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A disruptive (de)growth repository of spatial practices across sub-Saharan Africa

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Manifesto

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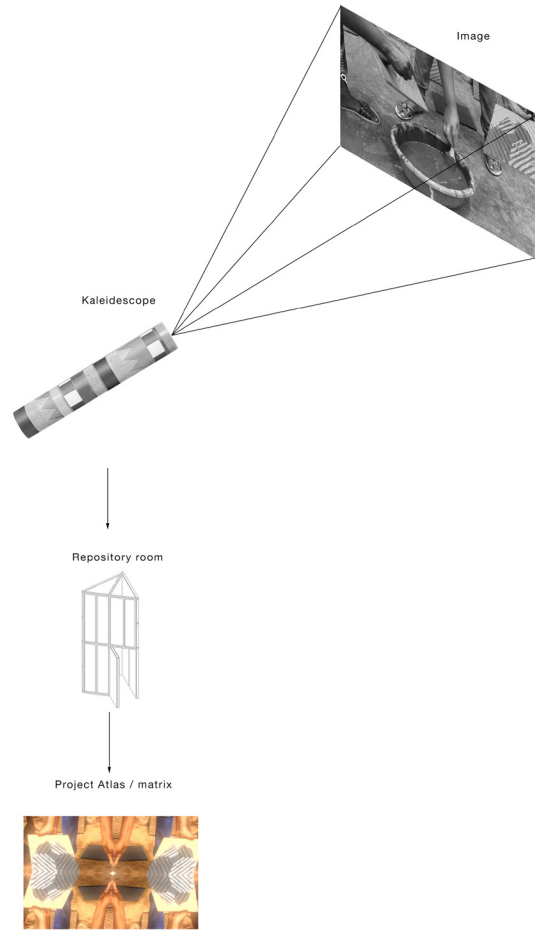
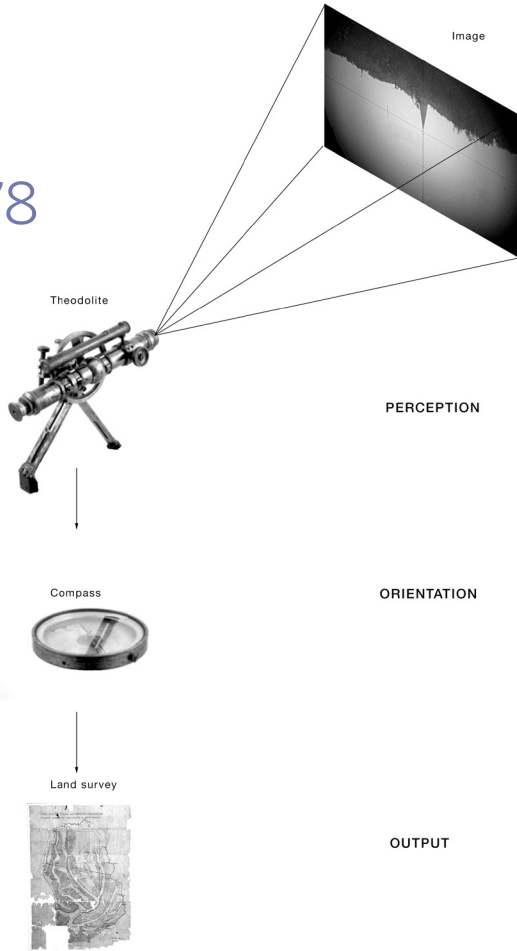
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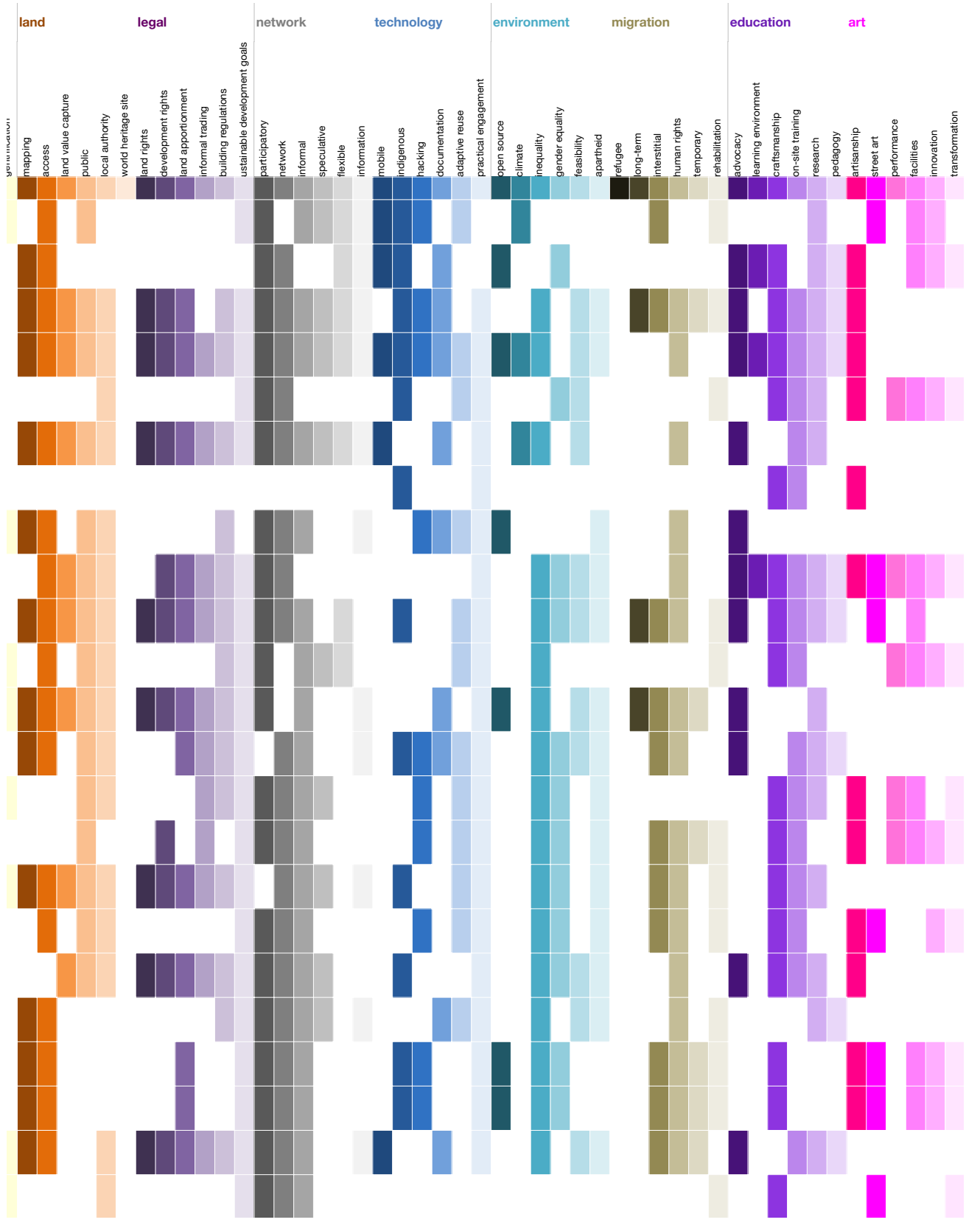
Project by Hunguta Collective

