Service design tools to engage marginalised youth in San Communities of Southern Africa

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Abstract

This paper reports the findings as part of a EU funded project which focuses on the participatory development with the Youth in marginalised communities of Southern Africa. It discusses the advantages of the adoption of Service Design methods in providing self-awareness, engagement and active collaboration among participants. Based on the literature review of Social Innovation, Participatory Design and Service Design, a framework is proposed and suggests a different overview of the role of individuals in a contemporary community, with the aim of identifying features that enable and empower the youths as change agents in their communities. A tool book is created as a result of a selection of the most effective tools and techniques developed and used in a series of workshops carried out with local Youth. Through a case study, we illustrate the use of process and tools that enables and creates an ethical, equal and open platform where the basic skills can be transferred, and issues or challenges identified individually and collectively can be transformed into solution-oriented opportunities.

KEYWORDS: participatory design, service design, youth empowerment, design process, marginalised youth.

Introduction

Youth are experiencing the difficulty of understanding their role in society and having their voice heard in many of the contexts in which they find themselves. This is especially the case for the youth from marginalised communities, where the entire group is denied involvement in mainstream economic and social activities, and is even more exposed to the risks and challenges of a world that is undergoing a metamorphosis (Beck, 2016).

On one hand, young people who are members of disadvantaged and marginalised groups have comparatively little control over their lives and lack access to social services to meet their basic needs, e.g. health and education, the labour market and the opportunity for social participation and its effects on the social fabric (e.g. juvenile delinquency) (Duchak, 2014). They can be the target of the negative beliefs or judgements from the public, and are often unequipped to participate fully and feel like they are making social contributions (Kagan et al., 2002; Evans, 2007). Consistent invalidation of their intelligence leads to low self confidence and self-esteem (Stoneman 2002).

On the other hand, research suggests the positive attributes and resilience of people at the social margins can be highly helpful in supporting collective social action. For example, Kagan et al. (2002) discuss that oppressed people's resistance and resilience in the face of oppression has a potential for an enhanced, reclaimed and re-invented identity. Joly, et al., (2014) identify that traditional ties of marginalised groups, their strong family values and emotional attachment among each other in the neighbourhood and village can be the sources of strength, knowledge and a driving force for social cohesion.

Service design is essentially a sense-making process that supports strategic conversations, idea generation, prototyping and new business model development for collaborative solutions, and often rely on the new media to allow people to connect, contribute, collaborate and share (Meroni and Sangiorgi, 2011). Public services design in Western economies have been reformed by acknowledging that people who use such services have unmet needs and latent resources. It is a common practice to enable the dialogue among the community members, ignite the connection with stakeholders and promote civic engagement toward a sustainable community development in Europe (Mulgan, 2007). Due to the diverse characters and needs of communities, many studies criticise top-down approaches and the passive role of the citizen in public innovations for being inefficient and ineffective, and emphasise the importance of a collaborative way of creating solutions "from people to people" (Meroni, 2007; Jégou and Manzini, 2008; Clarence and Gabriel, 2014). Participatory processes are at the base of a new relationship between the citizen and the governmental and administrative institutions. Service design is seen as a discipline that would enable rejuvenate the ways in which people participate (Jäppinen et al. 2015) to co-create a specific value through optimising service offers and channels (Holmlid, 2012). Service providers are putting the competence, ability and knowledge of service users and the wider community as a primary power for the service development. This suggests there is a strategic role for designers to influence the participatory process for "citizen engagement" or "service user involvement". It is important to recognise this more broadening role of design, to catalyse a transformative process in unlocking situated knowledge, developing people's skills and capacities and moving them to make their own futures (Akama, 2014).

This paper presents the outcomes of the PARTY project, where a framework is proposed to apply innovative service design methodologies (Miettinen and Koivisto, 2009) that provides the opportunities of experiential learning and problem solving skill development for the San youth. This is an attempt to get to the heart of young people's individual experience of community and their connection to community in order to better use social and human capital within the San community and empower the youth to solve daily life problems faced by their community. Through preliminary research, we create "environments" for and with young people that promote the development of their skills and capacities and reveal their local, situated knowledge and prepare them to become change-agents in the continuous process of making and designing their own futures.

