is further developed as he outlines the five new types of minds that he believes must be cultivated in order for individuals to thrive, as well as tolerate and collaborate with one another in the new millennium. According to Gardner, disciplined, creating and synthesizing minds are primarily cognitive, while the respectful and ethical mind informs the human, moral sphere. Friedman (2005, p. 281-293) echoes Gardner's emphasis on synthesis, claiming that the skills that will be in demand in the new 'flat world', include synthesizing, orchestrating, collaborating, adapting, greening, localizing and personalizing. Codrington's studies in generational theory (2008) also re-iterate the relevance of Gardner's ethical mind, ascribing the following qualities and attitudes to Millennials "optimism, confidence, media & entertainment, tech savvy, overloaded, street smart, diversity, civic duty, ethical consumption, morality, global citizens."

Gardner (2009, p. 19) warns against the "sheer cultivation of cognitive capacities, in the absence of the human dimension" dismissing it as "a dubious undertaking." Cunliffe (in Rayment 2007, p. 92) agrees that skills, knowledge, cognition and traits are not sufficient in the fields of arts and design, and singles out wisdom as the determining factor in the ultimately quality and success of design. Pink similarly (2005) has argued that the right brained aptitudes of empathy and spirituality are necessary skills for the new conceptual age. The problem inherent in the arts education status quo remains that "the importance of ethics for optimizing the cognitive processes for thinking and creativity" has not been sufficiently addressed (Cunliff in Rayment 2007, p. 92). The danger of this is "that a person who has developed cognitively reliable habits of mind could use these for unethical ends. Equally high levels of creativity can serve unethical purposes" (Cunliff in Rayment 2007, p. 93). This brief cross-disciplinary overview of cultural and educational trends serves to remind one that while we celebrate the fact that creativity is gaining currency at a rapid rate, we should also seek to balance cognitive and creative genius with an ethical backbone.

However, ethics are deeply personal, so an ethical 'backbone' can only be developed from the inside out. This research is anchored in Covey (2004) conceptualisation of voice, what he calls the 8th habit. While the ultimate goal of consciousness-raising is collective ethical awareness directed towards manifesting and maintaining the well-being, equality and higher consciousness of communities, the starting point is, as it has arguably always been, squarely placed on an individual coming to terms with who he or she is. Answering the question "Who am I?" has always underpinned the quest for deep and meaningful knowledge since Socrates. In a contemporary context self-reflexive practice (Schon 1983; Jackson 2006; Mezirow & associates 2000) paves a way for looking at the role of character in leadership, which now more than ever should be considered an educational priority (Nelson and Stolterman 2012), in light of the view held by Gardner (2009, p.10) amongst others, that character is 'higher' than intellect.

## The importance of character in education and design

While HE policies and curricula have traditionally focused on developing intellect, cognitive knowledge and academic prowess, supplemented with industry driven training in skills and scenarios, character lies in an altogether different learning sphere. According to Muller and Subotzky character is based in moral knowledge, which they define as "the incalculation and practice of autonomy" (2000, p. 163). It is the learning sphere where the new knowledge worker could be empowered with a sense of agency, reflexivity, and learn how to take responsibility and make good judgments.

It is especially important for designers who manipulate the desires and dreams of society. As Melucci (1989 cited in Muller & Subotzky 2001, p. 165) states, 'to desire and dream we use the language provided by the media'. As such, Nelson and Stolterman place a hefty responsibility on the designer

to make critical judgments “ranging from reflexive off-hand judgments, to judgments emerging from our core being” (2012, p. 158). They highlight the designer’s special task of moving concepts, ideas and possibilities from the realm of the ideal (formed in the imagination) into the realm of the real (manifested in the world). According to them, the success of this important enterprise depends almost entirely on the designer’s good judgment. While Nelson and Stolterman insist that “design judgment relies on all our capabilities as humans ... rational and conceptual thinking, as well as aesthetic and ethical considerations” (2012, p. 188), they single out the character of the designer as the fundamental starting block of good judgment. They assert that “design knowledge cannot be separated from the knower (2012, p. 188), thus design judgments always depend on the designer’s core values. In this framework, a designer should ideally be “a self-reflective individual with a fully developed character” (2012, p. 209). Therefore, in design, character counts.

Nelson and Stolterman’s emphasis on the designer’s great responsibility as guarantor of good design grounded on correct judgments substantiates why developing character and voice are as important as learning skills and creativity. If as Nelson and Stolterman (2012, p.209) state “to be a designer is to be the co-creator of a new world” which “is a calling of enormous responsibility, with its concomitant accountability”, then curricula must adapt accordingly. This can be done by making space, in content-filled and skills-based design curricula, for honouring and developing ‘personpower’ (Muller and Subotzky 2001). When learners are given permission to come to terms with their own truths and sense of integrity, by means of manifesto-making, it gives clarity to their perceptions, strength to their decisions and actions, and a profound sense of security to their lives. (Tulka 1991, p. 102). This self-knowledge enables them to guide their lives “in healthy and meaningful directions” (Tulka 1991, p. 102) and self-reflective, self-driven graduates are “deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own as well as the values and moral perspective of others” (Avolio in Branson 2009, p. 112).

## Desiderata and manifestos: strategic tools for developing voice

Genuine self-knowledge goes hand in hand with the development of desiderata (Nelson and Stolterman 2012) and voice (Covey 2004; Mezirow 2000). Using Nelson and Stolterman’s concept of desiderata, a designer can develop his/her voice by formulating future aims and intentions, based on what he/she deems desirable and beneficial for himself and relevant others (2012, p. 111). From this perspective, design is seen as more than mere problem-solving.

Desiderata initiate the emergence of “that-which-is-not-yet” and link human capacity with human achievement, anchoring design choices in deliberate intentions, rather than reactive response. Desiderata envision, articulate and create what ‘ought to be’. These projected aims and desires are based in ethics and morality, while conventional problem solving is more descriptive and explanatory (Nelson and Stolterman 2012, p. 106).

For Nelson and Stolterman (2012, p.113) intentionality is a key factor in design, as aim determines the direction in which design will go. Desiderata free the designer from the constraints of reality, by using imagination and intention to transcend redundant realities and create better ones. These ideas are fundamental to Nelson and Stolterman’s (2012) theories on the purpose of design, to drive, manifest and manage ethical, aesthetic and rational changes in the world all the while exercising good judgment and integrity. From this perspective, design evolves from a type of crisis management to a conscious imagining of potentialities that are desirable to all parties involved. However, learning to formulate desiderata is best practiced by each individual, before moving on to more complex collaborations.

Applying Covey’s whole person paradigm to Nelson and Stolterman’s desiderata, the individual should align personal desiderata with the four core human faculties ensuring that body, mind, heart and soul have each been given attention. As such developing voice must recognize and integrate the following: “talent (your natural gifts and strengths), passion (those things that naturally energize,



excite, motivate and inspire you), need (including what the world needs enough to pay you for), and conscience (that still, small voice within that assures you of what is right and that prompts you to actually do it)" (Covey 2004, p.3). Covey explains that the developing vision, discipline, passion and conscience (i.e. voice) results in a personal engagement with work because it generates their vision, taps their talent, fuels their motivation and draws them to respond with conscience to a "great need in the world". The committed student of 'greatness' is encouraged to pay attention to all four in order to obtain optimum success, therein lies the power of their voice, or as Hillman (in Covey 2004, p. 3) puts it their calling or "soul's code". This is a dimension of experience critical to a person's sense of meaning and fulfilment, and without it progress will be slower, more slippery and superficial.

An individual's voice is a unique expression of self and those who walk that path committedly will be "rewarded with the character, competence, initiative, positive energy, and moral authority that inspires themselves and lifts others" (Covey 2004, p. 3). Those in the process of finding their unique personal significance, i.e. voice, are looked up to as leaders. Leadership is always anchored in a clearly outlined and well-rounded sense of identity who are able to develop "a vision of great things they want to accomplish", take initiative, cultivate a greater understanding of the needs and opportunities around them and rise prepared to meet those needs with their unique talents, gifts and strengths (Covey 2004, p. 3).

In light of this I conclude that my cross-disciplinary synthesis of relevant theories shows that that the pursuit of self-knowledge, character and voice are determining factors in developing an individual's sense of autonomy, accountability and integrity. Armed with this knowledge, graphic design curricula would do well to consider the benefits of personal benchmarking in the form of manifestos. Paradigm shifts in micro- and macrocosm demand nothing less than the re-evaluation of established pedagogical criteria, standards and methods. In South Africa, SAQA's response to education's post-apartheid challenges was to reformulate core outcomes that would address national education imperatives. Three of these outcomes have particular relevance to this paper, namely Ethics and Professional Practice; Accountability and Management of self and (life-long) learning (SAQA 2000). These outcomes emerge from the domain of moral knowledge (Muller and Subotzky 2001) and include personal development planning (Jackson 2006) and self-reflexivity.

I propose in this paper that a personal manifesto, being a formulation, articulation and declaration by the self about the self, is an effective learning platform and tool for personal development, self reflexivity and learner transformation, by means of which an individual or group's desiderata may be developed and managed. Manifestoing demands self-reflection, which makes the manifesto an effective tool for measuring self-reflexive outcomes so central to learner-centered pedagogy. Robert Noziak (1989 cited in Nelson & Stolterman 2012, p. 210) confirms that developing character requires that we live 'the examined life'. It is ensured that when 'we guide our lives by our own pondered thoughts, it is our life that we are living, not someone else's'. These outcomes demand a critically reflexive practice as advocated by Barnett (1997). Ultimately we should prepare students not only to meet externally determined outcomes, but also to engage with, adapt and ultimately customise a set of standards and outcomes that give voice to their highest ideals, sense of purpose and unique significance. This kind of critically reflexive practice honours democratic principles of self-determination and if pursued, could create the circumstances that lead to an individual's emancipation from oppressive regimes and blind conformity. It is a practice that will meet Freire's call for a praxis of liberation that depends on men and women "consciously acting, reflecting on and ultimately transforming themselves and their world" (Freire 1993).

A manifesto is a good starting point for effecting personal transformation by means of self-reflection. Mezirow's theory of transformational learning insists that students draw from personal life to effect personal transformation (Mezirow 1991). Kitchenham (2008) explains that Mezirow's transformational learning requires critical self-reflection in the quest to develop greater personal autonomy. These authors imply that without anchorage in the domain of self, knowledge can easily

slip back into the ocean of information from whence it came. Linking learning to the self, anchors it more authentically, intrinsically and therefore more permanently. Without anchorage to the self, knowledge lacks moral, emotional and spiritual value and application, leaving the learner informed but aimless, not a desirable combination. Put another way, reflective practice is key to find one's voice and developing character. Reflective discourse "is the forum in which 'finding one's voice' becomes a prerequisite for free full participation" (Mezirow 2000, p. 11).

I write this paper as a lecturer and curriculum developer of dHistory of Graphic Design. This research was spurred on when I began to see my subject not only a collection of data, but can also as a rich source of voices, from which students may draw in order to develop their own unique voice. If curricula move toward honouring the whole person, encouraging pride in uniqueness and facilitating personal development, each individual would be empowered to formulate personalized aims, values and goals. Thus on a fundamental and intrinsic level the student could benchmark, drive and monitor his/her own progress, measuring his/her output against his own criteria for distinction and success. This type of self-assessment practice contains within it the seeds of learner accountability and integrity. By creating personal standards, the student has something relevant against which to measure his/her own progress and achievements. A manifesto is concrete and assessable evidence of this process, a documentation of the examined life so prized by educators (Mezirow in Kitchenham 2008). It is a declaration that makes explicit what would otherwise remain tacit, lying unused beneath the surface as untapped potential, namely intentionality (aim), desiderata (ideals) and stance (Nelson and Stolterman 2012). Thus a manifesto releases the potential of a person to find their voice, choose their legacy, express their deepest desires, design their future, and thus make their unique mark meaningfully in the world. In this way, the student determines and declares their principles, values and vision, and the success of this process is determined from beginning to end, by the character and judgment of the student.

It is worth understanding and explaining the function and evolution of manifestos (Danchev 2011) to appreciate the wisdom and effectiveness of appropriating the method for tertiary level design students. History of Graphic Design includes many manifestos and they play a central role in driving change and benchmarking the course of history. They are most succinct documents containing a wealth of information about their author's intentions, dreams and visions for the future. Once the province of kings and politicians, now manifestoing can be seen in the corporate environment, thinly disguised as branding. Corporate culture quickly recognized the power of public manifestoing to entrench values and principles as incentives to brand loyalty. A brand slogan is basically a manifesto point that has been singled out for attention. Parallels between branding and manifestoing make it especially suitable for design students, as both require the formulation of a vision, character, values and personality. However pedagogical studies have nowhere near tapped the potential of using manifestos as a strategy for personal development. There is little research done on the theory of manifestos, despite it being conspicuously present in the worlds of politics, leadership, corporate identity and commerce. For some reason, manifestos rarely feature as learning tools in educational contexts, and I found no evidence of it being used specifically to facilitate learner PDP in HE curricula. Hence my ongoing research of the manifesto as a device for cultivating voice.

The implication of ignoring student autonomy and voice, means that the student remains unconscious and disconnected from their own inner motivations and lifeworld. Then even core beliefs and values can lie dormant indefinitely, as untapped potential, which is a less desirable outcome for a graduate. Fortunately, when prompted to self-reflect, students respond eagerly and perform well. Self-reflection increases confidence, as students more feel empowered to study a subject well known to them, i.e. themselves. Thus the manifesto stands out as a relatively simple yet effective strategy for developing leadership potential and articulating a personalized creed that can include vision, mission, aim, purpose, philosophy and/or plan of action. In this way, it is facilitates learning opportunities for self-reflection (Barnett 1997; Schön 1983), character building (Nelson and Stolterman 2012), PDP (Jackson 2006), self-assessment and self-determination (Schunk and

Zimmerman 2012). Put another way, making manifestos develops a student's voice, as students formulate not only what they want to do, and how, but also who they want to be.

Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo interviewed design educators at the University of Johannesburg to arrive at "a deeper, more explicit understanding of the nature of the discipline and the values underpinning it, the kind of curriculum emerging from it and the student identities associated with it" (2013, p. 83). Their findings confirm Barnett's view (2000) that "in an unstable world of 'supercomplexity' students need to 'learn to be' rather than simply to 'learn about' (Fincham and Naidoo 2013: 83). They also refer to Maton's view that knowledge valued in the 'soft' Humanities and Social Sciences differs from the hard Sciences, in that it "focuses more on the identities and dispositions of the knowers as a way of measuring success and less on the possession of specialised knowledge" (Clarence-Fincham and Naidoo 2013: 6). These findings speak to and about Norman Jackson's work on personal development planning (PDP).

Jackson has contributed significantly to pedagogical practices of PDP. He ascribes a moral function to higher education and puts students at the centre of their own learning experience. He asserts that the HE should exist to "to make a positive difference to students' lives and ... to help students develop their potential as fully as possible at this level" (2006, p. 1). For Jackson creativity is "most definitely a matter of heart" and should be applied to "the development of students' potential in a more holistic sense than most higher education experiences currently provide" (2006: 1). He conceives PDP as a creative, critical and student-centred pedagogic practice that facilitates a greater sense of self awareness in students.

Self-awareness is increasingly relevant to pedagogic discourse, as seen for example in SAQA tertiary level outcomes such as Accountability and Management of Learning (SAQA 2000). In the field of creative arts and educating designers, self-reflexive practice facilitates the development of the individual's own frame of reference and desiderata, allowing them to customize their desired future according to the promptings of their newly discovered voice, rather than formulating some prescribed set of ethics. In this way curricula reflect the spirit of constitutional freedom that demands a democratic, ethical and accountable professional practice.

## Conclusion and relevance of research to conference theme

To conclude, this research puts ethics and accountability at the root of tertiary learning, and firmly in the hands of the learner themselves. The paper outlines how tertiary education today should address the development and transformation of the self (Mezirow 2000), as a whole person with an individual voice (Covey 2004), towards producing self-determining graduates and civic-minded critical thinkers (Cadle 2011). It is well understood that a certain type of education will generate a certain type of generation, so education must respond pro-actively to the challenges of supercomplexity (Barnett 2000). Self-aware, self-determining, responsible, creative (Jackson 2006) and critical citizens and leaders (Barnett 2000) is what a university education should foster, not only for the world of work, but also the life-world. If curricula engage students' life-world by validating their individual autonomy, values and beliefs, the development of authentic leaders (Avolio, Walumbwa and Weber 2009) will ensue. For this reason the study and practice of manifesto-making provides an effective platform for establishing a critically reflexive, intrinsically motivated PDP practice that establishes voice as a valid aim and tool for learning. By cultivating voice through medium of the manifesto, the student embarks on the path of life-long learning, equipped with a self-determined sense of purpose and set of ethics that lays the foundation for the practice of accountability in life and design.

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# Ethics and packaging design: Marketing of sugary breakfast cereals to South African children

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## Abstract

*Child-orientated sugary breakfast cereals are a prominent product feature in the dry goods section of supermarkets. Scholars in health sciences and marketing have reported on these products' poor nutritional value and how marketers appeal to children through the use of persuasive television advertising and packaging design. This study presents a visual thematic content analysis of child-orientated breakfast cereal packaging available in local supermarkets. The results indicated that South African marketers use "friendly" and "welcoming" cartoon characters as the most prominent graphic element on breakfast cereal packaging. As such, marketers disguise unhealthy, high sugar content products behind cartoon characters and juxtapose these characters against bright background colours in order to be eye-catching to the young consumer. The packaging designs and themes depict fun, enjoyment as well as happy, upbeat families and even employ text and graphics to portray a healthy theme.*

*The themes employed as regards child-orientated packaging design and their marketing content do not harmonise with the Department of Health's (DoH) Strategic Plan 2014/2015-2018/2019. This plan, inter alia, aims to reduce childhood obesity, reinforce a healthy lifestyle, and improve health promotion and nutrition intervention. Child-orientated cereal packaging design is also in stark contrast to and in conflict with Guideline 14 of the 2014 Draft Regulations relating to the Labelling and Advertising of Foods. Guideline 14 provides a set of recommendations and regulations that will limit children's exposure to the marketing of certain foods. Marketers, for example, may not use an image of a happy, upbeat family to market unhealthy foods, and may not appeal directly to children.*

*This paper questioned the ethics of persuasive and misleading graphic and text elements to market sugary breakfast cereals to children. Furthermore, this paper questioned whether it is ethical to use design elements to present an unhealthy product in an appealing and attractive manner to children. It proposes that we need stricter (design) advertising self-regulatory codes, and that design educators should align design training with the spirit of local and international regulations.*

**Keywords:** Breakfast cereals, children, design ethics, packaging regulations, misleading marketing

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## Introduction

In this paper we question the ethics of marketing unhealthy breakfast cereals to children through the use of misleading and persuasive graphics and texts. By means of a thematic visual content analysis, we determined the nature and extent of design techniques employed in, and themes portrayed on, the packaging of a number of identified breakfast cereals aimed at children.

Globally, children's food marketing is dominated by practices that promote foods that are high in sugar, salt and fat (Cairns, Angus, Hastings & Caraher 2013). These foods include breakfast cereals with a high sugar content, confectionery, soft drinks, savoury snacks and fast food (Ibid.). This is not surprising as children prefer fatty and sugary foods to healthier options such as fresh fruit and vegetables (Cooke & Wardle 2005). Marketers use television as their main promotional channel for

these foods and, to a lesser extent, printed media, the Internet and packaging (Hastings, McDermott, Angus, Stead & Thomson 2007). The packaging of the foods in question is typified by appealing graphics depicting cartoon characters from popular television programmes or movies as well as vivid colours, cartoonish fonts and competitions (Roberto, Baik, Harris, Brownell 2010; Harris, Schwartz & Brownell 2009; Elliot 2008). These graphics in turn are supported by thematic appeals to taste, humour, action-adventure, fantasy and fun (Cairns et al. 2013).

Breakfast cereal manufacturers, in particular, target both children and their parents. Breakfast cereal is one of the four leading food categories targeted at children globally (Cairns et al. 2013) and is also one of the food categories that South African marketers promote during local children's television programmes (Temple, Steyn & Nadomane 2008). Although children are the main consumers, it is their parents who purchase the cereals (Hill & Tilley 2002). It has also been observed that supermarkets strategically position unhealthy foods knowing that children exercise 'pester power' towards their parents (Dixon, Scully & Parkinson 2006). This 'power' applies pressure on parents to hastily and sometimes unthinkingly purchase these unhealthy food items. While manufacturers use graphics to appeal to children, they make nutritional and quality claims to appeal to their parents (ibid.).

The food industry has responded to the unhealthy food environment through self-regulations. An example is the Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative (CFBAI) by the Council of Better Business Bureaus (BBB 2015). The aim of this initiative is to encourage children under 12 years old to consume healthier foods (ibid.). Its signatories comprise 18 lucrative food and beverage corporations, including Kellogg's, Kraft Foods, Nestlé, and General Mills (CFBAI 2014). The initiative's fact sheet states that its nutrition criteria are chiefly guided by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2005 and the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) definitions of "healthy", "low" and "reduced" (CFBAI 2011). A recent progress report mentioned that many cereals of the signatory companies contained up to 15 grams of sugar per serving, and that this sugar content dropped to no more than 10 grams per serving as a result of the initiative (CFBAI 2014).

An ethical issue surrounding the current topic is that marketers exploit children's natural credulity and fondness of lovable and memorable characters. In this regard, Hebden, King, Kelly, Chapman & Innes-Hughs (2011) rightly indicate that marketers commonly use characters to promote unhealthy breakfast cereals. Children prefer foods that are promoted by means of popular characters such as those from *Sesame Street* to generic animal characters (Kotler, Schiffman & Hanson 2012). Children also perceive breakfast cereals that show cartoon characters to be tastier than those that do not (Lapierre, Vaala & Linebarger 2011). Some breakfast cereals also make use of sport celebrities on the packaging, thereby exaggerating their nutritional claims by alluding to supposed health benefits as demonstrated by a well-known and healthy sportsman or sportswoman or fitness celebrity. This should be a cause for concern as pre-adolescents perceive energy dense and nutritionally poor foods to be healthier than they really are when they are marketed with sport stars and nutritional claims (Dixon, Scully, Niven, Kelly, Chapman, Donovan, Martin, Baur, Crawford & Wakefield 2013).