(Maxwell Mutanda, Khensani de Klerk, Tomà Berlanda, Nerea Amorós Elorduy, Scott Lloyd, Sunniva Viking, Tao Klitzner) originally displayed at the 2019 Oslo Triennale

A disruptive (de)growth repository of spatial practices across sub- Saharan Africa

By challenging the reading of the South – established through the current divisive lens of the colonial theodolite – the project presents a living atlas, an immersive learning tool that subverts established modes of conceiving degrowth as an easily transported, translated or imposed paradigm. A manifesto for sustainability: The inherent flux and malleability of the Global South needs new perspectives and new mediums to advance the dynamic archive of spatial knowledge and truly express the transferable values of its emerging practices.

Is (de)growth an absolute term?



society

Space conditions, and is in turn conditioned by, society and culture (...) architecture can create the potential for social action and activity. (Peter Barber Architects)

	community					
<p>The Anthropocene – human activity’s dominant influence on climate and the environment – echoes in the innovative spatial practices of Sub-Saharan Africa through the dominance of community activity and engagement. Activist, civic and private interventions all navigate the complexities of community networks defined more by citizenry than regulatory authorities.</p>	<p>citizen-driven Spatial practices that represent the full and/or direct participation of members of the group(s) affected by any intervention.</p>	<p>social activism Socio-spatial practices that advocate intentional action with the goal of bringing about inclusionary, participatory social change.</p>	<p>civic society The aggregate of individuals and organizations that voluntarily or systematically work with the aim to represent the needs of a local community independent of governmental or corporate agencies.</p>	<p>peer-to-peer The social process of networking shared skills and knowledge that are distributed in a community.</p>	<p>grassroots The participatory actions by members of the group(s) within specific districts, region, or community to collectively effect change from the local level.</p>	<p>academic Any community-based spatial practice that is influenced by theoretical interest and/or relating to education and research.</p>
<p>The Sub-Saharan African dwelling traditionally described the social hierarchy and cultural norms in communities. The built environment is not only the venue for private desire but also for public expression and innovation. The promise and challenges of the twenty-first century highlight the conflicts presented by the inherited structures of colonialism, post-independence aspirations and indigenous values.</p>	<p>shack A small dwelling often built using reclaimed, repurposed or refuse material that is endemic to poor urban settlements.</p>	<p>hostel A relic of colonialism, common in major African cities, that was designed as single occupancy, single-sex lodgings for male migrant workers.</p>	<p>affordable housing A formal dwelling that is priced to meet an adequate household expenditure allocation.</p>	<p>localisation Emphasis on adapting practices to harness local materials, social capital and community members to develop socially engaged built environments.</p>	<p>mixed use Spatial practices that provide residential, commercial, cultural, institutional, and/or entertainment uses in a community. This variety of flexible types of land uses incorporates multi-family, mixed-use as well as mixed-income housing development.</p>	<p>well-being A holistic approach to the state of being comfortable, healthy, or happy in the built environment taking into consideration physical or ecological conditions, such as access to healthy food, as well as other social and psychological factors.</p>

settlement

Africa’s urban population has been growing at a very high rate, i.e. from about 27% in 1950 to 40% in 2015 and projected to reach 60% by 2050. (UNDESA)

	rural					
<p>Rural communities are particularly underserved in regards to service allocation and infrastructural investment. The socio-economic needs of rural communities require developing sustainable communities that take into consideration local materials, environmental impact and accessibility into design, planning, and building. Spatial practices therefore are defined by lack of infrastructure, remoteness and a reliance on autonomous systems.</p>	<p>sustainability Rural sustainability is the constant development, maintenance and improvement of robust built environments that respond to the long-term economic, social, cultural, political and environmental requirements of rural communities.</p>	<p>ecology Managed conservation defined by the symbiotic relationship between natural resources, rural spatial practices and community members.</p>	<p>small-scale agriculture Strategies against the exploitation of land-intensive agricultural or natural resource based development.</p>	<p>economy Spatial practices in a rural community have the potential to contribute significantly to sustainable development and economic growth.</p>	<p>utilities Rural distributed utilities that consider decentralized power generation or autonomous off-grid systems that produce and consume electric energy or water without any connection to external systems.</p>	<p>resilience Resilience, as defined by the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) is the ability of communities to absorb, recover and prepare for future shocks (economic, environmental, social institutional).</p>
<p>Urban centres generate economic mobility and social opportunities. The demise of rural subsistence and urban ambitions in the later half of the C20, have resulted in Sub-Saharan cities growing at an unprecedented rate. Globally, more people live in urban than rural areas. In 2018, about 55 per cent of the world’s population was urban, compared with only 30 per cent in 1950.</p>	<p>informal settlement Informal, spontaneous improvised/ low-income communities lacking in adequate basic social and civil services that usually develops on the periphery of urban settlements.</p>	<p>urban upgrading Improvement to the physical structures, public spaces, and basic services in low-income urban communities that includes but is not limited to responses to the challenges of providing health, nutrition, education and economic opportunities to the community.</p>	<p>violence prevention A comprehensive social intervention designed to improve the spatial quality and experience of members of the group(s) in a community by developing safe, sustainable and integrated strategies.</p>	<p>service delivery Addressing the inadequate distribution and maintenance of basic resources like water, electricity, sanitation infrastructure, land, and housing within a community.</p>	<p>social housing Government allocated housing. Every day 40,000 people move to a city in Africa, adding to the existing deficit for new and affordable urban housing.</p>	<p>gentrification Increased commodity value of urban environments due to direct investment in urban development. Generally resulting in the rise of rental and sales prices, and financially destabilising remaining communities.</p>

