HOW CAN WE CREATE TOGETHER A CREOLIZATION OF PROTOCOLS?

A conversation on Design,
Architecture and Digital Technologies
Beyond the Narrow Cosmology
of Universalism

With Paolo Cascone (African Fabbers School, Cameroon),
Juan Pablo García Sossa [JPGS] (Estación Terrena,

Marion Louisgrand So I will open the round of introductions: my name is Marion Louisgrand-Sylla, and I am the director of Kër Thiossane which is an art and new media center which I founded with my husband in 2002 in Dakar. It is a resource center for new media art in West Africa. We believe strongly in an open source philosophy and are doing lots of workshops, trainings, artists' residences, and modes of experimentation. We ourselves are not specialized in design, but in 2014, we opened the first FabLab in Senegal called Defko Ak Ñep ("Do it with others"). It was a part of a project called the School of Commons behind a garden which we asked an artist to create. We tried to experiment with the commons through thinking what can an African FabLab be in our context? And that is how we cooperated with Paolo, in a workshop for AfroPixel which we had outside of the FabLab in a small shop between the craftsmen and the other shops in the street. It was a very conscious decision to organize it in the street. It was a very rich experience, and now the FabLab is quite big as a disseminator with other FabLabs and with people who work here or who are opening others in Africa. So the FabLab is where we try to experiment on design. Also we have a festival called AfroPixel, a new media art festival, where we engage in video mapping art.

Paolo Cascone It is a pleasure to join you today! I am Paolo Cascone. I am originally Italian, and I grew up between the West Indies and East Africa. Originally we are from Naples and right now I am senior lecturer in architecture and environmental design at the University of Westminster in London. I am a founding director of CODESIGNLAB which is a sort of collaborative design and digital manufacturing activity. A few years ago, with my students from Naples and Paris, I funded an association called "Urban Fabrication Laboratory," which is actually one of the drivers of the African Fabbers school, a sort of an itinerant school for self-construction and urban ecologies. Over the last 15 years, we developed many workshops and projects in between different countries on the African continent. In the last 4 years, we have been involved in a big project in Cameroon, where the African Fabbers School is implementing a community-oriented laboratory
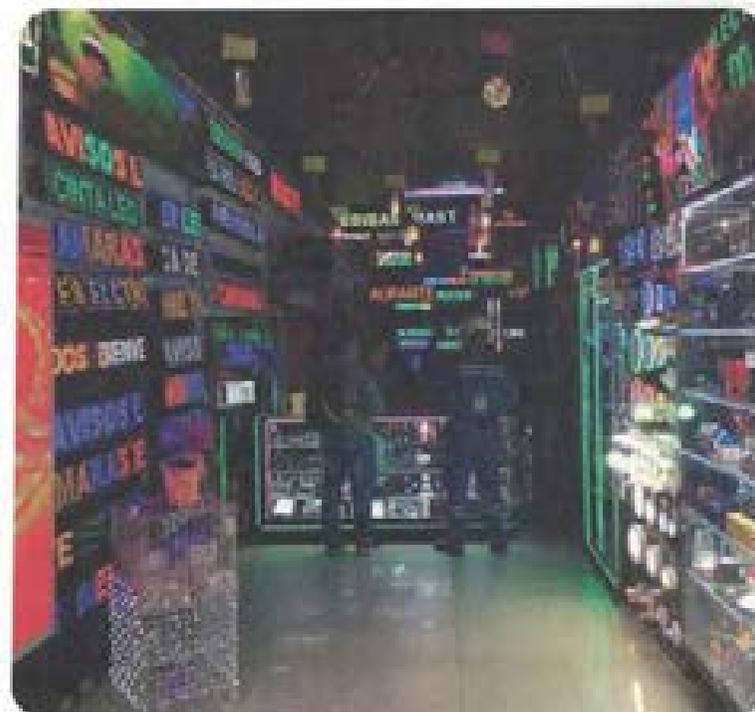
of digital fabrication for sustainable architecture. And then, there are the research activities: we are developing self-sufficient housing in Africa together with UN-Habitat and off-grid communities.

JPGS My name is Juan Pablo Garcia Sossa. I was born in Columbia and grew up in Bogotá. In the past eight years I have been between there and Berlin. Besides working at SAVVY Contemporary in the design department, since 2017 I have been co-directing, a space for arts, technology and research called Estación Terrena. In the past eight years, I have been investigating how technologies are being misused or re-appropriated in tropical territories and how by these re-appropriation of technologies other scenarios are being developed that would be otherwise unthought of in the so called global North. For example realities such as mobile banking systems through SMS like Mpesa in Kenya and later also in Tanzania, Afghanistan and Romania; USB-based distribution systems such as El Paquete Semanal in Cuba or the USB-sticks in Colombia, where you can virtually get any kind of content from the latest e-book or Netflix series to music, films, podcasts, whatever! This opens realities and scenarios that, in my opinion, have been more at the margins or have been considered as low-tech. This technology is very often considered non-existent or a legacy

of colonial occupations or dynamics. But I think between endemically situated knowledges and practices as well as responses from the popular culture, we do have plenty of technologies, only in different forms. In that context I founded Estación Terrena with my colleague Valentina Medina. The place has formerly been an electronics shop located in what one could consider as the so-called red-light district. We have a street in Bogotá where you can get all electronic components. It is an entire street that caters for the supply and repair of electronic devices. Everything there is provided by women, which is also interesting because we know about the gender gap in technology when you look at it from a certain perspective. But here everything is administered by women. So in this former electronics shop we began building a program around critical approaches to technologies, while also using it as a research space, hopefully bridging various communities. This is a project space that is financed by us and we are looking at tentacular finance options and sustainability models. Since the beginning of the pandemic for example, the front space is used as a TV repair shop. In the back is the project space. It is great to have the opportunity to host various of these other realities together.

This lateral exchange within the tropical belt of other understandings of what technologies are and what "progress" and "development" are is crucial for us.