### **Why are some of these cereals not that healthy?**

The Children's Food and Beverage Advertising Initiative reported a reduction of sugar in some of the cereals produced by the major manufacturers (CFBAI 2014); however, these cereals still maintain a low nutritional profile as compared to adult-targeted cereals. Some scholars questioned whether or not the CFBAI was effective in reducing unhealthy food marketing to children (Harris, Schwartz, Brownell, Sarda, Weinberg, Speers, Thompson, Ustjanauskas, Cheyne, Bukofzer, Dorfman & Byrnes-Enoch 2009). They evaluated the nutritional content of 277 cereals from 13 manufacturers targeted at children, adults and the family before (2008) and after the CFBAI initiative, early in 2009. Their study found that cereals aimed at children had 85% more sugar, 65% less fibre and 60% more sodium than adult-targeted cereals. They also found manufacturer reformulations of about a third of

the child and family cereals, but regarded these improvements to be insufficient. A common case was of reducing the sugar content per serving from three and a half teaspoons to three teaspoons.

A recent study by Song, Halvorsen and Harley (2014) conducted in the United States compared 127 cereals' messages aimed at children and adults. Eighty-eight (69%) were marked as adult-targeted and 39 (31%) as child-targeted cereals. The results showed that children's cereals are marketed with notably more nutritional claims than adults' cereals, despite their higher sugar content. They also discovered that 66.7% of the children's cereals contained artificial colourants and sweeteners in contrast to only 12.5% of the cereals aimed at adult consumers. Child-orientated cereals appear to have a lower nutrient value compared to those targeted at adults or the family. This is a cause for concern as logic dictates that cereals aimed at developing children should have equal if not more nutritional value than those targeted at adults.

Additionally, the Department of Health and the Directorate of Nutrition revised the South African Food-based Dietary Guidelines in 2011 (Vorster, Badham & Venter 2013). The general guide for South Africans recommends to 'use sugar and foods and drinks high in sugar sparingly' (Ibid. p. S7). We can also rightfully question whether all parents will measure or monitor the sugar servings of their children and whether children will refrain from adding sugar to the already high sugar content cereals. Sugar-laden cereals may contribute to children consuming more sugar than the recommended daily allowance.

### **Theoretical Framework**

A theory that can explain the vulnerability of children in terms of the marketing messages of sugary breakfast cereals is the Cognitive Developmental Theory by the Swiss cognitive theorist Jean Piaget (1896-1980) (Berk 2009). According to this theory children learn during their interaction with their surroundings (Ibid.). Piaget developed four stages that represent children's cognitive development. In the first stage, the Sensorimotor Stage (Birth to 2 years), infants make sense of the world around them through physical interaction with their eyes, ears, hands and mouth. The Preoperational Stage (2 to 7 years) is recognised by children being able to represent their environment through symbols and make-believe play. Between the ages of 7 to 11 years in the Concrete Operational Stage, children develop reasoning and logic and they are able to sort objects into their groups. The final Formal Operational stage has children from 11 years and older. Here, youth develop conceptual, methodological and research-based thinking.

From the above theory one can see that children engage extensively with their environment and recreate it through play. This engagement and recreation can be seen on breakfast cereals in two main ways, which could be why children are attracted to the packaging. Firstly, the cartoon characters are often anthropomorphised with a name and clothed with items such as caps and t-shirts. This is what children do when they participate in make-believe play. They oftentimes adopt new identities and wear somebody else's clothing. Secondly, the packaging engages the children through friendly, inviting and playful characters juxtaposed against colourful backgrounds. Seeing that it is part of children's natural development process to engage in a playful manner with their environment, we can rightfully ask whether it is ethical to exploit their natural development process by using marketing techniques that resonates with them.

Similarly, Valkenburg and Cantor (2001) used a number of developmental and cognitive psychology theories and marketing theories to develop a model for child-consumer behaviour from a newborn to 12 years of age. The first stage of the model (feeling wants and preferences) describes children from 0 to 2 years as having their own preferences. This however does not mean that they are mature consumers because they are still "primarily children of consumers" (Ibid. p. 64). The second stage (2 to 5 years) is characterised by children who nag their parents for products and who have difficulty resisting their desires for products. These children also have a difficulty differentiating between what is real and what is not. By the time children are 5 to 8 years old, they can be seen making their first purchase decision in a supermarket with their parents. In the final stage, children



aged 8 to 12 years are greatly influenced by peers and develop the ability to evaluate products. Additionally, their character preferences shift from cartoon characters to realistic characters such as real animals, sports stars, actors or actresses and superheroes. In this group, 9 to 10 year olds are uninterested in toys and rather value products that add to their social status. Valkenburg and Cantor's model raises relevant ethical concerns for very young children aged 2 to 5 years. Because they cannot differentiate between reality and fantasy, they will most likely develop an attachment to cartoon characters. These children also cannot exercise self-control which is why marketers leverage on their 'pester power' (Dixon, Scully & Parkinson 2006). It is also clear that marketers target a wide range of children through multiple promotional techniques. The younger children are targeted through the appeal of cartoon characters, whilst sports stars and celebrities are used to appeal to older children.

Currently, most of the research studies surrounding junk food advertising is undertaken internationally. A few examples include an investigation into the marketing techniques used on child-targeted food packaging in an Australian chain store (Mehta, Phillips, Ward, Coveney, Handsley & Carter 2012), a North American study on how popular cartoon characters on food packaging influence children's taste preferences (Roberto et al. 2010) and the persuasive techniques used to promote food and beverages on television to children in the United Kingdom (Boyland, Harrold, Kirkham & Halford 2012). We were, however, able to identify two related South African studies regarding food advertising. The first study considered food advertisements aired in June and October 2006 during children's television programmes on SABC1 and SABC2 (Temple, Steyn & Nadomane 2008). This study found that no less than 38 (55%) of 69 television advertisements promoted unhealthy food, including nine highly processed breakfast cereals. Twenty-nine advertisements were for generally healthier products such as yoghurt and peanut butter. Similar to international studies, Temple, Steyn and Nadomane (2008) recommend that policies should address the marketing of unhealthy food to children by restricting food advertising during children's television programmes or by restricting its marketing activities.

On their part, Mchiza, Temple, Steyn, Abrahams and Clayford (2013) provided an analysis of food advertisements aimed at children and adults on SABC1, SABC2, SABC3 and e.tv from 16 April 2011 to 13 May 2011. Their study identified 420 food advertisements of which 20 were directed at children. Their sample included 218 unhealthy food advertisements for products such as desserts, sweets and fast food that were aired during family viewing time. Healthier options including fruit and vegetables were observed in 167 advertisements. Mchiza et al. (2013) concluded that South African television promotes unhealthy food and that the health claims are ubiquitous and misleading. Their recommendation, similar to that of Temple, Steyn and Nadomane (2008), suggested that government should intervene in order to reduce the promotion of unhealthy food, especially to children. They went further to say that attempts should be made to increase the advertising of healthy food. We have some insight into television food advertising aimed at children from international and local studies. However, we do not have sufficient information regarding the nature and extent of the promotional tools and themes of misleading and persuasive advertising practices, as employed on cereal packaging, as far as South Africa is concerned.

#### **Guideline 14 and the Department of Health's strategic plan**

The South African Minister of Health recently released a set of draft regulations relating to the labelling and advertising of foods (South Africa 2014a) and invited interested parties to submit substantiated comments. These regulations, once accepted, will become part of the Foodstuffs, Cosmetics and Disinfectants Act, No. 54 of 1972 (South Africa 2010) and will cover design parameters, health, content and nutritional claims, to name but a few. Regulation 65 is applicable to this paper and deals with the commercial marketing of food to children. Regulation 65 states that food and non-alcoholic beverage marketing to children will not be allowed unless it complies with Guideline 14.

Guideline 14, however, was not included in the Draft Regulations and only became available later in 2014 as a part in a Department of Health (DoH) publication (South Africa 2014b). Guideline 14 is one of 16 guidelines in a comprehensive 147-page DoH publication. The aim of Guideline 14 is to reduce the impact of marketing unhealthy food and non-alcoholic beverages to children, and to reduce the risk for consumers to develop non-communicable diseases such as obesity and diabetes. These guidelines have a medical and scientific basis and are based on resolution WHA63.14, taken in May 2010 during the 63<sup>rd</sup> World Health Assembly (WHO 2010). The preamble to Guideline 14 also acknowledges the assistance of a number of international organisations and universities that assisted in drafting the content. Whilst the regulations have not yet been enacted, designers and design educators cannot ignore the rational, evidence-based and well-intended guideline. The 5000 plus-word guideline is by no means trivial, and includes 15 criteria that are applicable to all that are involved in marketing food to children. Designers, by virtue of their visual role in marketing, and design educators, by virtue of shaping design students' orientation, are two inescapable respondents to Guideline 14.

Criteria 6(1) aims at preventing the marketing of unhealthy food to children by using an actor that is younger than 18 years, using a celebrity, a cartoon character or characters, animation, competitions, gifts, or collectables that appeal to children. Criteria 6(2) goes even further and aims to prevent the marketing of any energy dense, nutritionally poor food to children that is, for example, high in sugar. Criteria 4 will, to boot, prohibit the use of a happy, upbeat family to promote unhealthy food. Applying these criteria to cereal package design may have far-reaching design implications. If implemented and enforced, we may see the disappearance of *Lionel Messi*-type endorsements on, for example, the packets used for potato chips (crisps), no longer happy, smiling families on the back of nutritionally poor breakfast cereals, and no longer cartoon characters promoting high sugar content cereals.

In addition to the draft guidelines, the ministry has developed a 53-page strategic plan for the years 2014-2019 (DoH 2014). The plan stems from the National Development Plan for 2030 which, amongst others, aims to achieve an effective health system in the country. The DoH's vision is to foster the long-term health of all South Africans through preventing sickness/disease and promoting a healthy lifestyle. The plan details eight strategic goals, one of which is to "[p]revent disease and reduce its burden, and promote health" (Ibid. p. 15). The Director General recognises that in order for the plan to succeed, key partnerships must be forged with "parents, child care providers, schools, health care providers, community organisations, the food industry, store owners and retailers and the media" (Ibid: vii). In light of the above, the design community of South Africa should use design to support the intentions of this plan. We can no longer afford to popularise and promote food with low nutritional benefits yet neglect the well-being of consumers. This national plan, in part motivated this study.

## The methodology

This study employed a thematic content analysis to determine the promotional tools and themes of graphics used on breakfast cereals targeted at South African children. Content analysis is a common method of examining packaging designs in order to determine its characteristics. An example is Elliot's (2008) study which used content analysis to create a profile of supermarket foods targeted at Canadian children.

### Sample and data collection

The sample consisted of 21 child-orientated breakfast cereals from two prominent retail stores in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. These were all the child-orientated cereals in these stores. Permission was granted by the various supermarket managers, after making a request, to sample and photograph the front and back of the products in the stores.

## Procedure

We independently coded the front images of the packages for promotional tools and themes. These included those that other researchers identified and new ones that emerged during the study. Examples of promotional tools are cartoon and celebrity characters, colours, giveaways, games, tie-ins to children's movies and television programmes, and competitions (Roberto et al. 2010; Harris, Schwartz & Brownell 2009; Elliot 2008). Typical themes are taste, humour, fun, cool, fantasy and adventure (Roberts & Pettigrew 2007). We considered inter-coder reliability, discussed differences, and arrived at a consensus until there were no differences between the coding decisions. Additionally, we developed short graphic descriptors to describe the overall themes of the sample's packaging. We also looked at the textual health claims and the sugar content of the products.

## The Results

The table below presents a list of the breakfast cereals included in the study. It also provides in descending order the sugar content per 30 grams serving of an adult's guideline daily amount. The reason why duplicates appear in the table below is because the package design differed for the same product.

	<b>Product</b>	<b>Sugar (g) per serving (g)</b>
1.	Nestlé Milo	15.9g/30g with 125ml low fat milk
2.	Spar Squillos Oat Hoops	15g/30g
3.	Bokomo Otees Crème Soda	11.6g/30g
4.	Kellogg's Strawberry Pops	10g/30g
5.	Kellogg's Corn Flakes Real Honey	9.8g/30g
6.	Heartland Choc Rockers	9.5g/30g
7.	Kellogg's Coco Pops Chocos	9.5g/30g
8.	Kellogg's Coco Pops Chocos	9.5g/30g
9.	Nestlé Milo	9.5g/30g
10.	Nestlé Milo Duo	9.5g/30g
11.	Nestlé Honey Cheerios	9g/30g
12.	Jungle Crunchalots	8.7/30g
13.	Weet-Bix Bites	7.6g/30g
14.	Weet-Bix Bites Chocolate	7.6g/30g
15.	Spar Squillos Oat Pillows	7g/30g
16.	Kellogg's Rice Krispies	2g/30g
17.	Kellogg's Rice Krispies	2g/30g
18.	Heartland Rice Poppers	1.7g/30g
19.	Kellogg's Corn Flakes	1.5g/30g
20.	Kellogg's Corn Flakes	1.5g/30g
21.	Rainbow Wheat Crunchies	0.9g/30g

**Table 1: Sample of breakfast cereals and sugar content**

From the above table, one can see that the sugar content of 11 (52.4%) cereals is between a third to half of a serving (9g/30g to 15.9g/30g). These values illustrate the high sugar levels in child-orientated cereals.

Table 2 below provides the frequency of promotional tools, themes and graphic descriptors on the package designs of the sample.

Promotional tools	N (%)	Themes	N (%)	Graphic descriptors	N (%)
Character	17 (81%)	Welcoming	18 (85.7%)	Play-pal	15 (71.4%)
Giveaway	3 (14.3%)	Health	8 (38.1%)	Flavour-full	5 (23.8%)
Celebrity	3 (14.3%)	Flavour/taste	4 (19%)	Chum-chase	4 (19%)
Game	2 (9.5%)	Action/ adventure	3 (14.3%)	Happy family	3 (14.3%)
Movie/TV tie-in	3 (14.3%)			Vroom-tritious	2 (9.5%)
Competition	1 (4.8%)			Sugar-buzz	3 (14.3%)
				Star struck	3 (14.3%)
				Bright spark	1 (4.8%)

**Table 2: Frequency of promotional tools, themes and graphic descriptors used for breakfast cereals**

### Promotional tools

Of the 21 packages considered, 17 (81%) used a character as their premium promotional tool. These included mystical creatures, stills of animated characters from movies and proprietor company-owned characters such as Kellogg's *Coco* the monkey, Kellogg's *Sammy* the seal, Kellogg's gnomish elves: *Snap*, *Crackle* and *Pop*. Other characters were the Kellogg's Corn Flakes rooster, the squirrels of Spar Squillos, *Cerealot* of Jungle Crunchalots, the three mystical creatures of Bokomo Rainbow Crunchies and the 'H' characters of Heartland Choc Rockers (hippopotamus) and Rice Poppers (zebra). Two packages (9.5%) used a honeybee and an anthropomorphised chocolate drop.

The characters on five packages (23.8%) were involved in activities such as playing soccer, skating, swinging, dancing or snowboarding. Three packages (14.3%) used celebrities, one being a Nickelodeon television character named *SpongeBob* from *SpongeBob SquarePants* and which included a collectable dog tag. The remaining two promoted the movie *Rio 2* and offered a free figurine. Another promotional item was a sticker that was included in the Kellogg's *Coco Pops* pack.

The most dominant colours, in terms of the packaging's surface area, were blue (42.9%), green (38.1%), brown (38.1%) and white (38.1%). Other colours were orange (28.6%), red (19%), cream or cream-white (9.5%), pink (9.5%), purple (9.5%) and gold (4.8%).

### Themes

The 'Welcoming' theme was the most popular on 18 packages (85.7%) and it was expressed through friendly and inviting characters. These characters had dilated eyes and wide smiles and looked directly at the viewer. 'Health' was another popular theme as observed on eight (38.1%) packages. Health was communicated by highlighting ingredients and nutritional aspects such as multigrain, vitamins, minerals, calcium and iron. Additionally, the back of the packages included information regarding these ingredients and suggested balanced meal options and guidelines for healthy eating. Interestingly, health was also portrayed through the use of the colour green. Flavour/taste featured on four (19%) packages that amplified the flavour of the cereal or evoked the gustatory sense. Action/adventure (14.3%) was the least popular theme as conveyed through jungle animals from the movie *Rio 2* and an under the sea scene on Kellogg's *Rice Krispies*.

## Graphic descriptors

A graphic descriptive name gave an indication of the general graphic theme displayed on packaging. Play-pal, for example, indicated that the marketer's general graphic message was one that projects a playful theme. This kind of package also has a playful character that appears to be a friend or a "pal" to the viewer. 'Play-pal', 'Flavour-full' and 'Chum-chase' were the top three graphic descriptors that were used on 15 (71.4%), five (23.8%) and four (19%) of the package designs respectively. 'Play-pal' was similar to the 'Welcoming' theme and it was also portrayed through friendly and playful characters. Five (23.8%) packages fall into the flavour-full theme. In addition, 'edible' coloured text and images of the cereal for the chocolate and strawberry flavour and dripping honey add to the 'Flavour-full' description.

## Textual health claims

All but one of the cereals made textual health claims. Most of these claims were related to the nutrient profile of the cereals: 'Contains the nutrients your family needs'; 'Provides you with at least 15% of your daily requirement of 10 vitamins and minerals'; 'Source of 8 vitamins'; 'Source of calcium'; 'Source of iron'; 'Source of fibre'; 'Source of minerals' and 'High in B vitamins: B1, B2, Niacin, Pantothenic acid, B6 & B12'. Additional claims were made regarding the raw material or ingredients of the cereals: 'Made with wholegrain'; 'Made from oats'; 'Made from 4 whole grains: Corn, Oats, Rice & Wheat'; and 'Made with real honey'. Manufacturers downplayed issues such as the absence of preservatives, colourants, cholesterol and added salt.

It is evident that manufacturers advertise their products by primarily using playful, friendly, inviting and welcoming promotional characters as the key graphic variable on their package designs. In addition, they buttress the value of their products through textual claims that are aimed at affirming the supposed health properties of the product.

## Discussion of the results and recommendation

The results of this study echo the findings of similar international studies. Ten of the 21 products contain 30% sugar or more, a dominant ingredient in child-targeted foods (Cairns et al. 2013). Seventeen of the 21 products use a lively character, which is a common practice in marketing unhealthy cereals (Hebden et al. 2011). The use of play-pal, welcoming characters, as the dominant graphic descriptor and tool on the packages, iterates the strong child-appeal of likeable and familiar characters (Kotler, Schiffman & Hanson 2012). By using the child-consumer model of Valkenburg and Cantor (2001), we can infer that marketers deliberately target children that are 8 years and younger.

Besides a welcoming theme, health was the second most popular theme employed by 8 of the 21 products. This differs from the work of Cairns et al. (2013) who found that the health theme was significantly less popular than the themes of taste, humour, action/adventure, fantasy and fun. In this regard, Dixon et al. (2013) indicate that pre-adolescents are often misled to think that cereals with sports celebrities and nutritional claims are healthier than they really are. Despite these health claims, almost half of this study's sample contained between 9 grams to 15.9 grams of sugar per 30 grams serving. Although this study's sample was not compared with adult-targeted cereals, the findings reflect those of Song, Halvorsen and Harley (2014) who observed that cereals targeted at children are marketed with nutritional claims even though their contents are high in sugar.

The spirit and intentions of Guideline 14 and the DoH's Strategic Plan is to protect children from exploitative marketing practices and thereby positively contributing to their health. It is for this reason that we can rightfully question the ethics of persuasive graphic and text elements to market sugary breakfast cereals to children. Designing marketing material to promote junk food to children can hardly be described as an ethical design endeavour. Taking an ethical position, such as espoused by Guideline 14, and supporting the DoH's Strategic Plan, may be a more ethical and appropriate, but this will invariably jar with the utilitarian approach of design and marketing. It is then not

surprising to note the comments by the Marketing Association of South Africa (MA[SA]) on Guideline 14. In their reply, they expressed their disagreement with some aspects of the regulations and in particular with Guideline 14. They recommend that the Guideline 14 contents be replaced by the Code of the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (MA[SA] 2014).

The difficulty with this, and the advantage to MA(SA) if accepted, is that the advertising codes of the Advertising Standards Authority of South Africa (ASASA) are not as detailed as the Regulation 14 criteria. The ASASA codes do not specifically prevent or prohibit the use of cartoon-type characters, the use of celebrities, happy families, and gifts as instruments – precisely the intentions of Regulation 14. Empirical studies have indicated that celebrity endorsement and cartoon-type characters are some of the strongest and most effective graphic instruments that one can use when marketing a product to a child (Boyland et al. 2012; Roberto et al. 2010). Marketing junk food to children, then, becomes an ethical issue due to the health implications and should take precedence over the utilitarian philosophy of profit-driven marketing practices. Whilst we acknowledge that it may be difficult to change the current trend, even if Guideline 14 is enacted, one option would be to imbue stricter (design) regulations in ASASA codes to protect children against marketers who target children's natural credulity.

We also concede that legislation and stricter self-regulatory codes may not necessarily solve designers' dilemmas in terms of their participation in the marketing of junk food to children. The food marketing environment is composed of decision makers in the food manufacturing industry, marketers and designers who were once students. Design educators should consider a course in ethics, to inter alia expose students to national and international plans such as the DoH's Strategic Plan (DoH 2014) and the WHO's (2010) recommendations about marketing foods and non-alcoholic beverages to children. Indeed, Elliot (2012, p. 315) points out that "the food industry... should not unduly complicate (or undermine) individual or societal efforts to make healthy food choices, promote good nutrition, and create positive relationships with food for children".

