



PEOPLE, THEIR STORIES and DESIGN

how can design make a sustainable contribution to developing countries through the stories of its people?

Case study of Penduka in Namibia

by Youngshin Sim

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*By Youngshin Sim
Man + Humanity Masters Graduation Project
Design Academy Eindhoven 2010*

***“We can work with people who
have dreams and support to
plan their own future.”***



Maria is portraying her own story onto a piece of fabric.

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Preface

In order to understand what it means for developing countries to develop successfully, we must have insight into the fundamental meaning of development while thinking about how experts of one field can contribute to such development with their specialization.

As a designer, I wrote this paper to point out key elements critical to understanding development from a humanitarian-aid point of view and to propose a way of engaging design as a sustainable system. This paper emphasizes that design could be human oriented in which stories that people have are highlighted. It is a characteristic of design to make a continuous contribution; people in developing countries can carry out their development with this design contribution.

As a design proposal, the paper proposes three different ways of incorporating people's stories into a design, which can be used as guidelines for designers and developmental aid workers. I expect that this paper could help people struggling with development issues by using a sustainable design concept.

To illustrate these ideas, this paper presents a case study of Penduka, a craft-oriented NGO in Namibia. Three different ways of incorporating stories into design are carried out in three different workshops at Penduka.

**A workshop for craftsmanship: creating narratives for products*

**A workshop for young local designers: translating personal stories into designs for products*

**A co-design workshop for designers and craftsmanship: stories with a motif of function*

The three main goals in this paper are:

**Connecting design to a development corporation*

**Empowering people by transforming their stories into a design*

**Proposing a design method using stories of local people*

Acknowledgements

My deepest gratitude to Penduka in Namibia and to Christien Roos-Toxopeus who turned this theory into reality.

Chapter 1



South Korea, 1950

What's in talks about supporting developing countries?



I. Empowering Economy ≠ Empowering Humans

In the international community, South Korea is regarded as a successful example of achieving economic development in a relatively short period of time. In the 1950s and 1960s South Korea was the poorest country in Asia and the GDP was lower than most African countries. It had been receiving international aid from the end of the Korean War until the end of the 1990s. Most aid from Western countries had been used to rebuild it financially, and its national policies were also focusing on economic growth in order to become a wealthy country. Now it has the 13th biggest GDP in the world, which is larger than Australia and Belgium¹. But it seems that many Koreans find themselves left behind in pursuing things other than financial prosperity. As a result in recent years, many private sectors and the government of Korea are making various efforts to nurture human empowerment, rather than promoting the economic status of its people. In this regard we can feel the change of recognition that defines self-respect of a person in Korea. One good aspect of this, is that they are very enthusiastic about showing their culture to the rest of the world. With respect to those activities, the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism of Korea has also been supporting citizens in various ways. For instance, the Ministry is supporting entertainment businesses like movie makers, drama productions, and singers to promote their works abroad in the flow of the so called 'Han-Wave'².

¹ According to OECD statistics in 2008

² Korean entertainment like dramas, movies, songs, etc. has become very popular in Japan, China, and South-East Asian Countries. It recalls the 'British Invasion' in the American popular music scene in the 1960s and 1970s.



South Korea, 2010



Now let us turn our attention to the African country to which this case study paper relates to. The Namibian government bases its economic and social policies on the long-term national vision, in which Namibia aspires to become an industrialized and developed nation by 2030. Since their independence in 1990, a series of National Development Plans have sought to: revive and sustain economic growth; reduce inequality; create employment; eradicate poverty; promote gender equality and equity; reduce regional inequalities; ensure environmental sustainability; and combat HIV/AIDS³. Namibia is one of the fastest growing countries in Africa and many people outside of Africa support them as they develop. Like any other developing country, the Namibian government is now focusing on economic growth.

We have seen two countries that show us certain implications of development issues, and we can question at the very least whether economic development is the final stage model in developing countries.

In this respect, with the assistance from many organizations on economic development, perhaps we can add or combine ways to support people discover their own values and sustain them consistently.

Along with structured assistance for economic development, we can work with people who have dreams and support to plan their own future. And if possible, it would be inspiring and effective to provide a manual for people in developing countries, which would operate like a locomotive engine. My interest as a designer has long been lingering on this type of contribution for developing countries; working with creativity in people and doing it in a cultural and environmentally sustainable way, as a designer.

³ Draft country programme document for Namibia(2006-2010) by the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme and of the United Nations Population Fund, 28 March 2005

II. What role will this paper play?

This paper aims to create a manual as a sustainable design, contributing to the self-empowerment of people through product development incorporating stories in design. A sustainable system with design engagement is presented, in which a set of performers have allotted positions: local craftsmen, local designers, a development corporation, and a product market. Economic factors are very important as well because they enable a system to run continuously. We can note that unlike art pieces, design is normally projected to products and they are strongly connected to a product market economy.

The question addressed is: how can product development through design in this system contribute to economic development if it were not to follow a conventional business model? First, we will look into two good examples that have been successfully applied. The first one is called 'social economy'. Social economy refers to a third sector in economies between the private sector and the public sector. It includes organizations such as cooperatives, non-governmental organizations and charities. The definition of social economy varies from many different points of views, but when we see it from a humanitarian point of view, it is different from a conventional economy because it stresses on benefits for the community and participants, rather than seeking the highest possible profit. In addition, it emphasizes on the participation of the local people. We can find a good example in Canada for this kind of well-combined system. In the early 1980s Quebec was in a deep economic slump, but the collaboration between government and a private organization called 'Community Economic Development Corporation' created social enterprises in various fields. This creation based on social economy created an enormous number of jobs and eventually helped overcome their economic slump⁴.

⁴ www.dec-ced.gc.ca, Community-based Poverty Reduction: The Québec Experience by William Ninacs Published by: The Caledon Institute of Social Policy

⁵ www.grameen-info.org



Grameen bank / PhD Muhammad Yunus

Another example is 'micro-credit'. The Nobel peace prize winner, PhD Muhammad Yunus developed a social economic system called 'Grameen Bank⁵ : micro-credit system'. It was developed for the people who were being neglected by the capitalist system, and has had great success in Bangladesh. So far it has helped many women to be proudly self-supported individuals in society by being provided access to financing.

These unconventional business models have created many jobs for people in need, but in order to make these jobs sustainable, they require a continuous creation of items that people can work on. In the field of design, it can be referred to as 'product development'. In this sense, creating product items to be sold in markets can contribute to economic development by giving people a chance to work and gain economic values. However, it does not necessarily need to follow the conventional business model of private sectors. Design, in the same way, can contribute to social economic development by contributing to production of product items through product development.

In particular, this paper proposes a way of product development by local talents. It is noticeable that local talents are especially given the opportunity for continuous engagement within the system, which relates to human empowerment.

In conclusion, a manual is presented in this research. With the help of this manual, local people will be producing products that express their stories in design, with the support of a social organization. Local people may find themselves self-supportive in terms of profit-yielding and self-motivation. In the manual, a guideline for both young talents and organizations to collaborate with one another will be proposed as well.

Chapter 2

Human, Story and Design



I. Human

“Human Development is a development paradigm that is about much more than the rise or fall of national incomes. It is about creating an environment in which people can develop their full potential and lead productive, creative lives in accord with their needs and interests. People are the real wealth of nations. Development is thus about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. And it is thus about much more than economic growth, which is only a means —if a very important one —of enlarging people’s choices.” (UNDP)

Human development is, as we see above, about expanding the choices people have to lead lives that they value. In that sense, it is important to create an environment that enables people to cultivate their diverse potential.

Until now though, aid for developing nations has focused on economic prosperity. To consider the enrichment of human potential, we need to add a different approach, though economic growth should not be overlooked in the course. In this research, a method of human empowerment along with economic growth is presented by setting up a system model in light of sustainable human development.



A Penduka lady performing
Namibian traditional dancing for visitors.



