

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

Torino, 10th - 11th - 12th July 2008

Organised by Co-ordination of Italian Design Research Doctorates with
Conference of Italian Design Faculty Deans and Programme Heads.

In the framework of WORLD DESIGN CAPITAL TORINO 2008 | © ICSID
An ICSID initiative of the IDA.

Amollo Lorraine [amollol@yahoo.com]

Member of Design Kenya, Lecturer at Design Department, Maseno University, Kenya

AN INDUSTRIAL SOLUTION FOR KENYA AND AFRICA

Using home-grown ideas to create sustainable livelihoods

THE INDUSTRIAL SITUATION

The Western concept of industrialisation has met with little success in most African countries. The poor performance of industries has led to the emergence of micro and small scale industries. In Kenya, these micro and small scale industries have been commonly referred to as 'Jua Kali' industries. The term 'Jua Kali' is Swahili for 'Hot sun' referring to the open air working conditions of the entrepreneurs. Most Jua Kali industries start off and remain as informal enterprises as their owners often cannot afford the expensive and rigorous process of registering with the relevant Government bodies. This informality means that the Jua kali businesses have found it hard to access business development services or export markets as compared to the formal and larger industries. (King 1995, 24-30). The Jua Kali entrepreneurs as result remain poor and their businesses small and uncompetitive. Though the Government has recognized the potential of the Jua Kali sector as an employment opportunity for many Kenyans, it has failed to create an enabling and sustainable environment for these micro and small industries to grow.

On the other hand, the Government of Kenya has since independence tried its hand at large scale production, an effort at which it has singularly failed. In one of its renewed attempts, it enacted an Act of parliament that saw the setting up of Export processing zones (EPZs) in various parts of the country. The EPZs provided incentives such as 10 year tax withholding, quick project approval and machinery and business inputs among other things. According to the Cover story on *Marketing Africa* of June 2005, though the EPZs have attracted investors to Kenya, they have been blamed for encouraging production of specific export products as well as importation of raw materials, technology and expertise. There are therefore no backward or forward linkages between the EPZ industries and local industries.

The poor transfer of technology as demonstrated by the EPZs in Kenya has been largely blamed for the failure to industrialise in Africa. In other instances, this phenomenon has been described as transfer of inappropriate technology. As a concept, appropriate technology originally involved the application or adaptation of technology to fit a particular context (Jeans 1999, 169-170). The popularisation of the concept is attributed to Eugene Schumacher in the 1960s, who called for the use of modern technology to solve the problems of creating work rather than improve efficiency and increase outputs while displacing workers (Heskett 1980, 10). This focus on efficiency and high productivity is a Western concept of Industrialisation that largely makes use of non-renewable sources of energy and is geared towards catering for the needs and wants of a consumerist society. Africa on the other hand, struggles

Changing the change

Design Visions, Proposals and Tools

An international conference on the role and potential of design research in the transition towards sustainability

to adopt these western technologies, which do not absorb the large labour force that most African countries boast of.

In light of these documented facts on the situation of Industrialisation in Kenya and Africa at large, this paper uses two case studies of Jua Kali enterprises in Nairobi and Kisumu, Kenya to explore their potential to grow into medium sized industries.

In its conclusion the paper proposes:

- Provision for accessible and affordable licensing and registration for Jua kali entrepreneurs by the Government
- Research and development programmes by Local universities and other research institutions to improve Jua Kali production and entrepreneurship.
- Use of Indigenous Knowledge systems to design products for local use and export
- The use of recycled materials and renewable sources of energy as sustainable means for Jua Kali production.

Improving the Jua Kali in Kenya will help provide meaningful employment for a large population, create sustainable livelihoods and help to break the cycle of poverty in Kenya.

References

- Bokea, Crispin and Mullei, Andrew. Eds. 1999. *Micro and Small Enterprises in Kenya, Agenda for Improving the policy environment*. Kenya: International centre for Economic Growth.
- Cover story. 2005. Export Processing Zones. *Marketing Africa, Exploring New Frontiers*, June 1st.
- Fiksel, Joseph. McDaniel, Jeff. Spitzley, David. 1998. Measuring Product Sustainability. *The Journal of Sustainable Product Design*, Issue 6. July 1998. <http://www.cfsd.org.uk/journal/archive/index.html> (Accessed on January 30th 2008)
- Harper, Malcolm. 1984. *Small Business in the Third World*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- Harper, Malcolm and Ramachandran, Kavil. 1984. *Small Businesses Promotion, Case studies from Developing Countries*. London: Intermediate Technology publications.
- Heskett, John. 1980. *Industrial design*. London: Thames & Hudson.
- Jeans, Andy. 1999. Technology, NGOs & Small enterprise: Securing livelihoods through technical change. In *Enterprise in Africa, Between Poverty & growth*. Eds. King, Kenneth. and McGrath, Simon. 169-178. London: Intermediate technology publications.
- Kenya, Government of. *Small Enterprise and Jua Kali Development in Kenya*. Sessional Paper Number 2 of 1992.
- King, Kenneth. 1995. *Jua Kali Kenya, Change and development in a changing economy*. Nairobi: EAEP.
- Manzini, Ezio. 2005. A cosmopolitan Localism, Prospects for a sustainable local development and the possible role for design. <http://www.dis.polimi.it/manzini-papers/05.02.01-Cosmopolitan-localism.doc>. (Accessed on February 10th 2008).
- Millard, Edward. 1992. *Export marketing for a Small Handicraft Business*. Oxford: Intermediate technical publication, Oxfam.