This lateral exchange within the tropical belt of other understandings of what technologies are and what "progress" and "development" are is crucial for us. I ask myself what could be other meanings of "development" or "progress", other than this imposed idea that we need to copycat what US America or Europe does. They have a metro – so we need a metro too!? And very often, this feeling of needing to catch up to the global North might be preventing us from examining in which direction we would like to progress.

Marion Louisgrand I would be curious to know more about how you work with the women you mentioned. Are you organizing workshops with them? How do you engage in this field of electronics and women?

JPGS In our practice, there have been various ways to acknowledge the space we are in and the neighbors we have. For instance, we interact regularly with our neighbors and we installed a system through which they lent us equipment for exhibitions, like projectors or sound systems. In the next months, we are planning a neighbor's cine-club where we will show films from India, Indonesia and Northern Africa. We have been thinking about the ways to address the so-called red light district in our neighborhood. We are for example in conversation with the network of trans people in Bogotá to see what we can work on together. So these are our approaches. I think, not exclusively addressed to women, but more to our neighborhood and the location that is not an artsy location, per se. It is more like a working-class supply area of the city. Which has sometimes resulted in friction, but we also want to provoke.

Marion Louisgrand That is the role of art: sometimes it is easy, sometimes it provokes such situations and reactions!

JPGS Where is Kër Thiossane located? And is the Fabbers school nomadic or is it actually based in Cameroon?

Marion Louisgrand Kër Thiossane and FabLab are based not far from the center of Dakar. The FabLab used to be somewhere else but we have now brought it back to Kër Thiossane because

we have more space here and can make use of our machines, like our new laser cutter. We also have to think about the sustainability of the organization. We saw that it was important to not only bring the public to the FabLab. It is equally important to go to the public and the central urban zones. We collaborated with DK Osseo-Asare and Yasmine Abbas, two designers who work in Ghana, who are deeply engaged in the sites of electronic garbage dumps, especially in Accra. They have exchanged with community members, youth and students especially in the technological field in a participatory co-design process in order to co-create a spacecraft, an alternative architecture for making. Osseo-Asare and Abbas describe the space as a "small-scale, mobile, incremental, low-cost and open-source spacecraft that operates as a set of tools and equipment to 'craft space' in different ways, enabling makers with limited means to jointly navigate and terraform their environment." This spacecraft was built and now we can move with it, we brought it to the public in different areas in Dakar but also to the countryside, and to Mauretania for example. We use it for workshops. We also have a screen with a mobile bicycle to produce electricity so we can go to schools and other public places for screenings.

So, our base is in the center of Dakar but we go out to the public. We are not necessarily specialized in design, but with the Fab-
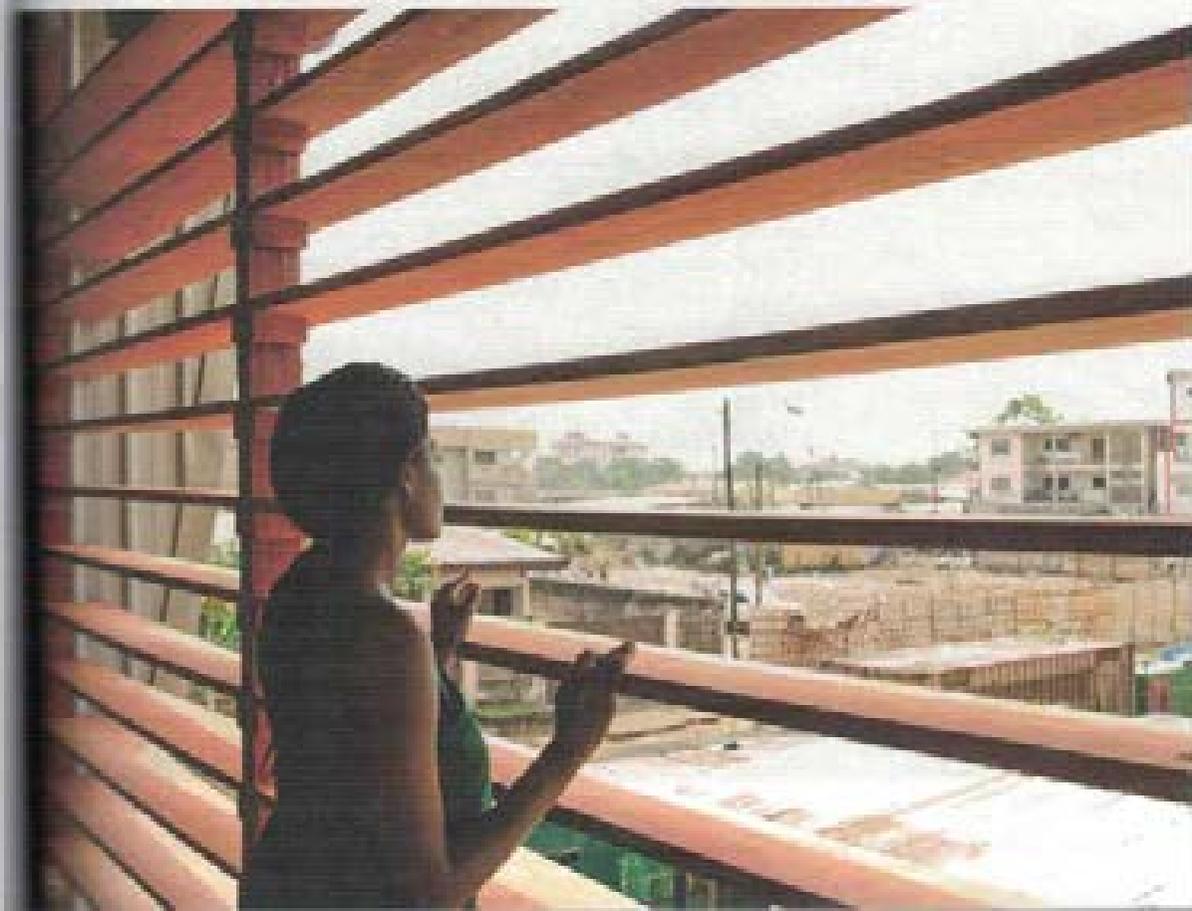
Internal view of the Douala Cultural Hub and its naturally ventilated corridors. The Hub hosts a school of fine arts as well as laboratories of traditional and digital manufacturing, exhibition spaces and a cafeteria open to the local community. © CODESIGNLAB

Labs we go for an open-source approach, from high-tech to low-tech. We do a lot of research, on recycling and especially on and with local, traditional knowledges which are partly disappearing.

