

UGANDA

NTNU student trip 4.4.2014-11.4.2014

First weekend

We spent the first couple of days in Kampala and in Jinja. This being the first trip to Africa for the most of us, we had enough with just absorbing all the impressions: People selling things everywhere, nicely hand painted commercials in stead of printed ones a lot of places, and chicken transportation on bikes.



Visit at Makerere

Tuesday we went to Makerere University in Kampala. We started off with a visit to CREEC (Centre for Research in Energy and Energy Conservation), where we got plenty of input on energy efficient stoves and other devices such as solar panel lamps. What was rather interesting was the wide range of unexpected challenges related to gasifier stoves. While these would minimize the problem of smoke, users would complain that those ones didn't keep the mosquitoes away, and that the food didn't taste as it used to do.

We got to see their test lab where they kept all the different stoves that were tested, and where they could calculate the emissions from the stoves. The traditional three-stone cooking solutions (where fire wood is used as fuel) are mostly used at the countryside leads to several problems:

- Safety issues
- Health problems because of the smoke
- Deforestation, due to massive consumption of firewood
- High emissions from climate gases

After lunch we went to the showroom to meet some of the design students. We got quite envious of

these gallery facilities - we should definitely have that at home. Both of the student groups had a presentation to explain our work. The group from Makerere was especially interested in the mechatronic projects: How they worked and how we came up with the ideas on such an open exercise. From our point of view it was impressive to see the animation projects that some students had created on their spare time.

In the afternoon we got to meet with three designers from Design Without Borders and ask them questions about their work in Uganda. Two of them were working for a project for UNICEF concerning computer centers within communities, while the last one had worked together with another designer to develop a service for the World Food Program. The outcome from the last project was particularly interesting as it involved a game to teach people in refugee camps how to handle money. A dilemma we discussed was the limited time period the designers stayed, and if the projects actually were implemented. It will be interesting to see how DwB will work in the time to come, as they are starting their own office in Kampala this month.



Ugastove

We visited the stove factory together with design students from Makerere. What struck us the most was that everything was done by hand, from the shaping of the metal plate cover to the inner part of clay. We got to see the process of making the stoves from beginning to end, which gave us a better understanding of the complexity of aspects that would have to be taken into account if re-designing a stove like this. From the side of the owner, two things needed especially to be improved. The weight was too high, and some parts were moving out of position during transport. We were going to work on this with the Makerere students in the end of the week.



NIAAD

In contrast to Makerere, NIAAD was a small and specialized school for art and design. Situated in Entebbe, this place had beautiful surroundings. The students were very talented in the classic arts, like drawing, painting, weaving etc. Some of the graphic design students presented their work about teenage pregnancy and the role of a traditional game. It was interesting to see how they focused on challenges regarding young people, while we in Norway design for the growing group of elderlies.

We continued with a workshop in groups together with some of the students where we made a SWOT analysis of the school and came up with a vision based on its strongest qualities. A topic for discussion was the future strategy of the school. Should it try to expand and embrace new areas such as product design and dance, or should it stay specialized and focus on its existing experience in classical art and advantage of closeness to the students? Most of us students from NTNU would tend to claim that staying specialized is a good idea.



Workshop at Makarere

The teacher in design at Makarere was interested in knowing how we worked to generate ideas. Based on this, we were divided into groups and given the task to develop concepts within the frame of Ugastove. As this was a completely open assignment and a very brief workshop, we faced some challenges. All in all it was a good and useful experience, but we think that some more time to prepare and a longer workshop session would have given all a greater outcome in the end.

As it was spontaneous, it was difficult to know which approaches to use from the start. That made it hard to explain all the phases to the students from Makarere to give them an overview of the process. Even though we didn't know specifically all the steps we were going to do, we (from NTNU) still had a common idea of diverging with many ideas before picking some of them and developing them further. We tried to explain what we were going to do before a new step, but it must still have made the other students unsure about what was happening next. This made them in some cases either stick to their own ideas and a high level of detailing, or trying to include all ideas in one concept, while we wanted to do the opposite.

Another difference was what we were interested in doing. Many of us from NTNU preferred to work on the system around the stoves and focused on originality of what we were working on, compared to the others groups. Most of the students from Makarere were more interested in the physical features of the stove and the detailing. As the time was so short, we would also automatically think that we would like to do something fun and creative, while the other students tended to have a more realistic approach. Also, we (NTNU students) assumed many different things during the session, while the Makarere students had more knowledge about how things are done in their culture.

What worked well, was to make a time schedule, having quick warm-up games, and using personas as a means of argumentation for what the end user would like from Ugastove. Also the setting was nice and informal, and we felt very welcome. Finally some of the presentations initiated some discussions, which was good.

It was nice to have the opportunity to have dinner all together in the evening, so that we could have the chance to meet each other in another context.



Thank you so much for hosting us in Uganda!

Makarere University
Design Without Borders
NIAAD
Ugastove
Brita Fladvad Nielsen