II. Human + Story

Human beings love story-telling. We are surrounded by stories of all sorts: fiction, dramas, movies, etc. We laugh and cry from stories and feel sympathy and empathy from stories. We form deep relationships with one another by telling and listening to our stories. It seems that 'Story' strongly influences people and vice versa. These aspects having been studied by many experts in various fields.

Sociologists Patricia Ewick and Susan S. Silbey denoted in their article, published in 'Law and Society Association', that narratives are social acts that depend on their production and cognition of norms on performance and content that specify when, what, how, and why stories are told. Because narratives are situationally produced and interpreted, they have no necessary political or epistemological valence, but depend on the particular context and organization of their production for a political effect.

Carl Jung(1875-1961) recognized that a story is more than a mere collection of facts, figures, syntax, and language. In Jung's definition of a story, they are the 'connective tissue' of all human experience. From his perspective, a story is the fabric of self-understanding, cognitive development, and the basis for meaningful human interaction. He theorized that stories heighten shared meaning, thus enhancing the message and impact between people who communicate with one another. Jung called this a "collective unconscious" as an academic term, which means that stories tap into our deep psychological reservoirs as a way to enhance meaning and mutual understanding.

In respect to human empowerment, storytelling among many things is one effective way to motivate people to express themselves. It is a convenient medium to convey personal 'stories' and synchronize the identity and the culture of the teller.

III. Human + Story + Design

People tell their stories everyday using various instruments. Verbal languages, arts, and even diaries are found with ease in which people seem to produce stories and relieve their desires by expressing themselves.

Can design also convey stories of people? If each individual creates a design out of his or her own stories with the intention of telling their story in such form, we are able to know that there are no fundamental differences in the means of telling a story whether, it is spoken, written in other languages, through art or design. Though not every design by each individual can be developed into a product, for it is infeasible that every story to be a novel or every drawing to be a reputable art, but it is an effective device to transfer the stories of people in a refined way. Stories of people may also be adopted as a design material. Designers can select part of a story of people to conceptualize design, or can make their impression of a certain story into a design.

In this regard, it is worth noting that telling stories through design is not a matter of logic. Design is considered a form of expressing ourselves and can materialize from our stories like it does from our ideas, imaginations, and passions.

Many designers have worked by taking images of a famous tale or conceptualizing their own impressions of stories, and with their design works, product development has been carried on, contributing to the utilization of local craftsmanship or labor forces in developing countries.

But what else can we think of in terms of design involvement to support developing countries? Considering a 'human empowerment' element of storytelling, stories of local people can be adopted as materials in design; stories by design. If their own stories are incorporated into a design by local designers, we get closer to spheres of self-reliance. An organization or a program comprehensive to those local performers, can be offered as an effective way to support a developing country in this respect. If that kind of an organization or a program applies to many developing countries, design and the work of designers can broaden their horizons in terms of supporting sustain the development of



developing countries. In summary, a practical system which contains local people and local designers is worth researching.

What traits do local designers have? They share relatively many things with local people; backgrounds, sentiments, communications, and even interests. A prospect of deep interaction between local people and designers come out. They can create products through product development by applying their own stories in their own design. However, they should be given an appropriate position in an organized program in which motivation and economic yields are created and sustained.

In chapter 3, a manual will propose three ways of telling stories through objects and how the stories of people can be realized by local craftsmen and designers. This manual will be proposed in a form of easy-to-follow steps so that craft organizations, designers and NGOs may refer to them. It will eventually lead them to be able to foster local people to be self-sustainable financially and mentally. The ultimate goal of the system is to focus on letting local people have a strong identity of their culture, which will then be communicated to other cultures in the form of products.

The range of products can be from crafts that already exist in the field to new ones to the effect that the markets hold. These can be from small accessories and textiles, to clothing and furniture.

*Direct translation of linguistic narratives
into graphics on products:
Tree



*Representing story as symbols and images:
Princess chair

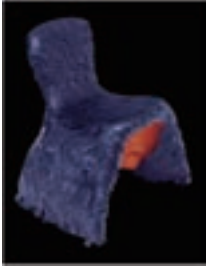


*A story as a motif of a function and/or a form:
My brother is not able to walk.
He can only sit on a chair.
He wants to hang around the town on his favorite chair.



Designs incorporating stories:

Examples from V&A collection (*Telling tales*)



1	2	
3	4	5
6	7	
8	9	



1.'Witch' chair

Tord Boontje(born Netherlands, 1968)

2004, Metal, foam, leather, felt lining

This chair is scaly, dark and sinister, while the 'Princess' chair is like a child's fantasy of Cinderella at the ball: effervescent, elegant, light and fanciful.

2.'Princess' chair

Tord Boontje (born Netherlands, 1968)

2004, Antique chair, silk, embroidery

The morality of fairy tales relies on oppositions of good and evil, often taking a visual form. This chair and the 'Witch' chair, also by Tord Boontje, show both traits. The 'Witch' chair is scaly, dark and sinister, while this chair is like a child's fantasy of Cinderella at the ball: effervescent, elegant, light and fanciful.

3.'The Pyramids of Makkum' tulip vase

Alexander van Slobbe(born Netherlands, 1959)

2008, Tin-glazed earthenware

Tulip vases, for the display of cultivated cut flowers, became status objects for European royalty and nobility in the late 17th century. Royal Tichelaar Makkum, the oldest ceramic firm in the Netherlands, restored a tulip vase in the Rijksmuseum and then invited four contemporary designers to create new versions. They all loosely conform to the pyramid or pagoda shape of the original vase and use the same materials and techniques.

4. 'Linen-Cupboard-House' ('Linnenkasthuis')

Jurgen Bey(born Netherlands, 1965)

2002, Found furniture, textiles, mattress, stone, coating

Just as children imaginatively build fortresses, so Jurgen Bey used old furniture to create this guest room. It is like the gingerbread house in the classic fairy story, where Hansel and Gretel were promised sanctuary but were deceived by the witch. Their story can be understood as a parable of the loss of innocence.

5. 'Storm' chair

Stephen Richards(born Britain, 1964)

2000, Various timbers including ash, sycamore, walnut, oak and elm

The 'Storm' chair looks as if it has been captured at the moment of explosion, or collapse. Its agitated form, tense angles and brit-

tle character could stand as a metaphor for an anxious mental state. It seems to record its own end, or presage it.

6.'Catastrophe' vase

Maxim Velcovsky(born Czechoslovakia, 1976)/ Studio Qubus 2007, Porcelain, natural and found materials

Velcovsky's 'Catastrophe' vases look like they have just been exhumed from an archaeological site. Brutal, even ugly, they appear to be covered in earth and detritus as though they have survived a natural or manmade calamity - an earthquake, a landslide or an explosion.

7. 'Else cow bench

Julia Lohmann(born West Germany, 1977), 2005, Leather, upholstery foam, wood

'Else' is one of a herd of thirty cow benches by Julia Lohmann. Each is formed from the hide of a single animal, bringing us very close to the source of the leather.

8.'Damned.MGX' chandelier

Luc Merx (born Netherlands, 1970)

2007, Manufactured by MGX for Materialise, Belgium

The tumbling bodies that make up this chandelier were inspired by Peter Paul Rubens's depiction of the Fall of the Damned at the moment of God's last judgement. In western art the human body is often a metaphor for spiritual attributes. By using the body in a work of design, Merx seems implicitly to equate the value of design and art.

9. 'Robber Baron' table

Studio Job(Job Smeets, born Belgium, 1970; Nynke Tynagel, born Netherlands, 1977)

2006, Cast bronze, polished, patinated and gilded

The Robber Barons were those ruthless 19th-century American industrialists who amassed - and spent - vast fortunes. The objects in this collection, decorated with imagery drawn from heavy industry and warfare, may appeal to the Robber Barons of today: power-hungry despots, oligarchs and bankers. The results are awe-inspiring and overwhelming, while the use of cast bronze evokes the gravitas and status of grand European sculpture and decorative arts.

IV. What has been done so far to support developing countries in the design field?

There have been similar approaches in order to nurture communities in developing countries by building craftsmanship. By reviewing these cases, the characteristics of this research can be revealed.