Paolo Cascone I am very fascinated by both of your work. I am fascinated by the idea of having the very permanent laboratory installed in Dakar and in Bogotá. And I think this is quite powerful for many reasons. What I have been trying to do was to strategically continue to behave like a foreigner. I am interested in this condition of being a foreigner, and in a very naïve, strategically naïve way, we start to question how to basically interfere with an existing dynamic. As an architect with a PhD in environmental engineering, we always have to proof that we are doing something meaningful, that we are saving the world, which we are of course not, we are more like trying to interfere. We have this kind of informal dynamic, for example, when Marion was building the FabLab in Dakar, we were trying to understand how we could potentially interact and somehow connect it with the culture of this existing community. It was very interesting to create this kind of street laboratory. I am so interested in the street perspective.

External view of the Douala Cultural Hub realized in collaboration with CDE in the framework of the CAMoof project © Dione Roach

We were trying to create this intersection between analog and digital culture by just working on the tools. I think tools are very important, much more than the design itself.

For example I don't work in an office. I could have one, but my office is usually the street. At the very beginning it was because I couldn't afford an office (laughs), but then I began to see it as an opportunity to not have an office, a physical office, and use the street as my and other people's laboratory, as a space of revelation.

And I think the idea of African Fabbers started by chance. When I was teaching at the School of Architecture in Paris, the majority of my students came from Africa and they were very interested in translating what we were doing together in terms of digital design into something feasible for their own contexts. And we started gradually with experiments in Mali and in Burkina Faso. So, the African Fabbers started with the network of African student in Paris. From the beginning it was clear that we wanted to avoid humanitarian rhetoric and humanitarian projects in general. Our aim is to create a shift in the way we work with interstitial or residual urban contexts. We began to work together on the question of productivity and local industries. How can we change the perspective in terms of self-production, how to transform vernacular production or indigenous technologies into something more, let's say "industrialized," which I am using here in the best sense. We were trying to create this intersection between analog and digital culture by just working on the tools. I think tools are very important, much more than the design itself.

> In Senegal, you've got a FabLab everywhere because everybody has knowledge, whether it is recycling one thing or repairing another.

I agree with both Juan and Marion on this idea of questioning the social role of digital tools. In my perspective as an architect, as a builder, as a maker as well in terms of architectural skills, I was interested in self-produced tools to transform local materials, so we started to transform some very basic tools to build walls and domes. We started to also hack some 3D printers while working with local clay and taking traditional technologies as a reference. And the more recently, we are questioning the aspects related to energy and self-sufficiency.

At the same time, we are using the African Fabbers as a platform for connecting people from very different backgrounds. We are interested in the idea of decolonizing the teaching of architecture through a cross-disciplinary approach that goes beyond

academic knowledge. We once started to map the lack of schools for architecture and design in Africa, for example. We then tried to understand how we could deal with this lack of opportunities. In 2015, we made open calls to invite people from different African and European countries to work with us. I think that the question is not just about giving African creative people the possibility to go to Europe or the United States as a student or resident in a program. But also to see Africa as a platform for design and architecture etc. to be investigated by European students.

In order to break open these very fixed ideas of where knowledge is and who needs to teach whom, we have to create this kind of circularity. Which we were trying to do through creating a network of schools around Africa and Europe. But it was very complicated due to the nature of collaborations with institutions. So now, we keep it very informal after understanding that the more we formalize agreements with universities, the more the project becomes useless and overcomplicated for our community.

Marion Louisgrand I agree with you regarding the lack of schools of design and architecture in West Africa. It is very important to continue that work. I think there is now a school in Benin. Even in Dakar, design was more important and present ten years ago at the biennales. Of course, we have very good designers but no formal school. On the other hand, like people have said: in Senegal,

you've got a FabLab everywhere because everybody has knowl-
edge, whether it is recycling one thing or repairing another. There
is an omnipresent Do it yourself-culture because you have to man-
age the daily reality, often without means. Still, I find it important to
organize workshops and meetings to train and offer a possibility
for young artists, designers or craftsmen to work with others and
to experiment with tools, like 3D printers and laser cutters. That
is what we do, what we have been doing, and we continue to do
really across very different publics, from engineering students to
the girls from the social center who are working in fashion.

With artists, we have workshops that experiment around
typography or architecture, different workshops like this. There
are many connections to be made. We have experimented with
generative design workshops which is closely linked with fractal
and traditional culture and knowledge.

I agree with Paolo that it is important to continue the informal
way. In the FabLab eco-system, we have many ingenious self-
made innovators, for example Bass Touré who works with metal.
He has his workshop where he makes motorcycles for handi-
capped people. He is full of ideas! During the pandemic, he made
a washing machine from recycled plastic. I think we still have to
make many connections between design, technology and tradi-
tional knowledge.

*etc by Gabriel Zea,
2018. Pieces in black
marble engraved with
the number of hours,
minutes and seconds
Gabriel spent on
Youtube, Facebook,
Instagram, Twitter,
and WhatsApp during
2017. Exhibited at The
Glass Room Bogotá
at Estación Terrena
© Sergio Mantilla*

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technology and traditional knowledge.