## Conclusion

This study considered the promotional tools and themes that marketers use to promote child-orientated breakfast cereals to South African children. We questioned the ethics behind marketing sugary cereals through child-appealing promotional characters and an implied health theme. Breakfast cereals are predominantly marketed to children through cartoon characters, a welcoming theme and playful graphic messages. The spirit and intention of manufacturers to sell these type of products to children do not complement the DoH's goals towards a healthier nation (DoH 2014). In addition, the graphics and themes are diametrically opposed to Guideline 14 in the Draft Regulations relating to the labelling and advertising of foods (South Africa 2014a). In addition to developing more restrictive ASASA codes and implementing existing labelling legislation, design educators should align their design training with the spirit of these codes and legislation.

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# Architecture and agency: ethics and accountability in teaching through the application of Open Building principles

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## Abstract

*This paper will explore the notion of ethics in the built environment, and professional accountability, topics which are generally sidelined or given little direct consideration in teaching and practice. However, this status quo is increasingly being questioned. Built environment educators and practitioners need now to develop the intellectual and skill resources to address new questions, formulate a position, and set guidelines to be able to incorporate and make these 'measurable' in the performance of educators and practitioners, and for achieving a level of accountability.*

*The paper will present the general development of definitions in the field of ethics. It will then focus on architecture, where ethical considerations may have spatial implications, as spatial characteristics are a reflection of thinking on opportunity, access and equity. The city structured during apartheid modernism in South Africa provides one iconic case in point to how modern belief systems can often implicitly impact on practice, teaching and design decision-making strategies; powerfully and persistently manifesting—although little recognised—in patterns that reinforce ideas about race, poverty, power and privilege.*

*Ethical considerations also reflect on design decision-making strategies. Design decisions in the built environment are always 'value-laden'; they are a reflection of what we believe the role of the architect is and how we believe architecture needs to engage with the people it serves – or should be serving. These concepts are at the core of the University of Johannesburg's UJ\_UNIT2, Architecture and Agency: Design, Make, Transform. Launched in 2015, UJ\_UNIT2 is based on the premise that the built environment comes into existence and transforms as a social/physical ecosystem, where buildings and neighbourhoods are never finished, but rather transform part by part. The design process, thus, needs to include different levels of decision-making, facilitating distributed control of environmental decision-making among diverse agents and stakeholders.*

*'Open Building' as a concept resonates strongly with present-day South African concerns in the post-Apartheid era. The principles contained in Open Building thinking can be linked to some of the principles contained in the National Development Plan, Vision 2030, the newly launched (and perhaps wrongly termed) Master Spatial Plan, as well as a number of city level visions, such as the "Corridors of Freedom" in Johannesburg and similar public transport led transformation projects. Issues of participation, social integration, mixed use, mixed income, accessibility, choice and affordability are all principles that can be better facilitated and achieved through the use of an "open" approach to design and delivery in the built environment.*

*UJ\_UNIT2 aims to explore the boundaries between architecture and planning, building and city, and architecture and infrastructure, towards a new way of designing and building in the interest of efficiency in design, finance, implementation, management and maintenance. At its core, UJ\_UNIT2 is essentially about people, the relationships between people and the role that the built environment plays in managing those relationships and in achieving social cohesion, wherein the built environment functions as a 'mediator' and 'interface' between individual and collective needs.*

*This paper elaborates on the above, namely the valency of ethics across education, design, practice, within contexts and the discipline in general, as well as on the process of equipping architecture graduates to have a deeper understanding of how their future practice may contribute towards addressing some of the built environment challenges facing South Africa and the global South. The topics presented in the unit thus link strongly to the wider social and ethical practice of the*

profession. It is hoped that this unit will ultimately contribute towards a transformation in education and in practice, with a well-articulated intellectual apparatus.

**Keywords:** architecture, ethics, imagination, agency, practice, education

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## Introduction

The paper describes the focus of an experiment in architectural education, UJ\_UNIT2, being implemented at the University of Johannesburg as part of the newly launched unit system at professional Master's level. The paper's trajectory begins with an overview of readings on ethics in architecture and its relevancy today, articulating a position on the topic. Secondly, it locates this within the intentions of UJ\_UNIT2, presenting its approach to 'agency' as a key element in ethical practice through the adoption of Open Building principles. This entails setting guidelines for developing ethical considerations in teaching – making this a vital and reflexive component of what is delivered in studio, as well as a 'measurable' component thereof (in terms of accountability rather than control). The discourse developed in the paper, which finds practical application in the UJ\_UNIT2 studio, therefore opens conversations and offers a contribution on many levels within the architectural discipline.

## Enquiries into ethics in the built environment and spatial design

### The 'ethical turn'?

In a brief account of ethics in the built environment, Peter G. Rowe (1996, pp. 243–244) expounded on architectural ethics through the familiar Vitruvian triad of commodity, firmness, and delight; whereby 'firmness' was understood simply as a building that meets building codes and regulations, while 'commodity' and 'delight' were understood to relate to issues of public welfare, sustainability, culture and general well-being. By contrast, many works on ethics in the built environment since have illustrated the topic not through such familiar architectural categories, but through cross-disciplinary ones, especially philosophy.

Generally, in the field of philosophy since the 1970s, the traditional human-centered concerns of an "anthropocentric ethics" has transformed into an "environmental ethics" focused more on the natural than the built environment, to address the perceived imbalance of the former approach and fueled on by naturalistic and evolutionary readings of the world (Fox 2000, pp. 1–3). A significant early work exploring the architectural-philosophical crossover, and coming from a position of addressing this "blind spot" toward the built environment within environmental ethics, was the volume "Ethics and the Built Environment" edited by Warwick Fox, with contributions by "philosophers (especially ethicists) with an interest in architecture... and... philosophically orientated architects" (Fox 2000, pp. 2, 4). At the time, Fox (2000, p. 3) noted that "no field of enquiry presently exists that is clearly and explicitly devoted to the subject of what we would call *the ethics of the built environment*."

The volume covered three broad focus areas: first, "the green imperative of sustainability;" second, "building with greater sensitivity to people(s) and places," including issues of social inclusion, community participation, a process-orientated approach and *genius loci*; and third, philosophical explorations of "steps towards a theory of ethics of the built environment."

Taylor and Levine (2011) sought to take this approach further: "...our study calls upon ethics as a branch of philosophical inquiry, particularly moral philosophy, but attempts to go beyond its specific concerns and terms, erudite speculation and rhetoric... to describe design practices that are... directed toward images of a whole or fully integrated person" (Taylor and Levine 2011, p. 4).

In a different approach to a more philosophically orientated one, Fisher's "Ethics for Architects" (2010) still made some reference to the former but more closely followed a codified professional route, by expanding on the six canons of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct and similarly defining six categories of "obligations" for architectural practice (general obligations, obligations to the public, to the client, to the profession, to colleagues, and to the environment).

Yet another approach in a more recent work, "Design and Ethics: Reflections on practice," editors Felton et al (2012, p. 3) described their approach as one of "critical ethics," a multidisciplinary approach "to create a space for critical engagement in which contrasting, contradictory views are a necessary part." In contrast to Fox's (2000, p. 3) earlier contention that "no field of enquiry... exists... devoted to the subject," by now, twelve years later, Felton et al observed that "there is little disagreement that we are witnessing an 'ethical turn' occurring in professional and allied practices, including the design fields" (Felton et al. 2012, p. 3).

Even given this brief survey, it is clear that the current study and role of ethics in architecture is in a moment that is very much evolving, that there already exist various approaches toward it, and that these have already extended its scope well beyond that which it may once have been formally defined as a relatively narrow 'code of practice' (in education, a professional practice course was too often where the discussion on ethics got relegated toward).

This expansion, of course, has not occurred in isolation but has paralleled design problems presented by society that transcend 'normal practice'. Architecture must now—necessarily—develop the intellectual and design tools and skills needed to be able to intelligently, and compassionately, navigate these newly opened terrains. More sophisticated conceptual and analytical apparatus would not only more sharply define architecture's roles and responsibilities for itself, but also allow for education of design literacy to wider than the already initiated (significant works or architecture are usually also produced by knowledgeable and cultured clients)(Rowe, 1996, p. 246).

### Urgent, ethical imagination

"If the centre has been found wanting... then what right has it to define, and so control, what constitutes the 'margins'? In many ways the tenets of the centre are unraveling by themselves in front of our eyes... and so what we present are not merely reactions to established 'mainstream' practices but empowering examples... that provide pointers as to how one might operate not only in uncertain times but as a matter of principle." (Awan et al. 2011, p. 27)



**Figures 1 and 2: Cities and the extremisms of twentieth-century modernity: Tokyo, after the firebombing of the United States Army Air Forces, 1945 (Wikipedia contributors, 2015); and Houston, Texas, 1978, by Alex Maclean (Hardy, 2014).**

With approximately 231 million people killed in wars and conflict during the last century (the most murderous in recorded history)(Kalantidou and Fry 2014)(Leitenberg 2006, p. 1) with accompanying

mass devastation, and prospects for the current century already looking dismal hardly over a decade into it (see Figures 1 and 2); with the global environmental crisis; with an urban revolution in the global South (and a migration “crisis” in the global North); and with the force of globalised capital and its spectacular 2008-2009 economic collapse; and all with accompanying social divisions; we are faced with a multi-faceted crisis on the one hand—between the social, the political, the urban, the ecological and the economic—and times of extreme relativism and uncertainty on the other hand. Never before, it seems, has an ethical role in architecture seemed so relevant and so urgent, while concurrently being so problematised, peripheralised or pejoratively treated.

On the one hand architecture is often implicated in all of this, “sustaining the unsustainable” (Kalantidou and Fry, 2014), on the other hand 90% of the world’s population remains unserved by professional designers (Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt, National Design Museum, n.d.) Spatial design disciplines can at once be accused of being largely irresponsible and largely irrelevant. But it is also from here, in the words of Teddy Cruz, that architecture can bring an ethical and “urgent imagination” (Catling, 2014), to rethink unsustainable patterns and present new operational paradigms. Straddling the social and technical fields, perhaps architecture is better equipped, in terms of a unique skills set, to be the moral consciousness of the built environment professions?

### **Reduction or inspiration?**

While few would seriously contest the pairing of the words ‘urgent’ with ‘imagination’, for new forms of architectural thinking and practice, the relationship between ‘ethics’ and ‘imagination’ appears to be less resolved. Fox (2000, p. 227), for example, touches on a central concern in many objections to an ethical approach in architecture: “... I ask (but answer in the negative) the reductionist question: Are allegedly ethical concerns about the built environment actually reducible to more familiar kinds of ethical concerns?”

Fox’s question stemmed from a philosophical standpoint around the very need for an ethics peculiar to architecture, but exactly the same questions may be raised from a design perspective: Is an ‘ethical’ approach to a design discipline not a ‘reductionist’ approach, for architecture reducing it in both scope and complexity? In other words, does it reduce architecture to a limited selection of predefined typologies, such as ‘community centres’, or predefined socio-economic environments, such as the poverty of shantytowns on the one hand or the corporate world of ‘social responsibility indexes’ on the other? Does it essentially divorce architecture from its intrinsic creativity: ‘the greater the ethics, the lesser the creativity?’ And does it ultimately result in an “architecture of good intentions” (Fisher 2010, p. 11) as Colin Rowe observed (as opposed to an architecture of depth and quality)?

These more tangible critiques apart, moreover, there are also concerns of its cognitive implications, such as those raised by Sylvia Lavin, Chair of Architecture at UCLA, who feared that an ethical turn meant a ‘slide back’ into “nineteenth century moralism” and “religiously based instruction” (Owen 2009, p. 3).

While this form of critique is admittedly not without some foundation (the rhetoric linked with participatory design approaches and community engagement exercises does tend to become almost “evangelical” in character), the ethical in architecture, in the view and praxes of the authors, is extensively more dynamic and multivalent. “Quality not charity,” as Alejandro Aravena of the Chilean practice Elemental put it (Catling, 2014).

On the contrary, rather than opposing an ‘architectural ethics’ on its own terms and merits, perceptions that a turn to the ethical would mean a turn to ‘superficialisms’ or reductions could itself be attributed in some part to our “technological world” and its associated “technological mentality” (Pérez-Gómez 2006, p. 67), where universal truths and legitimacy are based on applied and measurable sciences, that has reduced meaning in architecture to the provision of basic shelter and necessities to the poor and needy on the one hand or to commodity and status symbol on the

other, with poor regard to local specificities, traditions and cultures, and the nuanced language of history and the humanities.

In this sense the critique then is unjustified, being in essence a response to a technological discourse, established and pervasive, rather than an ethical one, evolving and emergent. 'Meaning' in architecture, then, may better be found not conversely in a flight into pure poetry and abstraction necessarily (or alternatively into a post-ethical *realpolitik*, *a la* Rem Koolhaas)(Owen 2009, p. 2), but somewhere more in a coalescence, between the measurable and the immeasurable or, like Alberto Pérez-Gómez (2006, p. 67) argued, between the transcendental and the temporal.

Many philosophers and theorists, furthermore, have argued that imagination and ethical action are inextricably linked. Aristotle defined the work of art as a *mimesis* of *praxis* (or a representation of ethical human action)(Pérez-Gómez 2006, p. 69). In his essay "Ethics and Poetics in Architecture" Pérez-Gómez (2006, pp. 69, 71–72) argued that architectural work is a process of embodied making, and as such can be a vehicle for ethical production: "Contrary to the view of many critical theorists who may believe that there exists an irreconcilable contradiction between ethics (associated with democracy, rationality and consensus) and the poetic imagination, ...the lack of imagination... may be at the root of our worst moral failures. Imagination is precisely our capacity for love and compassion, for both recognizing and valorizing the other, for understanding the other as self, over & above differences of race, gender, culture & belief".

Through hermeneutical readings of nineteenth and twentieth century European philosophy, Amato (2011, p. vii) for example also argued similarly that "in developing the capacity to envision new relations, responses, and realities, we are able to take that first vital step towards creating or enacting them" and therefore "regular meaningful engagement with creative works and activities that cultivate the imagination ... also increase our possibilities of being with and for others in ever more responsible and inspired ways."

### Education and ethical thinking

In considering the place of ethics in architectural education, where the focus of the ethical approach is, and where the most appropriate place is within the broad scope of architectural education to cultivate that focus is important. Here the field of ethics in philosophy can assist and enrich architectural education with its systematic conceptualisation of the topic for effective didactic purposes, although placing architectural ethics *solely* in the realm of philosophy would be limiting and somewhat artificial, especially given architecture's probably epistemologically unique core integrative form of 'design thinking' (Rowe 1996, p. 243).

In philosophical terms, ethics generally entails the descriptive study of what ethical views people *happen* to hold (descriptive ethics), the study of the views people *ought* to hold (normative ethics), discussion *about* normative ethics such as the meaning of terms or semantic and epistemological issues (meta-ethics), or the application of normative ethics in specific practical situations (applied ethics). In normative ethics moreover, the heart of ethics, the focus of the ethical approach can be on either the character of the actor (virtue ethics), on the principle that leads to action (principle or duty ethics), or on the outcome (consequentialist ethics)(Fox 2000, p. 222-223).

Architectural education in turn, to continue with the current systemisation, can be said to consist of three general clusters of knowledge: history and theory, design and technology, and professional practice. Considering then the fields of ethics and architecture together, the domain of history and theory—the traditional domains of thinking, reading and writing—is therefore probably the area most suited to cultivating an ethics of character or principle; while the domains of design and technology—which entails practical contexts, action and outcome—are probably more suited to the ethics of principle and outcome. But this is only a broad schema, useful as a general overarching guideline. With closer attention to detail there are many more overlaps, nuances and complexities,

revealing the need for an ethical project in architectural education to be treated with sufficient intellectual vigour and scrutiny.

Design, like history and theory for example, is also a way of thinking about and knowing the world, while history and theory also implicates design, by allowing design practices to be scrutinised from a variety of other perspectives which can be more normative or value-specific (Rowe, 1996, p. 245). Even outside of academia, in conventional practice, as Fisher (2010, pp. 10–11) observed, different aspects of ethics are relevant at virtually every stage of the project, from the receipt of a commission through to post-occupancy evaluations.

Despite the limitations of philosophical categorisation for architecture, their sophistication does point to a lack of sufficiently complex and critical approaches to the issue of ethics in the built environment. Rather than an ‘ethical stifling’ of creativity, *translated* within an architectural process they can better function as a springboard of imaginative and intellectual inspiration, and the development of new methodologies, which is its fuller and intrinsic potential.

Moreover, “architectural education and practice,” as Fisher (2010, p. 12) suggests, “would not only benefit from a greater understanding of ethics but might also benefit ethics as well.” Fox’s concluding words to the volume on “Ethics and the Built Environment”, (Fox 2000, p. 228) which highlights both the relevancy and an inadequacy in the general state of the discourse, in many respects still stands today: “These questions are obviously being pursued in various implicit and *ad hoc* ways at present (...) What is now to be hoped for is that this field of enquiry becomes a vigorous, inspirational and practically fruitful contributor to life in the twenty-first century.”

#### **Human rights, humane service: Architecture and agency**

In the field of housing and human settlements, there has been a shift from a needs-based approach to a right-based approach, articulated by UN HABITAT as follows: “A human rights-based approach involves moving away from assessing the needs of beneficiaries towards empowering and building the capacity of claim-holders in asserting their rights.”(UN Habitat n.d.)

The concept of ‘human rights’, in their current form, is a comparatively recent phenomenon. The President of the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed in 1948 that this was “the first occasion on which the organised world community had recognised the existence of human rights and fundamental freedoms transcending the laws of sovereign states” (Cole 2012, p. 1).

Mike Cole, a professor in Education and Equality, listed several subtle and oblique observations regarding this discourse. First, Cole argued, all were “social constructs” closely associated with particular contexts and histories, reflecting either their own particular social systems or the crucial terrains of struggle between conflicting social forces, not uncontested universals but themselves arising from particular systems and contestations (Cole 2012, p. 5).

Secondly, while also observing that people were affected by equality-related issues in the various institutions in society in which they interacted, Cole identified that much of the issues within human rights discourse in fact had ‘personal parameters’, whereby people were affected individually (Cole, 2012, p. 6). A human rights discourse thus parallels, and so must also be read within, an age that is often fiercely individualistic, whereby many freedoms are in essence personal freedoms, pursued for private ends. Without taking away from its advancements or from activists who campaign on behalf of disenfranchised groups, it is nonetheless also a discourse which most commonly is engaged with on an individual level, characteristically centering the self.

But these incisive observations, more curiously, at times appear to undergo a certain shift of focus when they enter as a discourse into the architectural domain. Perhaps due in some part to the particular nature of architecture as a ‘public art’ and ‘social act’—social in method, purpose and use

(Kostov, 1995, p. 7)—that where it is developed within the discipline the language of its individualist parameters can often shift noticeably to ‘the public’ or ‘the community’ rather than the individual.

Driven by content but shifted in focus, this shift from the human to the humane ultimately, as argued by Awan et al (2011, p. 29), should be an act of enablement, of agency or “spatial agency.” According to Awan et al (2011, p. 32) “agency is intractably tied to power,” but instead of power exerted over another, “in relation to spatial agency ... the agent is one who effects change through the *empowerment* of others, allowing them to engage in their spatial environments in ways previously unknown or unavailable to them, opening up new freedoms and potentials as a result of reconfigured social space.”

Significantly, the agent/architect acts with and on behalf of others, on equal terms and as part of a mutual enterprise, between “expert citizens” and “citizen experts” (Awan et al., 2011, p. 32).



**Figure 3: Meeting of Two Cultures by Sandile Goje, 1993 (MOMA, 2011).**

Even if it is seldom actualised in reality, this architectural alchemy is the possibility and promise of the agency of architecture, as a service that enables and centres the agency of others, opening up a space which invites new combinations between process and product, between the informal and the formal.

The apparent idealism of such ‘architectural activism’— and those of similar mould—is not entirely as separate from the spirit of ‘real world’ architectural practice as it may at first appear, but rather draws from and amplifies some of its essential makeup. Arundhati Roy argues that: “...this term “activist”—I’m not sure when it was coined. To call someone like me a writer-activist suggests that it’s not the job of a writer to write about the society in which they live. But it used to be our job. It’s a peculiar thing, until writers were embraced by the market, that’s what writers did—they wrote against the grain, they patrolled the borders, they framed the debates about how society should think” (Naqvi n.d.).

A similar retrospective could be said of architecture. Controversies apart (though duly noted), modernism was still a strong statement on society, and its manifestos meant to advance the cause of the social role of architecture. The profession was seen as an economic and political tool that could be used to improve the world through the design of buildings and urban planning, and this was a driving force of the movement.

Rowe (1996, p. 242) also alluded to architecture’s essential “sense of fiduciary duty, of something held or given in trust that places the client’s interests before those of the professional, and the interest of society above both,” which “lies at the heart of all professional activity.” There may

perhaps also lay something deeper in the commonly used expression of ‘providing an architectural service’.

Awan et al (2011, p. 29), in their powerfully argued book “Spatial Agency,” confess to a sentiment—but also a resolve—probably shared by many who may be frustrated with the conservative tendencies of much architectural practice: “It would have been easy enough to be relentlessly damning about the limited preoccupations of the profession, but as we progressed through the research, this negative turn was replaced by a much more buoyant approach, inspired by the examples in the book, which leave us in admiration for their mixture of canniness, bravery and optimism.”

It is in this spirit that humane agency is intrinsically a part of architecture’s latent and charismatic potential and possibility, as much as it is the positing of a ‘new’ course within it. The exploitation of the former and the pioneering of the latter in the advancement of knowledge, moreover, is always also a part of the intellectual apparatus of academia, “by which the discipline takes its bearings and advances itself (...) even if the actual work is being performed out in the field” (Rowe, 1996, pp. 245–246). “Many ecological concerns, for instance”, recalls Rowe (1996, p. 245), “as well as appreciations of cultural differences and understandings of historical continuities and of the likely spatial effects of globalization, have roots in academia”.