'mikkel' wall decoration by hella jongerius



'gullspira' by hella jongerius

1 Hella Jungerius and Marimekko have designed objects for a country, or a group of countries, and have utilized the local craftsmanship. Marrimekko, a Finnish company, performs activities in India and Africa, producing fabric products reflecting Indian and African identity.

Hella Jongerius created wall hangings for the IKEA-unicef programme, which helps women in India to start small sewing businesses. Sources of inspiration are the animals featured in Swedish fairy tales. In the production process of small-scale craft productions in India, is combined with large-scale industrial production by IKEA, while the images refer to the local roots of this global company. The intended result consists of textiles that not only benefit IKEA and Jongerius, but also the craftswomen who leave their traces in the making.

These activities have given an opportunity for the

craftsmanship of India and Africa to participate in the commodity production of the global company, which has resulted in making local women acquire earnings. It is worth noting the design engagement in production made possible by local craftsmanship besides industrialized production facilities that help create considerable economic benefits.

However, local craftsmanship still depends on global corporations for the country's sustainable economic growth, i.e. its involvement in the production is contingent upon the investment decisions of the international big firms.

2 Oxfam, one of the biggest and most well-known international development NGOs, helps people develop craftsmanship by focusing on funding, changing consumer recognition, branding, etc., by focusing on the economic development based on



local craftsmanship.

In partnership with a local association, the Associação Quilombola de Conceição das Crioulas(AQCC), Oxfam has helped women in Brazilian communities develop craft products and market them through trade fairs and nearby shops. The community now produces high-quality pots, dolls, bags, and mats from caroá, a fibrous local plant.

This activity has focused on management help, like fund raising and marketing, to sell products that local craftsmanship has made in the markets. It is significant in that local people produce products entirely of their own discretion and bring revenue to themselves.

However, people tend to stick to craftsmanship itself in this way, reminiscent of a cottage industry, producing typical local specialties continuously.

3 Moroso sets a theme of African local identity, utilizing local craftsmanship to produce products. But their products only give a representation of images or symbols.



Binta by Philippe Bestenaider

Moroso uses a hand-weaving technique by employing plastic threads, traditionally used for making fish nets. This has created the success of Tord Boontje's Shadowy collection: chairs, armchairs, loungers and stools/tables in light-hearted shapes.



Products made in Africa by local craftspeople



Bouquet chairs, Do-lo-rez by Ron Arad

In these works, an eminent designer has taken the design material from local cultures, making various products. Consumers of the products can grasp local culture in the forms of manifested images and symbols, thus turning their attention to the local communities.

Nonetheless in this case, with the exterior designer's involvement, we can find that their products are a reconstituted version of local culture by the designer. For that reason, most products were presumably made as furniture or decoration.

Table of Comparison

Positive ● Negative ✕ Possible ▲	Local Craftsmanship	Contribute to Local Economics	Local Design Development	Self-Sustainability	Reflects Local Stories
Hella Junggerious	●	▲	✕	✕	✕
Marimekko	●	▲	▲	✕	✕
Oxfam	●	●	✕	✕	✕
Moroso	●	▲	▲	✕	✕



These European designers' meaningful activities have some common aspects with my research, but my research distinguishes itself in that it intends to build up a system of empowering people to sustain their development for themselves by adopting local stories, local craftsmanship, local designers and local businesses.

Preceding design works have made efforts to connect prominent designers in developed countries, to craftsmanship in developing countries. Those endeavors bear limitation in that people in developing countries still need to depend on the capacities of exterior entities, which seem to lie in a provisional phase of support.

Notably, in some cases with outside designers being involved, we can find that their products are only reflected versions of local people's thoughts by foreign people.

This research, however, heads in a totally different direction. Local craftsmen and designers will tell their own stories and create their own design. Their products will reflect their own thoughts and cultures, rather than the impressions of it through foreign eyes.

“Local craftsmen and designers will tell their own stories and create their own design. Their products will reflect their own thoughts and cultures, rather than the impressions of it through foreign eyes.”



Cecilia with her embroidery work that reflects her life story.



THE MANUAL

**Storytelling-Design
into a system to build
human empowerment**

Manual *Introduction*

I. Introduction to the manual

“Storytelling-Design”

The manual presented in this paper proposes an easy-to-follow, step by step guide with the case study performed in the actual working field (Penduka in Namibia). It will give a reference for craft organizations, designers, and NGOs to empower people in developing countries.

These steps will help offer a solution to listen to local craftsmanship and designers and foster them to be self-sustainable with financial sustainability in mind.

The ultimate goal of the manual is not an increase in profit but an increase in self-esteem, and to let local people have a strong identity of their culture, which can be communicated to other cultures in the form of products.



Case study *Introduction*

Who is Penduka

“Penduka! Empowered women working for a better future”

Penduka, which has participated in this case study, is a registered welfare and non-governmental organization(NGO) located in Katutura, Windhoek, Namibia. The organization was established in 1992 and focuses on economically vulnerable women and other marginalized communities with the aim of fostering and developing sustainable livelihoods through its focus groups via training, skills development, production of crafts, hospitality, and community health programmes. It pays particular attention to women who are disadvantaged through poverty, disability, ill-health, or lack of education. It empowers them to develop their skills and talents and markets crafts and community based tourism to the international and national community.

The word ‘Penduka’ means ‘wake up!’ and it is a call for women to take charge of their own lives and earn incomes with the abilities bestowed upon them. Using a payment-per-piece system, Penduka successfully initiated and managed two large embroidery groups in urban and rural Namibia, and has empowered more than 4,000 Namibians during the course of its existence.

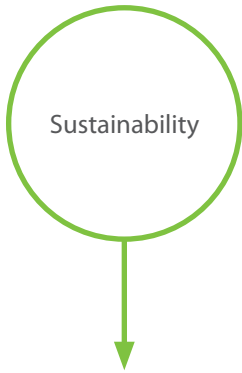
Currently the organisation has more than 1,000 direct beneficiaries and estimated 4,000 indirect beneficiaries. The direct beneficiaries include more than 860 tuberculosis patients(through the Community health programme), 105 women in the embroidery group from Otjiwarongo, and 70 women on site in Goreangab, Katutura. The gender profile of the organisation is unique: 90% female in general; board of trustees, 100% female; disabled employees, 15%.

Manual

Three goals **the storytelling-design system is focusing on**

Storytelling-design is a system creating a new platform for developing worlds. The platform includes communication, product development, and interaction between the organization and local people. The stories that will be told by design are of culture, life, dreams, and visions of the local people. Because these design concepts come from stories of people in the field, the development of products is culturally **sustainable** as long as there are people with stories. Once the system is settled in the field, it can create a **self-supportive** platform for the local people. The design will reflect the **cultural identity** of community and individuals through their stories. We can carefully achieve those three goals through a Storytelling-design system.

The following questions can be asked in order to examine the current status in supporting local craftsmen and designers.



Is the design process sustainable?



Does design provide a platform for local people to be self-supportive?



Does design reflect local cultural identity?