JPGS Seen from our perspective, this whole idea around "design
your own tools" is basically an everyday life practice. Living in
Germany, my biggest or only cultural shock is being told con-
stantly "Das geht nicht!" which means "It's not possible" or "It's
not doable" even for things that I have done before. This attitude
is really not an option for territories in the tropics. We have always
designed our own tools in a way. And you can see it expressed
in the Brazilian "gambiarra" or the Latin American "rebusque"
or the West-African concept of "goorgorlou" – all these ways
of looking at a work-around. They are seen as manifestations
of the so-called "vernacular" design, but are they vernacular
because they don't speak with the same standard grammar?
In our perspective, we are not so much interested in replicating
these "vernacular manifestations" but in looking at the principles
behind them, meaning how do we keep provoking these accents
or these new vernacular responses to rescript our own grammar?
And also acknowledge it as design or technology. Because we
were taught not to consider that as such.

In our experience in Bogotá, we have noticed that hacker
culture is very disconnected from arts culture or design culture.
They don't really overlap. We are trying to bring them together in
our space with some hybrid exhibitions and projects, also perfor-
mances and concerts. And another thought on this idea of sharing
and open source: once I was speaking with a taxi driver who had
a recipe for making his own version of a super powerful soap. It is
called Jabon Rey and he produced a copycat version of it in Colom-
bia. He invited me to attend a workshop to learn the recipe, and I
mentioned that it would be so nice if it was open source because
then everybody might know how to make it themselves. His reac-
tion was: No, Juan, you don't understand. If everybody knows the
recipe, then where's the business? I find it striking. We do have this
resourcefulness but we don't share it so much. Of course, we do
have street cooperatives and networks of support and such.