In an age of individual freedoms but collective crisis, of personal liberty but global calamity, the project of the humane, the ethical, and the imaginative could not be more urgent. And like the word ‘ethic’ suggests (from the Greek *ethos*), as does the synonymous ‘moral’ (from the Latin *mores*), both etymologically rooted in the notion of habitual or customary conduct, the ethical dimension in architecture needs not only to be developed multivalently within the discipline (including the tools and skills needed to realise it), but if it is to seriously challenge a status quo that leads to projected multivalent disaster, then it must also become a more normative and ‘evolved’ part of architectural apparatus.

When the centre is discredited and unravelling, there is no longer “alternative”—and hence marginal—practices vis-à-vis “mainstream” practice, as Awan et al (2011, pp. 26–27) so astutely observe, there are only more ethical and humane ways of thinking and being in the world.

## Defining an ethic within architectural practice and education

### The process of ethics and the ethics of process: ethics in shifting eras and paradigms

An important factor for educators in architecture to consider is the reality that many architects graduating today will not practice architecture within the expected, conventional and limited parameters previously taken for granted. Many architects will exit architecture school and create, invent and innovate new roles for themselves. It is perhaps a moral obligation of academia to support them in this process. In education, these shifts in thinking have led UJ\_UNIT2 to focus on an approach which is supported by various ‘methods’ rather than ‘solutions’; where systems, type and form are all understood as outcomes of unwritten/unspoken transactions and agreements between people, as reflections of a combined social understanding of the built environment and how it governs social interaction and vice versa.

Bjorgvinson et al (2012) described several significant shifts that have recently taken place in architectural thinking and practice; namely how design focus has shifted from the work space to the public realm, and how this shift led to new modes of production which required ‘alternative’, ‘innovative’, bottom-up and long-term collaborative practice. Political shifts were also described, towards “engagement with publics around controversial issues” as compared with “design with predefined groups of users” (“publics” here implying the blurring of traditional distinctions between public/private and state/market). Furthermore, Bjorgvinson et al showed how these shifts have all led to a move towards processes/strategies rather than projects, and how “agonistic democracy”



challenged authority through “engaged publics”. In this regard, this paper’s authors draw from their years of engaged experience at the Malmo Living Labs (MML) working with groups such as a grassroots hip-hop organisations and multi-ethnic women, all first and second generation migrant communities.

These collaborations led to an engagement with intangible aspects such as the marginalisation experienced by certain social groups in the city – leading to solutions that allowed for them to ‘be seen’ and ultimately toward ‘legitimacy and visibility’. Correspondingly, the authors also developed a focus on ‘social innovation’ rather than, what they refer to as, ‘a narrow focus on technical innovation’. These ‘constructive controversies’, moreover, proved more likely to generate ‘creative innovations’ vis-à-vis ‘rational decision-making’. Thus, what this paper calls for is the establishments of “networks of working relations ... that make technical systems possible.” This is a key shift away from a rubric of projects with design and technology components to a way of thinking about the social systems that facilitate production: “...co-creation as a collective interweaving of people, objects and processes”.

### **Privilege, power, and positioning**

The above approach relates strongly to ideas articulated by Habraken many years ago around society and production: “...production is shaped by social structure and society organizes itself around production...” (Habraken, 1985). Acknowledging the built environment as a social ecosystem, UJ\_UNIT2 recognises that architectural design holds an unjust position of power. The unit therefore attempts to employ critical processes that articulate the various values held by the variety of its local stakeholders (rather than centering on those of the designer).

Since existing systems (reflected in space and form) have been established and transformed gradually over time as a corollary of social organisation, it follows that it is vital to avoid major disruptions through the introduction of alien or incompatible values and forms, which may ultimately be rejected in any case (much of this, like the spectacle of modernist utopias, was created over the last century). Kendall (2015) articulated this principle thus: “... TYPES are a primary nutrient in the cultivation of the built field. Ignorance of the types that grow well in [a particular context’s] soil mean that we (architects) will always be at a disadvantage if we try to make new interventions grow healthy roots in this particular soil. When we don’t know these types, and try to make new ones, it’s like a gardener being ignorant of the soil and the plant types that thrive in that soil, and who, trying to be creative and inventive, attempts to make new flowers never seen before. The chances that they will fail to take root are large!”

The critical positioning of ‘design’ as well as the designer within such complex spatial conditions necessitates a cultivation of certain ethical approaches. This shifting of the role of the designer is, in effect, a call to the adoption of new modes of practice and education and, consequently, also to new methods and forms of representation. The latter is particularly crucial, not only because conventional architectural and planning representation falls short of offering a useful means of designing with such complexity, but moreover it is often perceived to be alienating to those whose environments it represents and hence reinforces the distance between the professional and the user (as opposed to encouraging user agency, whether individual or collective). New forms of representation therefore need to be accessible to the stakeholders served by the profession.

Adopted processes of architecture need to establish trust between the professional and the communities being served, they need to avoid unnecessarily disrupting existing systems and they need to engage with complexity rather than try to “sort out the mess” (Hamdi, 2010). Again borrowing from another field, McGarry (2013) explained how “methodological approaches for writing and analysis” aimed to establish trust with participants, to “do no harm,” to avoid easy categories and acknowledge complexity, to aim to “demystify” process and to resist the urge to romanticise participants’ voices. Each one of these principles is equally valid in architectural practice.

McGarry (2013) further elaborated on the values driving this approach: “It explored ethical engagement as a shared responsibility and shared authority between research and research participants, or in this case Responsible Participant and participant citizens. The practices that I engaged with and explored in this work did not see the participants as vulnerable subjects without their own moral intuition, but rather sees informed consent being developed through a process that is constantly negotiated by all those involved in the practice as it evolves.”

## UJ\_UNIT2: an experiment in architectural education

### ‘Levels’ of practice: individual and collective, tangible and intangible

In its approach, UJ\_UNIT2 has adopted the concept of Open Building which manages distributed control of environmental decision-making: “It is also about change. Healthy environments are never finished. Time enters. Like living organisms, living environments replenish themselves part by part. In that process, who decides about what, and when? These are the central questions of Open Building. Some decisions have to be shared (we live with other people after all and share *some* values and environmental aspirations). Other decisions have to be personal (we are individuals too, with our own motivations and dreams and possibilities). Thus Open Building architecture shows the imprint of both. If this were not the case, the result would be prisons (devoid of individual freedom) or anarchy (everyone for themselves). Neither extreme, of course, is a desirable one. But mediating and managing these potential extremes is neither a task for engineers, nor for policy makers. Rather, given its social and spatial complexity, and the knowledges and skills this entails, it is most appropriately an architectural task” (Kendall et al. 2015).

The UJ\_UNIT2 assignments have aimed to encourage students to consider the relationships between systems, infrastructure and people, and to consider individual and collective needs and how these are mediated through built form. Students have been encouraged to pay particular attention to ‘levels’ of the built environment (the urban level, the building level, etc.) as well as to detect the methods of negotiation that happen in the built environment – as well as how that negotiation is facilitated (or hindered) by the spatial and structural qualities of the area.

Further to its principle of co-production, UJ\_UNIT2 has also operated in an ‘in-house’ dialogue with the STUDIO AT DENVER and other initiatives at the Faculty of Arts, Design and Architecture (FADA) at the University of Johannesburg. The UJ\_UNIT2 project briefs have been deliberately and carefully structured to enable the achievement of a balance between the physical and the socio-cultural conditions. However the briefs also acknowledged that built form—carefully considered—may facilitate and support socio-cultural processes. In this way, the unit has embarked on these dialogues with an aim towards tangible and intangible systems and outputs.

The coordinators of the STUDIO AT DENVER embodied a similar approach in terms of thinking on multiple levels of the built environment: “In our approach this top-down would need to include spatial development frameworks, development plans, National Upgrading Support Programme (NUSP) reports etc. If we are able to quantify and summarise the province's/city's stance on the site this will inform the formulation of design proposals to be both radical and realistic as an interpretation/response to local government intentions” (Eric Wright in Kendall et al., 2015).

There was also a concern with regards to looking, “... too heavily to the physical aspects of context. The [later] immersive process will call for cultural and social sensitivities. We suggest including time frames for (*limited*) transformation immediate, medium term and long term strategies/goals” (Eric Wright in Kendall et al., 2015). This led to UJ\_UNIT2 developing a framework for Denver that envisioned small scale, immediate interventions through to larger, longer term spatial strategies.



**Figures 4 and 5: Denver, Johannesburg: density, form, scale as a starting point, prior to immersion in context.**

Each brief was carefully designed to allow students the freedom to develop their own stance on design practice, supported by the experience, tools and methods of the unit co-leaders. Students were encouraged to critically engage users in context in order to foster their own techniques of engagement, while grounding this experience with specific literature and theory suggested by the unit leaders.

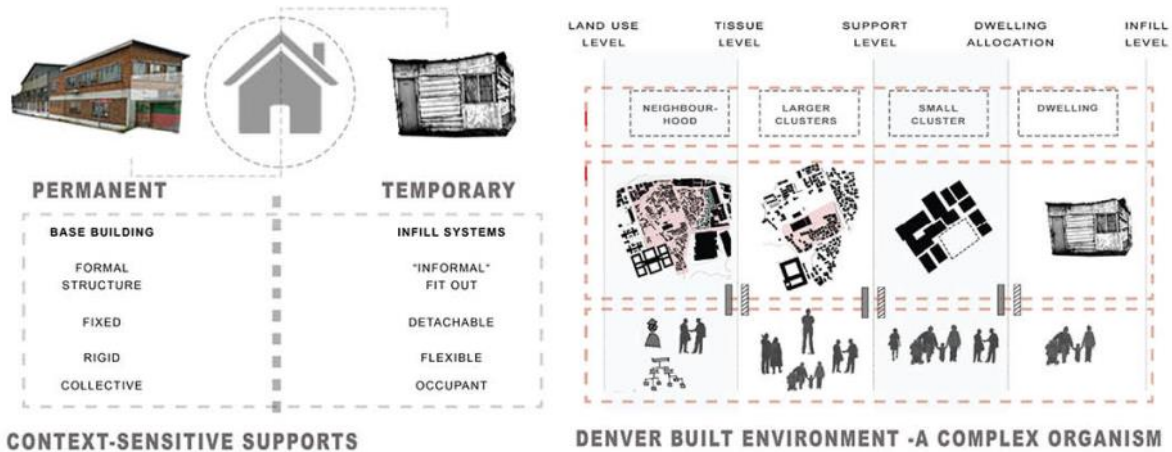
The UJ-UNIT2 ‘education experiment’ is intended to raise new questions, and in the process to discover ‘other’ ways of practice. Through an intensive engagement with urban form, students are encouraged to develop skills in design, density, form, scale, services, materials and technology, prior to an actual social immersion within a neighbourhood – after which prior developed forms are re-assessed and refined based on a deeper understanding of context.

#### **UJ\_UNIT2 studio outputs: different process, different products**

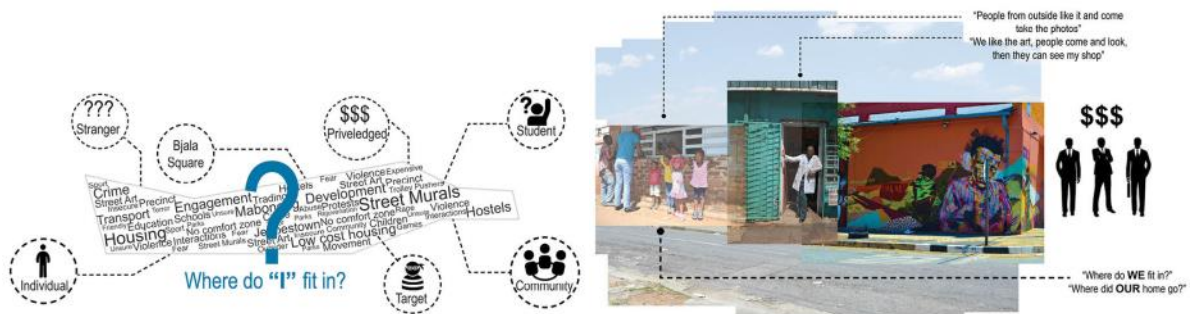
Students developed a competency in ‘time-based design’ and the exploration of capacious typologies in architecture. The social systems of production are addressed through understanding many times intangible processes of negotiation, transaction, territory, ownership and deal making. Students are empowered to formulate positions that will allow them to be better-equipped to influence higher-level policies and translate these into lower level project interventions.

The ‘artefacts’ produced in the unit are also different from a more ‘conventional’ architectural studio, in that the intangible processes, which translate into space and form, must be understood, analysed and graphically communicated. Given this new and complex terrain, the authors (coordinators of UJ-UNIT2) therefore are also still in the process of developing a terminology to better describe the studio outputs: ‘agency architecture mapping’ and ‘socio-technical spatial design’ are still tentative headings.

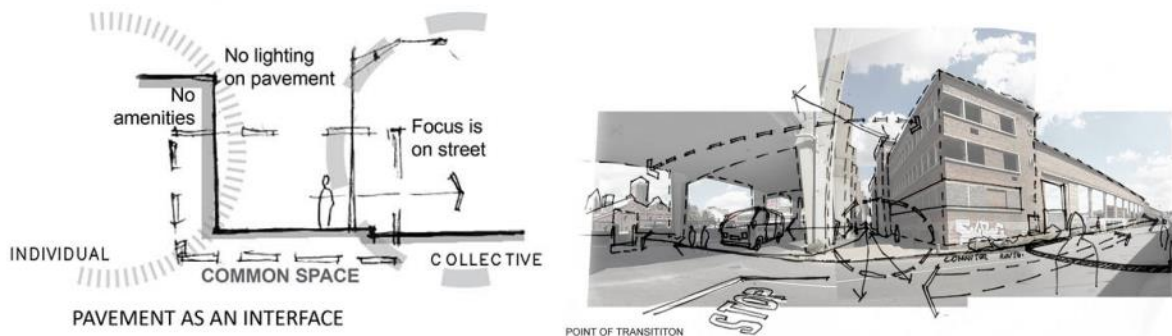
The unit also draws upon a number of other fields, including information architecture and development studies, as the idea of translating data and social relationships into spatial and technical interventions resonates strongly within these fields, as well as the shared concern of dealing with extreme complexity without over-simplifying solutions (albeit in different forms and with different focus areas). This is demonstrated with a few examples in the images below.



Figures 6 and 7: Explorations on Denver, Johannesburg and “occupant agency through design” by UJ\_UNIT2 student Simon Ngubeni.



Figures 8 and 9: understanding systems of the built environment – diagram representing the dynamics of Bjala Square in Jeppestown, Johannesburg by UJ\_UNIT2 student Andrea Relling.



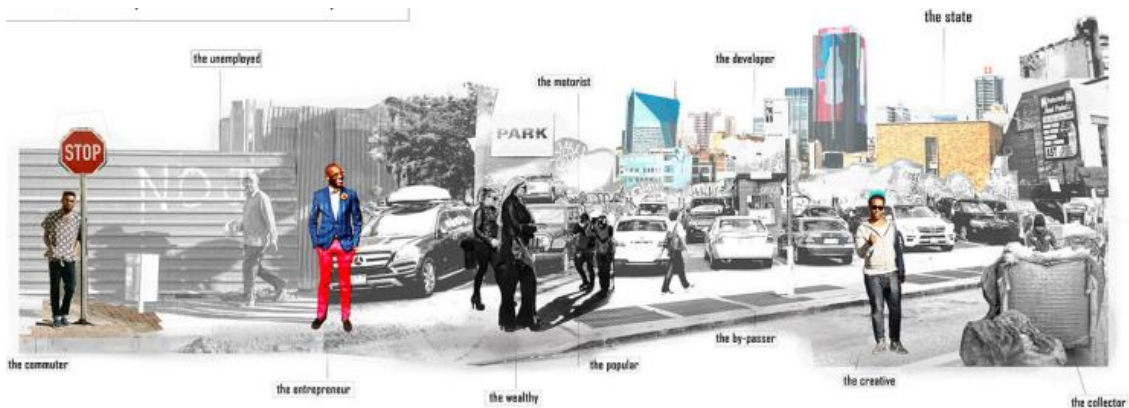
Figures 10 and 11: understanding how the built environment mediates between the individual and the collective to develop decision-making strategies – Johannesburg explorations by UJ\_UNIT2 student Simon Ngubeni.



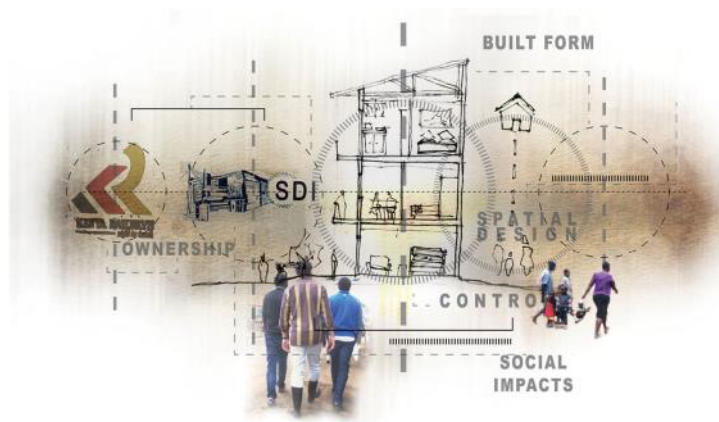
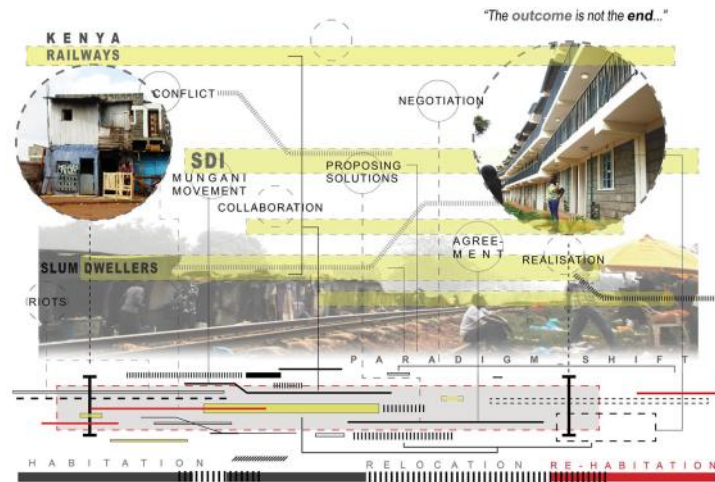
Figure 12: prior to developing design interventions, mapping the dynamics of interaction between different user groups in the spaces adjacent to and beneath the infrastructure of an inner city context of Johannesburg – a diagram by UJ\_UNIT2 student Sibusiso Lwandle.



Figures 13: explorations by UJ\_UNIT2 student David Pratt into the importance of well-located, safe and sufficient space for traders to set out their goods and to have good interaction with pedestrians.



Figures 14, 15, 16: explorations by UJ\_UNIT2 Mfundo Magongo student into the use of public space in various contexts in Johannesburg – the student has a particular interest in public space and protest.



Figures 17 and 18: understanding how “negotiation, transacting and deal-making” processes impact on the development of informal settlement upgrading projects in Nairobi, Kenya by UJ\_UNIT2 students Simon Ngubeni and Kashiya Mbinjama – this project is a negotiation between the railway agency in Kenya and the squatters that inhabited the line in certain sections of Nairobi.



Figures 19: a portrayal of the railway project in Nairobi by UJ\_UNIT2 students Manuel Simon, Clara Senatore and Sibusiso Lwandle: an attempt to understand how people are using the railway line and how these dynamics might be better managed.

## Conclusion

The paper has questioned some of the many objections and obstacles to ethical thinking and practice in architecture (alternative as marginal, ethical as reductionist or dogmatic, etc.), offering its own positioning, development of processes, and examples of application.

The paper also discussed how considered collaboration and application of other fields such the field of ethics in philosophy, information architecture and development studies, have the potential to enrich (not override) various aspects of architectural education. The point is worth noting, for many a well-intentioned design professional, perhaps feeling overwhelmed by the challenges of the built environment in South Africa and other similar contexts, can shy away from the core architectural skills set—the production of space and form—believing it to be inappropriate or insufficient in certain contexts. Despite its stance regarding equity and the engagements of Open Building dynamics, the unit yet affirms the role of architecture, for design and building can possess profound potentialities: to empower, to educate and to facilitate; or to alienate, disempower and disadvantage. This all is part of the complexity and the challenge that UJ-UNIT2 has embraced; for engaged practitioners and teachers must recognise their own positioning, identify where design has the most impact and value, and then direct their creative focus on the architectural scale while still recognising the complexity of the higher levels of intervention.

At its core, UJ-UNIT2 is essentially about people, the relationships between people and the role that the built environment plays in managing those relationships – with the built environment as a ‘mediator’ – between individual and collective aspirations. Thus, UJ\_UNIT2 consistently oscillates between the spatial/physical and the socio/cultural. This is further presented in the context of the discourse of human rights and what happens when this is brought into architecture. The authors argue that this is not simply an extension of familiar ethics, but rather takes on its own particular character, such as ‘enabling agency’.

UJ\_UNIT2 promotes a very particular approach to the concepts of ‘agency’ as well as the familiar rubric of ‘community engagement’. The unit’s focus on Open Building means that buildings and space are designed to allow for use and re-use over time. Since Open Building projects have been designed with a view for increased capacity for adaptation and change, resonating with different people over time, these buildings have been described—in a word that appears almost alien in a discipline with, often, over-intellectualised terms of reference—as being “lovable” by Open Building practitioners (Geiser, 2006). Mediation, positioning, relevance and time, however, all are concepts that need to become part of mainstream practice rather than a continued peripheralisation within the architectural discipline. This surely is, indeed, an ethical question; and one at the very core of debates on the relevance of the profession today.