land tenure

The indigenous African concept of land conflicted sharply with the Eurocentric view (...) Not a commodity that can be sold or exchanged on the market. (Carlos Nunes Silva)

	land					
<p>Africa, all 30,221 million km2 of its land, is greater in size than the entire continental United States, China, the Indian sub-continent, Japan and most of Europe combined. In spite of this, economic and environmental factors have concentrated populations in large urban agglomerations. The battle for land is hard-fought both in highly densified urban areas and isolated rural settlements.</p>	<p>mapping Mapping is the use of cartographic based methods to visualise data on human settlements. These practices include community driven demographic enumeration and settlement mapping using Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to survey community data.</p>	<p>access An easement is a non-possessory right-of-way onto the real property of another without ownership. This use and/or passage of land is the basis of the right to access of communities in Sub-Saharan Africa.</p>	<p>land value capture (LVC) Land Value Capture is a policy approach that enables communities to recover and reinvest land value increases that result from public investment and other government actions. Also known as “value sharing,” it’s rooted in the notion that public action should generate public benefit (Lincoln Institute of Land Policy).</p>	<p>public The use and access to public land is exacerbated by the history of colonialism, in particular the dispossession of communal land rights. In this regard, communities in Sub-Saharan Africa are in conflict with state as well as private organisations.</p>	<p>local authority A formal local authority is a governmental organization responsible for the good of the population in regards to public services and infrastructure.</p>	<p>world heritage site A landmark or area deemed as a World Heritage Site by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) is legally protected by international treaties and recognised as having cultural, historical, scientific or other form of significance.</p>
<p>Land ownership in Sub-Saharan Africa is defined by many official and informal systems. Beyond just ordinary leasehold or freehold tenure, most countries have a legacy of indigenous communal land rights that have been amalgamated into colonial land appropriation misdeeds as well as continuing post-colonial land related displacement, discrimination and containment of communities. Today many work to develop access to basic services, land, tenure rights and affordable housing through various spatial practices and restorative justice.</p>	<p>land rights The rights of indigenous peoples and local communities to land, either individually or collectively provides land and resource-related rights that are fundamental in securing land with cultural or religious significance as well as self-determination, identity, and economic benefits.</p>	<p>development rights Commercial development rights are a legal mechanism for managing land-use planning and zoning for a more pre-defined urban growth and land conservation model used by local authorities, that often come into conflict with the needs and desires of local communities. Dev. rights can also be awarded to registered occupiers of land.</p>	<p>land apportionment Colonial Land Acts were segregationist measures that governed land allocation and acquisition prior to independence in African states. These laws discriminated against indigenous communities in urban settlements, by designated towns as white areas and delegated the majority black citizens to faraway townships.</p>	<p>informal trading Small-scale traders utilising markets, public spaces and streets to trade. Municipal by-laws in progressive cities recognise that such trade practices promote social and economic development.</p>	<p>building regulations Building Regulations are a set of legal guidelines that determine the form and standards of the built environment. However, such regulations are unreachable to the vast majority of populations in Sub-Saharan Africa, causing a rethink as to how more appropriate regulations could be developed to serve the lived experience.</p>	<p>sustainable development goal In 2016, the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development officially came into force. The SDGs universally apply to all countries to mobilise efforts to end all forms of poverty, fight inequalities and tackle climate change, while ensuring that “no one is left behind.”</p>

