

Summary

4. Discussion in Johannesburg, 23-25 February 2020

The fourth hearing of the iF Design Foundation took place between the 23 -25 February 2020 in Johannesburg. The Greenside Design Centre acted as co-operation partner.

The 26 participants are currently active in 10 different countries (Lebanon, Nigeria, Ghana, South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Kenya, Zimbabwe, Dubai and India). They represent design practice as employed and freelance design-ers, in teaching and theory at universities, in networking and planning for state authorities and professional associations, as well as in management and consulting. The interdisciplinary cooperation characteristic of design is evident in the participants' various fields of activity (business, administration, organisational development, social entrepreneurship and design with a focus on communication, product, textile, UX and interiors).

In contrast to the previous hearings in Gmund, Pasadena and Kyoto with participants from Europe, the US and Asia, the relationship between design and community was emphasised. The relationship of design to traditional practices in African and Indian cultures plays an important role here. Design is frequently regarded as a remnant of colonialisation by Western industrial countries, which place the individual as autonomous subject at the centre of an objective society. In African and Indian cultures, on the other hand, the greater significance of community and nature is often presented as the material and spiritual basis for life. This reference seemed particularly stimulating from the perspective that aspects such as sustainability and cooperation are currently receiving prominent attention in the international debate. The extent the Western-dominated design discourse can learn from these traditions for future development was discussed.

A second focus was the discussion of African cultural concepts such as the inner eye (the observation that the manual execution and visualisation of a design must be preceded by the inner conception, and that this skill is based on that ability) or the wisdom of traditional, anonymous artefacts in contrast to the undisputed stupidity of many industrial products.

This series was concluded on schedule with the hearing in Johannesburg. In spring 2021, the iF Design Foundation will make the documentation and evaluation of the entire project available to the public as a bilingual book publication in German and English.