Youth in marginalised communities

"We live in a world that is not just changing, it is metamorphosing" (Beck, 2017), and this is particularly evident in the case of the indigenous youth, stuck within the traditional values and cultural norms of their parents and that of western society. With the influence of social media (mainly through mobile phones), indigenous youth became a generation with the burden of a legendary, even though anachronistic, ancestral past and the dream of a future as the next pop star or international football player, and a generation facing limited access to resources in their everyday life and challenged by the same global problems of all other youth in the world. If these conditions are often the cause of marginalisation, they also are the reasons why many young members of indigenous communities feel a commitment to "doing something" for their communities and themselves. They feel the urge to "determine their own identity and their own life project" (Manzini, 2015).

2

Youth engagement

These very conditions are that the social innovation literacy considers possible to set the basis of creative collaborative organisations, where design experts can enable collaborative ecosystems and nurture the design capabilities of each individual. As "social actors", these experts have a role to play in creating strategies, processes and initiatives that would engage the youth in the community development.

Youth engagement should take into consideration how to attract young people and understand how personal capabilities, values and visions could trigger a common action, as well as a sense of belonging to a local group and even a larger and "fuzzier" social unit. According to Putnam (2000), the engagement should leverage on a personal involvement, on elements of a bonding social capital, related to the community of homogenous people, and on features of a bridging social capital, related to community of heterogeneous groups.

The research method

The challenges faced by the marginalised youth in developing countries, such as unemployment, are not simple or easy to be solved. They are influenced by a number of factors, such as levels of education, gender, self-esteem, geographic location, physical ability and physical location. Employment and educational opportunities are two factors which impact on the future success of young individuals.
The PARTY project, a EU funded initiative involving six academic and non-academic institutions (University of Lapland, University of Leeds, Paco Design Collaborative, Namibia University of Science and Technology, Cape Peninsula University of Technology and South African San Institute), is trying to endorse human development and assist in reducing youth unemployment by increasing the involvement and inclusion of young people in service development in South Africa and Namibia by using participatory and exploratory service design tools. The research focuses on San youth and young adults, especially living in poor or otherwise marginal conditions who either are or face the risk of becoming marginalised. During the first two years of project, a series of workshops have been run both in Namibia and South Africa with local NGOs and organisations who are already working with the San youth. More in specific we have been working with: SASI in South Africa and //Ana-Djeh San Trust in Namibia. A practical handbook has been assembled by selecting the most effective tools from testing during the workshops with the youth and the local stakeholders.

The model: "me, me+, me++"

Defining the boundaries of a community has always been difficult. The global digitalisation has made these boundaries even fuzzier. We simultaneously live in a hyper-individualistic "global village" and are still part of specific communities, more than one at the same time. We defined these three levels as ME, ME+ and ME++. The boundaries of these three levels vary from context to context, from action to action. We considered an approach based on these three levels in any action engaging the San youth.

ME: It is the level of the individuals focusing on their personal beliefs, skills and behaviours. Especially in a hyper individualistic society every participatory action has to start considering the drive to satisfy the inner needs of safety, belonging, self-esteem and self-actualization of the individuals.

ME+: It is the level of the immediate interactions of the individuals, mainly related to their family or the close local community they belong to. It is the level in which the interaction occurs with people of the same kind, the one in which we feel to be part of a group. The

sense of belonging to the local community is often based on the bonds created by the shared identity, the habits and traditions of the groups.

ME++: It is the level we can access by using social media that makes us feeling to be part of a larger group. At this level the individuals open themselves to the others and to the diversity and common patterns between different groups. The interaction occurs within similar groups in different contexts (the Youth of the World) or between different people bridging different cultures.