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# Transforming the Training: Ethical considerations in Re-designing an Incubation Model aimed to Train Aspiring Fashion Design Entrepreneurs

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## Abstract

*Empowerment incubation is a strategy to address unemployment in South Africa. It was determined during 2013 that 50% of jobs were lost in the South African Clothing and Textile Industry since 2003. Contrariwise, this situation has presented opportunities for prevailing local fashion design businesses to collaborate on government funded initiatives that promote transformation and empowerment linked to entrepreneurial opportunities. Consequently there has been a sharp increase over the last five years of hubs, centers of excellence and incubators that provide experiential learning opportunities, business support as well as access to expertise and into the marketplace to candidates who aspire to find ways to improve their own socio-economic circumstances through an entrepreneurial career route. The candidates selected for these initiatives often include aspiring designers with insufficient access to formal training opportunities. These candidates would typically embrace an incubation programme that incorporates vocational training due to the advocated prospects of an improved future.*

*This paper reports on the principles needed to guide an incubation model for a fashion design incubation hub that offers training programmes on the relevant vocational, as well as business skills. The research was required to guide the re-design of an incubation model, because the drop-out rate was 50% within the first six months after inception. The research problem addressed in this paper revolves around the question: which principles should a selected hub incorporate in the incubation model to adhere to ethical conduct pertaining to the transformation of aspiring candidates into fashion design entrepreneurs? In-depth interviews with three social entrepreneurs enabled the researcher to identify the principles that could guide the model of an incubation hub that needs to follow an approach which aims to transform and empower aspiring fashion designers into fashion design entrepreneurs.*

*Empirical data is presented from the researcher's interviews and reflections on the uncomfortable truth discovered during interviews. The identified principles provide some guidance for the selection, support and realistic results that empowerment incubation hubs should keep in mind. The identified principles can enable empowerment incubators to be more accountable for the results that they promise.*

**Keywords:** *incubation, entrepreneurship, accountability, vocational training*

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## Introduction

Good intentions to provide training programmes to entrepreneurs in incubation hubs can have detrimental consequences if the training programmes and incubation models are not guided by principles that relate to the specific purpose of the incubation. Good intentions regarding skills development in hubs often relate to improving the socio-economic circumstances of unemployed people (Basu & Biswas 2013, p.199). The socio-economic problems related to job losses in the South African Clothing and Textile industry in particular has raised concern and the government therefore supports and encourages initiatives that facilitate entrepreneurship (Tilly et al. 2013). Statistics

presented in 2013 suggest that 50% of jobs were lost in the South African Clothing and Textile Industry since 2003 (Nattrass & Seekings 2014). Inversely, this job crisis has presented opportunities for prevailing local fashion design businesses to collaborate on government funded initiatives to facilitate SMME venture start-ups. The purpose of such initiatives is to support candidates who aspire to find ways to improve their own socio-economic circumstances through an entrepreneurial career route (Hopkins 2012). Consequently there has been a sharp increase over the last five years in incubation hubs<sup>52</sup> with a focus on creating jobs through entrepreneurship (Masutha & Rogerson 2014; Ababio & Meyer 2012). These hubs are often managed by private companies and financially supported by the local Government, but appropriate principles that should guide the training programmes offered in hubs, to enable the hub owners and/or managers to attain the intended results are often lacking.

The aim of this paper is to report on the principles that can be incorporated into an empowerment incubation hub model purposed to train and develop aspiring fashion design entrepreneurs. Although there are many best practice principles for business incubation programmes (Bergek & Norrman 2008), guidance on the principles for a hub model which offers training of technical and business skills with the aim to empower the candidates to become entrepreneurs in fashion design businesses is needed. These principles can guide the practices in hubs that assist the owners and/or managers to set realistic goals during and after the incubation programme.

This paper will provide an overview of the best practices of incubation hubs, principles associated with business incubation and a discussion on how programmes in different types of incubators should differ according to their purpose. This section is followed by the methodology implemented to yield findings on the principles that informed the model of a specific incubation initiative in a well-established clothing design SMME hub where aspiring fashion design entrepreneurs are supported to develop the skillset relevant to become fashion design entrepreneurs. This paper presents answers to the research question: which principles should an accountable incubation hub for fashion design entrepreneurs incorporate in their incubation model aimed to transform aspiring candidates into fashion design entrepreneurs?

## Literature review

### Best Practice Principles for Business Incubation

Incubators make a positive contribution to a county's economy especially with regard to job creation (Basu & Biswas 2013, p. 199). There are several types of incubators that are categorised according to their purposes. An overarching purpose of any incubator is to provide support to start-up businesses within a formal environment or community (Perdomo, Alvarez & Urbano 2014, p.40). Start-up businesses need support as they are often vulnerable to threats in the market environment for example threats due to market competitors and problems with suppliers (Ropega 2001, p.476). The support that business incubators offer range from creating new technologies, offering access to different networks, supporting and accelerating small businesses in their start-up phases to providing training intended to develop the candidates' skills and their business ideas (Bollingtoft 2012, p.304; Moraru & Rusei 2012, p.107). Although every business incubator's model may vary, it seems that the purpose of business incubation links to business development. It is usually determined from an economic perspective which revolves around how the incubator mobilises productive and competitive enterprises that are able to be sustainable when separated from the incubator.

Business productivity from an economic perspective is often facilitated through programmes on business planning, mentorship on know-how in business as well as support to financial access (Ewere, Adu & Ibrahim 2015). What is seen as an advantage of these programmes is that they are flexible (Boahin, Eggink & Hofman 2014), which implies that candidates can select the programmes

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<sup>52</sup>The terms incubation hubs include business accelerators and incubators that provide experiential learning opportunities, business support as well as access to expertise.

and support they require as needed. The requirement or needs for programmes are guided by one principle: lowering failure rate in the initial start-up phase (Aerts et al. 2007 p.254). One might argue that although this principle directs the programmes aimed to equip start-up businesses to survive in the economic climate of a country, it is not clear how the programmes are adjusted or structured in different incubation models to focus on the specific candidate's needs or the possible gaps that candidates might have to become entrepreneurial. A sound knowledge foundation accompanied by realistic expectations that relate to being an entrepreneur should be as important as the business' survival. A focus only on the business' performance might present some challenges in incubator models purposed to empower candidates to become entrepreneurial.

### **Best Practice Principles for Empowerment Incubators**

Incubation is often used in emerging economies for empowerment purposes by leveraging talent and creating value ventures as a result (Basu & Biswas 2013, p.199). These type of incubators are called minority or empowerment incubators (Lewis et al. 2011, p.17). Although an empowerment incubator is a type of business incubator which follows a similar model to business incubators, the purpose of the incubation programmes offered in this type of incubator is aligned to empower the candidate in becoming more entrepreneurial and start a business thereafter. Landig (2011) assert that for empowerment purposes incubation programmes should always include training and support to complete a business plan, provide access to finance, and in addition offer more extensive mentorship that continues between one and three years after incubation. Empowerment incubation models often include vocational training programmes if the entrepreneur needs an understanding of a specific vocation in an industry (for example the Textile and Clothing industry) before launching a business.

### **Vocational Training and Support in Incubation Programmes in Empowerment Incubators**

Vocational training (such as fashion design and clothing construction) can be linked to competence based training especially in an incubation environment (Wheelahan 2012, p.152). Competence or competency can be understood as the specification of knowledge and skill and the application of that knowledge and skill to the standard of performance expected in the workplace or the progression through training when an ability to perform a specific task is demonstrated by the candidate (Brightwell & Grant 2013, p.107). Competency based training is a way to place the primary emphasis on what a person can do as the result of the training (outcome) (Ayonmike, Chijioke & Okeke 2014). However, processes to measure performance criteria and recognition of prior learning (RPL) are required especially when competency based training programmes allow flexibility (Boahin, Eggink & Hofman 2014). RPL practice is recommended as a principle that guides the content of the incubation programme and can also be used to determine in which areas the candidate will need more support to improve competency.

In addition to RPL practice, Harris et al. (1995, p.26) identified six principles that should guide competency based training; 1) proper outcomes must be structured and aligned to industry competence standards, 2) the curriculum should give the learner a clear indication of the expectations in the workplace and training should be aligned accordingly, 3) delivery should be flexible and learners must be able to exercise initiative, 4) assessment should measure performance against competence standards, 5) reporting must be shared and understood by the learner and 6) persons demonstrating all prescribed competences in an accredited course or training program should obtain a credential or statement of attainment which is recognised within the national framework.

Richards (2014) emphasises that industry should be involved in competence based training especially with regard to the assessment of outcomes or competencies. This industry involvement is usually very accessible from an incubation environment and can therefore be viewed as a strength of incubators. However, the incubation model should involve all the mentioned principles through the vocational programmes offered as well as mentorship on entrepreneurship. Therefore, structures and programmes should be in place to accommodate the desired flexibility and mentorship on what entrepreneurial approaches entail.

From the above literature it is apparent that competency based training programmes can be applicable to empowerment incubation models, because it can be aligned to a task that the candidate should be able to perform and it can be flexible so that a candidate who is competent in one area can focus more on becoming competent in other areas. It is also apparent that there are some guiding principles for the programmes and what the vocational training should entail or adhere to. Nevertheless, the principles to align the incubation programmes to a model that supports the training programmes is not provided for a specific context. Therefore a method to gain insight into the principles that can guide incubation models applicable to empowerment incubation of fashion design entrepreneurs are explained in the next section.

## Research methodology

### Context

The enquiry in this paper formed the first phase of a larger study for a specific fashion design incubation hub that was launched in 2011 by a well-established fashion house in Gauteng on their premises. The need for the research was apparent when the drop-out rate was 50% after only six months from inception. The hub was purposed to train and develop fashion clothing designers (technical and business related skills) who wanted to start-up their own fashion lines from the hub (intrapreneurship) or alternatively start-up an own SMME (entrepreneurship). The programme was supposed to be funded by a Governmental institution that also committed to support the incubation model that guides the training programmes. Unfortunately this Governmental institution was closed down during the implementation phase and the intended support did not realise. The hub-owners requested that research was done so that it could inform a new approach to the programme offered to the remaining 20 candidates in the hub.

### Research Paradigm

A qualitative approach to this research phase was deemed appropriate as the researcher was interested in exploring the views and experiences of the participants (Babbie & Mouton 2001, p.80). More specifically this paper presents a phase in the field study research design with the objective to explore which principles had to guide the model so that the practice in the incubation hub was directed to develop fashion design entrepreneurship.

### Data Collection

A purposive sample was used to select participants that could provide insight into a topic they are familiar with. De Vos et al. (2011, p.232) assert that purposive samples are suitable when the participants have to comply with certain criteria that will enable the researcher to acquire appropriate information. Because of the limited number of social entrepreneurs that met the inclusion criteria, only three acknowledged social entrepreneurs were selected to participate in this phase of the study. The social entrepreneurs could provide an insider's perspective on empowerment incubation. The participants were selected according to the following sample criteria:

- 1) the participants had to have at least 10 years of experience with empowerment incubation;
- 2) the participants had to be from Gauteng province (they had understand the communities and clothing industry in Gauteng); and
- 3) the participants had to have an incubation model which could incorporate vocational training programmes.

In-depth interviews with participants were conducted during the first phase of the study. One interview with the first participant, one interview with the second participant and three interviews with the third participant was done during the first research phase. The interview schedule contained standard questions and several probes. Interview probes were not always used in the same order because the researcher allowed the participants to speak so that thick descriptions could be acquired during the data collection period. Two interview questions in this phase related to the overall approach to empowerment incubation (models) and the challenges that the participants encountered so that the principles for an empowerment incubation model could be derived.

Interviews were done over a period of two months in the first phase of the research, however after the two months regular meetings, interviews were continued with only one of the participants whose incubation model seemed to have the most applicable principles to support the fashion incubation hub's training programme.

### Data Analysis

Data analysis was done with a strategy that the researcher developed following the guidelines of De Vos et al. (2011, pp.410–416) as well as Miles and Huberman (1994, p.17). The following steps were implemented to analyse the data: 1) the interview schedule was used to create initial categories in tables for each interview, 2) all information from interview transcriptions and field notes of each interview was processed in the tables (phrase by phrase), 3) categories, sub-categories and units of meaning were created as they emerged from the data and 4) the categories in all the interviews were compared and units of meaning were moved to the relevant categories or sub-categories.

### Findings and discussions

The findings presented in Table 1 reveals the three main principles that can guide empowerment incubation models as they were derived from interviews.

Participant	Principle Identified	Participant View	Researcher's Reflections on the Statements
P1t <sup>53</sup>	Effective recruitment	<i>You can't take in candidates that are not at a certain point of development. If they don't understand: me and only me is responsible for me, then we can't try and empower them.</i>	Internal locus of candidates is important
P2		<i>We ask the candidates to be responsible. This means we are assuming they are able to respond. Many of the people you want to incubate are not able to respond yet. Most of these candidates are unconsciously incompetent. They don't know what they do not know.</i>	Competence (ability to respond) should be at a specific level
P3		<i>Recruitment is key [to success and avoid drop-out rates]. You must provide exposure to several jobs in an industry. They must be given access to opportunities to explore what a job is really about. They must be able to choose. Anything is better than nothing for some of these people. You cannot take people with stars in their eyes if they are not ready. We call it readiness. We never say no, but sometimes we have to say: 'not yet'. People get hurt...</i>	Exposure to other jobs in the industry is important before selection of candidates  Readiness is something that needs to be determined before an incubation programme starts
P1t	Family or community support	<i>I have seen that the boys in my programme don't even want to mix with their friends in our area anymore. They have sort of outgrown the others. They have seen what is out there now and they want to get out of here to get better opportunities...</i>	Taking the candidates out of their communities can create gaps between candidates and their communities

<sup>53</sup> Participant 1: this data was translated from Afrikaans to English, therefore the coding for the participant's name is P1t

P2		<i>We decentralise this type of skill [clothing manufacturing] and create the hub in the communities so that the hub becomes part of that world.</i>	Involve community
P3		<i>...it is just too much of a gap between the candidate who was incubated and their family...so they break away from their families or simply go back to struggling with the family When we transform [empower], we transform families, not individuals. So it should be one family at a time.</i>	Family support should be part of the programme
P3	Support failure in the hub	<i>Failure should be anticipated so that it is supported. Failure needs to be celebrated as a learning tool... We have to fail, otherwise we cannot learn. When we learn from our mistakes, the Americans have a saying "we fail forward".</i>	Creating an environment that embraces failure should be part of incubation
P1t	Set realistic goals with regard to the deliverables for entrepreneurship	<i>These guys still need our input long after they start a business. We connect them with guys that help with business skills because it is tough if they start...</i>	Candidates will need ongoing business mentorship and support on business skills
P2		<i>You can enhance the competence level of the person up to a certain level. Usually in this [3 year] timeframe if you are lucky, you can develop tools and have the candidate use the tools. This level is where the person starts to take initiative and can do the task. But not everyone will get to the higher competency levels to be an entrepreneur that requires a lot of abstract problem solving and things like that.</i>	Initiative can take time to develop and not all the candidates have the ability to be an entrepreneur
P3		<i>I do not like this notion of "the entrepreneur". Solo entrepreneurship should be avoided at all cost. Entrepreneurship is a team sport. "The" entrepreneur is born and there is a very small percentage of them. One cannot teach business. There is a difference between business and commerce. You grow up in a business family or you are adopted [mentored] by a business family. All those families know that you have to fail first and they will support each other. The people you work with here should have that? So can you say that you are training entrepreneurs?</i>	Not all the candidates in the hub are entrepreneurial. Facilitate realistic expectations and different levels. The incubation hub cannot take accountability for incubating "the entrepreneur" Failure is an important aspect of any business/entrepreneurial venture

**Table 1: Guiding principles for empowerment incubation models**

The findings presented in Table 1 suggest that an empowerment incubation hub offering vocational training and access to business skills development should in principle implement 1) an effective recruitment process, 2) set realistic goals with regard to the deliverables related to entrepreneurship, and 3) provide support by involving family and community as well as support systems for failure.

Effective recruitment should ideally involve a process that allows candidates to explore other job opportunities in addition to the opportunity that the hub is offering. In this regard, Swanson and Fouad (2014) confirm that an informed career decision based on several options is in the best interest of the potential candidate and holds the candidate accountable for his/her own choice. In addition effective recruitment also requires that the competence levels of the potential candidates are assessed before incubation starts so that the programme and support that the candidate needs can be provided. This is in line with the suggestions made for empowerment incubation as provided by Landig (2011). Landig (2011) also confirms that working with competence levels requires that some flexibility should be managed in the programme to accommodate individual needs. From the findings it also seems that competency levels in an empowerment incubator relates to more than being competent with regard to a specific vocation (for example fashion design and production). It may also relate to the candidate's readiness with regard to entrepreneurial performance or skills.

The goals of the incubation model for empowerment should always be realistic. It is apparent in the findings, that the participants are sceptic about the expectations that empowerment incubation hubs can create regarding the competency levels of entrepreneurs, which requires a high level of business thinking and an entrepreneurial attitude which is cultivated in business families or through mentorship (Ward 2011). It seems that some literature does distinguish between a person with business skills and an entrepreneur. An entrepreneur is usually defined as the person who starts a business and in addition to business skills has creativity and innovativeness in a problem solving context (Longenecker et al. 2013, p.47). This problem solving perspective that involves creativity and innovation are not necessarily addressed in vocational training programmes or in the empowerment incubation environments. In this regard the incubation hub should in principle not create expectations about incubating entrepreneurs but rather aim to develop entrepreneurship which is the result of a team that collectively has the relevant skills in the hub.

Moreover, providing support is an important principle that should guide the model of the empowerment incubator. Although support by mentors and support in terms of access to resources and networks are associated with business incubation (Mata Garcia, Deserti & Teixeira 2013), the participants in this study refer to a wider support system: family and community support as well as support when failure happens, so that failure is celebrated as a learning tool that moves people forward. Including family or community does however have important implication relating to the location of an empowerment incubator. The participants' clearly indicate that taking individuals out of their communities without their families to empower them can create gaps between the candidate and their support system (usually their families or communities), which can harm the candidates.

The family or community support is pivotal to the success of entrepreneurs, therefore the location of the incubation hub should involve family and communities so that the candidates in the programmes are supported by their own support network when they succeed but also when they "fail forward" so that they can learn from their mistakes.

## Conclusion

The owners of incubation hubs or all the stakeholders involved should bear in mind that they are accountable for attaining the goals that they set and the results that they promise to deliver, despite the challenges that they encounter during the process.

The vocational programmes as well as the business training should be flexible to accommodate the needs of individuals when specific needs are identified during an effective recruitment process. Effective recruitment should also involve exposure to other options for jobs in the industry so that



candidates can make informed choices. The ethical conduct of the incubation hub is therefore supposed to start before the actual incubation programme. Another principle that should underpin the incubation model for empowerment, is creating realistic expectations relating to attainable results, especially with regard to incubating individuals to become entrepreneurs as opposed to entrepreneurship (teamwork). The principle of support should be implemented with families and communities so that a candidate is incubated with a support system even at home and a limited gap should be created between the candidate and the family and community. Support should therefore be facilitated by the hub to enable the family or community to support the candidate should the candidate fail or prevail.

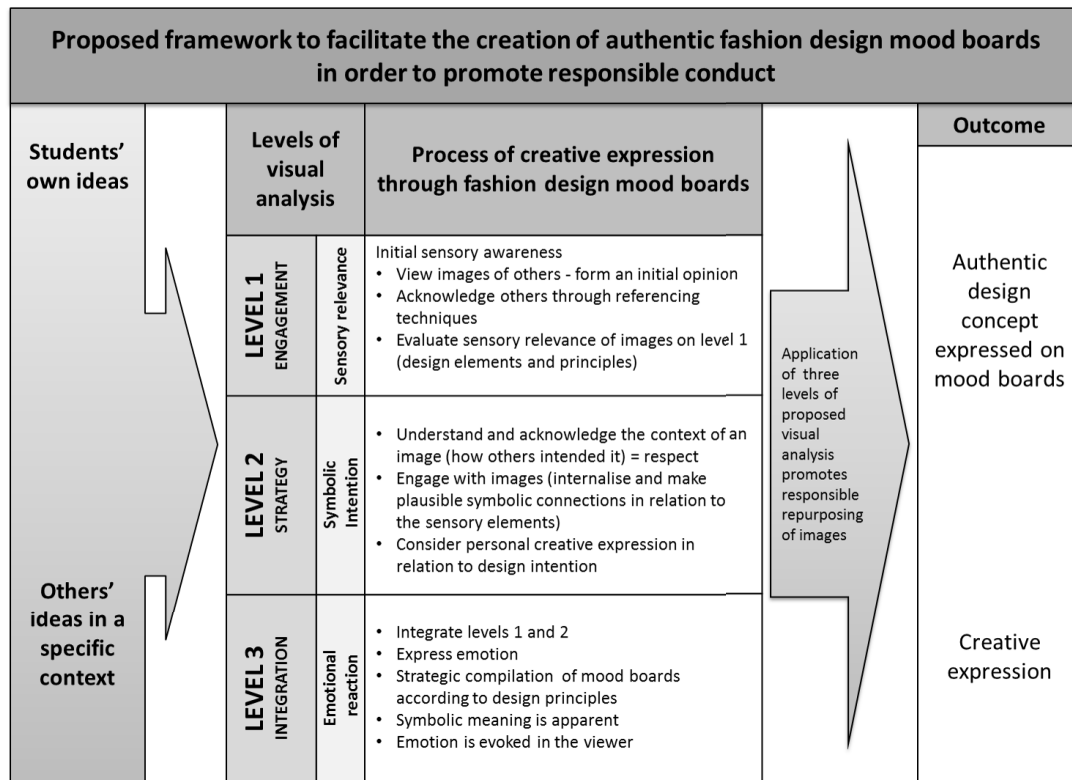
The principles provided in this paper may enable the candidates as well as the incubator owners to be accountable for the results that they obtain. People with intentions to empower others through incubation should reflect about the principles they will implement especially when it comes to accountability. This paper is therefore concludes with a statement from one of the participants who is experienced in the area of empowerment incubation: "If you can't put results first and ego last, it is not worth the effort, because people will get hurt."

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**Figure 1: Diagrammatic representation of the proposed framework to support the creation of authentic fashion design mood boards in order to promote ethical conduct (self-constructed)**

The risk for unaccountable behaviour during the process of conceptualising and communicating a design concept situates largely within levels one and two. If a student does not engage responsibly during the first two levels, it may result in copying, or simply repurposing without reflecting, which would not be appropriate conduct that supports the authenticity of the design ideas generated and communicated on mood boards.

