

# Decolonising Design Education through Playful Learning in a Tertiary Communication Design Programme in South Africa

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## Abstract

This article introduces playful learning as part of the decolonising project at institutes of higher learning in South Africa with specific reference to the discipline of communication design. Not only does the article interrogate the content of design education, specifically design for development, but more specifically the way that design for social innovation is taught. The article begins with a contextualisation of the decolonisation debate both locally and internationally, which is followed by a brief historical overview of formal design education. Design education's trajectory informs the contemporary conception of design as a form of rhetoric. Design and play are then interfaced theoretically, and pragmatically through a case study to explore how deeper learning was made possible by play in a curriculum-based project. Ultimately, the article aims to highlight the value of playful learning in design higher education to nurture alternate modes of design thinking that favour localised practice, intersubjective relationships between designers and their stakeholders and the enabling of students' self-realisation through real world experience.

## Introduction

The call for decolonising education is not unfamiliar within the broader social transformation debate in post-apartheid South Africa; in fact, this call has become louder over the past few years. Student mobilisation and protests since 2015, under the umbrella of the *Fees Must Fall* hashtag, spurred a transformation debate beyond the issue of financing education to include critical deliberation about inclusivity and the politics of knowledge in South African universities. The protests were the result of the growing apprehension about the slow speed of transformation at local universities. Hence, students continue to call for a dismantling of a Eurocentric positivist paradigm that has dominated South African higher education. Such a vantage point, which favours Western canons of truth, is exclusive in nature and supports a number of epistemic injustices according to Bernal & Villalpando (2002)<sup>1</sup>.

Epistemological debates around decolonisation are not new, nor are they particular to South Africa. However, such debates are currently topical considering that 'academic organisation of universities (including curricula) remains largely unchanged and unchallenged in post-apartheid [South Africa]' (le Grange 2016, 10). Similarly, Fataar (2018, vi) argues that the decolonisation debate 'has fundamental questions about reframing the purposes of education. Centring Africa-centric epistemology is at the heart of this educational reframing.' Following this sentiment, the process of decolonising education should begin by nurturing critical literacy skills so that students can understand knowledge as a social construct. According to Ruddock (2018), 'This would necessitate that the focus of educational activity not be on what young people think, but on how they think, that they think.' Accordingly, decolonisation is not meant to be a subjugation of Western knowledge, but a critical re-look at the way in which knowledge has been constructed in the academy to date. In practice, this means

challenging the status quo by being open to, and favourably embracing, local ways of knowing and being.

Similarly, within design discourse, there have also been increased discussions around design and issues of decolonialism. Most noteworthy is the dedicated Decolonising Design research group, with their editorial platform that emerged in response to the Design Research Society's (DRS) conference titled *Future-Focused Thinking* (2016). By self-admission, the Decolonising Design research group, comprising young researchers, reacted to the politically charged reviews they received about their co-authored paper submitted to the DRS. In their statement that appears on their eponymous website, the Decolonising Design (2016) group makes the following assertion:

*“We strongly believe that design, as a field of study, has systematically failed to address the questions of power that have shaped its own practice. Decolonising the ontological forces of designing must not be understood as an attempt for additive change; rather, we call for a radical structural shift in the field. In other words, we do not want this endeavor – of which we are nothing but catalysts – to be seen as a token for ‘diversity,’ accommodated within a supposedly plural worldview fostered by the Design Research Society (DRS). Rather, we want to invite a profound reflection on the devices that constitute our field as it is now, and the types of futures contained in design research and practice.”*

Since my overarching focus as a design educator is on design for development and design for social change, this article is a direct response to the Decolonising Design group's invitation to reflect on the future of design, namely the design methodologies, skills and knowledge necessary for the discipline to remain relevant and be inclusive amidst the radical and complex social challenges that designers are faced with nowadays. Hence, in an attempt to unshackle formal design education – that has historically been shaped by industrialisation, modernism, Bauhaus-style learning and a more recent neoliberal agenda – towards a new disposition that consciously embraces design's particular and probable nature, I offer playful learning as one possible approach.

The article highlights how play is used to disrupt a 'one-size-fits-all' mindset towards social innovation, made ubiquitous by management and business-related models of design thinking; these models are touted as the mere application of a step-by-step process to subsequently arrive at an innovative solution. However, as I have previously argued, design thinking is a skill that needs to be nurtured and honed through an experiential learning process (Cassim 2018). To this end, the article first traces the development of formal design education to arrive at a contemporary conception of design as a form of rhetoric. The interface between design and play then follows from a theoretical perspective before play's application in a curriculum-related design project is highlighted to show how design educators can nurture in students a mindset to work from the inside-out rather than from the inside-in.