Developing a participatory process according to the ME, ME+ and ME++ framework makes possible to start from collecting personal stories and experiences and then mapping them into common aspirations and expectations, supporting the understanding of the role of traditional communities in a global context.
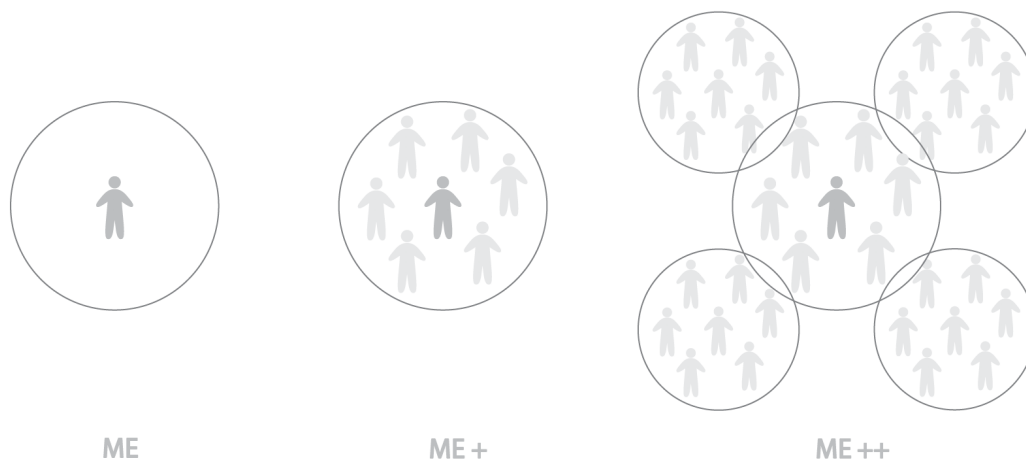

ME   ME+   ME++

Figure 1: "me, me+, me++" model

The PARTY model aims to provide service design tools to the youth who are willing to activate themselves as agents of change within their community. The model is based on the principles of Design Thinking, structured in phases and steps. It is intended to start a dialogue at different personal and social levels, increasing the awareness of the participants about the possibility to create ideas, small actions and co-designed services that support the livelihood of the communities and sustainable local businesses. The model can be used in a specific project and a long-term commitment among communities and stakeholders through education, capacity building, curricula design and training for the service design capacity building.

The youth can participate in the project with different levels of engagement, experiencing through concrete experience (feeling), reflective observation (watching), abstract conceptualization (thinking) and active experimentation (doing), which are characteristic of an iterative experiential learning, as defined by Kolb (1984). In PARTY project the learning experience it is framed around the Me, Me+ and Me++ levels of the individual relationship with the community and are represented by the state of awareness (empathy) of the challenges of the youth, by a moment of co-creation (conceptualization) and by a call to action (finding resources, doing).