connectivity

no program is an island unto of itself, every program is a piece of the solution, a part of the team. (john coyne)

network
By definition an ecosystem is a network of interconnecting and interacting parts. Spatial practices on the continent are therefore usually a sequence of (in)-voluntary aggregations of responses to the challenges of providing shelter, health, nutrition, education and economic opportunities to the community. The apparently causal relationship between parts, results in the intense exploration and limits of the built environment.

participatory
Community-based participatory spatial practices emphasize co-production, communal learning, collaborative inquiry, and experimentation through design.

network
Network interventions in Sub-Saharan Africa disrupt the built environment using inter-connected socio-spatial practices to accelerate change or improve conditions in a community.

informal
Informal networks of vernacular spatial practices, that develop in an unregulated environment, present the embedded knowledge of appropriate built structures within a community.

speculative
Speculative interventions are the basis for experimentation in community-oriented design practices.

flexible
Disruptive spatial practices are often defined by their ability to interact and adapt quickly and often to change.

information
Community-led qualitative and quantitative information gathering networks enables communities to leverage their own resources, to develop appropriate solutions and also to better position themselves to solicit institutional engagement from local municipal authorities.

technology
Modernisation – in particular, the advent of mobile telephony – as apposed to traditional indigenous technogenesis redefining “spatiality” in Sub-Saharan Africa. Whether in isolated rural areas or low-income urban centres, technology is shaping the built environment through new relational possibilities.

mobile
Advances in mobile technology enables consistent, standardised data collection in surveying, mapping & GIS fieldwork, as well as quick and effective communication of ideas with social media.

indigenous
Local and indigenous knowledge refers to the understandings, skills and philosophies developed by societies with long histories of interaction with their natural surroundings (UNESCO).

urban hacking
Disruptive spatial practices that utilise vernacular technology to adapt prevalent standards through ad hoc techniques that are better suited to the incremental development of low-income urban settlements.

documentation
Information gathered either for academic research, broadcast or digital media or construction documentation that becomes the principle form of evidence to advocate for participatory spatial justice.

adaptive reuse
Adaptive reuse refers to the process of reusing an existing built structure for a purpose other than which it was originally built or designed for.

practical engagement
Participatory action in communities whereby residents work together to map their assets, identify needs, mobilize resources and set in motion a community-based development process (Global Communities).

demography

Sub-Saharan Africa hosts more than 26 per cent of the world's refugee population, over 18 million people. (UNHCR)

environment
The socio-political context has a direct influence on the development of the built environment. Political power is increasingly consolidated in the urban centres causing new ecologies. Demographically, Sub-Saharan Africa is faced with a youthful population – 77% of Africans are younger than thirty-five years old – which corresponds with the need for healthcare and education facilities.

open source
Project or system developed to intentionally produce open content and forms of open collaboration within a community.

climate
The consequences of climate change, such as environmental migration, soil erosion, disaster displacement and droughts, have a direct impact on human settlement.

inequality
Participatory spatial practices can target the uneven distribution and access of resources due to social, economic and wealth inequality in a community.

gender equality
Disruptive spatial practices can promote gender equality and women's empowerment, and address the physical and emotional consequences of gender-based violence (GBV).

feasibility
The socio-economic realities of Sub-Saharan Africa determine that long-term and financial feasibility is the objective of proposed projects or systems.

apartheid
The history of forced displacement and spatial segregation in South Africa is not in question – apartheid after all, is the Afrikaans word for separateness.