Another example: I was involved in an exhibition called The
Glass Room organized with an NGO called Tactical Tech that
focuses on very critical approaches to technologies. The whole
project was on data and privacy, and we invited Colombian and
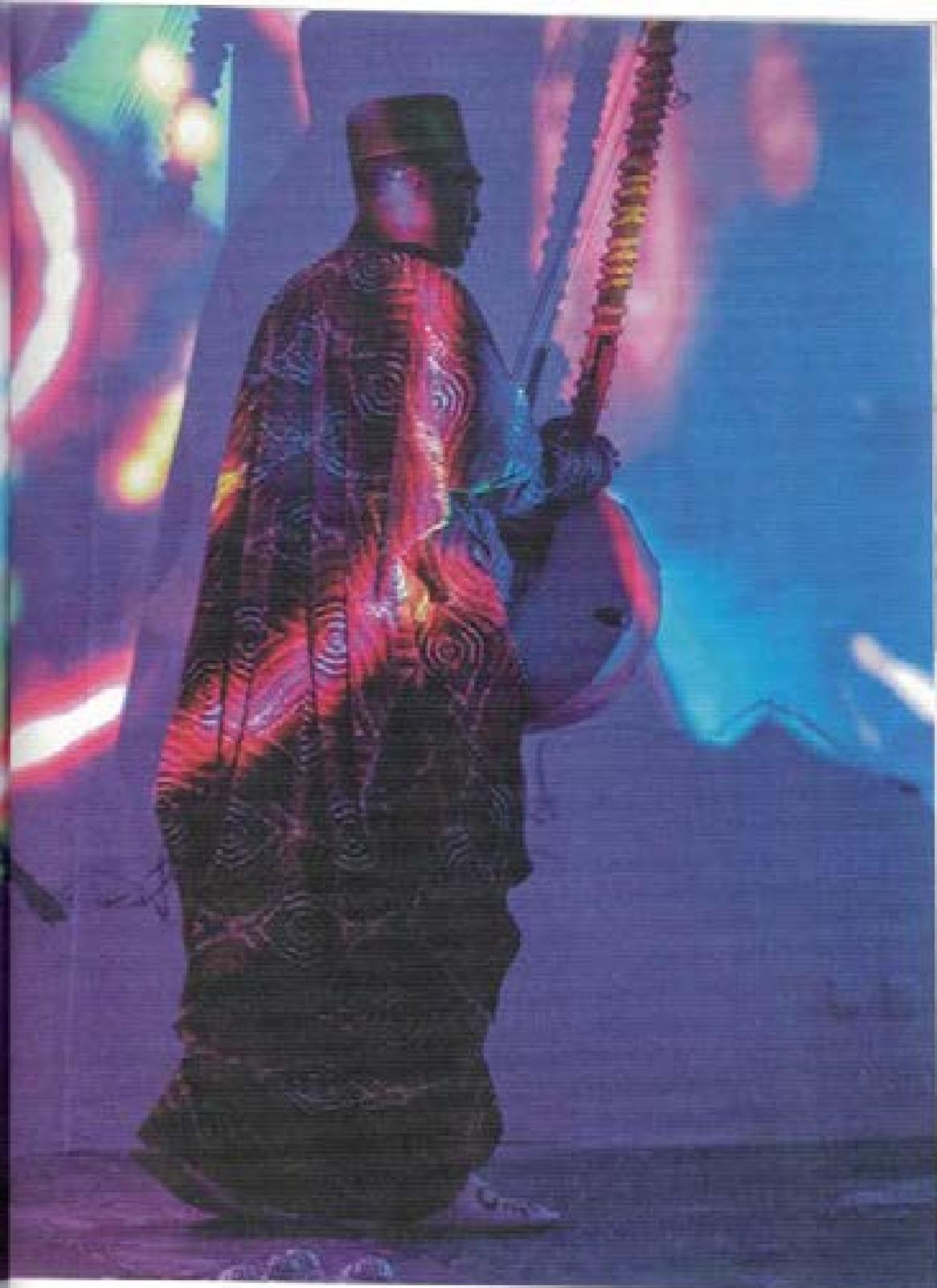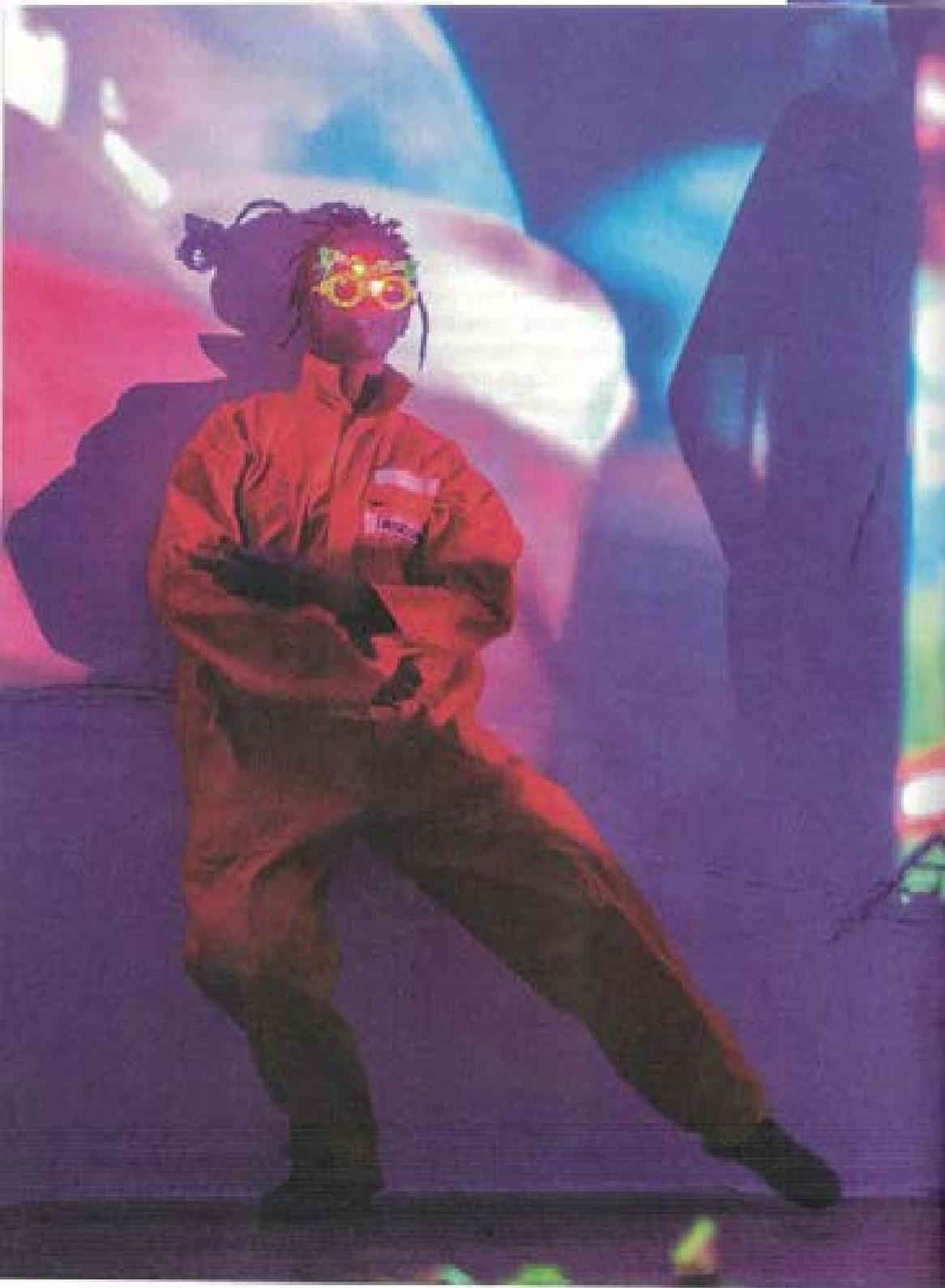
international hackers, designers and artists to respond to the context of Colombia and the tropics. Once, someone came in asking what is going on. We explained to him that it is an exhibition on data and privacy because enterprises and governments extract your data and manipulate you for political purposes or advertising. He replied: "OK, do it for me!" and gave us his phone and asked us to do what we were trying to expose. At that time, we realized, that the concept of privacy is something that you cannot translate literally. The conversation around privacy is much more complex than exposed data or not. It is almost non-existent in a place where you share your room with four siblings and you have dozens of cousins and street cooperatives and so many friends. We realized that the discussion is more about how we treat data in so many manipulative ways and not so much around privacy. So that, I would say, was an accent we developed while translating these discussions to the Colombian context. I am wondering like how can we keep weaving together spaces like Kër Thiossane or also the practice of African Fabbers? How can we create together a creolization of protocols?

> It is crucial not to keep this technology only within a capitalist system but to make it accessible to the civil society so they can work with it in their own context.

Marion Louisgrand We really cover a wide field at Kër Thiossane. But first and foremost, we are an art center and technologies are only tools. And we have to interrogate these tools. So as an art center, we are using art to work with civil society, with people – in many different projects. If it is high-tech or low-tech is not really that important because every day, we have to fight more and more in this capitalistic surrounding with its capital-driven start-up systems, and find an economy for ourselves. So like you, we are engaged in some very experimental and tech-oriented projects. But there is also a need for craftsmen to make their products and to protect their rights. This has been a challenge recently. So, first of all, we defend the arts while machines and technologies are just tools that allow us to innovate. In that context, an understanding of design is very wide. For example, at the moment we are working on a design in developing a system that

30 printing session with the students of the African Fabbers School investigating on additive manufacturing with local clay, in Douala, Cameroon. © CODESIGNLAB

uses tree bark as filters for pollution. So in our many projects, we move between art, technology and craft.

JPGS I wonder how you are experiencing this current trend of the combination of arts, science and technology? I realize it has been a super trending in Europe and it also came to Colombia. So now everything always has to be art, science and technology. But sometimes I feel it responses to a relatively narrow cosmology of universalism. Is this trend of combining arts, science and technology also very present in Senegal?