## **Tracing the development of formal design education**

In contrast to traditional art education, formal design education has a much shorter history. A gradual establishment of formal design education can be traced back to the Arts and Crafts movement, spearheaded by the work of William Morris and John Ruskin in Britain in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Hall (2016) acknowledges that the Central School of Art and Design (now known as Central Saint Martins) in London, which was established in 1896,

emerged from the Arts and Crafts movement. This decorative arts movement, which critiqued industrialisation and its by-products, was driven by a desire to create beautiful and utilitarian objects through handcraft. Accordingly, the school's curriculum 'emphasized an understanding of materials and workshop-based experience at the hands of professional designers ... [whose] practice-centred approach marked a distinct break from the generally prevalent drawing-based education offered elsewhere' (Woodham 2016).

Subsequently, in the second decade of the twentieth century, design education continued to be shaped by modernist ideals. Modernist ideals that were essentially based on a utopian vision of human life were epitomised by the Bauhaus, the influential design school that opened in 1919 in Weimar, Germany. The Bauhaus sought to uphold the universal principle of progress by rejecting history and conservative values; its avant-garde ethos pervaded the design pedagogy of the school. The hierarchy that had separated art and design from the time of the Renaissance was confronted by the Bauhaus and made visible by abandoning the traditional fine-arts education for its design students. The decision to move away from beaux-arts training for design students is regarded as the first generation of design methods that sought to understand the cognitive process of design action (Bousbaci 2008, 38).

The position adopted by the Bauhaus helped to elevate, and subsequently shaped, the practices and processes of design in unprecedented ways. The Bauhaus created an object-driven design culture and its form-follows-function methodology provided a formalist model for design schools the world over. After the closure of the Bauhaus in 1933, many of its key proponents emigrated to Canada and the United States spreading the ideas across the global north. Owing to the extensive legacy of the Bauhaus, formal design education has largely been informed by a Western knowledge canon. Hall (2017) affirms this viewpoint by stating that 'Many of the design methods, research approaches, tools and even our fundamental [design] epistemologies are rooted in the western mass production ethic.'

The Bauhaus belief in technological advancements and science-based progress continued well into the 1960s. The desire to 'scientise' design was also evident in design research at the time. A particular turning point in design research was the emergence of the Design Methods Movement in London (Bayazit 2004). The main aim of this movement was to document design practices and processes in scientific ways in an attempt to elevate the status of design as a discipline in higher education so that it could hold its own like the natural sciences. In this regard, Herbert Simon's *The Sciences of the Artificial* (1969) offered designers a new way of looking at the discipline as a man-made endeavour that could optimise the function of design through technical rationality. According to Bousbaci (2008), efforts to formalise a design science largely characterised the second generation of design methods.

Unfortunately, the initial optimism that science offered designers fell short rather quickly when designers realised that design problems were 'wicked' in nature (Rittel & Weber 1984). The utopian ideals that informed modernism were slowly replaced by an active dissensus from designers who critiqued the unnecessary commercialism that resulted from technological advancements. To this end, Victor Papanek is lauded as the key proponent of this new social and environmentally focused direction that design began to take.

In his seminal book, *Design for the Real World*, Papanek (1981) brought to light the human element in design, as well as the natural environment in which a designed product lives. His call for socially responsible design was heeded by design educators too. For example, design schools began to provide students with real-world project briefs instead of hypothetical ones

that were far removed from the environments in which the tangible design products were intended for use. Essentially, real-world project briefs challenge a positivist, value-free approach that has dominated design education, because they cannot ignore the lived experiences, nor the cultural and historical viewpoints of a particular design's end-user. In turn, this viewpoint facilitated a reflective turn in design.

Donald Schön's (1983) argument that designer's cognitive behaviour needs to be guided by a reflective epistemology owing to the complex and ill-defined nature of design problems was a significant turning point. Therefore, since the 1980s, design practice and theory have embraced a plurality of approaches; by and large, design has not only become interdisciplinary, but multidisciplinary in nature as a way to understand the phenomenon of design and the cognitive processes that guide its practice. The cognitive process employed for purposes of designing, nowadays referred to by the popular term 'design thinking', is not new and actually has its roots in Aristotle's articulation of three different modes of reasoning. The first two, deductive and inductive thinking, were complemented by abductive thinking. In contrast to induction and deduction, abduction 'combined invention, judgement and decision wrapped up in a social process of debate' (Golsby-Smith 2008). Since abductive reasoning as the core of design thinking (Dorst 2011) is concerned with the particular and the probable, arriving at an inference is effectively a process of rhetoric.