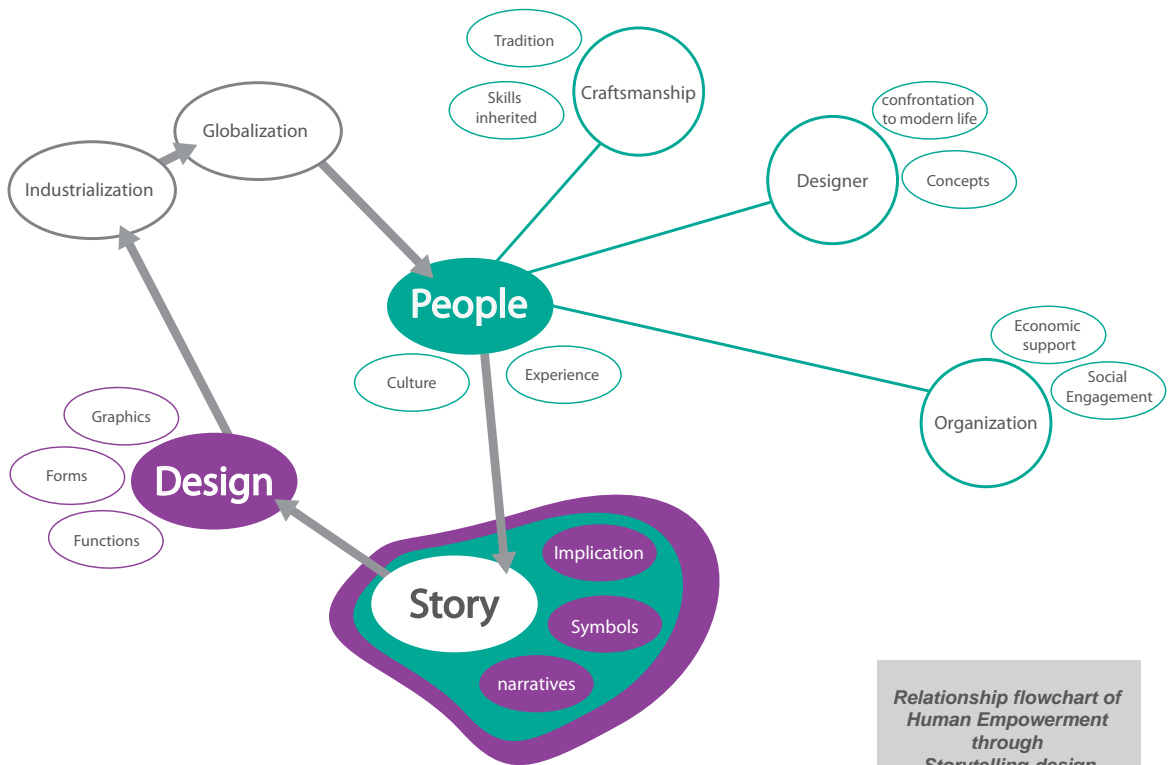


It can be achieved through Storytelling-Design System

Manual

The Key Elements involved in the System

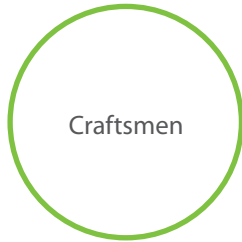
The key elements involved in this system are organization, designers, craftsmanship, design, and people. Those elements are interconnected to each other and affected by each other. The element that connects **People** and **Design** is **Story**. Since it is about a design system, people will refer to craftsmen, designers and organizations that are supporting the system. People who have their own rich culture and experience. Those elements being reflected in stories. Stories portrayed as product designs and those products being produced into a certain amount and consumed with a help of industrialization. And thanks to some aspects of globalization, those products will travel fast to other people in other parts of the world.



Manual

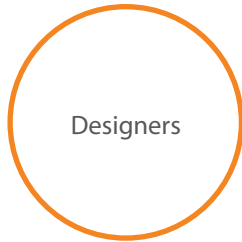
Who are the *Actors*?

There are four main actors that are to play important roles in order to create this storytelling-design system.



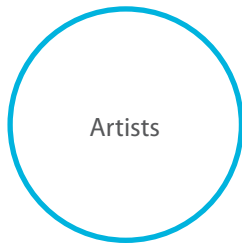
Craftsmen

People who make things skillfully with their hands. Skills inherited by knowledge of tradition. By expressing strong cultural identity, craftsmen can play a very important role, by these terms.



Designers

People who work with the aesthetics and usability of mass-produced products that may be improved for marketability and production. The role of a designer is to create and execute design solutions towards problems of form, usability, user ergonomics, engineering, marketing, brand development and sales.



Artists

People whose creative work shows sensitivity and imagination.



Organization

A group or association organized outside of an institutionalized political structure to realize particular social objectives (such as conserving nature, empowering local people) or serving particular constituencies (such as local communities).

Manual

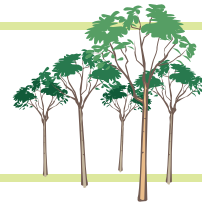
How do we tell stories through objects?

Through several case studies, three main storytelling methods through objects can be defined. A basic way of telling stories with objects is **a direct translation of linguistic narratives into graphics**. For instance, if you want to tell 'trees' or 'a boy is climbing a tree', then draw those objects and situations literally. It is basic but is still a powerful tool to tell a story because the scenes and objects reflect the culture of the illustrator. The second method is **representing stories as symbols and images**. It might require more imagination and communication skill but it can give a strong impression about a theme and an ideology once the story is understood. The last method suggested in this manual is **taking a story as a motif of a function and/or a form**. People might not recognize the story that you told at a glance but it can give you a consistent and strong impression with stories implied.

Three ways of telling stories through objects

Direct translation of linguistic narratives into graphics

Tree



Representing story as symbols and images

Princess chair



A story as a motif of a function and/or a form

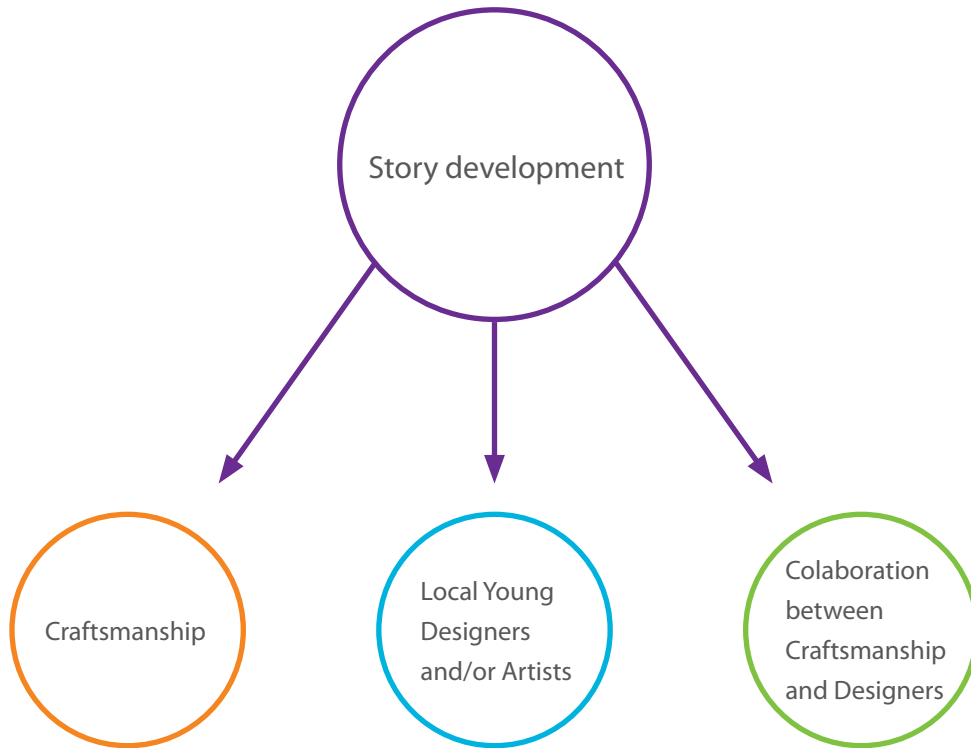
My brother is not able to walk. He can only sit on a chair. He wants to hang around the town on his favorite chair.



Manual

Who is going to use what?

Three main actors can be fostered and empowered through three storytelling-design methods. Each actor is suggested to be paired with each storytelling-design method. Craftsmen can use 'direct translation of linguistic narratives into graphics', rather than using non-communicative traditional symbols. They can embody the stories of their tradition and experience through graphics. In the case of local young designers and artists, it is suggested that they should represent stories as symbols and images. As a way of developing local talents on the foundation of one's culture and tradition, this method can be a platform to think about their ways of expressing their own identity through creative means. The last storytelling method 'stories as motifs of functions and forms' can be used by co-designing between craftsmen and designers. The combination of those two talents can create a synergy effect and products with new forms and functions on a story-based foundation. This pairing, however, is an exemplary suggestion that can be formulated according to the capability and desire of actors.