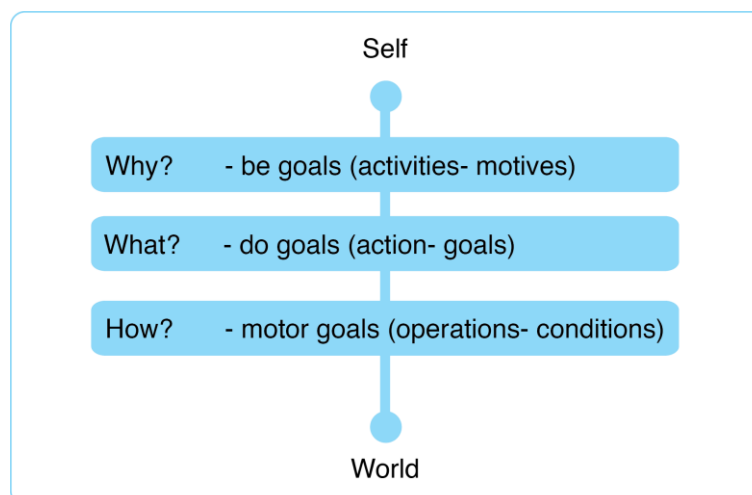
## Conclusion

Accountability when fashion design students repurpose existing images when creating mood boards needs to be further explored in terms of authenticity. The primary argument of the paper is that theory concerning the design process provides limited guidelines to inform appropriate conduct for accountability during the ideation phase of the design process. This paper contributes to fashion design education and addresses this issue by presenting a conceptual framework that proposes a strategy to support the creation of a design concept that is authentic. It is suggested that authenticity can be a result of the student's responsible repurposing of images for fashion design mood boards, after turning inward to reflect and then turning outward to visually communicate the intended design concept. The framework proposes a process that can enhance authenticity and accountability during the mood board creation process. The proposed methods in phase one can involve evaluation of existing images in a workshop where students communicate the sensory relevance of the images and acknowledge the creators of the images. The second phase can be facilitated by means of analysis help sheets that probe the students' thinking on the symbolic meaning of the images in relation to an intended design concept. This help sheet could involve a written narrative on the meaning of the individual images and then collectively as a combined concept. The third level of visual analysis should portray the process followed in levels one and two so that the intended emotion is evident. An action research approach is recommended to evaluate the effectiveness of the first two levels of visual analysis of the framework in order to achieve the strategy of provoking an emotion on the third level.

& Hanington 2012, p. 58), *Collage* (Martin & Hanington 2012 p. 34) and *Role-Playing* (Martin & Hanington 2012, p. 148).

While it is true that any shared understanding will to an extent help the designer better understand the user, when designing (particularly with vulnerable or resource- scarce communities) there is an increased ethical need that design solutions are relevant and applicable in order to “maximize the purchasers’ investment” (Marsden, in Rogers et al 2012, p. 452). In order to ensure that design solutions are as appropriate as possible, an emphasis on constructing effective research practice needs to be in place.

To help focus participatory research inquiry, this paper puts forward Marc Hassenzahl’s *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model (2010, p. 12, 44) and his *Top-10 Psychological Needs* (p. 46) framework as a viable approach for guiding practice. The *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model (see Figure 2) is based on Activity Theory (Hassenzahl 2010, p. 44- 45) and articulates how user-goals can be divided into three levels, which he terms *be-goals*, *do-goals* and *motor-goals*. A user- goal is an expectation of an end-condition that is personal to the user (Cooper et al 2007, p. 15). From a design perspective, the envisioned product, service or system is designed to facilitate the users’ achievement of their intended goals. User-goals are a fundamental concern for any design field that seeks to understand and design for human interaction.



**Figure 2: Adapted from Hassenzahl’s *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* (2010, p. 45)**

The *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* describes how the individual user relates to the world through action (Hassenzahl 2010, p. 44). A *do-goal*, which sits at the middle level of the hierarchy, is a concrete outcome the person performing the action wants to achieve. For example, a *do-goal* would be ‘monitor their bank account’. *Do-goals* generally do not change much over time. For example, today one can simply use a mobile phone go on line to see banking details while ten years ago you would need to go to an ATM, and twenty years ago it would entail visiting a bank branch.

*Motor-goals* at the lowest level of the hierarchy are the sub-units of actions that collectively contribute to how a *do- goal* is achieved. While *do-goals* are consistent, *motor-goals* tend to be constructed around the particular *do-goal* they support (ibid). Thus the operational actions involved in visiting a bank teller and using a banking app both fulfill the same *do-goal* but are completely different in execution.

Hassenzahl identifies human emotions as the drivers of behavior at the *be-goal* level. *Be-goals* occupy the top level of the hierarchy. According to Hassenzahl (2010, p. 43-44) *be-goals* are the user-goals that motivate action and provide meaning to the action. He describes *be-goals* as focusing on

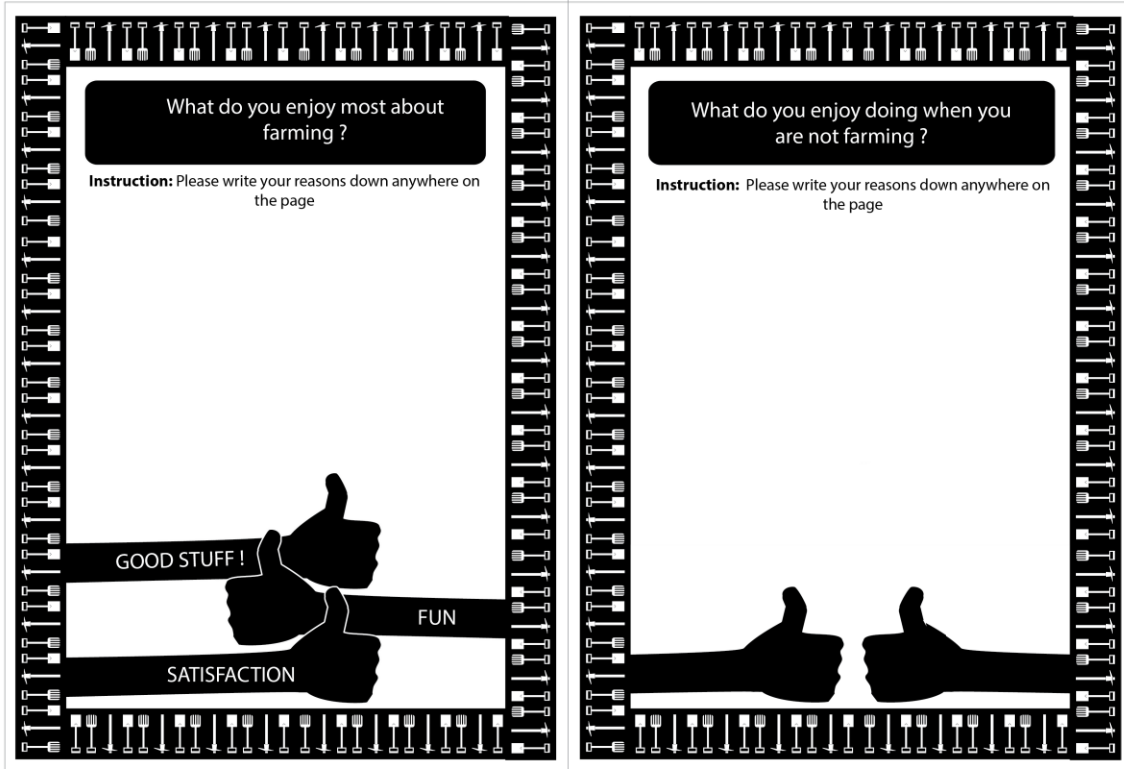


Figure 3: Worksheet examples of the applied psychological needs related to pleasure/stimulation

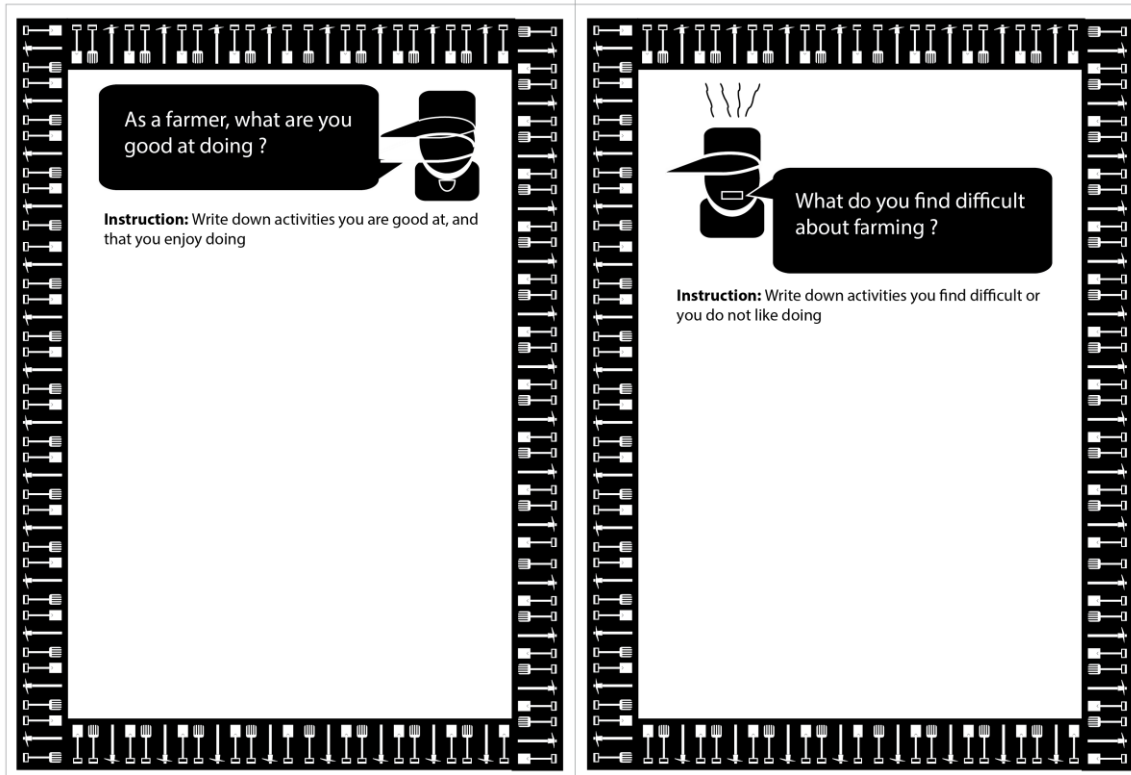


Figure 4: Worksheet examples of the applied psychological needs related to competence/ Effectance

into new formations of meaning, or relationships using the Affinity Diagram method (Martin & Hanington 2012, p. 12)<sup>5</sup>.

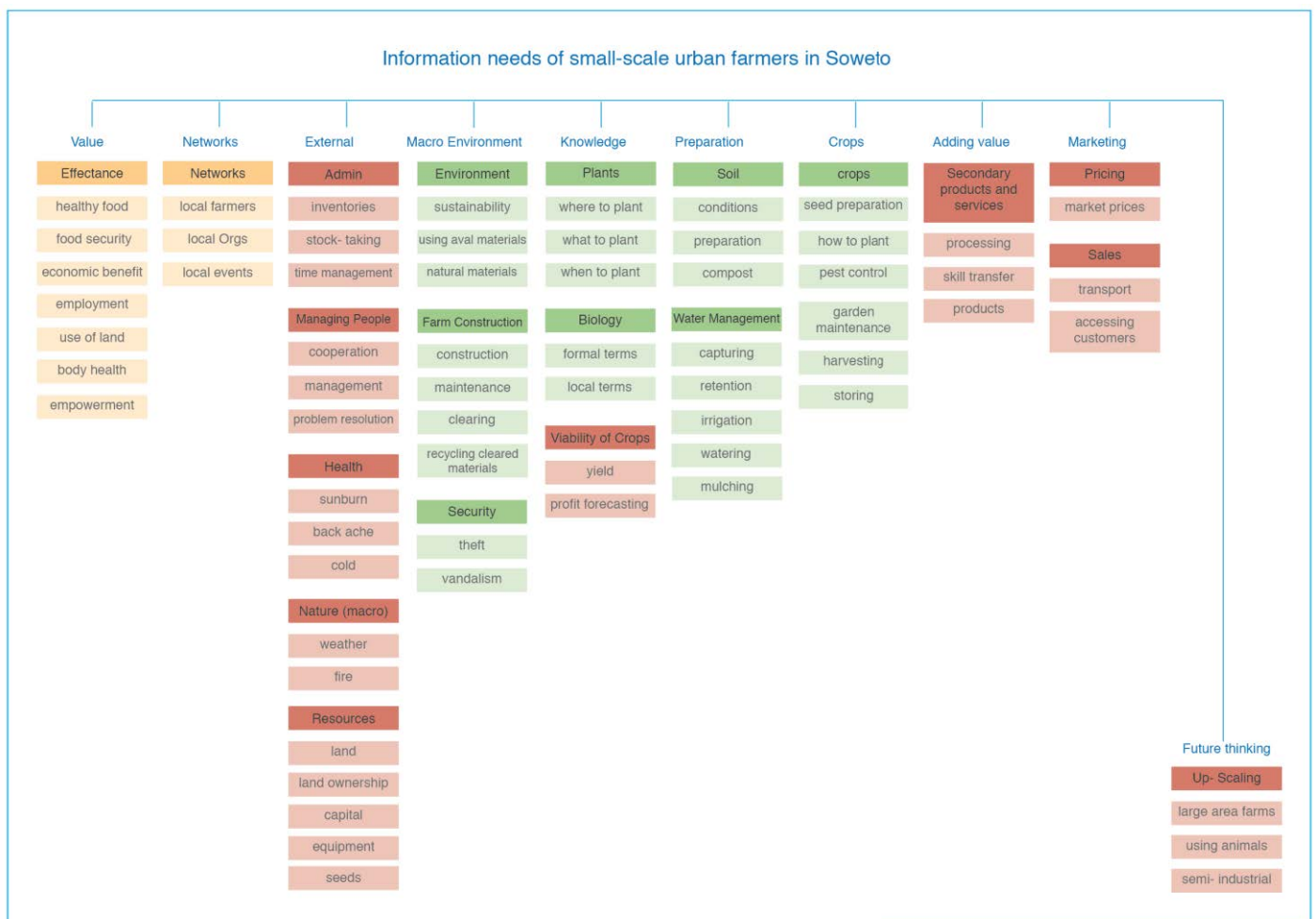
This case study applied the Affinity Diagram method in three rounds of categorisations, with each round using all the collected data to reflect a level of the *Three Level Hierarchy of Needs* model.

The first affinity categorisation was the *do-goals* of the model, which was determined as the ‘things farmers needed or wanted to know’. Figure 7 describes major categories and sub-categories of information identified through the analyses as important to the farmers.

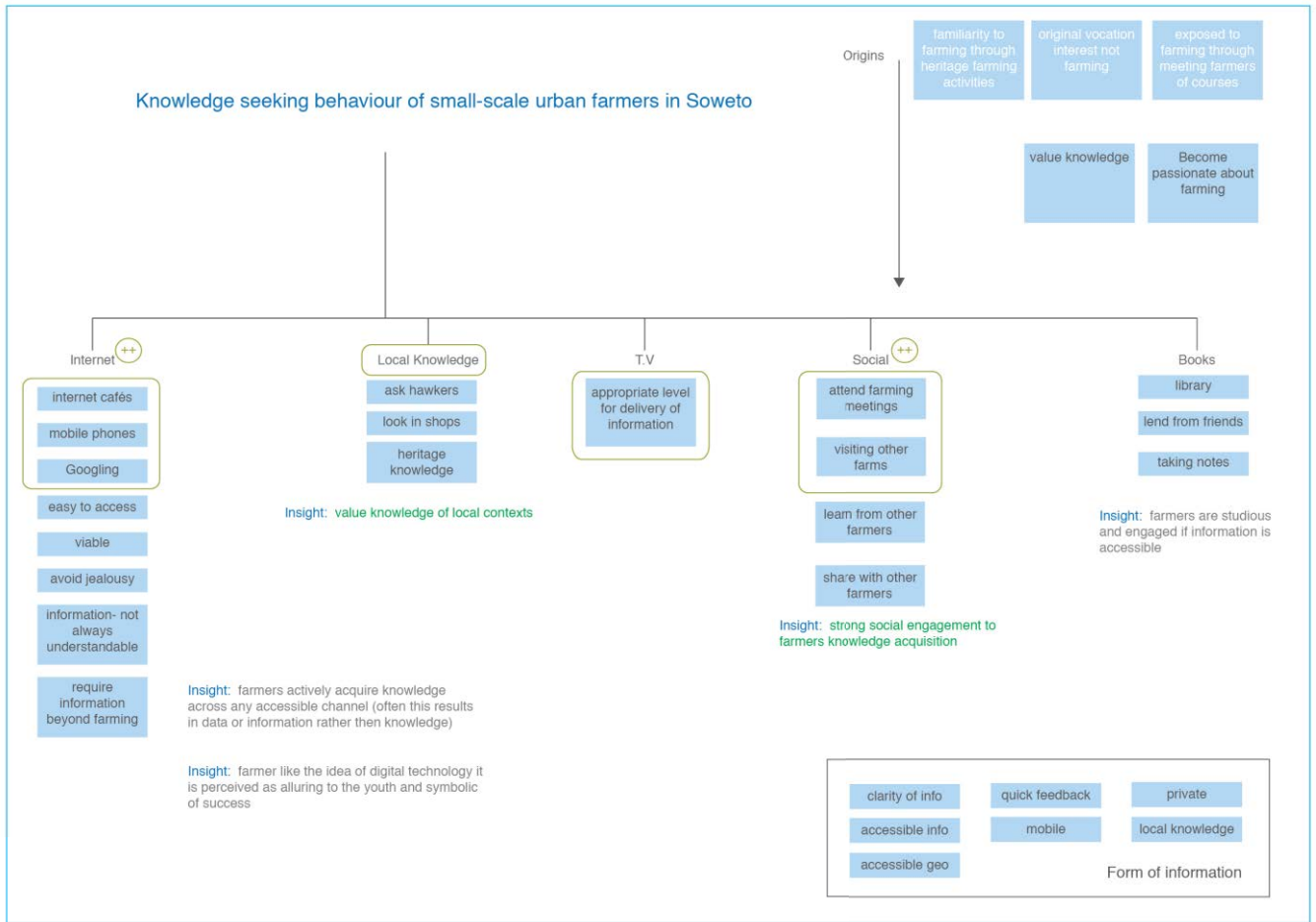
The second affinity categorization, as depicted in Figure 8 was concerned with the operational *how* goals which were determined as ‘the current behaviours or practices that farmers undertook when trying to find out information pertaining to farming and associated activities’.

Within these two affinity diagrams a bottom-up categorisation system was applied which allowed for categories to emerge organically through prevalence and association.

**Figure 7: Illustrates the categories of information identified as important to farming and associated activities**

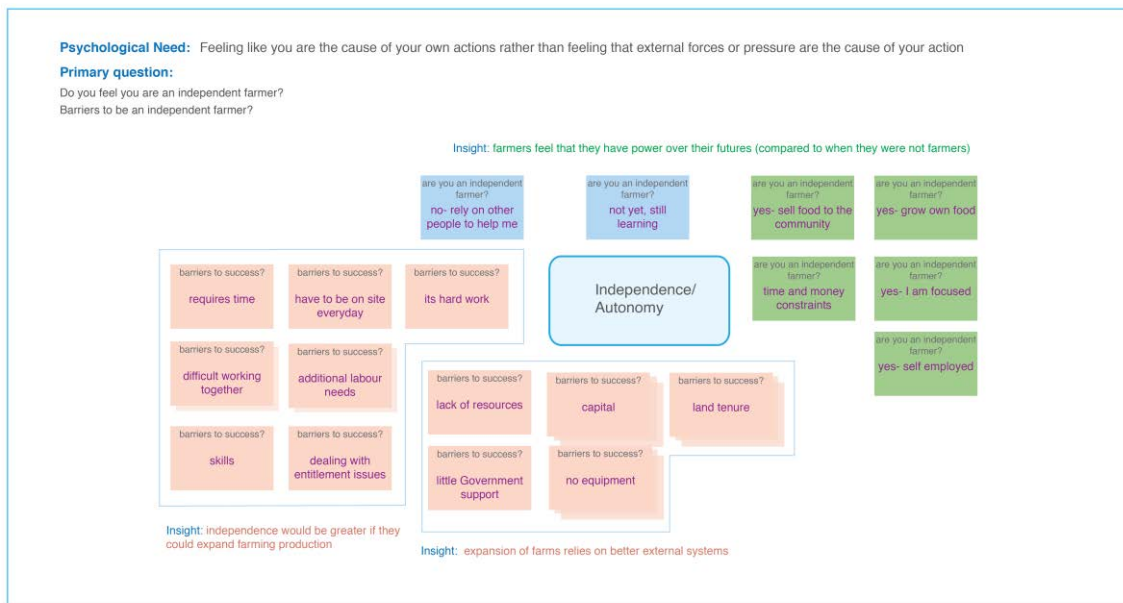


<sup>5</sup> Affinity diagrams share many similarities with commonly applied research analysis tools such as grounded theory and content analysis [ibid].