The analogy between design and rhetoric by Gui Bonsiepe (1961) was an early exploration of the theme in design discourse during the 1960s. Later, Richard Buchanan (1985; 2001) also elaborated on 'design as rhetoric' as both a theoretical and practical conception of contemporary design; according to him, design is a rhetoric with an unlimited palette that is unrestricted to words. Simply put, design as rhetoric means design as a persuasive, effective and strategic communication system, resulting in an outcome/product with a defined intent and purpose. This conception of design as a rhetorical device of using various media to communicate successfully to a specific audience speaks to the following understanding of social innovation as defined by Ezio Manzini (2014, 57): 'Social innovation is a process of change emerging from the creative re-combination of existing assets (from social capital to historical heritage, from traditional craftsmanship to accessible advanced technology), the aim of which is to achieve socially recognized goals in a new way.'

Despite the value of using the rhetoric of design to address complex social problems in the global south in general, and in post-apartheid South Africa in particular, Akama & Yee (2016) stress that 'Design and Social Innovation is largely populated by case studies in Europe and the US, further reinforcing global hierarchies and certain paradigms.' Moreover, design as a globalised practice of innovation has also been critiqued for killing design variety (Hall 2017). The ubiquity of products that look the same is a case in point made by Hall (2017). He notes that 'almost all the smartphones available come in shiny mostly black flat oblongs and rarely express cultural values from the places where they were made.' In turn, Western case studies about innovation are at risk of perpetuating the aforementioned argument about legitimate epistemologies for students because the practice of design for development becomes charged with connotations that allude to a dichotomy between what is deemed 'good' and what is deemed 'bad' design.

In keeping with Achille Mbembe's (2001)<sup>2</sup> posture to challenge the 'master narrative' and 'Anglo-domination' historically assumed to interpret Africa's history relative to the rest of the world, we need to (as South African design educators) open the door for design students to other world views. This means that we need to embrace pluralism and thereby nurture

multi-centric design ways of knowing and doing for our students, specifically from their own vantage points. This means considering factors such as location, culture and language directly and more critically.

Hence, to nurture abductive thinking skills in students that value efficacy, appropriateness and accountability, we (as design educators) need to rethink our processes of teaching design thinking by doing (Cross 2011) to ultimately create design leaders who can innovate for alternate futures. Julier (2014, 216) considers this an empowering role for designers who have the potential to ‘open up possibilities, to challenge the collective imagination and to help in fashioning new dispositions ... so it reconnects people, practices and places’. The next section therefore brings play and design face-to-face to highlight and motivate their intersection towards more inclusive education.

## **The interface between design and play**

According to Henricks (2015b) and Sutton-Smith (1997), two seminal play theorists, it is challenging to define play. Play does not have one definitive characteristic, but is rather a convergence of characteristics, such as being fun, voluntary, self-directed and unexpected to name a few. Henricks (2015b, 390) for example, supports taking a ‘wide ranging approach’ in this regard because he asserts that ‘Play is conditioned by, and exists in, contexts that are physiological, biological, environmental, social and, cultural.’ While it is not within the scope of this article to unpack the numerous conceptions of play from extant literature, it is imperative to acknowledge that play research is interdisciplinary in nature; it is situated at the intersection of many disciplines, including but not limited to anthropology, education, occupational therapy and psychology. As such, I bring play into focus from my vantage point as a communication design educator. The following three overarching historical and operational similarities that I have observed previously<sup>3</sup> between play and design guide the theoretical exploration that follows: emphasising localised practice; nurturing inter-subjective relationships; and enabling self-realisation through experience.

Firstly, play and design have been subject to bias as modes of thinking and doing. As children, play is generally favoured over reason; whereas in adults, play’s use is by and large relegated in favour of reason. Despite spurring innovation, urbanisation and industrialisation have unfortunately reduced play as private idleness. Rapid urbanisation minimised the number of playing spaces, while simultaneously regulating them; and industrialisation made a distinct separation between work and play, thereby eroding community values and forming class divides (Dyson 2015, 44). These historical occurrences have over time undermined the value of play both in children and in adults, but more so in the latter. However, discourse on play provides us with evidence that suggests otherwise. For example, Flanagan (2013), who writes about critical play, argues that games ‘are systems of imagining what is possible’. Likewise, design is regarded as a process of imagining the ‘not-yet-existing’ (Nelson & Stolterman 2012). Since design and games both have the potential to facilitate innovative and immersive environments that encourage experimentation, creative expression and conceptual thinking, I argue that we need to reconcile play and design with their counterparts of reason and rationality instead of viewing them as a dichotomy. Here I echo Friedrich Schiller’s philosophy (in Henricks 2015a, 164) about man’s ‘play drive’, which is in essence the ‘mediation of nature and reason’.