- Rather than using non-communicative symbols, embody the narratives of their tradition and experience with graphics

- Direct translation of linguistic narratives into graphics

- As a way of developing local talents on the foundation of the culture and tradition they have, provide a platform to think about their own way identity with creative means

- Representing stories as symbols and images

- Create a synergy effect by combining two talents into one product

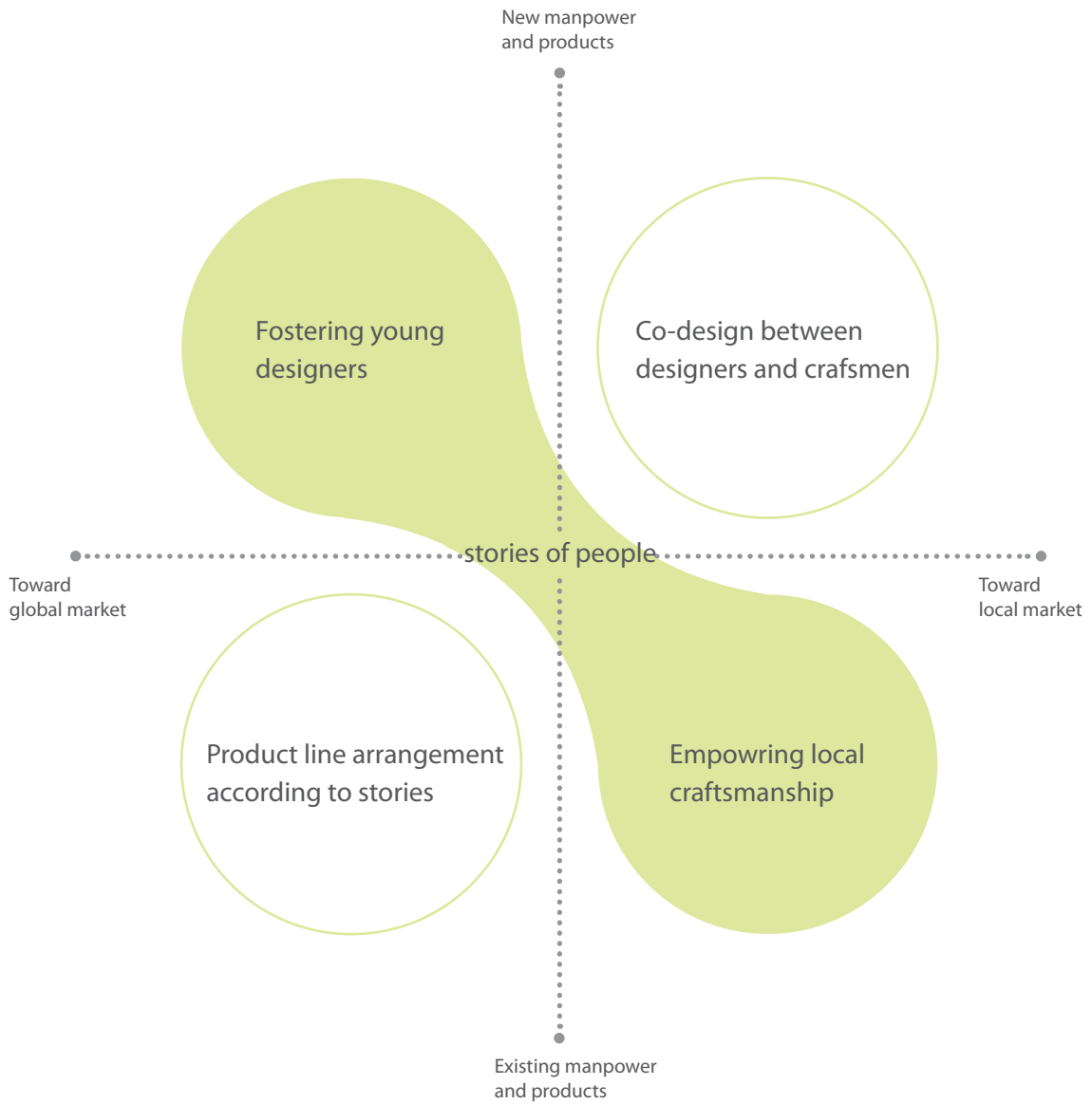
- Stories as motifs of functions and forms

Manual

Storytelling-Design System Matrix

There are four components in a storytelling-design system in terms of marketing. They are 'fostering young designers/artists', 'empowering local craftsmanship', 'co-designing between designers and craftsmen', and 'product line arrangement according to stories'.

As seen in the matrix, the lower parts are carried out in order to utilize and empower existing manpower. That is, existing products can be re-arranged according to stories of local people. Local craftsmen can express their lives more, extend their skills with their own stories, and be empowered by them, and the upper parts are carried out in order to develop new manpower and products. Through fostering young talents and arranging collaboration between designers and craftsmen, an organization can achieve local manpower empowerment and consistent product development at the same time. Since there are particular cultures in every local market, collaboration of designers and craftsmen can create products that meet the needs of the local market. For reaching out to global market, young local designers can create designs which confront modern lives with a reflection of their own culture. This can be another way of communicating among cultures through acts of buying and selling.



II. Story as a seed of product development

: Product lines based on stories

In this research, story is considered an effective medium of connecting intangible empowerment with tangible benefits. A good and simple story can be a golden seed for an organization or a designer to create a line of products. Not only will it be able to help us create a range of products, but can also imply messages that we want to deliver to users.

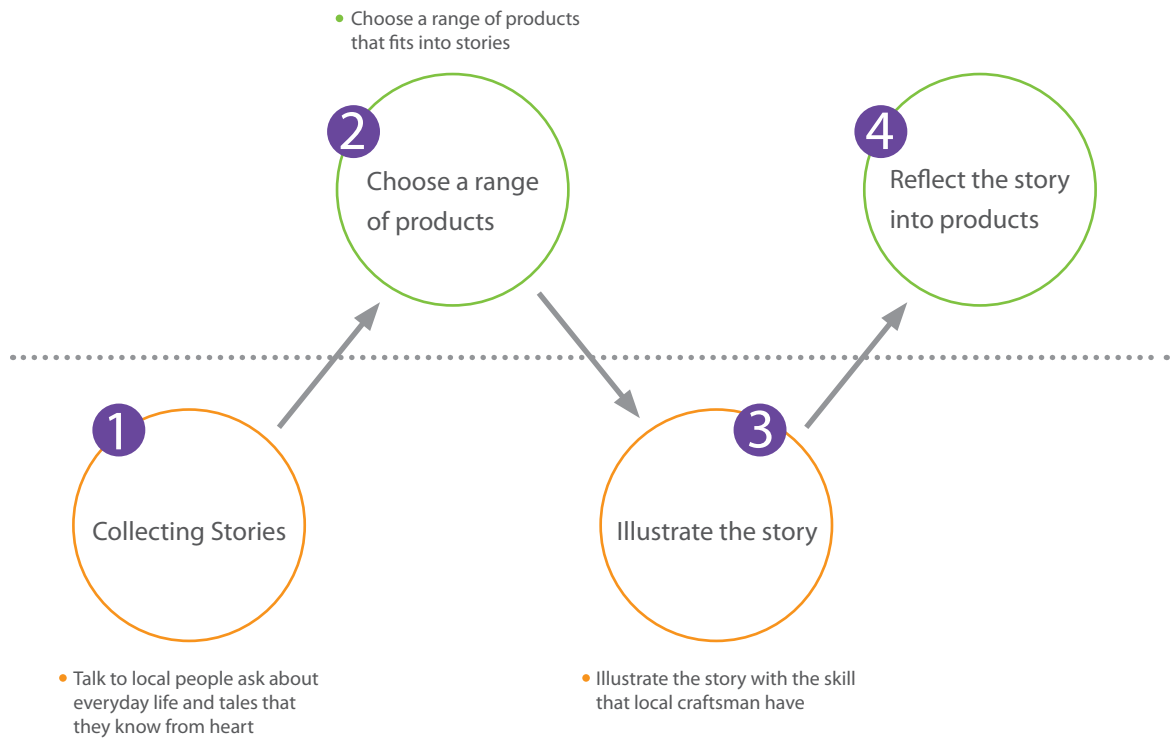
Suggested criteria to choose stories:

- 1) Stories that reflect local life – Even in the same country, the life in the urban and rural are different.
- 2) Stories that reflect the local culture – Products can portray specific and interesting cultures such as ways of greeting, eating, dressing and so on.
- 3) Stories that reflect the philosophy of a nation – When the products have philosophical meaning of a nation, they will then provide not only a different aesthetic experience, but also a learning experience from other cultures.