The process

The process is structured in order to involve young individuals on a personal level at first and as part of a local and global community in a second time. This structure reflects the passages among the ME, ME+ and ME++ model and aims to leverage on individual self-awareness to enhance participation, the capability of implementing ideas into projects and to deliver them in the community.
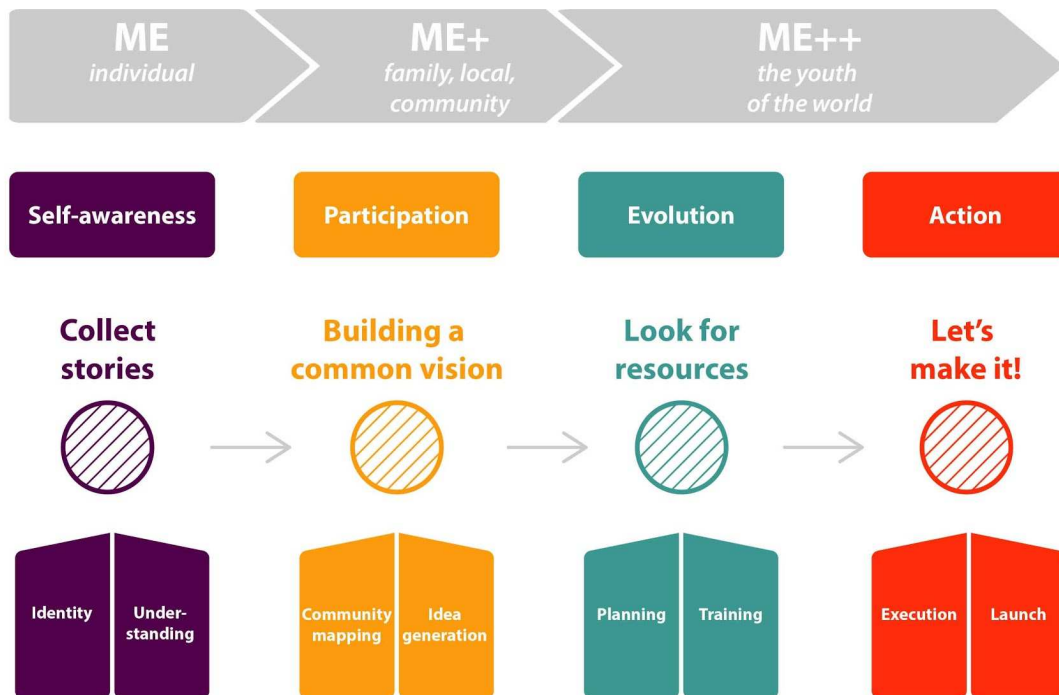

Figure 2: The process

Self-awareness, Participation, Evolution and Action are the four consecutive steps of the process.
The actions related to understand the sense of self-awareness of young individuals are developed at the ME level and allows to explore the personal sense of identity and belonging to the community. Helping the participants to collect and tell personal stories has being defined as the most suitable action to explore people sense of identity.
This approach has been proven useful in several directions:

- it supported the individual empathic connection with the youth
- it helped detecting those individuals who are more reactive and motivated in the workshops
- it revealed those individuals in the community with stronger leadership skills

Following Self-awareness it is the call to participate, leveraging on the sense of belonging to the community of the Youth.
This second phase helps in mapping the community and giving roles to the participants, guiding the generation of new common ideas. The activities related to this phase are developed at the ME+ level, the level of the local community; the specific action related to this step is the building of a common vision.
Two other phases follow, called Evolution and Action, which are related to the implementation of the idea into a service, its production and delivery. These phases refer to the ME++ level and aim to transfer design and managerial skills to the Youth.

As any conceptual model, it has been conceived to identify the logic of the process, which is not necessarily linear: many activities and tools described in one phase can be used iteratively

in different moments and applied to reach different goals, to involve individuals, groups and communities. All phases of the process aim to help the youth to understand the position it covers in the community, amplify the sense of belonging and give the opportunity to the young people to have a productive role.

To resume the four actions related to the four phases are:

1. Collect stories
2. Building a common vision
3. Look for resources
4. Let's make it

1 - Collect stories

Storytelling is a powerful way to exchange and address the barriers to knowledge transfer within community members (Prasetyo, 2017): this is one of the reason why an initial approach based on collecting stories has been considered.
The engaging phase of the process starts with activities in which the Youth is asked to create, collect and tell stories from their individual perspective. The actions aim to increase the self-awareness of the participants. Workshops and methods are aligned to facilitate an introspective activity with the Youth, understanding their feeling, their actual status in the community and their personal expectations for the future.

This phase is divided into two sub-phases:

- Identity: participants identify their challenges and wishes, reflecting upon their position in the community
- Understanding: participants understand more in-depth the identified challenges and wishes, share knowledge about each other, raise up the real motivations behind the first answers.

2 - Building a common vision

In this phase the activities with the Youth are scaled from the individual perspective to the community one of the ME+. The actions aim to start group participation in the process, working on a sense of community. The workshops included in this phase are the most generative. Some of the activities could be also played at a ME++ level.