Secondly, play and design are localised practices, meaning that their outcome cannot be analysed or measured using the same yard-stick because both practices are contingent on the

context in which they exist. Here, the term ‘local’ (or ‘indigenous’) does not only denote a geographic place but also embraces a cultural dimension. In creative play for example, right or wrong cannot be used as the measure of success of a play activity, because creative play takes on many forms – making, unmaking and even re-making – owing to its emphasis on uninhibited self-expression. Creative play therefore allows participants to explore their thoughts and feelings privately or socially without the pressure of being judged. Likewise, not all design-led innovations are revolutionary. As noted earlier, social innovation denotes change that is dependent on a specific need. I therefore draw on a South African *Interdesign* project, hosted by ICSID in 2005 (van Zyl 2006), to illustrate this point. The brief, which called for sustainable transport in a rural area in South Africa, resulted in the design of a donkey-cart system. While this solution may seem regressive in light of universal technological advancements, the design proposal was in fact innovative in that it carefully considers the local needs of the end-users, including their rural setting and their limited access to resources. Hence, appropriateness was the measure of success for the resulting, not the absolute measures of right or wrong (Owen 2007).

Thirdly, design and play favour inter-subjective relationships. Traditional and hierarchical designer–client/user relationships are disrupted nowadays by design processes that increasingly comprise a multitude of stakeholders. Similarly, there is a collective ethos that underpins group play. Since participants are not only seen but heard within the design and/or play settings, it can be inferred that there is a decentralisation of power (albeit in varying degrees). Owing to the democratisation of their processes, play and design both have the potential to create visceral experiences for all those involved. In turn, design and play are both hands-on activities that have the potential to strengthen social skills and also to build social capital.

Following from the above, I now bring into play a South African higher education case study to show how play and design are pragmatically interfaced in a formal design education setting. To reiterate, since there is little guidance and literature on how design can be decolonised, I present playful learning as one possible approach.

### **Playful learning in practice: a South African case study**

The context in which playful learning was intentionally introduced in a design project is a four-week long design for development curriculum project in the exit-level BA Information Design module. While the pedagogy of play, defined as ‘an intentional approach to teaching and learning – that supports educators in navigating these paradoxes and leveraging the power of playful learning’ (Solis et al. 2019, 8), is widespread within early childhood development education, the case study presented here highlights how playful learning was facilitated in higher education. Moreover, playful learning is interrogated from a constructivist perspective in this article. The reason for this is that playful learning is situated within a constructivist theory of learning (Rice 2009, 96), which argues that knowledge and meaning are constructed by learners through experience. To this end, Rice (2009, 96) asserts that ‘the shift from learning as a direct transmission to a constructivist perspective requires that there is no single or universal truth, but that there are many alternative versions of events’. This viewpoint resonates with the intention to critically examine traditional approaches to design education.

Informed by the abovementioned aim, the students design brief asked them to work in groups of three to design an educational toolkit comprising ‘educational tools and activities, projects,

games, etc. for children between the ages of 8 and 12 ... that can be used by children, either amongst themselves or with their parents and/or other facilitators (such as teachers)' (Cassim & van der Merwe 2019). Each toolkit had to introduce South African children to creative problem-solving using a design principle by means of play. The following are two examples to show how the 2019 cohort of students married design principles with their social theme for their respective toolkits:

- *Going overboard* uses balance to teach children about emotional regulation; and
- *Foe Fiction* addresses conflict resolution using contrast as the design principle.

The overall pedagogic aim of the project was to facilitate an experiential learning opportunity for the students through an iterative design process that was not bound to the classroom. This process mimicked professional practice. Students had to consult other significant stakeholders, such as subject experts, end-users and teachers who could contribute to the overall efficacy of their designs. Some of this engagement was facilitated by the educators, and others were student-led.