The following steps are suggested to help create product lines with significant meanings.



In Organization



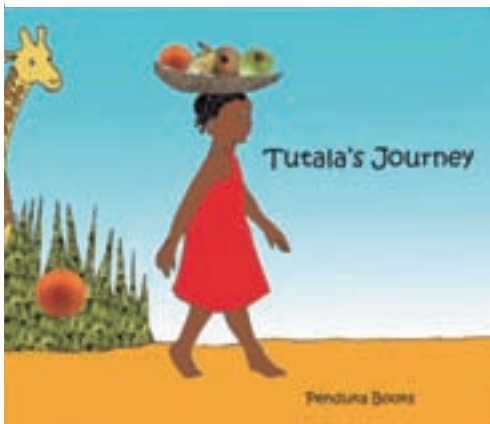
With People

Case study 1

Tutala's Journey

A story book is created in order to set up an example of how one story can generate a line of products.

It has a simple African story and shows scenes of Namibian landscapes and how they see things. The book itself requires hand craft in order to make it unique. Based on this book, a children's product line is created for Penduka using their existing craft techniques.



Illustrations



Books



Childrens' product range

Manual

III. Designs to **empower** craftsmanship

Local craftsmen usually use their inherited skills to produce fixed forms of traditional objects or objects designed by designers. This has made craftsmen rather passive actors. But, local craftsmen can become proactive by sharing their stories with people who buy objects that they have incorporated with their personal stories. It means they can be self-empowered by actually making products reflective of their stories.

The following steps are suggested to empower local craftsmen through stories.



Step 1 Listen to craftsmen you are working with

Craftsmen you are working with have both good skills and stories. Encourage craftsmen to tell their stories and try to record them.

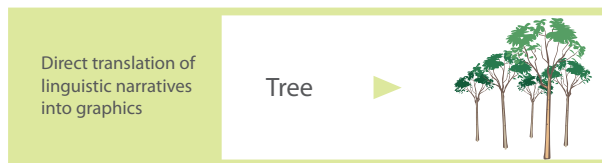
Step 2 Determine the target market

You probably already have your own target market. However, if the purpose of production is human empowerment, you can re-think the target market of where you want to connect and extend the empowerment of craftsmen. You might want to promote the stories of local people in a global market in order to make people achieve awareness of their own culture or you may want other local people to be empowered, like the craftsmen you are working with.

Step 3 Select items

Match a new story with an existing skill and a product.

Step 4 Start with direct translation of stories into graphics



Step 5 Give credit to craftsmen

Put a label with basic information of a craftsman to the product, which will create a platform to allow each craftsman to be recognized.

Case study 2

Workshop for *Craft ladies* at Penduka

This workshop is to empower Penduka women who have craft skills in order to utilize their skills as a tool for telling their stories and communicating with the world. 16 participants with background in embroidery, Batik and pottery are convened. Facilitators - Christien Roos(Penduka), Anya Link(Penduka), Evelyn Breuer(Penduka), Youngshin Sim(Design Academy Eindhoven).

The participants are preselected from various tribe groups.

Details are as follows:



Period 3 days, from April 28th to April 30th

Pre-assignment Bringing in writings of each person's own story (oral fairytales or personal experiences)

Target market Global crafts market

Current market of Penduka embroidery and batik products is established with tourists in Namibia. With this result, Penduka is seeking to extend to global markets starting from European markets. Penduka will enter those markets with Namibian narrative stories.

Schedule

DAY 1

- a. Introduction to the Project
- b. Presenting initiated stories by women
- c. Presenting design direction
- d. Starting design and production

DAY 2

- a. Design and production

DAY 3

- a. Presentation of individual works
- b. Evaluation

Workshop for craft ladies

Participants

10 from Otjiwarongo
6 from Katutura

Specialties

Embroidery
Batik
pottery



Participants



Workshop Details

- SEPT 1 Presenting stories
- SEPT 2 Designing stories
- SEPT 3 Portraying stories as products
- SEPT 4 Presenting works
- SEPT 5 Evaluation

1

Presenting stories



2

Designing stories



3 Portraying stories as products



4 Presenting works



5 Evaluation



IV. Designs to foster young talents

Organizations working with local craftsmen might face a need for new product development. They might reach out for help to professionals from developed world or local experts. But here is presented a suggestion that can help develop new products, and at the same time, give us a chance to empower people in the place where we are working. This is to foster local, young talents by providing a platform for them to reveal their unpolished talents, and to develop products with a local identity. Therefore, young designers can be fostered and their work can be developed as actual products.

The following steps can help you organize a platform in order to foster young talents.

Step 1 Know what are the needs

Find out which of your work needs a fresher design input

Step 2 Determine the target market

You probably already have your own target market. However, if the purpose of production is human empowerment, you can re-think of the target market of where you want to connect and extend the empowerment of young designers. You might want to promote the young designers design in global market, or you may want other local people to be empowered, like the young designers you are working with.

Step 3 Set a plan for a design workshop

- 3-1 Create a design theme
- 3-2 Set the period for the workshop
- 3-3 List up items which need to be designed and materials available
- 3-4 List up the examples of similar cases of your theme to inspire participants.
- 3-5 Find the spots of where you think potential participants are, and make notice.



Step 4 Publicize 'designer wanted'

Publicise a 'designer wanted' notification with the theme that you have chosen. Make sure you mention the design of the results will be developed into products. Prizes can be a royalty or promotion for a designer by the organization.

Step 5 Carry out a workshop

For designers, challenge them to work beyond direct translation of stories by graphics. Encourage them to utilize materials, forms, colors and lines to illustrate stories they want to tell. You may want to use a design method that requires more of a thinking process than the one used for craftsmen.



Step 6 Link the results to products

Put the results into the market with labels of designers.

Step 7 Evaluate the products

Evaluate the products according to reactions of customers and sales statistics.

Step 8 Plan a reflection workshop

Plan a reflection workshop for designers who previously participated. Give them feedbacks on their products and open a discussion.

Discussion points can be as followed:

- 1) What was the customers' reaction?
- 2) Who was the main group of buying such products?
- 3) Did customers grasp the stories that designer was intended to tell?
- 4) What was missing and how can it be improved?
- 5) What can be made as a spin off from the product?

Case study 3

Workshop for young designers in Namibia

The objectives of the workshop are to stimulate young Namibian designers to realize the importance of knowing their own culture and develop their own way of expressing modern Namibian life through objects and to promote them to project their perspectives into their designs.

Participants are: 5 from JMAC(John Muafangejo Art Center), 6 from College of Art, 5 from University of Namibia, Dept. of Visual Art. Facilitators are: Cathy Mc Roberts(University of Namibia), Christien Roos(Penduka), Youngshin Sim(Design Academy Eindhoven). The participants are preselected by faculties of each organization and Penduka managements. Details are as follows:



Period 5 days from May 3rd to May 7th

Pre-assignment Investigating Namibian traditions and culture (from objective point of view)

Method Considering Namibian culture and tradition, participants will design objects based on their own stories or the stories that women brought from the craft lady workshop so that there is an organic connection between two workshops- two groups of people.

Target market of the results Global crafts and design market
This can be a good chance to promote Namibian identity to global market through young Namibian designers perspectives.
It is not only to acquire bigger markets for Penduka but also to promote contemporary Namibian ways of expressing life.