Marion Louisgrand I think to use artificial intelligence and data and all this is, is extremely crucial and it poses an enormous economic challenge on the continent. So it is important to give access to local artists and offer the possibility to understand and use these tools. At the moment, we are engaged in a project on the pollution of the ocean and rising sea levels. We are working with the FabLab to make open source low-tech microphones to record under the sea. I see it as a challenge to provide this access. It is not only about art, science and technology; there are bigger things at stake here in our context. It is crucial not to

keep this technology only within a capitalist system but to make it accessible to civil society so they can work with it in their own context. For me this is all a new colonial thing, all this technology and in the field of arts, science, pollution, all of this. I think it is very important.

JPGS So the environmental crisis or responses to the environment are very present at the moment, like measuring pollution levels?

Marion Louisgrand Yes, and we need to understand the challenge or how to find collaborative solutions with OpenStreetMap and with AI. And you don't have schools for that, there are only very few private schools here working with AI. So there is a lot of demand to do more, but then we are just an art center, what we can do has limits. Paolo what do you think about that?

Paolo Cascone I am interested in this question of playing with technology in an informal way and I think the role of art, especially in some contexts, will be quite subversive. That is why I really appreciate your approach. What I am trying to do is to completely reconsider the role of the designer in this kind of complex dynamics. Like the question: in some of the African

cities, what is the role of architecture? What are we teaching our students? Is there the kind of old-fashioned top-down way to make decisions or is it more trying to create the sort of collaborative approach where the question of self-production is not just a technical or a technological issue, it is also a tactic to foster people's responsibility for the public space? And the notion of public spaces is very, very delicate. I come from Naples where the public space is an extension of an individual house and probably this happens from Naples to the rest of the global south. I am always interested in bringing together people with different backgrounds in a process of, I wouldn't say regeneration, but the process of transformation of a generic space into a performative space, a space where people can perform in different ways.

I give you an example of the last project that we developed in Milan. In the women's prison, we developed a workshop on restorative justice, which is a huge topic. We were asked to meet this group of young women with very different backgrounds – people from Eastern Europe, the south of Italy, African countries, very different stories. And we started to talk about their physical necessities, their condition of being – especially during the lockdown, when they were completely isolated and physically constrained into a very critical space. And from this meeting, we started to work on this idea of a device to play with, which is a sort of a gym. We started to work on a device which is a more like an organic system or kinetic system that they could customize in different directions over time and over space. And so, this the role of design, in this case, it was not to make a sketch or a physical model. It was more like helping them to actually create this kind of cause-effect relation between the space, the performance of the space and their needs in terms of physical activity. Physical activity is crucial in a prison. It is the only way to take care of yourself, it is not just doing some exercise. It needs to be something where the people can identify themselves. It is very hard to take care of yourself when you are in a prison. We are always investigating how we can create this device by somehow formalizing the ideas of the community we are dealing with. In this case, with a group of students from 16 different countries and the detainees, we started to make it. So now we have a 50 square meter prototype of an open-air gym for the courtyard of the women's prison. And we are trying to understand how to evolve and extent this. Everybody wants it now, you know each prison has different branches. So each branch has a different courtyard. So now we have to customize several types of gyms, according to different community uses. People want to do karate, boxing, aerobics and we are going to give them a sort of self-instruction kit. We help

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them to make it, but they will do this by themselves. It is also very interesting to see how to transfer knowledge in a situation where they don't have access to the internet and you can see them only once every two weeks for two hours. We are giving them a protocol that is the result of our meeting and small workshop.

This is another way of working on the social role of design and architecture, which is really about authorship. It is a huge topic. Who has authorship, who is the owner? It is a cultural issue. I am working on it and I am struggling with my ego as well sometimes. Wondering what I made and what they made, what we made and who is going to use it next. And then at the age of 45 years old, I started to understand that the more people would actually hack what you are doing, the more the project that you are doing is successful. I can completely imagine how in the universities and the schools of architecture this could change the role of designers and architects for generations. To make systems that are generating other systems rather than a frozen shape. And of course, we have the technology behind, so what are the tools? What is the part of the materials? And of course, what are the skills of the people that you are working with? Do the people need to do the same thing that they normally do in their life or do they have the right to experiment and fail? Cultural failure is another crucial issue. We strategically ask our people to fail

"El Picoso Sabroso" by Picó artist William Gutiérrez, researcher Laura Malagón and designer Juan Pablo García Sossa, exhibited at Herencia Futura — > El Nuevo Normal (Future Heritage — > The New Normal) by Instituto Habanero, 2019 © Sergio Mantilla

because when we switch our machine and when something fails, we finally have the perception that we understood at least something. This is where I position myself in a very strange condition between practice and research and teaching.

Marion Louisgrand I think what we have in common is the way we work with the public space.

> I started to understand that the more people would actually hack what you are doing, the more the project that you are doing is successful.

Paolo Cascone Yes, and I am also very interested in Juan's point of view concerning the question of public space – as a non-architect. Sometimes by mistake, we always think that we need to change something, but sometimes it is revealing what is already there. Sometimes I am so anxious to make something. But at times you have to not fabricate, but you have to reveal something. I think artists are much more clever and sensitive in this question.

JPGS I guess one way is to sensitize or to point to a possible reality; another one would be to fabricate it, and maybe another one would be to squat or to occupy it. Or rather to perform it, to think it and embody it and perform it. Actually, I find some dynamics in Naples quite interesting and I can relate them to the way I see how technologies are being re-appropriated in the tropics. I play with the etymology of the word tropics which in ancient Greek means "to turn". So it is about how tropicals turn around dynamics. In Naples, I saw this shop that had the sign turned upside down and we ask them about it. And the reply was: We don't pay taxes on it if it is upside down. I find that very clever and I see this as a tropical turn. It is that way of finding a loophole to change the laws of gravity and thermodynamics, to operate with another logic. And this is like the squatting or the performing that I find so inspiring in many places. One could say that the public space is an extension of the individual, but maybe it could be also pluriversal as the place where many worlds clash and coexist together. I think there must be a dialogue with this inside and outside world,

with the surroundings. And I feel this is what we are all doing, like Kër Thiossane does by going outside and responding to these realities in Dakar.