As a point of departure for the project, a half-day play workshop was hosted by two play professionals. Students were introduced to different types of play, including biblioplay, creative play, sensory play and mastery play. Students played in class with games/activities related to each type of play; moreover, their experience was scaffolded by information about each play types' developmental-appropriateness for different age groups. Not only did the workshop serve as an enabler of play, it also signalled to the students that they had the permission to play in a higher education setting. This type of consent empowered students to let loose in an otherwise formal setting and in turn allowed them to frame their complex design challenge in more fun and engaging ways.

In terms of the design process, the act of framing refers to the creation of 'a (novel) standpoint from which a problematic situation can be tackled' (Dorst 2011, 525). Through play, the students were able to formulate a much more accurate view of the 'wicked' problem that they were addressing. Play and design both occur in a space-time boundary, so taking students out of the comfort of the classroom and into the real world encouraged students to communicate face-to-face with each other and their target audience. Owing to the vast amount of information available online, the real-world setting of the project encouraged students to be mindful of the particularities of the context they were steeped in. To this end, play assisted the students to break the ice more easily with their end-users, especially during prototyping sessions. The rapport that was established made it easier for the end-users to contribute towards framing the design problem at hand. In turn, this allowed students to move from their own (often assumed) frames of reference. Students are generally moulded by ideas and ideologies that stem from their own contexts and cultures, so it was significant to see during class consultations that students tried not to impose their own views and beliefs on their designs.

Playing with their end-users more intentionally enabled students to challenge their own ideas of being in the world in a more relational manner. The level playing field that was created through play also gave students a way to embrace mutual curiosity and thereby collaboration in their design process. While students' prior learning experiences certainly supported their process, the project gave students an opportunity to nurture their design thinking skills within a real-world group setting.

In the latter part of the project, it became clearer that the play workshop was a catalyst for students to develop and design innovative play-based learning activities/games because it informed their understanding of different types of play. This new knowledge moved the students' outlook beyond designing for edutainment, which is often the typical approach in game design. In practice, this meant that rather than merely marrying existing game designs or strategies with content related to their chosen theme (Tekinbaş & Zimmerman 2004), the students were able to embed more meaningful play in their toolkit activities. This speaks to the aforementioned concept of design as a rhetorical process because students were grappling with their selected topics through meaningful argumentation and negotiation with their end-users.

Overall, playing in the classroom and in the 'field' with end-users and other experts enabled a relatively smooth co-evolution of the design problem and solution. It was therefore not surprising to see that the more successful toolkits were designed by the groups who made more of an effort towards play-enabled prototyping throughout their design process. These instances of play speak to Flanagan's (2013) view about in-between spaces being the place where innovative ideas can emerge. Likewise, it became evident that play shifted the students point-of-view because most of them were not afraid to make changes based on the feedback they received from the design educators, the play experts as well as their end-users. As design educators we are aware that students tend to show reluctance and do not always take heed to feedback during a design process if it means more work for them. Hence, it was significant to recognise students being reflective practitioners by embracing the voices of others, not only in a creative manner but more significantly in a constructive manner when moving towards their final design deliverables.

## **Discussion and conclusion**

From the case study, it is evident that the attempt to decolonise the design curriculum through playful learning is not an act of reversal nor is it an exclusionary practice. On the contrary, the design for development project interrogated the curriculum so that design students could tackle real-world contexts by embracing new ways of knowing and doing. In doing so, the case study does not merely perpetuate the Western / Eurocentric progressive narrative of global salvation, but shows how we can hold our own to design a better world within an African context. As such, the case study presents an alternate way of knowing and doing in design, which disrupts the trope of the general absence of African case studies in design discourse. The discussion below prefaces the article's conclusion by presenting the findings that emerged from interfacing design and play in the curriculum-related design project.

The introduction of playful learning disrupted a 'one-size fits-all' approach to social innovation. The non-linear, iterative design process that the students embraced mimicked play in that the process was characterised by emergence: that is, the solution to the design problem at hand was not clear to the students at the onset and was therefore not predetermined. As noted in the following student reflection, play reiterated for students that social innovation is a holistic process that requires big picture thinking:

*“It made for a purposeful design process where everything needed to serve a very specific purpose – something I was not used to. Everything we did needed to be done in accordance to the grand narrative – and it all needed to add value to what we were trying to convey.”*



The emphasis that was placed by the students on their design process shifted their viewpoints of design being merely solution-focused; in turn, it moved their perception of social innovation beyond materialisation. Likewise, the students' conception of play was also challenged. Students recognised that play is a lot more nuanced and they realised that designing for children is not child's play and was more difficult than they anticipated. The following reflections by a student speaks to this point:

*“My assumptions were challenged as I underestimated the difficulty of creating a playful and innovative game that is easy to understand. The process was much more difficult than I expected ... designing for children is much different than designing for adults as one cannot rely on assumptions and they are constantly challenged throughout our research and prototyping.”*

Students embraced play not merely as a frivolous activity but as a mind-set during the design process. Play paid dividends to the students in understanding because it allowed them to broaden their frame of engagement and reference. In the words of one student: ‘Play as an approach to the design process provided an alternate lens to execute things. By involving play, we were prioritising engagement, which I feel is beneficial to the design process.’ Another student's insight that ‘one does learn more through play and physically doing things, rather than being taught’ further supports the philosophy of learning by doing.