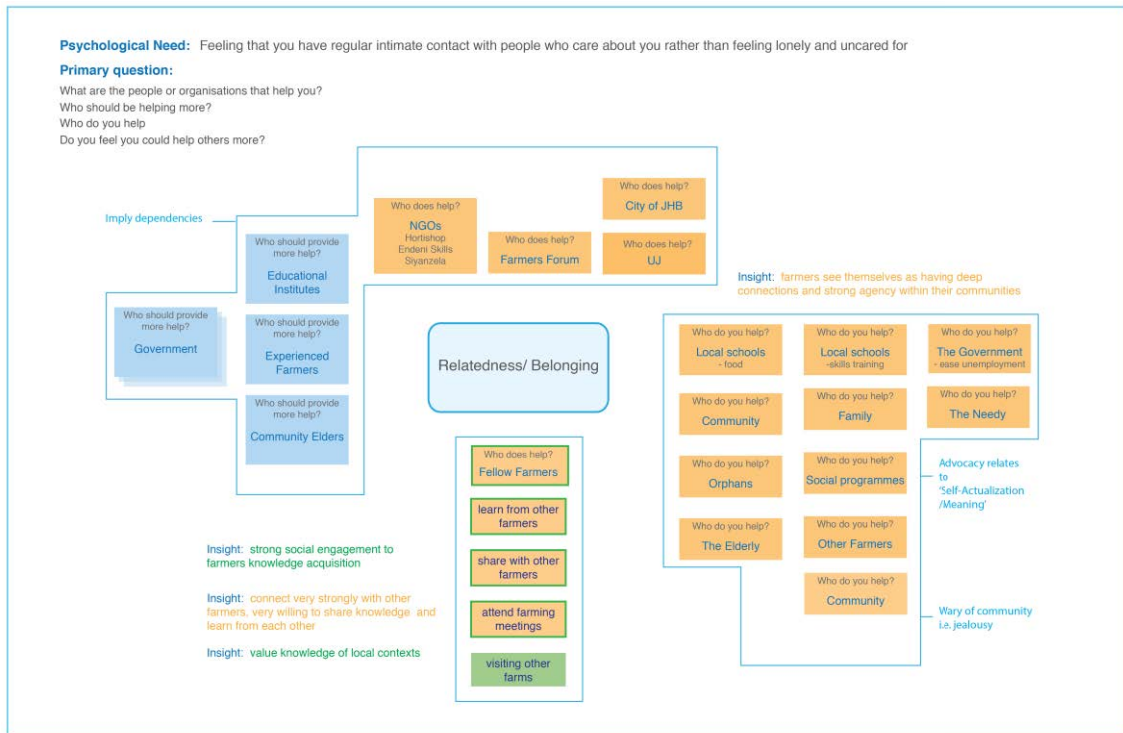
**Figure 8: Illustrates and describes the most common methods farmer in Soweto use to access information about farming.**

The third affinity diagram was a tighter, top-down ordering in which all the data points were arranged into ten categories indexed to Hassenzahl's Top-10 *Psychological Needs*. This categorisation related to the *be-goals* of the hierarchy model.



**Figure 9: Diagrammatic representation of the Autonomy/ Independence category**





**Figure 10: Diagrammatic representation of the Relatedness / Belonging category**

Figures 9 and 10 represent the categorisation of two of the ten psychological needs and their associated data points. Once all ten needs categories were completed, the included data was further organised into thematic concerns represented by one or more insights. The insights gained from the psychological needs were then further analysed to determine any thematic relationships. Three major themes emerged, as depicted in Figures 11.

Key insights	Key insights	Key insights
Insight: connect very strongly with other farmers, very willing to share knowledge and learn from each other.	Insight: farmers engage with agriculture easy but often their real problems sit outside of farming (business skills, industrial farming, HR skills)	Insight: connect very strongly with other farmers, very willing to share knowledge and learn from each other.
Insight: most farmers feel competent and in control of farming activities	Insight: their financial aspiration is for their farms to be successful sustainable businesses rather than just subsidiary income	Insight: farmers see themselves as having deep connections and strong agency within their communities.
Insight: overwhelmingly, farmers see the health value of farming	Insight: expansion of farms relies on better external systems	Insight: the perceived lack of respect farmers get from the broader community is disheartening to them.
Insight: farmers feel respected within the farming community	Insight: independence would be greater if they could expand farming production	Insight: feel threatened by the community.
Insight: farmers feel that farming has given them power over their futures	Insight: feel threatened by an unsecured future	Insight: farmers see themselves as useful and needed in the community and with in the broader South African community as well.
Insight: find farming a fulfilling activity in its own right	Insight: Derive meaning through status, economic power and ability to provide for family	Insight: farmers see themselves as belonging to the vocation of farming (just as much as a commercial farmer)
Insight: feel they can offer other farmers skills to learn.		Insight: Derive meaning through learning and sharing knowledge
Insight: value knowledge of local contexts		Insight: Derive meaning through contributing to the health of the community
Insight: strong social engagement to farmers knowledge acquisition		Insight: most farmers see the money they make from farming as valuable income
		Insight: value community activities

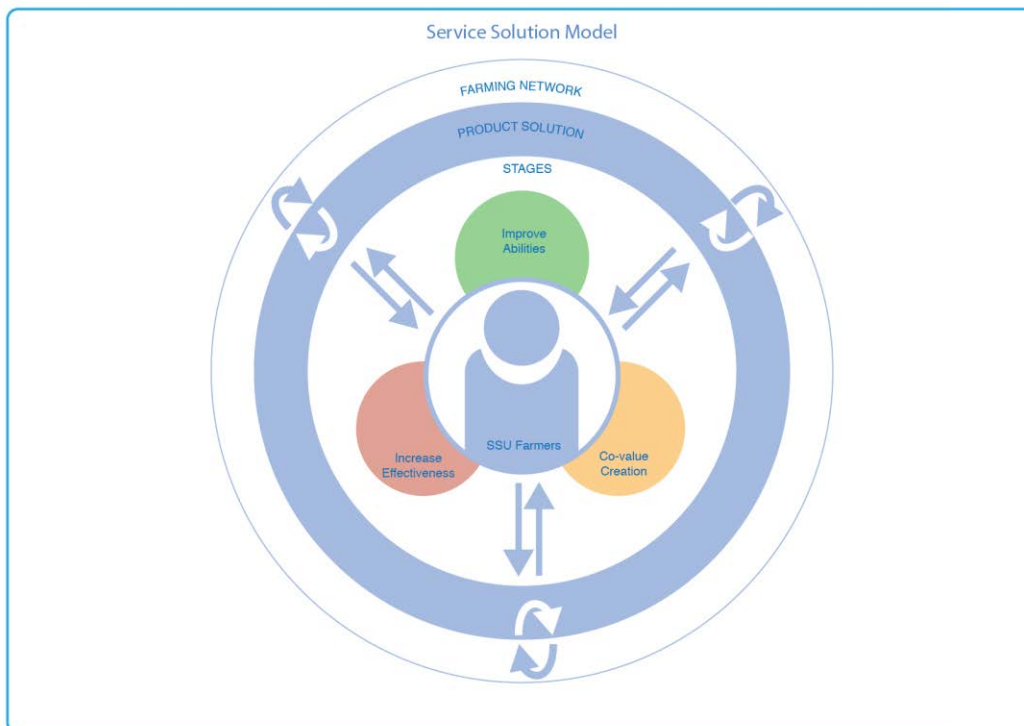
**Figure 11: The insights arranged into the final three themes**

## Modeling the solution strategy

The three themes that emerged, as modeled in Figure 11, were:

1. Improve Abilities: The need to access information in order to improve agricultural production.
2. Increase Effectiveness: The need to improve the business side of the farming business.

3. Co-value Creation: The need to enhance the value of farming as a vocation in the Soweto community and improve the esteem and confidence of farmers through utilising the existing, healthy social and community networks.



**Figure 12: The solution model for the Soweto Farmers (Small-scale Urban farmers [SSU]) Project**

The process of analysis and synthesis is always subjective, and in this case study, the role played by the farmer participants in confirming that insights were reflective and the strategy appropriate has been underreported<sup>6</sup>. However, what is important, and evident in this theoretical positioning and case study, is that the application of the *Three-Level Hierarchy of Needs Model* is a viable approach for framing human-centered research activities that address complex societal problems. The structured approach to recognizing needs presented in the hierarchy increases the likelihood of obtaining actionable insights from research activities that are directly useful for forming impactful design strategies, subsequent product solutions, as well as providing an approach to critically reflect on design product solutions.

## Conclusion

While HCD has been identified as a valuable and effective approach for design, HCD can, due to the complexities embedded within societal formations, and the indeterminacy of design outcomes, be difficult to practice effectively— particularly for novice designers.

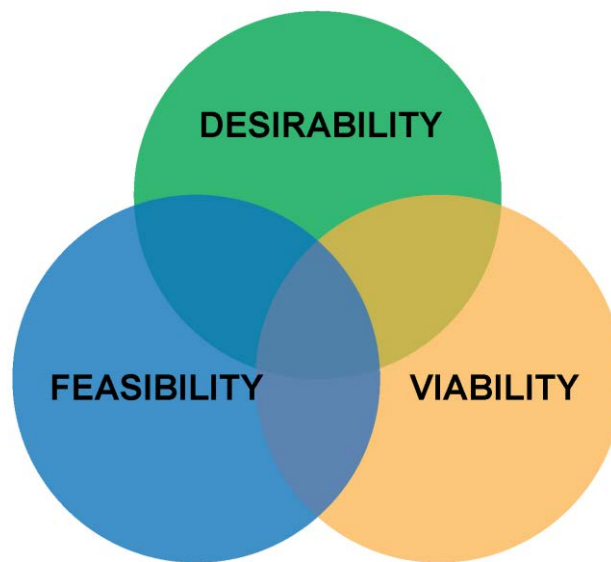
Experience obtained through running HCD design courses with undergraduate students shows that they often do not have a considered approach to constructing research questions. The result of this lack of technique in constructing design research activities is often a barrier to obtaining rich and insightful data from research activities, which can affect the impact of subsequent understanding and solutioning.

<sup>6</sup> See Fenn (2014) for a description of this aspect of the design project

For example, an ethical conflict may exist between the need for a business to honour its profit obligations to shareholders where the means for achieving this involve deceiving customers.

The authors have observed that in many conversations, presentations and student project briefs with HCD, it is implied that by placing an emphasis on the end user, the 'exploitative' nature of the business or organization will be checked. This line of whimsical discourse is often compounded by the belief that if the organization was 'to only listen to the user', both parties would enter some type of fairy tale win-win situation. Thus, it is often tacitly implied that ethical considerations of a design engagement can be met by managing this tension. While valid ethical conflicts may exist in this business / customer dichotomy they often extend further to other stakeholders in any given ecosystem.

The oversimplification of the complexity of relationships in a given ecosystem, and the number and variety of relative ethical positions, in HCD practice and models is of concern. Consider for example IDEO's model for desirability, feasibility and viability in HCD.



**Figure 1: IDEO's Desirability, Feasibility and Viability model. (Based on, IDEO 2008 p. 8)**

In this model 'desirability' is defined as what people (end-users) desire, 'feasibility' as what is technically and organizationally feasible and 'viability' as what is financially viable for the business.

The business / customer (or organization / user) dichotomy can be observed at play here where feasibility and viability are largely representative of business or organizational concerns and desirability of user concerns. In this model, technology, is the only area of concern beyond the organization / user dichotomy that is acknowledged.

Consider then that a business may believe that it is acting ethically to its shareholders by reducing costs in production of a product by using a certain material however it may be considered un-ethical if that material contributes to environmental unsustainability.

And what of the potential ethical conflicts to society at large, not just niche groups within the scope of a design project (especially in heterogeneous societies)? What of economic considerations, cultural and political considerations? What of the needs of the marketplace, competitors and both the physical and technological environment?

remember that while ethics can be taught, as noted by Piper, et. al. (1993), ethical behavior involves many aspects of who we are as human beings that ultimately affect our belief of “the self” in relation to those around us. These aspects involve attitudes, values, thoughts, feelings, and actions and help us to relate, connect and respond to others around us. This essentially influences the responsibility we have and feel for others, providing a sense of caring which ultimately allows for one to act in an ethical manner in order to achieve a sense of integrity as we reach for that which we feel responsible (Noddings 1984). Furthermore, if someone or something exists and is part of our community, it is likely that it will be more difficult to inflict harm upon them (Weathersby & White, 2004).

While curriculum revision is part of the solution, as a faculty we need to recognise that while students may learn what we teach, they also learn from who we are and how we act in the milieu of the academic workplace. “Our values, attitudes and beliefs are conveyed to students whether we are conscious of it or not. Students learn from what is omitted as well as what is emphasised” (Weathersby & White 2004).

For these values and attitudes to influence our students, we need to first realise the impact of professional ethics in the classroom environment as well as our interactions with the students themselves in that same setting. Additionally, we need to focus on curriculum design in order to maintain and model the high standards of ethics we wish to instill in our students (Weathersby & White 2004).

## Community of Practice

The concept of a community of practice provided the team mentoring approach with direction and purpose. Wenger (1998) suggests that we all belong to communities of practice, sometimes without realizing. He suggests that we are all informally bound by what each member of a particular ‘community’ or group does together due to the shared practice. This practice is further represented by common goals, a collective understanding and shared vocabulary.

He further iterates that there are various stages of development within the constructs of communities of practice which are highlighted in the graphic shown below:

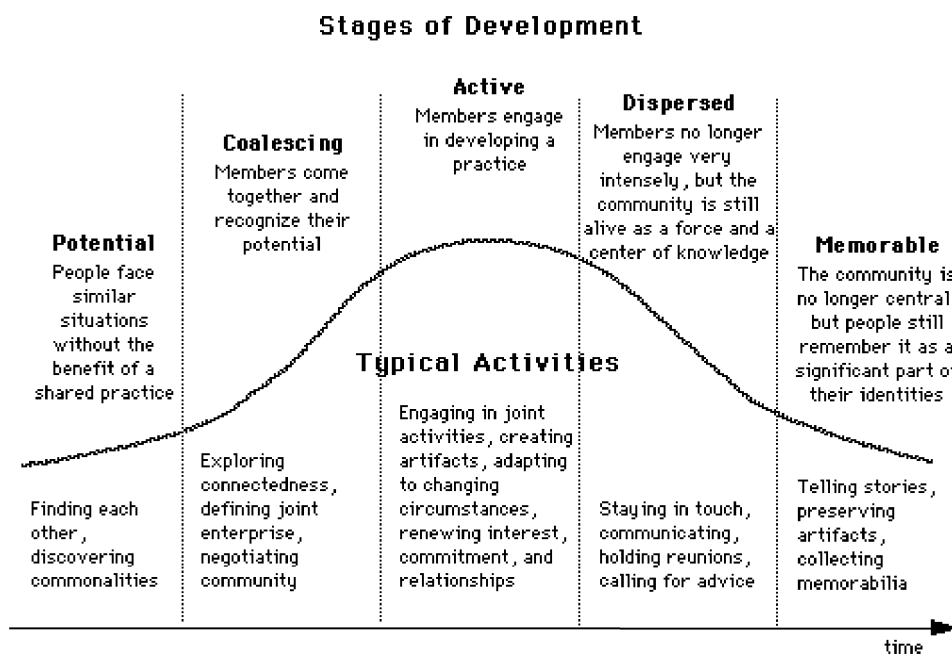


Figure 2: Stages of Development – Communities Of Practice (Wenger E. , 1998)

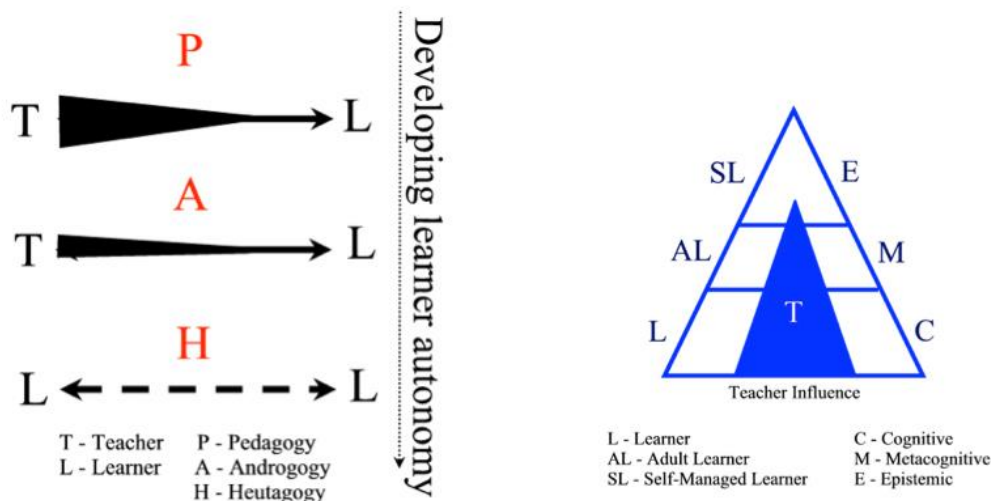


Figure 4. Combined Pedagogy, Andragogy and Heutagogy model (Source: Lee & McCloughlin, 2008).

They continued by enveloping this self-regulatory state of the student with “obuchenie”, a Russian word meaning teaching and learning, used in Vygotskian thinking and resulting in their “Obuchenie Context Model”. The ideal is that “at any moment, teacher may be learner, learner maybe teacher and both may become mutually conditioned co-learners” (Lee & McCloughlin 2008). The self-regulatory state goes beyond scaffolding to a new stage to what Cahill points out as enabling the learners to “come to think for themselves and make their own choices about how to choose” (Cahill n.d., p.178).

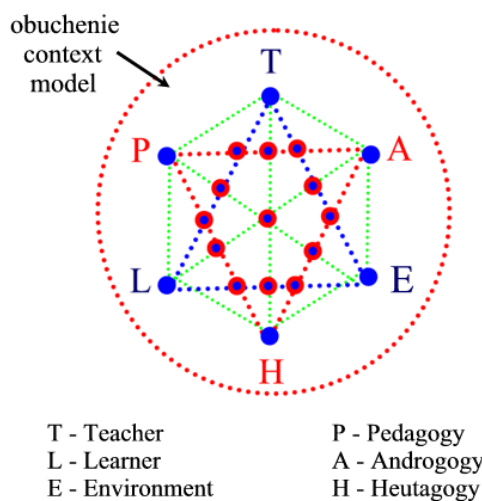


Figure 5. The Obuchenie Context Model (Lee & McCloughlin, 2008)

## Knowledge and learning

The focus of these pedagogical models is mainly to provide a space for the student to learn. The notion of the co-learner seems educationally current but pedagogically vague. Traditionally, educational research introduced episteme knowledge, consisting of a broad range of situations that the student might encounter, and phronesis knowledge, which is an understanding of specifics. Both of these concepts are classified as conceptions of judgement (Coulter & Wiens 2002, p.15). Appropriate judgement became the considered context accountability. Coulter and Wiens (2002) elaborate on this notion of accountability by “linking the actor and spectator” in the context of

judgement. They emphasise the commonly known fact that much of the research on education, that I alluded to earlier, is removed from the practice of education, resulting in a divide [ha-ha] between teaching practice and research knowledge on teaching. The ethical dilemma is in the resulting unclaimed accountability. We have seen how quickly the same divide develops, almost naturally like erosion, when undergraduate and postgraduate pedagogy develops separately. A typical example is that of the epistemic-drift mentioned earlier, when undergraduate poiesis knowledge, focusing on practice as craft, is negated, in favour of *sophia* or theoretical knowledge (Coulter & Wiens 2002).

Knowledge construction through learning is illustrated by Gravett's triad (Gravett 2001, p.36) of learning (Figure 6.), a simple illustration of the dialogue between the student (learner), the teacher (educator) and the learning content. The decentralisation of the three role-players who become responsible for learning enforces appropriate dialogue between them, as well as shared accountability towards learning as outcome. The pedagogy is therefore dominated by learning as the driver.

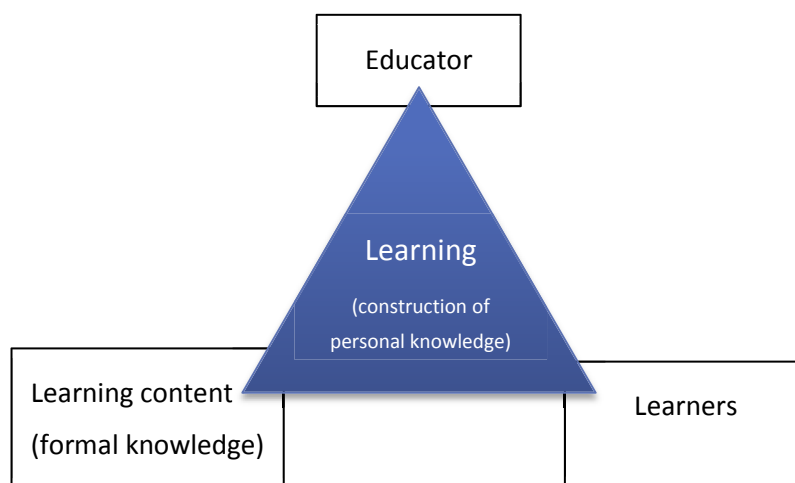


Figure 6. Learning model (Gravett 2001)

The actors and spectators that Coulter and Wiens refer to also apply in this context. With learning as dominant proposition and outcome, the role-players are relegated to collaborative dialogue instead of binary opposites fighting for voice.

At this stage we realise that the developments in pedagogical models tried to bridge some identified separations. However, none of these models focuses on vocationally focussed education with praxis as a core ingredient. It needs to be noted here that vocational courses conceptualised at UoTs are contained within departments and controlled by the departments. Let me illustrate this concept through an example of a photography programme's subject composition and the different knowledge fields that have to be consolidated.