Marion Louisgrand There is an expression in Dakar that everybody uses the street: the shops and individuals are using streets as their space. And you have to balance these many worlds.

JPGS Yes, a street academia, as they say in Colombia, and of course everywhere in the tropics, there is this idea of a University of Life. So yeah, that performativity I think is interesting, but I also understand like maybe this other step to either formalize or validate it. Paolo asked before, how one can take these vernacular expressions and how they are responding to the industry. In my perspective, it might be a better "validation" to formalize the informal or to recognize it. I think that a bridge is necessary in a way, maybe not a good response to industries, but more to this level of acknowledgment, validity and importance. Because the street is a street anyway in the end. I mean, on one hand, it is highly appreciated, on the other it is still a street.

> In the tropics – on the African continent, in Latin America, South Asia – we don't read instruction manuals: we rescript with them and we have the opportunity to rescript our ways of doing or relating to the science and technologies.

Paolo Cascone This is something that I would like to add to this question of the synthetic vernacular. There was a moment in my research where I met Ron Eglash who is an ethno-mathematician. He is teaching something in between cultural anthropology and computer science, and he wrote this book called *African Fractals*. It recognizes from a mathematical point of view, the recursive aspect related to contextual algorithms. He points out something very interesting for me. He reconstructed the logic of some specific patterns which belong to different ways of organizing matter in Africa from haircuts to furniture to informal settlements, in his

trans-scholarly approach. He was actually rebuilding the algorithm and explaining that this algorithm is an implicit algorithm because the people probably didn't know anything about algorithmic culture itself, but they knew how to make a sort of a difference in a repetition system. So systems that somehow replicate themselves with a small difference and always with this logic of redundancy. The redundancy is somehow the way to optimize resources. And this guy was saying that I was doing the same in contemporary architecture. I did this workshop with him with these students of mathematics and cultural anthropology. This was very interesting as they were working on a tool – a very interesting open-source tool, a tool of evolutionary design. I think evolutionary design really belongs to the informal culture. It is something that is open to a transformation, and this transformation responds to different criteria. Some of them are cultural or religious or environmental.
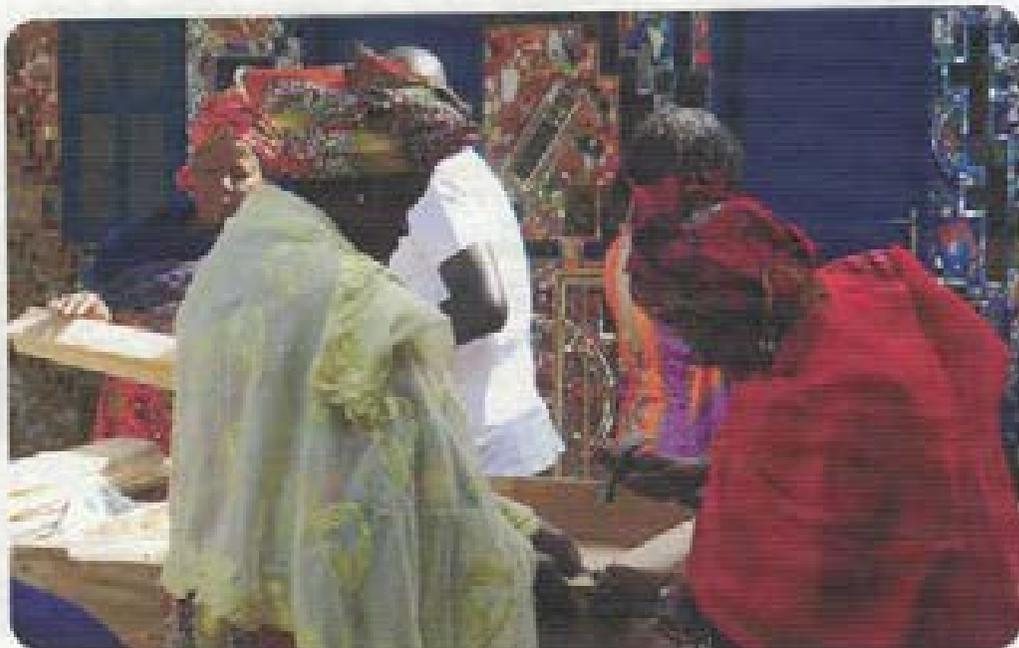
I discovered a world when I read this book and I started to ask my students to work in the same direction. How do we use environmental data to somehow inform contextual algorithms? So, for example, last year, like everyone else, I was teaching online on this question of synthetic vernacular architecture by using a contextualized algorithms and environmental maps together. We were doing this as an online exercise, but it was very interesting to understand this approach, because it generates new languages which belong to a tradition.

We could potentially find this everywhere and we discovered that these languages are the negotiation between climatic, social and economic issues. So, the synthetic vernacular is this way to hack and evolve. I think that this is probably one of the most interesting ways to, as Marion was saying before, see technology in another way. I think that technology, digital culture, is belonging to Africa more than to the UK, for example. Because the culture of complexity, geometrical complexity, material complexity, the familiarity with fabrication is much stronger. I see more perspective of an ecological industry in these places than in Europe, for example. I am provoking, of course, there are many steps I am skipping now, but this is very promising in my view.