The students did not have prior experience of designing for children, so their intended target audience challenged them in unprecedented ways. Firstly, play facilitated their immediate identification of the lived experience of children as end-users. Secondly, playing with the children for purposes of initial research and prototyping stimulated social awareness amongst the design students. The students' experience in the field quickly suspended any social hierarchies they may have had. The age gap between the children and the design students also went further in challenging the so-called apartheid of knowledge by giving voice to the voiceless; children are often not viewed as citizens who have the same autonomy as adults, so it was noteworthy that the students took heed to the children's feedback with intent and purpose.

Furthermore, students learnt that designing for children was not about dumbing down the content of their designed products and also required a careful consideration and curation of information. One student acknowledged that ‘we sometimes assume children are less intelligent than what they actually are’. Playing together thus facilitated a co-learning ecology in a way that challenged traditional modes of knowledge production. Nevertheless, a shortcoming that needs to be addressed in future is the inclusion of a feedback loop with the end-users once the project is completed. This step will ensure that students do not rely on end-users merely to serve their own academic endeavours. Moreover, it will reinforce the understanding that play is not only a cornerstone of creativity and imagination, but of social development as well.

In conclusion, since the students consistently echoed the value that play afforded the designed innovation process, I argue that, at a fundamental level we as design educators need to have a closer look at our teaching methods and tools, and not just the content, if we are to constructively address the current decolonisation debate. Accordingly, the case study has highlighted the potential of contemporary design education to facilitate experimental playgrounds, which may allow students to learn to innovate more meaningfully without focusing solely on the outcome. As Stuart Brown asserts, play offers ‘the empowerment of

coming through a scary experience unscathed'. Hence, playful learning's potential to mitigate risk should be explored as a way to mobilise future designers as agents of social change. Ultimately, for design educators to successfully marry play with learning, it will require them to balance the act of 'learning to play' and 'playing to learn'.

## Acknowledgements

The author is grateful to Mrs Marguerite van der Merwe for facilitating the Information Design student project with her in 2019; to the Information Design students who worked effortlessly on the project; as well as the certified Child Life specialists (our partners in play), Dr Karen van Zijl and Mrs Megan Ribbens, without whom the playful and experimental approach in the classroom would not have been possible.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Despite questioning the apartheid of knowledge in the American higher education system, Bernal & Villalpando (2002), as educators of colour, challenge the so-called 'legitimate epistemologies' that are maintained by those in power.

<sup>2</sup> Mbembe's disciplinary vantage point includes African History and Postcolonial Studies. He is currently affiliated with the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (WISER) at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> Having collaborated with certified child life specialists during a community engagement workshop in the inner city of Pretoria a few years ago, I became increasingly curious about exploring the role of play in the design process. The experience of seeing designers and non-designers brainstorming innovative ways to address some of the daily challenges faced in the city, sparked my interest about the value of play in facilitating design thinking skills not only amongst designers, but increasingly amongst other citizens for them to also use the rhetoric of design (i.e., abductive thinking) when grappling with social justice issues.

## Biography

**Fatima Cassim** holds a doctoral degree in Information Design from the University of Pretoria, South Africa. She was awarded the 2012–2013 Harvard South African Fellowship, during which time she was affiliated with Harvard's Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Currently, as a full-time member of staff at the School of the Arts at her *alma mater*, she is a senior lecturer and subject coordinator in the Information Design division. Her research focuses on the culture of design; in particular, she is interested in design activism and the possible impact it may have on design citizenship. She is a co-editor for the accredited *Image & Text* journal. In addition, she is on the board of directors (as the Director of Education) for Open Design, a South African NGO that uses and promotes design to innovate, educate and build resilient communities. When she is not being an academic, she tries to exercise creative muscle by running around the globe. Contact address: School of Arts, University of Pretoria, Private Bag x 20, Hatfield 0028, South Africa. Email: cassim.fatima@gmail.com

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