This phase is divided into two sub-phases:

- Community mapping: participants move from the individual wishes/challenges to the group level, sharing and clustering the personal challenges with the ones faced by the community.
- Idea generation: challenges and wishes are converted into insights which are used to generate innovative ideas/solutions.

3 - Look for resources

This phase includes a series of initiatives aiming to find resources to support the implementation of the ideas generated in the previous step. Some of these resources are skills that the San Youth need to develop to implement the projects: in these cases some

training courses are provided to the Youth. Almost all activities include the participation of relevant stakeholders (ME++ level), as possible supporter of the implementation.

This phase is divided in two sub phases:

- Planning: participants develop more in-depth the design concept in order to define what/who they need to do/know to make it real.
- Training: participants learn basic design and managerial skills to implement, produce and deliver their concepts.

4 - Let's make it

The final and operative phase see the San Youth working to bring their concepts into reality, from the pilot project to the implementation of the final proposal.

This phase is divided in two sub-phases:

- Execution: participants develop the idea into a pilot project in order to test it in a protected environment.
- Launch: the idea is launched in the community.

The tool book

A tool book has been designed as a practical manual by the local actors for organising and running workshops with marginalised communities and more in specific with the San community. The scope of the manual is to support local communities in a series of participatory actions, including meetings, brainstorming, co-creative moments, jams, prototyping sessions and presentations. The handbook introduces tools with instructions that support the youth who have participated in the workshops to be facilitators in small co-design sessions within their community. The youth to act as facilitators are often those that are active in the workshops and have a reputation of being impartial, open-minded and "active listeners". They are able to inform the discussion from what has been perceived by the audience and quickly learn the necessary basic skills of being facilitators.

The book provides insights on how to set the right mood for the meeting, involve the community members in a workshop, promote interaction and co-creation between participants. The book is structured in two parts: the first collects a series of behaviours/rules which are important to consider before starting to work within a marginalised community; the second introduces all the tools divided into the four phases explained above.

- Phase 1 "Collect stories".
  Sub phase "Identify". Tools collected: paper collage, digital storytelling, face the future, the big 4, family tree.
  Sub phase "Understanding". Tools collected: peer interview, back to the roots, future CV, in & out.

- Phase 2 "Building a common vision".
  Sub phase "Community mapping". Tools collected: future us, social sculpture, drama acting dancing, community on a map, development spectrum.
  Sub phase "Idea generation". Tools collected: 4 quadrants, insights generation, structured brainstorming, musical chairs.

- Phase 3 "Look for resources".

Sub phase "Planning". Tools collected: BMC simplified, resources blueprint, single organization stakeholder map, mapping.
Sub phase "Training". Tools collected: create a poster, storyboard, presentation tool, team building, proto-acting.

- Phase 4 "Let's make it".
Sub phase "Execution". Tools collected: execution line.
Sub phase "Launch". Tools collected: pitch.

A case study - The San youth living in Windhoek

Participants in the Windhoek workshops are between the ages of 18 and 34. The participants are predominantly from the !Xun and the Khwe San tribal group and reside in Windhoek most of the year mainly for educational reasons. Some of the educational activities the youth are engaged in include attending school to improve their grades, vocational studied for skill training and furthering their education in colleges or universities. The youth participants were recruited to participate in the workshop through NUST's collaboration with //Ana-Djeh San Trust. //Ana-Djeh San Trust was started by young San students in Windhoek in 2014 and was formalised as a legal entity registered at the Masters of Court as a trust in November 2015. //Ana-Djeh is a word from Xung (a San dialect) that means 'New Light'. //Ana-Djeh is contributing to the development of the San communities by educating their societies on the importance of education and remaining in school. The wider goal by the Trust includes a right to education, no discrimination in schools or workplaces, provide assistance in education, minimise dropout rates, and improve school performance for all San communities.
With the youth in Windhoek, we had a series of workshops during the last two years of research. Thanks to the strong relationship built with them over the years, we managed to work on all the phases of the processes with the same group of youth.
All the workshops were held in English since the San youth came from different tribal groups that speaks different languages.