JPGS Coming from what you are trying to provoke, I also see many opportunities there. I have been taught to try and see many opportunities in what others would consider problems. In the tropics – on the African continent, in Latin America, South Asia – we don't read instruction manuals: we rescript with them and we have the opportunity to rescript our ways of doing or relating to the science and technologies. I sometimes see some approaches that are still very "classic" in design in Switzerland,

between the North and the South, not in the colonial system and approaches. And I think what Paolo does with the workshops and the schools is one way to go about it. There are many opportunities and there are many challenges. Especially when you live in the city, which can be very intense. You don't have bicycle lanes, but the sewer water passing by in front of your house,... and many, many challenges in your everyday. And now the ecological challenge comes on top of that. And surely, it cannot be a designer from the North that has to come and find the solution. We have to do our own workshops. There are many opportunities, but also many challenges that have to be solved, also by artists. In Dakar, we have one architecture school by Jean-Charles Tall. He fought ten years to open the school, in a corrupt system. Everything has to be done here in Africa, with the artists. That is the role and the challenge of art. This is where we can collaborate with different organizations but always working with local knowledge.

JPGS As Paolo said before, I share this wish for a more bilateral exchange between the North and the South, and not a monologue imposed on the tropics. But now I am thinking even more of a lateral exchange within the tropics or the so-called "South-South exchange." And I imagine very well how someone from Senegal responds to realities in Brazil or Venezuela or Colombia or Vietnam.

Marion Louisgrand That is what we tried to do with the Arts Collaboratory where we have an institutional exchange. Next week, we will have an interactive design workshop with people from KickFestival in Namur and Sandra Suubi from 32 East, from Uganda. We will make a Baobab from recycled material and put interactive sensors on it so that people will play with this during a performance beginning of December at the cathedral of Dakar. Also another visual artist designer from Lubumbashi will join us. That is very important for us to have these South-South exchanges.

JPGS That sounds amazing, I mean, we would be very honored to find opportunities to host someone at Estacion Terrena in the future to work with you guys. And I am convinced we will find ways.

Italy, Germany. In the tropics that is a double-edged sword, because apparently "good" design is Swiss design and Swiss design is timeless. It is taught that design is not existent in places like Colombia. But at the same time, because of this, we can rescript what we understand by design in the first place. I find some things interesting about that provocation, and also I see that having the environmental crisis umbrella of looking at ways to respond to this crisis by looking at places that have been in a permanent state of crisis. One can understand the crisis as an inflection point; to some extent, tropicals have become elastic with so many crises and inflection points. There can be interesting opportunities to reposition not only responses to our environments, also as Kër Thiossane does with all the experiments and with "reading" their environments. But I think especially in terms of principles or like in a more cannibalized way, they are not like a translated one-one, as in: Senegal does it like this so we are going the same way. But more like, because of this context in Senegal, we can alter the ingredients for this recipe. So, maybe it is not the same dish exactly but the consistency or the flavors or the spices in it or the logic is similar in a way.

Marion Louisgrand I was invited by African Crossroads, a Dutch foundation, with other designers from the continent and from the Netherlands to think about what we can do as designers

Marion Louisgrand We worked with Platohêdro in Medellin to understand what it means when we speak of the commons. We made a project between Medellin and Dakar to understand, in our local languages, what we mean with *buen vivir* instead of this very northern concept of the commons. What does this mean in our different languages? Platohêdro made a radio program...

JPGS Yeah, I listened to it!

Marion Louisgrand Yes, it is very important to have this South-South exchange, and in the African crossroads project we also realized how important the Diaspora is. There is a huge Diaspora, for example in Germany and Netherlands; they want to come back and do something.

JPGS Do you think these connections we are seeing now are more mediated by the North, by an actor like the Netherlands, Germany, the UK or are they also arranged from South to South?

Marion Louisgrand In our Arts Collaboratory we tried to experiment with a common fund – to shift funding paradigms. So that we don't have to do any more reports, and we have a common pot that we decide on together for this institutional exchange. We are 25 organizations, among them also ruangrupa. To work with public institutions can be a nightmare. I think when we opened the FabLab we could have worked with many ministries – the ministry of youth, the ministry of education, of innovation, of craft... But when they talk about innovation it is all about building a new city. They have a different discourse about technology and innovation, so it is difficult to work together. We try. We helped the Dakar city to get the label of *Ville Créative Numérique* from UNESCO. I think we need more centers like Kër Thiossane, you know, a center for a new media, for experimentation. Raw Material is another arts center that is part of Arts Collaboratory. So, it is very important to work between us but sure, the money mainly comes from the North at the moment. We try to shift the paradigm, to do more lifeline instead of reports, sharing knowledge through peer-to-peer experiences, and we base our action more in solidarity. So, it will take some time, we learn and we unlearn. I think that Latin America is more advanced in this collaborative way of doing things. In Africa, it is more of a hierarchical system. That is why it is very important to connect with centers like yours in Colombia. Because sometimes you get tired of doing something, just to organize one workshop takes a long time. We don't want to be in the classical system, we don't want to work with the EU anymore.

We worked with them for two years in 2012, and we have done many things, we worked with Mali, South Africa, Martinique. It is important to try new ways. So, I really believe in the independent art spaces.

> We try to shift the paradigm, to do more lifeline instead of reports, sharing knowledge through peer-to-peer experiences, and we base our action more in solidarity.

JPGS Super interesting what you are mentioning about the common pot! I am also initiating another network where we are exploring ways of redistributing resources and maybe adapting the street cooperative dynamics on an interplanetary level.

Marion Louisgrand Yes, we have to work with our ecosystem!

Paolo Cascone It would be good to understand how this conversation could generate something. Could it generate a project between the three of us? I think it would be very interesting to use this conversation for something new because we were all talking about our world and trying to find the connection, which will be interesting is to say, OK, what's next? What could we do? How and for whom? How this could be done in three different contexts where maybe everybody is a foreigner somewhere else. It would be also very interesting to create a common agenda out of this conversation. I don't have any precise idea in mind right now. I was more listening because again, there are topics where I am maybe more experienced and others where I prefer to listen.

JPGS Yes, definitely, on my part! Even before our talk I had already strong intentions to connect with you both and explore the possibilities of developing something together. There will be a space-time for it. But from my side, I can say that I would be super excited to cook things together in thoughts and at some point, hopefully also physically.

Marion Louisgrand Let's go ahead and have a concrete exchange. I agree with our different ecosystems, it would be awesome!