Schedules

DAY 1

- a. Introduction to the Project
- b. Introducing examples of designs with culture and story considered
- c. Discussion on "storytelling methods"
- d. Presentation on "individual storytelling method"
- e. Proposing design plan for following days (concepts / material / method / application)

DAY 2,3,4

- a. Design and production

DAY 5

- a. Presentation of individual works
- b. Evaluation

Workshop for young Namibian designers

Participants

5 from University of Namibia

6 from College of Arts

5 from Katutura Art Center

Specialties

Textiles

Sculpture

Visual arts



Participants



Workshop Details

- SEPT 1 Self - introduction of participants
- SEPT 2 Group discussion
- SEPT 3 Presenting discussion outcomes
- SEPT 4 Planning product development
- SEPT 5 Portraying stories as products
- SEPT 6 Presenting works
- SEPT 7 Evaluation
- SEPT 8 Reflection

1

Self - introduction of participants



2

Group discussion



3 Presenting discussion outcomes



4 Planning product development



5 Portraying stories as products



6

Presenting works



7 Evaluation



8 Reflection



“This workshop has inspiring me to think out of the box and to change from craft to design.”

-John Nampala-

Manual

V. Designs to build collaboration between craftsmanship and designers

We can accomplish multiple benefits through collaboration between craftsmen and designers. They can exchange their knowledge, experience and skills and they can create a synergy effect through combination of talents. Two parties can build an interaction on one story, then they can share their thinking, compare their thoughts, and specify what they have been thinking or making.

The following steps can help you to arrange collaboration between designers and craftsmen.



Step 1 Select the items to be developed

The items need to be defined and listed so that designers and craftsmen can get a sense of where to start for their product development. It can be great challenge for participants if the item to be developed is totally new product. But make sure the selection of the item is done within the range of skills of the craftsman and specialty of the designer.

Step 2 Determine the target market

The function of products may vary for different area and user groups. It is crucial to know your target group and market.

Step 3 Set up a meeting

Set up a meeting with the staff from an organization, a craftsman and a designer. In this meeting, define roles of each actor and set up a discussion to the convergence of everyone's interests in one goal.

Step 4 Make up a schedule

Make up a schedule for further meetings and the creation of a prototype.

Step 5 Carry out design process

Since it is a collaboration of people, a story can be reflected to multiple aspects of the product that will be created by this process. In order to be focused on the same goal, try to get a theme and use a particular storytelling-design method.

A story as a motif
of a function
and/or a form

My brother is not able to walk. He can only sit on a chair. He wants to hang around the town on his favorite chair.



Case study 4

Martha's Chair

Its objective is to create an example that shows a fusion of traditional craftsmanship and modern use. This can be a platform to have consistent design follow-ups.

The workshop also deals with how a very personal story can be shown to the public. Participants are a traditional basket weaver, a furniture maker and a concept designer (in the current study, a foreign designer is participated due to the time frame to set up an example but the intention of system is for a local designer to be participated).

Details are as follows:

Design Object A Lounge chair

Title Martha's Chair

Concept Martha is a disabled lady who works at Penduka. She spends most of her time sitting on a chair. When she sits her lap is covered with many objects such as notebooks, threads, files, pens, etc. The chair is designed to free Martha's lap from objects. And this can be applied to ladies with purses sitting on chairs in public spaces.

Period April 26th to May 6nd

Place Penduka

Product target market Local furniture market

Namibia is relatively newly independent country.

It has been over 20 years of independence but most fabricated goods supplies are imported from South Africa. The furniture market is one of the major growing markets in Namibia but it is hard to find Namibian furniture. A few small Namibian furniture makers are at the stage of following South African footsteps or European trends.

A new furniture design in this country can make a good initiation to think about developing Namibia's own furniture design.

- Participants



- Design



- Process



Manual

VI. Building a sustainable system

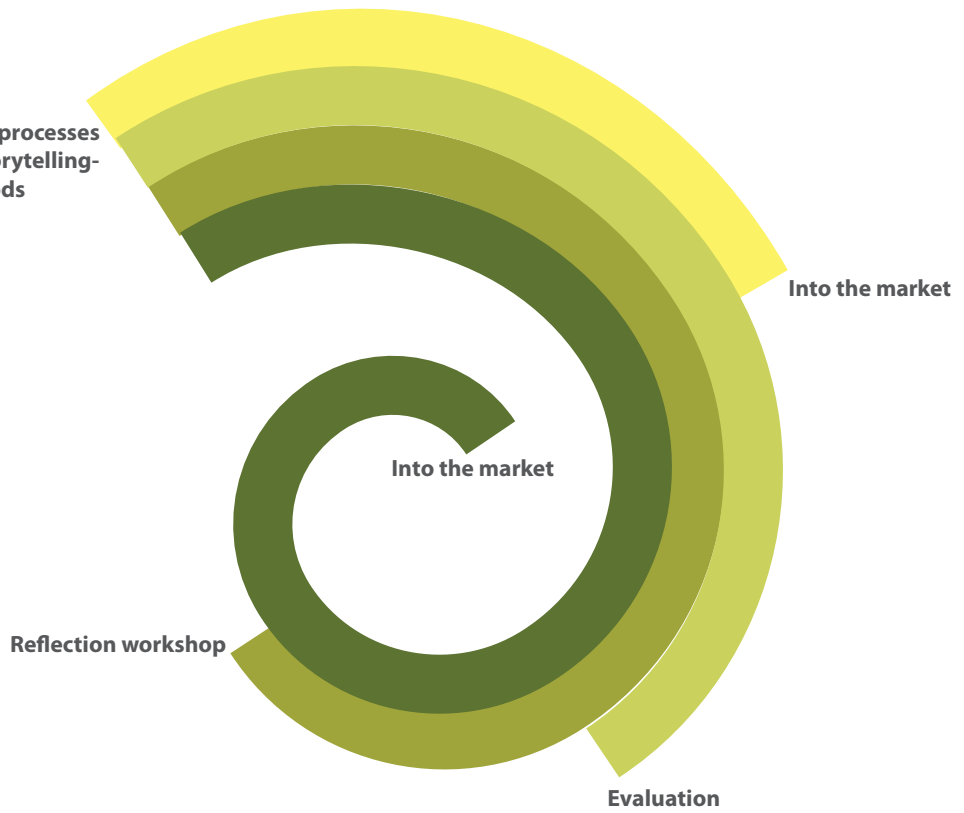
If products have been made to be on the market with a brand, collect sales data and responses from consumers. Based on the collected facts, gather the participants again for comprehensive follow-ups, and reflect discussed points into a design.

Case study_ *Penduka product development*

The products designed and produced through workshops will be on the market with the brand name Penduka. All products will be evaluated by customers through a bar code scanning system which accumulates sales data of each designer and after 6 months, workshop participants will be gathered again for a comprehensive follow-up of their design.



**Three design processes
with three storytelling-
design methods**



Manual

VII. Advocacy⁴ through design

Both craftsmen and designers can be self-empowered in the system. The craftsmen's stories are reflected in design that can be stimulated to produce products in respect of human empowerment. Local designers may also find their empowerment in the system, for they will actually see their design reflected as products. Ultimately, it is not simply to tell stories of vulnerable people, but is to shift the position of people in developing world, from receivers, learners, and passive listeners, to givers, teachers, and proactive tellers. Through a storytelling-design system, people can advocate their philosophy, ideology, and opinions. In this way, we can also show that design can be a great tool for advocacy. It can deliver people's own ideas for making better lives through products that contain ideas from their own stories.

¹ Advocacy by an individual or by a group normally aim to influence public-policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization undertakes including media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing research or poll etc.



Sara's finished tablecloth. The printings are about Namibian traditional wedding.

“It is not simply to tell stories of vulnerable people, but is to shift the position of people in developing world, from receivers, learners, and passive listeners, to givers, teachers, and proactive tellers.”