We started with a series of workshops related to the first phase of the process "collect stories" where we explored:
- young people's dreams, aspirations, fears, statements, and commitments;
- places and people they usually meet with in their daily life;
- behaviours and feelings when in different contexts (e.g. at their school, village, or at other meeting points like bars) and with different people (e.g. teachers, family members, friends, unknown people).
- awareness of their skills and characteristics
- value system in relation to their own traditions, stories and cultural backgrounds
- capacity to creatively link the understanding of themselves and current obstacles/daily challenges to their knowledge of their roots and values.

During these workshops we tested new tools designed ad hoc for the project or we adapted service design tools already tested in other contexts.
"My super power is…" is an example of one of the tools that was developed using skill/characteristic of each person declared during the energiser activity, which each participant tried to define using their own superpower. Facilitators have a key role in helping the participants to understand what a superpower is, how it would work, and how they might use it. Each participant creates an accessory or piece of costume that demonstrates their superpower. By creating this accessory, the participant analyses why and how his/her superpower would be important and useful to himself and his/her community. Facilitators have the role to help each participant to understand the meaning of superhero accessory. Before offering ideas about how to create this item, the facilitators support the analytical process through which the participants become aware of their best skills and the potential to

add value for themselves and their community. It is key that the participants understand the significance of their accessory.

Figure 3: Youth presenting their superpowers

The second series of workshops were related to the second phase of the process "building a common vision" in which we focused more on the ME+ dimension. The youth started to think as a group in order to explore the challenges related to the family, their home villages, their education, their employment, and more in general, the future of Namibia. From mapping these collectively, we asked the youth to choose one challenge they wanted to work on. They decided to focus on how to bring skills and knowledge back into the villages that are presently isolated from the cities. Participants worked in groups throughout the design development process and generated three design solutions to overcome the challenge:

- 1 - TIME TO GIVE BACK: Creating a service/system that the students could offer their community with free knowledge when they return to their villages for a short period of time. The service/system would help villagers to acquire the knowledge, skills and attitudes they need to tackle the common problems being faced by community members living in the city.
- 2 - WATER ISSUES WITHIN THE VILLAGES: Community group lead by the youth, that aims to raise awareness about water issues within the villages, such as, ways to purify water, collect, distribute and save water.
- 3 - PROMOTING LITERACY SKILLS: Raising awareness of the importance of literacy education in villages focused on the elderly and the youth.

One interesting tool used during this phase is "In 5 years time".
The tool was created to understand youths' perception of five key topics in relation with themselves: my country (Namibia), my village, my family, my job, and my education. The topics were presented in the form of a question: "How do you see your job in five years?". Participants chose a topic and created a discussion group, moderated by one facilitator for every three people. This tool works best with groups of 4-6 people, so smaller groups may be clustered together - or unattractive topics discarded. The discussion has a three-step procedure: 1) participants individually write on sticky notes what they wish to happen in the following five years, and then attach the post-its on a poster explaining to the others their perspectives; 2) after a full round is concluded (or a few), each post-it is re-interpreted as a challenge and a group discussion is held to identify factors constituting barriers to the

realisation of the challenge being analysed; 3) wishes and challenges together are finally clustered to determine dominant and common factors. At the end of the discussion, each group presents in front of the others, their thoughts and conclusions.