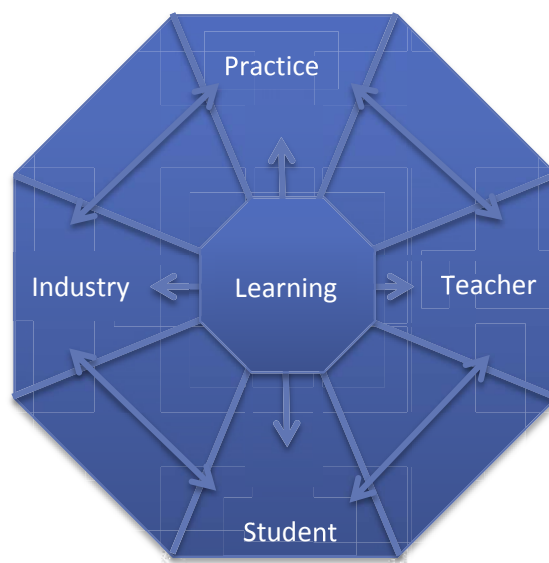
In a specific UoT photography course we find four major subjects consisting of the following:

- **Visual Communication**, a theoretical subject that can include visual literacy, aesthetics, genres, history, contemporary practice, etc.
- **Theory of Photography**, a technical theoretical subject that can include related scientific and technical aspects of photography
- **Professional Practice**, a theoretical subject that deals with concepts around the business practice of the entrepreneur
- **Applied Photography**, a practical subject that deals with the creative output, or making of photographs

Academic staff within such a photography department are responsible for at least two to three of these subject components each, normally a mix between practice and theory. The luxury of academic specialisation is therefore replaced by the notion of the academic bricoleur focussing on a discipline of field of practice. Ensor refers to this scenario as a disciplinary discourse that ensures “cognitive coherence” (Ensor 2004, p.342) and favours “skilled graduates for employment in the workplace” (2004 p.240). There are complicating factors here that need consideration towards pedagogy that favours practice. Shulman suggest a signature pedagogy that is directed towards specific fields (Shulman 2005), in this case, photography. For simplification purposes I will replace the word signature with photography. The photography pedagogy as a practice-based vocational orientation requires the consideration of four main role players, practice, industry, the teacher and the student. Practice, and the focus of the orientation of practice as an applied art are debatable and contentious. The notion of photography as fine art will be underplayed here in favour of an industry focus that the qualification orientation demands.

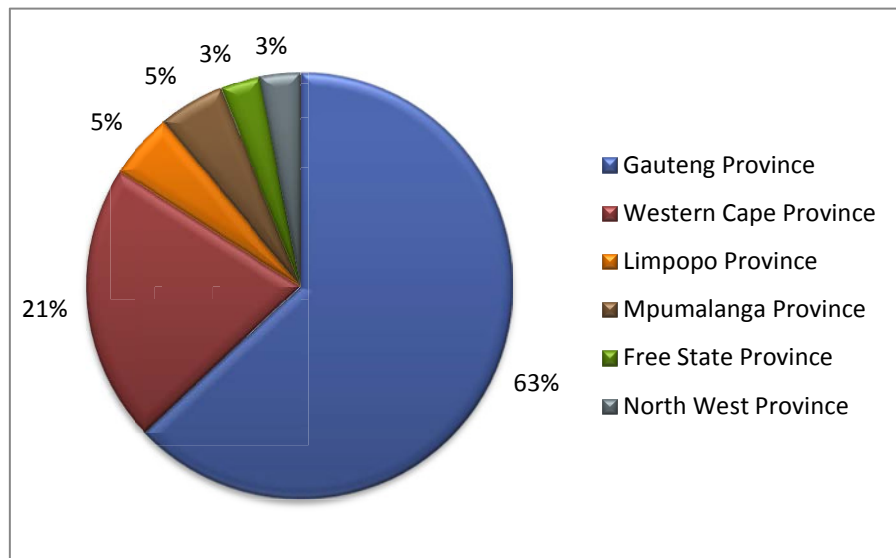
### Towards a pedagogy for practice

The practice orientation is guided by the industry orientation where the student will seek employment. Ensor refers to this outward focus as a “professional discourse” that favours framing over selection in the curriculum, away from the more “therapeutic discourse” (Ensor 2004, pp.345-46) that favours selection. A reiteration to what was alluded to earlier is that the undergraduate pedagogy and curriculum structure should promote epistemological access to postgraduate studies. The current focus shift from Mode 1 to Mode 2 research thinking can add an additional side force to contend with in an already complex scenario. This paper will not be able to address the influences of Mode 2 (collaborative, interdisciplinary, etc.) research in any detail.



**Figure 7. Influencers for the Practice Pedagogy**

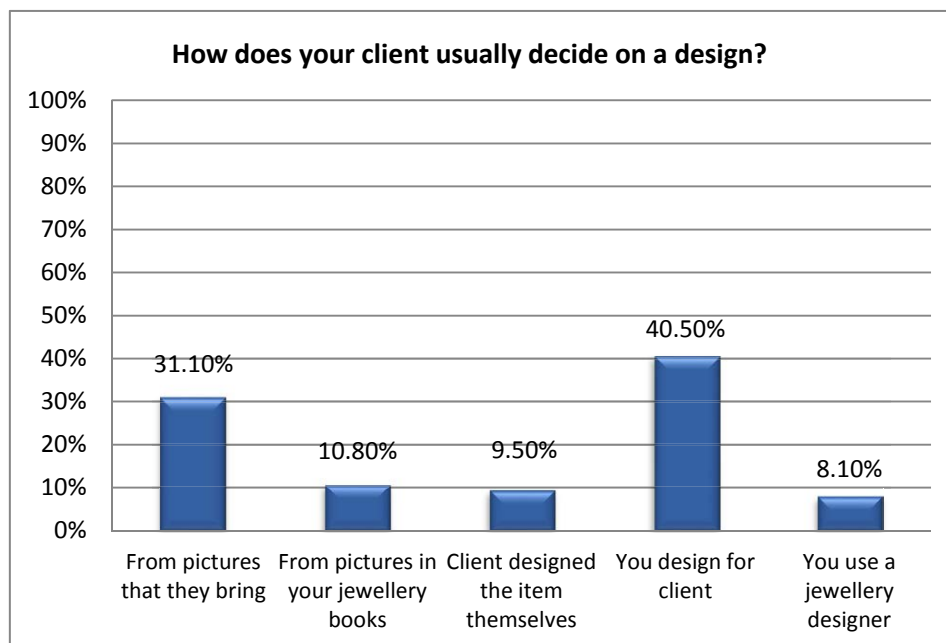
From a photography discipline perspective (as with any other applied design), I would argue that the therapeutic and professional discourse that Ensor identified should be reconsidered within a less exclusive discourse. This strong separation that is applied to the context of UoTs can, according to my understanding, only be fully aligned with the hard-core science disciplines within UoTs. These scientifically dominated disciplines require less description of meaning, or interpretation, which locates them in a strictly professional domain. Photography as a medium requires technical scientific tools as well as a therapeutic discourse to interpret the world subjectively. The subjective interpretation, in the case of a creative practice profession, also requires a deep understanding of



**Figure 1: The geographical location of the participants.**

### Commercial jewellery design process and approach

Before gauging the participants' perception of commercial design registration, it is first necessary to understand the process in which the participants designed for their clients, and how important they viewed unique commercial jewellery designs. Devon and Van de Poel (2004, p. 466) notes that decision-making in design are made by various stakeholders, such as the project leader, the design team, the client, or a combination of people. This was taken into consideration, and, as seen in Figure 2, various approaches to design were asked. Most participants chose more than one method, and one participant noted that the "client brings ideas in pictures, then I design something new based on pictures". This indicates that the client also has an input in the design in some cases.



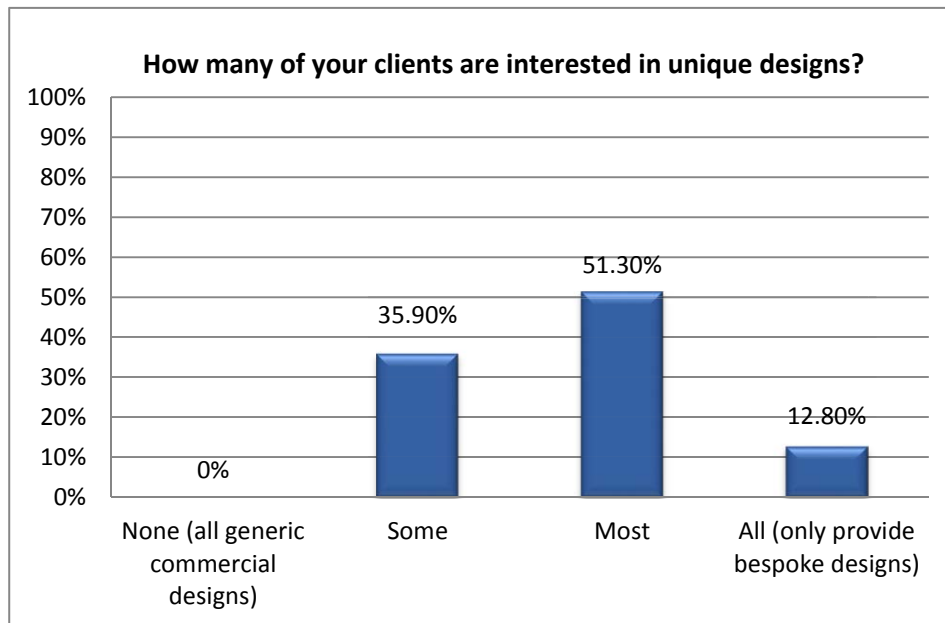
**Figure 2: Methods on how clients decide on a jewellery design.**

When confronted with an image that a customer presents (31.1% of the time, as seen in Figure 2), nearly half of the clients (47.5%) insist that the image be copied exactly. This is regardless of whether or not the jewellery design is protected through design registration or general copyright law. However, most participants (62.5%) noted that they alter a commercial design when presented with



an image of a jewellery piece, 27.5% indicated that they sometimes do and 10% indicated that they do not alter the design. This demonstrates that the client has some control over the direct copy of the jewellery design, although most industry members try to alter the design.

Figure 2 also indicates that unique jewellery designs are created through the client (9.5%), by the participants themselves (40.5%) and by the employment of a jewellery designer (8.1%). This automatically implies that unique commercial designs are created in nearly 60% of the time. One question asked if clients are interested in unique designs and the results, seen in Figure 3, seem to confirm that most clients do. According to the participants, over half of their clients preferred unique designs and even 12.8% of the participants provided only bespoke designs to their clients.

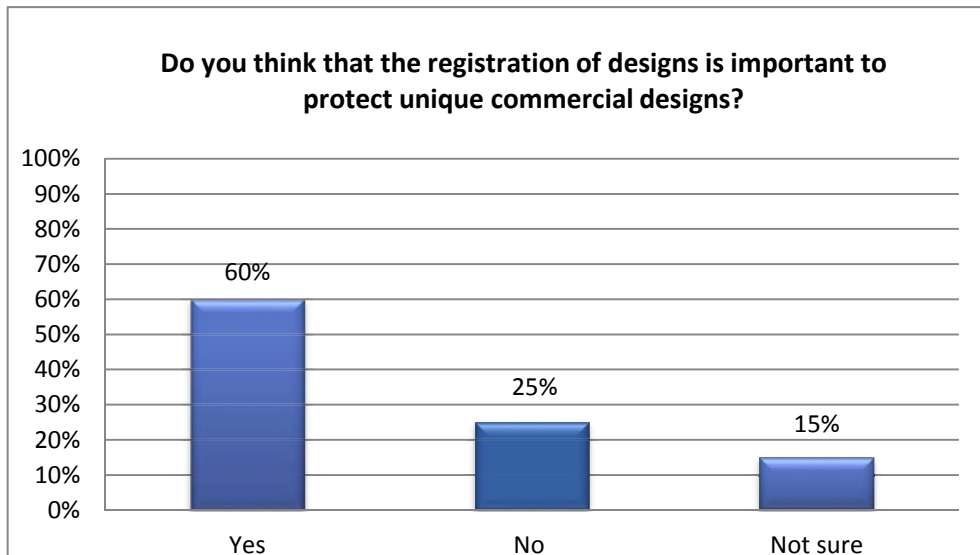


**Figure 3: The results from the participants indicating if their clients are interested in unique commercial designs.**

In reference to the demand for unique designs from the clients, when asked whether the participants consider unique commercial designs important to the trade, 82.5% agreed that it was important, 7.5% of the participants were not sure and 10% noted that it was not. This high percentile confirms that the demand for unique commercial designs is high, and that the protection of such designs become increasingly important.

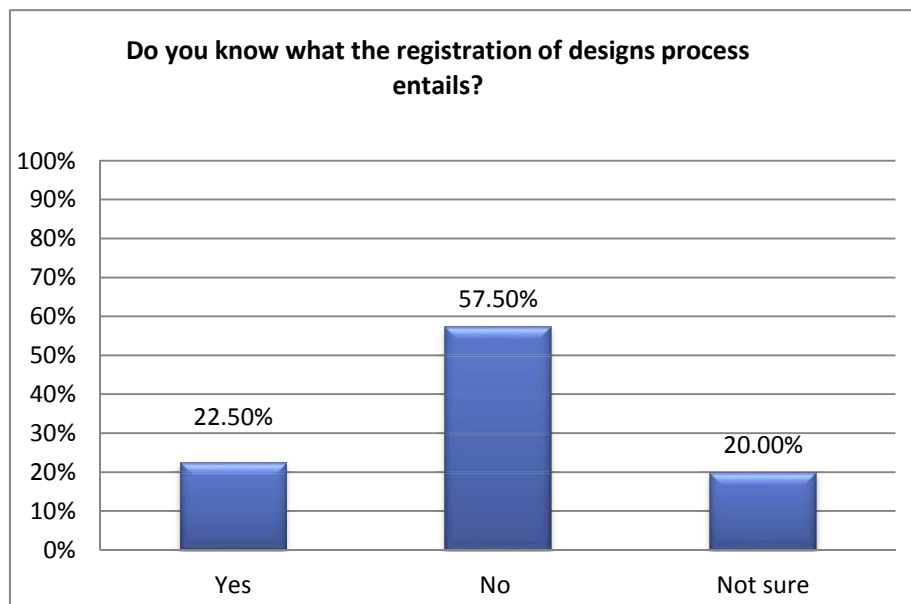
### Design registration process

This section of the questionnaire investigated whether the participants think that the protection of unique commercial designs are important, what the registration of designs entail and their knowledge of designs registered currently in South Africa. Figure 4 shows the results when the participants were asked if they think that the registration of designs is important to protect unique commercial designs.



**Figure 4: The results showing that most of the participants thought that the registration of designs is important to protect unique commercial designs.**

The results show that most of the participants were in agreement that the registration of designs is important, opposed to 25% who did not agree. However, one participant noted that the registration process is “too complex and any part of a design can be changed”. When asked if they knew what the design registration entails, over half of the participants did not know and 20% were not sure (Figure 5). A participant also commented that the registration process is “far too complicated and expensive. We tried to register a design but ended up simply registering its name”. Another participant commented on the uniqueness of current registered designs, noting that “I don’t think it will be fair for a company to patent a classic design, or one that has been in Europe/USA a few years before – just because they are the first to patent it (in SA), doesn’t mean it is their design and therefore they have exclusive rights”. This concern was echoed by another participant, “Another problem is that you will once again have companies registering common designs like tension set rings and three stone rings and then claiming that they came up with the idea, giving it nice names”.



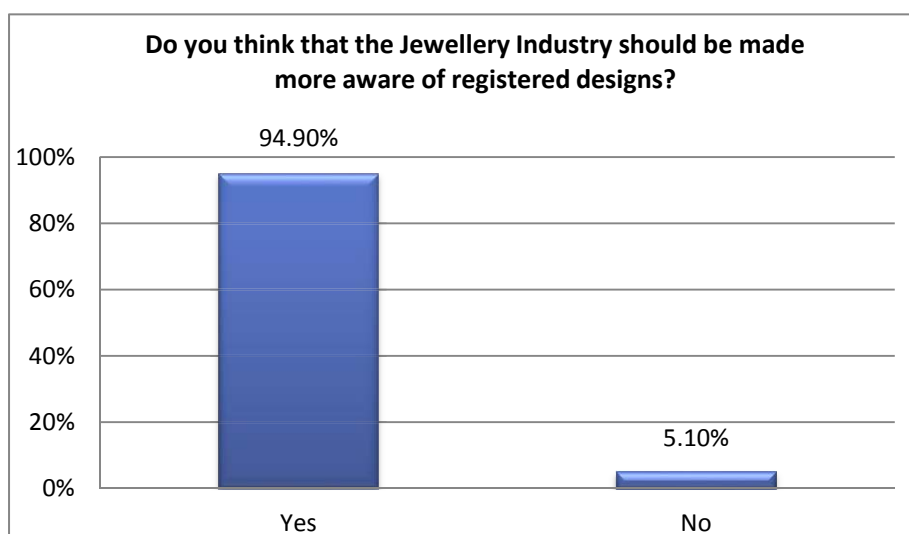
**Figure 5: The results of whether the participants are familiar with the design registration process.**

Other questions in this section shed light on jewellery designs that are registered and the awareness of the industry regarding these designs. Of the participants, only 5.1% currently have commercial designs registered with the South African Design Office. Fewer than half of the participants were familiar with any registered designs and 12.5% of the participants were not sure. However, when asked if the participant would copy a design if they knew it was registered, 87.5% stated “no” with the other 12.5% noting that they were not sure. No participants answered “yes” to this question. One participant commented that “I may be influenced by them”, indicating a reluctance to reproduce an existing registered design. This, together with the high number of participants that specified that they do not replicate a registered design, indicates a high level of professional ethics from the participants.

### Participant proposed recommendations

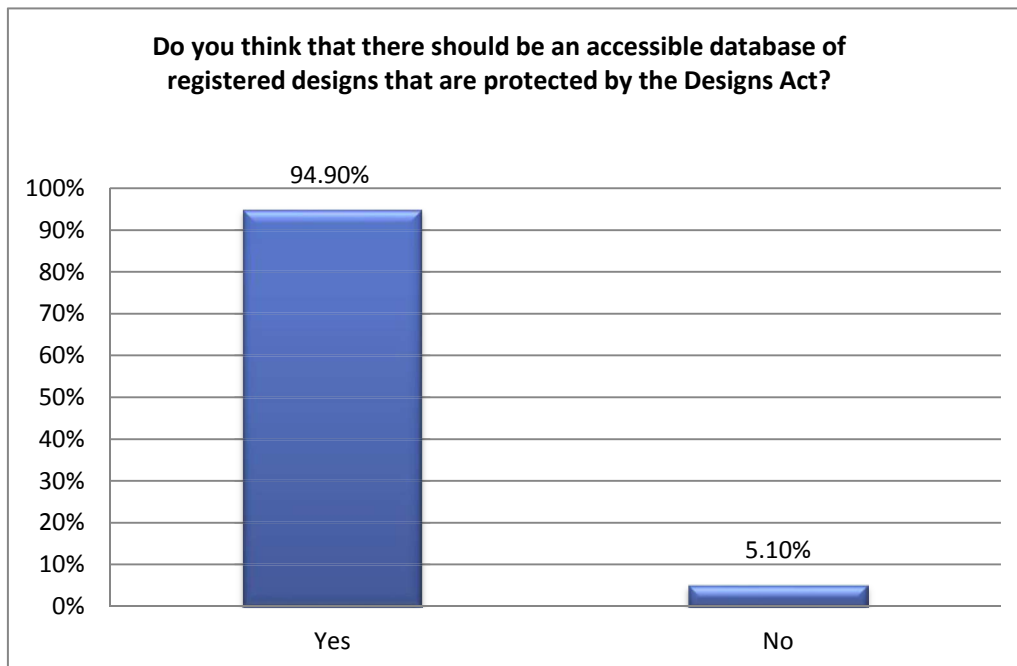
This section mainly gauged the participants’ perception regarding proposed measures that can be put in place as to make the industry, as well as the public, more aware of registered designs. The first questions dealt with the current knowledge of the design registration process. When asked if they would like to know more about the design registration process and design protection, the majority of the participants agreed and 72.5% of the participants further showed interest in having their unique commercial designs registered.

When referring to Figure 6, it is evident that nearly all of the participants agreed that the Jewellery Industry should be made more aware of registered designs. One participant commented on the importance of this awareness: “They have to be [made aware] otherwise who will know. I have seen numerous ring designs of our protea, all very similar”. Nearly the same response was echoed when the participants were asked whether the Public should also be made more aware of jewellery designs that are protected, although a participant commented that “it is a very complex issue because of marginal differences”. Another participant noted that “We should find a way to educate the public and especially the industry so that they would not want to make someone else’s designs, but rather take pride in doing their own designs”. The high demand could relate to the predicament jewellers face when a client insists on the reproduction of a registered design (in reference to the 47.5% of clients that insist that a design be copied exactly as the original). Fenn (cited in Searle 2010) agrees with this sentiment and states that “I think ultimately the public needs to be educated enough that they can spot a copied piece of design and care enough about originality not to buy it”. Fenn adds that the media should also play a role in educating the public about local original design which should help reduce the need to copy existing designs.



**Figure 6: The graph shows that nearly all the participants agree that the Jewellery Industry should be made more aware of registered designs that are protected by the Designs Act.**

In conjunction with the aforementioned results, the creation of a registered jewellery design database was proposed. Once again, nearly all of the participants agreed that this database would be beneficial to the Jewellery Industry (Figure 7). A total of 89.7% of the participants also agreed that this proposed database should display images of registered designs. The creation of a database is supported by Magliocca (2003, p. 886) who notes that the benefit of have a dedicated registry of intellectual works is that other peers can note what has been done, and so avoid duplication. However, one participant cautioned that “I think that it should be irrelevant whether or not a design is registered, it is protected by copyright. It becomes a problem, when something is not on the design database, many might think that it is okay to copy the design because it is not registered, forgetting about copyright”.



**Figure 7: The majority of the participants agree that there should be an accessible database of registered designs that are protected by the Designs Act.**

## Conclusion

Design registration offers protection to the industry as a whole and should be considered vital in the growth of the industry, as it was developed to support the increase of new products, create competition and to stimulate economic development. Although other forms of intellectual property protection exists, this paper mainly focused on design registration, as it is mainly applied in the protection of mass-produced commercial designs. The main aim of the paper was to gauge the perception of design registration in the Jewellery Industry, as an attempt to raise awareness on the process and on the companies and individuals who have registered designs according to the Designs Act (South Africa).

Although the low response rate can be seen as a limitation of the study, the questionnaires did give a clear indication of the Jewellery Industry’s perception regarding design registration. The comments added by some participants also indicated that there was a need for a platform to voice opinions on the matter.

The results of the questionnaire show that various approaches to design are applied in the Jewellery Industry. One of these approaches includes the client presenting an images of a commercial design to an industry member. This creates an ethical dilemma as in some insistences, a direct representation is demanded from the client, thus creating potential design infringement by the industry member. Nonetheless, the participants noted that unique designs were regularly created