

OPEN INNOVATION FOR DEVELOPMENT: AN EDUCATIVE AND ENTREPRENEURIAL PROJECT BETWEEN SHENZHEN AND ADDIS ABABA

Tech4Dev, 27-29 June 2018

Monique Bolli

monique.bolli@epfl.ch

Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale Lausanne (EPFL), Switzerland

ABSTRACT

Creative and innovative communities, hubs, clusters and industries are supporting and fostering exchange and innovation. China is often perceived as a model for innovation and economic development, countries from the Global South use China as a role model to learn and cooperate in order to scale up local know-how. In this context, maker and entrepreneurial communities interested in open innovation and development connect and create new ties to implement their vision. An educative project being launched between communities of Addis Ababa and Shenzhen illustrates the mutual benefactory interest and the willingness to exchange on different levels.

from made in China to designed in China to designed in Ethiopia and made in China to designed in Ethiopia and made in Ethiopia?

PROJECT

The initiative started by Nael, a former intern of the Shenzhen Open Innovation Lab **SZOIL** (a space and platform for worldwide makers to communicate and cooperate in Shenzhen, China) and **iCog Labs** (a team of visionary software professionals in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia) has caught the attention of the Ministry of Science and Technology (**MoST**) of Ethiopia.

The project "Designed in Ethiopia" currently takes place in Ethiopia (June 2018) with the support of a team of experts working in the innovation ecosystem of Shenzhen.

Empowering youth, creating connections, producing a product locally needed and on the long run developing the Ethiopian industry, this innovative project links individuals, students, communities, universities, AI-oriented businesses and governmental entities.



Nael, an Ethiopian student in China, becomes an intern at SZOIL in 2016 and starts developing an idea to link, learn and share between Shenzhen and Addis.

Fall 2017, the Belt and Road Summit International Maker Cooperation takes place in Shenzhen where a member of iCog Labs takes part. (screenshots: medium.com)

Spring 2018, the Ministry of Science and Technology (MoST) of Ethiopia calls for participation to the "Designed in Ethiopia" project targeting university students. 1200 projects have been submitted across the country, 100 teams are presenting them in Addis Ababa and 10 will have the opportunity to develop them with Shenzhen. (screenshot: http://www.most.gov.et/dieth)

June 2018, members of SZOIL and the MoST share news of the ongoing trainings on social media. (screenshots: wechat and facebook)

The 10 winning teams of the competition will be sent to Shenzhen for prototyping their projects, learning from Shenzhen and possibly support the relocation of the production to Ethiopia.

CONNECTING THE DOTS

Through research, connections and building knowledge and exchanges with, in and between the existing communities, it has been possible to learn from and support a project starting from motivated individuals to create a new dynamic and hopefully participate to the development of an empowering ecosystem of educative and entrepreneurial projects through open innovation for people in countries such as Ethiopia.

with a special thanks to EPFL / SZOIL / Nael / iCog Labs & MoST