migration
The built environment is essential to improving the lives of nearly a quarter of the world's displaced population living in Sub-Saharan Africa, mainly in isolated containment in so-called temporary environments. On the continent disruptive spatial practices are influenced and defined by migration.

refugee
The refugee population reflects the global changes in urbanisation, both in terms of the regions from which refugees originate and the areas to which they move in countries of asylum. Most refugees are now based in urban areas (UNHCR).

long-term
It is currently estimated that approximately 40% of refugees displaced by conflict worldwide have been living in exile for more than 20 years (www.mappingrefugeespaces.com).

interstitial
The intermedie open spaces situated between built structures in a settlement.

human rights
The UN define human rights as the rights inherent to all human beings, regardless of race, sex, nationality, ethnicity, language, religion, or any other status.

temporary
Refugee camps in Eastern Africa are rarely dismantled, with the majority of the planned 'temporary' solutions resulting in permanent settlements (www.mappingrefugeespaces.com).

rehabilitation
Rehabilitation is the spatial practice of enhancing community through the repair, alteration, and addition to the built environment while selectively preserving original features that convey historical, cultural, or architectural values.

culture

Learning from the existing landscape is a way of being revolutionary for an architect (...) in a more tolerant way; that is, to question how we look at things. (Venturi Scott Brown)

education
Participatory action in institutionalised learning environments, or informal peer-to-peer skills exchange and casual community-based knowledge production influence the spatial practices and development of Sub-Saharan Africa. Education is a non-western, non-stereotypical communal combination of indigenous knowledge systems, experimental regulatory frameworks and innovative international practices.

advocacy
Participatory projects and systems that work together with communities to end the injustice of poverty through their public support for and/or recommendation of a particular cause or policy.

learning environment
A humanitarian-led or NGO-managed formal/informal early childhood development centre (ECDD) or pre-primary school in a refugee community.

craftsmanship
The skills and knowledge of traditional craftsmanship that can be passed onto others, particularly within a community is impacted by competition from large multinational corporations or environmental and climatic pressures.

on-site training
On-site training maximises participatory community engagement in a development project to increase up-skilling, community acceptance, and local salary distribution.

research
Design research methodology applies intellectual ideas – drawings, models and analysis – with community-engaged cultural insights to develop new spatial practices.

pedagogy
Spatial practices in Sub-Saharan Africa challenge conventional knowledge systems with reflective teaching practices as well as community-based critical thinking and design methods.

art
Art and cultural practices in Sub-Saharan Africa based in contemporary and indigenous traditions determine community driven spatial practices that emphasize development through creative enterprise and cultural capital. Often these transformative public interventions in low-income, under-resourced communities present the first steps towards improvements to the built environment.

artisanship
The cultural heritage of traditional artisanship can be used to produce projects or systems and develop into an economically viable cottage industry.

street art
Visual art created and displayed in public locations in a community is artwork that fosters social change in urban settlements.

performance
Physical artistic practices, such as dance or music, promote well-being and security by engaging the community and activating spaces.

facilities
Public spaces designated to accommodate the creative economy promote gender equality, youth engagement and safe spaces in a community.

innovation
New media can become unconventional assets to drive innovative spatial practices.

transformation
Visual art is an accessible, cost effective strategy to engender change, participatory action or aesthetics transformation in a community's built environment.







References

1. Kaleidoscope drawing: “Disruptive (De)Growth Repository Of Southern Ecosystems”, Hunguta, Matthew Dalziel, Interrobang, 2019
2. Kaleidoscope photograph: “Disruptive (De)Growth Repository Of Southern Ecosystems”, Hunguta, The Library, The National Museum. Photo: OAT / Istvan Virag, 2019

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Hunguta Collective

Hunguta design is collaborative assembly of architects, designers and multidisciplinary artists loosely centred between Cape Town, Harare, Kampala, Johannesburg and Zurich. Team: Tomà Berlanda, Nerea Amoròs Elorduy, Khensani de Klerk, Tao Klitzner, Scott Lloyd, Maxwell Mutanda, Sunniva Viking.