Chapter 4

Project evaluation and discussions

Victoria the Batik designer

Victoria works in the Batik department at Penduka. And she is one of the ladies who participated in Penduka crafts ladies' workshop. Before she participated in the workshop, her job was to illustrate African animals and abstract patterns on fabric, using her Batik skills. Although the job was to delicately hand craft every product she made, the images that she was portraying were the same and stereotypical African figures such as elephants, lions and giraffes. She considered herself as a worker in a Batik department. But after the experience she had in the workshop, she became a designer in the Batik department at Penduka, and no longer just a worker. She now portrays her stories into products, illustrating her life at work and at home, and the experiences she had in the past; beautifully using her own skills. This was not only a great turning point for Victoria, but also for me, for someone who built the workshop; to see how her simple input, changed a perspective of herself, and others who witnessed it.



Victoria



Victoria presenting her work at the workshop



The works done by Victoria before the workshop





The work Victoria made through the workshop. She illustrated her Batik work process

“This humble system built by a course of design study, was able to discover that a small human-centered system could provide a huge step forward for people. Making them go beyond the barriers of economic and social underdevelopment. Design proved to be a great medium to make this happen.”

Lessons learned

The initial intention of building this system had two main points. The first point was to encourage people in developing countries to be proactive on speaking out their ideas and philosophy. The second aimed to empower them through their own stories and skills. Referring to the case study of Penduka Namibia, it is evident that a particular country might not be developed or may be in stagnation in many economic and social aspects. However that doesn't mean that people themselves are in an impasse. It is found that the problems lie in the defective and/or lack of systems. A careless system might mislead people towards a wrong direction. Pursuing dreams and setting visions is the nature of human beings. Any kind of system in human society should intend to support those dreams and visions. People who attended the workshops carried out during the case study, didn't require any stimulation. They were prepared to speak out their vision and share philosophies with their own people, and others in developed countries. This humble system built by a course of design study, was able to discover that a small human-centered system could provide a huge step forward for people. Making them go beyond the barriers of economic and social underdevelopment. Design proved to be a great medium to make this happen.



“Invite people into the center of issues that can be told out loud and worked out within the community, and to propagate the specific values that locals have to other cultures in a form of product.”

What's next

A critical side of the system is that it doesn't run by itself. It requires people who are able to organize. And it is crucial to have someone who understands the fundamentals of design. In order to place the outcome of a system to the market, there should be 'a creative director'. One who can fine-tune products, before putting them into the market.

The next step for people who applied this system in the field, with a theme of general storytelling, can set specific themes of stories for a certain period of time such as family, neighborhood, and friendship, etc. in order to bring up awareness on certain issues. This can help not only to develop products and to initiate into building self-esteem of locals, but also to invite people into the center of issues that can be told out loud and worked out within the community, and to propagate the specific values that locals have to other cultures in a form of product. As a person who proposes this system, my next step will be to introduce it to more designers, aid workers and NGOs and collecting data from their results. It is expected that a more solid system can be built in order to be a strong reference for development cooperation in developing countries. Through the course of the study, I believe we can grasp what sustainable development is, the practicality of which can be presented in a system where design provides motives and a device for people; design empowering humans.



Reflection by Christien Roos **(The founder of Penduka)**

Reflection on preparation, input and output of the design workshop held at Penduka April/May 2010-05-10

The workshop on : "This is my story" for the rural women was a good intro and the outcome exceeded her expectations since it was hard to find out beforehand which participants would come out and would they be prepared for such a workshop. Story telling is a way of living in Namibia. The oral traditions are strong and well developed, the writing down of such is not common special in a grass root women organization where some women cannot read and write until today.

The rural women coming out for 4 days to the workshop where extremely committed and would work on their hand embroideries until 1.00 o'clock at night to get it finished.

Second workshop on: Fostering local talents" with 15 young crafts people was very successful and well attended and evaluated. The students loved coming out to Penduka, got free use of materials and an open space with everything they would require to make a products according to a new way of thinking. That was the hard part of it and the biggest challenge for Youngshin to make the young people aware of thinking out of the "craft" box. Some succeeded to escape from it, some not. This is



the reason why continues fostering for the coming years is requested and intensive evaluation and reflection. Only since 3 years ago the local craft and design people showed interest in organizations like Penduka as a way of assisting in local development and finding exposure for themselves.

Outcome of the workshop in terms of very good products for Penduka to take in production is limited to 2 or 3 products, but the interest for cooperation and future input is very much awake.

The exposure for their products to be showed in The Netherlands with their name attached to it was of main importance. Penduka will offer Royalties to the young designers if there designs will be reproduced and sold under Penduka. This will contribute towards their future and forms the next interest of getting involved.

Product development by Youngshin as a designer, a furniture maker and a craftsman: "Martha's chair" is very well received by the public and at Penduka. Youngshin spend many hours working on the chair at the project which made the women aware of the story behind it, the function of it and the commitment towards developing a new product with ups and downs, not resting until completion of the chair! Great inspiration to all!

By now 2000 copies of Tutala's journey are printed

by a local Namibian printing company.

The hand embroidery of the women as the finishing touch has start and samples are made. If marketing is up to standard this book can create work for almost 35 women in Penduka and the income will be going towards the salaries and profit into the Product development fund of Penduka, this according to Youngshin's request not to put her as beneficiary but towards further development. This in a nutshell indicates her motives.

Conclusion: Youngshin's system towards development of young Namibians is whole hardly approved and shown very positive effects in case of product development outcome, but even more in case of processes and awareness.



Reflection by Anya Links **(Sales & Marketing manager of Penduka)**

Young designers' Workshop (3 - 7 May 2010)

The workshop started on Monday, 3 May, at Penduka and 16 Namibian designers participated.

The designers were students or graduates of the University of Namibia (UNAM) or the College of the Arts (COTA). The facilitator of the workshop was Cathy McRoberts of the Visual Arts department of UNAM.

The aim of the design workshop was to foster Namibian design talent within a development system that incorporated design as the tool for human development. It was important the stories of Namibians from within a cultural context be conceptualised and converted into a product(s) to be offered to other communities (international or local). Youngshin Sim said 'design is about economics'. The story, she emphasised, must be an essential component in the product and in this way, marginalised communities like those in Namibia are empowered to offer something unique to the rest of the world. Once the system is sustainable, meaning a continuous influx of Namibian stories produced and converted into desirable products at Penduka, the benefits to the community, in my opinion, are endless.

During the course of the workshop, the designers pointed out that Youngshin is encouraging them to look at their communities and cultural herit-



age from a different angle. They found it inspiring and illuminating. All the designers invested a lot of time and energy into developing their designs and products. It was this personal investment that made the workshop at Penduka unique. There was buy-in from everyone. Even though the prizes were non-monetary, commitment from the designers was high. Two designers could not complete the workshop due to unforeseen circumstances.

From Monday to Thursday, Penduka was a hive of activity as the designers moved about, scratched around for material, asked questions, checked each other's work and changed ideas half-way through. Penduka was the ideal venue for the workshop. All materials and space were available and respect for the creative process is ingrained among the women. When the designers needed help, they were assisted by the staff of Penduka. Youngshin emphasised the workshop is not about her but merely about how successful the system she empowerment system she developed will deliver the desired results.

The evaluation event of the design workshop took place on Friday, 7 May 2010. External evaluators like established designers and artists were invited to perform the evaluations, in addition to the staff at Penduka, who are extremely experienced in the production of crafts. The products from the

designers were inspiring. The winner was Sara Nekomba, a 2nd year student at the College of the Arts. She is 23 years old and won an individual exhibition at the Dutch Design Week and the opportunity to develop a range of products for Penduka, while earning royalties.

From a socio-political development point of view, the design workshop for emerging designers was moderately successful (within a limited context). Youngshin Sim's model for development as expounded in her masters thesis, could have far-reaching effects and benefits to the Namibian economy if properly applied and administered. Young designers were engaged for this round however, architects, industrial designers, engineers and other disciplines could just as easily have been incorporated into this system and delivered favourable results. Namibia's national average for unemployment currently stands at 51.2%, with a staggering 78% for the youth. In an effort to create employment and empower Namibians, Youngshin's human development system using stories, is a wonderful vehicle to achieve just this objective...with the buy-in of players at all levels of community and management.

I certainly support this development model and can definitely see the overall and long-term benefits.

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