In the third phase "look for resources" the youth developed the ideas in details defining step by step how the services/systems work, the stakeholders to involve and the resources needed for the implementation. One of the tools used in this phase is the "simplified service blueprint". The tool was created to help with the development of the details of the solution proposed by the youth in the phase 2. To better identify how the service works step by step they started to write on post-it all the actions related in a chronological order. For each action they then identified the main stakeholder to be involved and wrote the name on a new post-it that has been set under the action related. A third line of post-it is then set under the stakeholder with the resources (financial or physical resources) needed for each action.
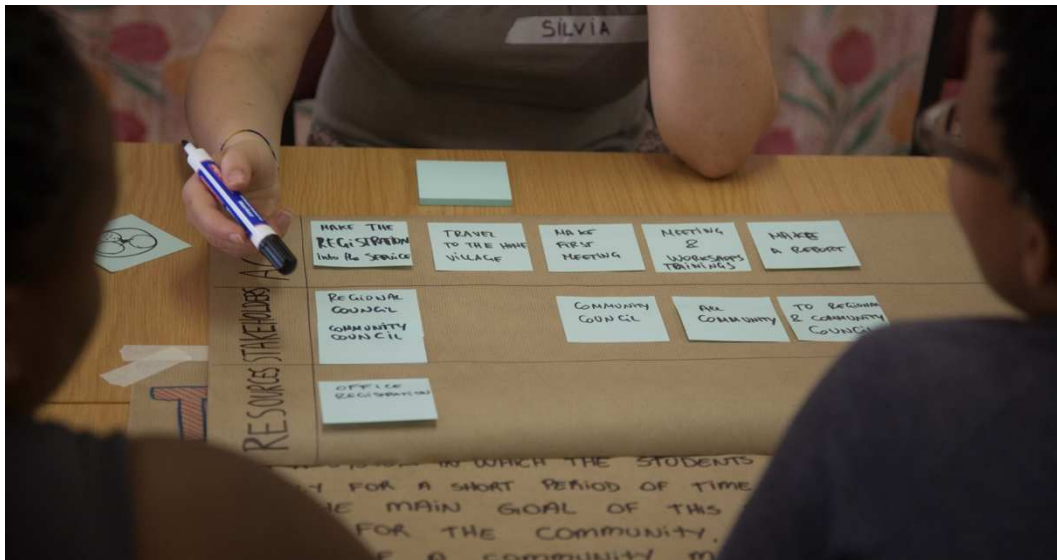

Figure 4: Simplified service blueprint

In the fourth phase "let's make it" the youth presented their ideas to a group of selected stakeholders. A series of workshops have been organised to help the youth to prepare the materials for the pitch with the stakeholders. In the meanwhile the //Ana-Djeh association selected the stakeholders to invite and sent the invitations via mail. The pitch was successful and at the end of the event an informal discussion started where stakeholders gave suggestions and tips about future development and implementation. A tool used during this phase was the "presentation" tool that is divided into 3 parts:

- The context in which the youth work that has to be represented with drawings and words
- The problems the youth are trying to solve, that has to be represented with acting
- The solutions proposed that has to be represented with drawings, words and acting

Figure 5: Pitch event

Conclusion

"All men are designers. All that we do, almost all the time, is design, for design is basic to all human activities" (Papanek, 1985). Applying service design methods to engage youth of indigenous communities definitely helps in enabling creative and collaborative ecosystems, supporting the participants in discovering their being "designers": a process which starts from the self-awareness of the potential they have in creating a change in their community and ends with action plans that potentially have impact on their own lives and future.

The suggested framework (ME, ME+, ME++) has been useful to structure the different phases of the co-design sessions with the Youth, starting from sharing personal stories to trace unspoken values and expectations, till defining common strategic directions for the project development. Surely more has to be done to validate the framework from the theoretical and practical perspectives: it would be important to define the differences between the bridging relationships that are happening not between different communities but at a deeper level beneath the community, affecting the traditional hierarchy and the role of the Youth. What is more, the use of specific techniques with the tools (e.g. the use of props or leftover materials when prototyping, which seems to affect people's engagement) in the toolbox can be further analysed and tested.

The role of design experts in the participatory design process with the Youth of marginalised community is essential for concretizing and planning the steps to solve the development issues that community has raised. Community-led design creates ethical, equal and open platform where the basic skills can be transferred, and issues or challenges can be transformed into solution-oriented opportunities. These PARTY activities are well perceived by the Youth, because skills, tools and "space" provided are valuable for both their personal growth and their professional career.

Acknowledgements

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