Season 2 Episode 2: Context Driven Learning Lab Processes

Featuring a discussion between FRACTAL's program coordinator, Alice McClure, and three FRACTAL researchers:

1. Dr. Anna Taylor, researcher at the University of Cape Town focusing on climate adaptation in cities, particularly developing a process-based understanding of how urban climate adaptation happens, is organized and governed.
2. Dr. Sukaina Bhurwani, an interdisciplinary senior researcher with a background in social anthropology and computer science. She co-leads the Stockholm Environment Institute's Climate Services Initiative and weADAPT platform.
3. Dr. Gilbert Siame is a senior researcher who heads the Centre for Urban Research at the University of Zambia. He was integrally involved in the design of transdisciplinary research in Lusaka and across FRACTAL more generally.

Anna, Sukaina and Gilbert share their wealth of experiences from the learning lab approach and FRACTAL processes. They explain the concept of the labs and how these were engendered as collaborative spaces where stakeholders could come together, identify, define and co-explore burning issues as well as create solutions to the complex issues.

Highlights around Learning Labs:

- Convened multiple stakeholders and experiences to increase collaboration and problem solving of complex climate risks in cities.
- Innovating and making commitments to think about and act towards addressing climate change and building urban resilience.
- Quality venues and facilitation skills created an inclusive and safe environment to break down power dynamics, the barriers between disciplines and comfort zones, where people could bring themselves and not their professional-selves to the table.
- Evolved as emergent, iterative, context-driven processes where interesting, innovative and interactive methodological approaches (games, role-plays, social events) supported different outcomes in each city.
- Were all about unearthing light bulb moments and enabling researchers to practice humble science, ask better questions, and appreciate tacit versus surface knowledge.
- Helped build capacity by assisting researchers to take deep dives and unpack issues by questioning their own assumptions and actively listening.
- Produced intangible outputs and outcomes such as building trust, confidence and relationships, breaking institutional and discipline barriers.

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To learn more about the concept of learning labs (LLs), here are some further resources:

- Future Climate for Africa (FCFA) podcast # 3 | Two FRACTAL Researchers from Lusaka, Wilma Nchito and Brenda Mwalukanga, were interviewed on the subject of the LLs and their role in their city.
- START ProSus Magazine Issue # 3, 2019 | Article with FRACTAL researcher, Dr Gilbert Siame. The article discusses the important commitment from stakeholders to address urban flooding in Lusaka that's been created through engagements such as the LLs.
- Impact Story #1: FRACTAL Learning Lab Approach | A research brief summarising FRACTAL's co-production approach FRACTAL. It considers the lessons learned from the LL process. This Impact Story is part of a series that explores different aspects of FRACTAL's work.
- Chapter 3, Climate Risk in Africa | Discusses the process of co-production in general, which it describes as blurring the boundary between producers and users of information. The authors explore three case studies, including FRACTAL's LLs.
- SEI article + video | This video focuses on FRACTAL's experiences in Windhoek where FRACTAL held four LLs as well as numerous other transdisciplinary engagements, applying both qualitative and quantitative approaches and emphasising "collaborative problem solving".
- Dialogue for decision-making: unpacking the 'City Learning Lab' approach and Inclusive, participatory and reflexive learning processes for climate resilience: key lessons from FRACTAL | Two FRACTAL working papers that focus on the LL approach and what using the approach taught the research team.
- Papers on learning lab processes | Several academic papers from the FRACTAL research consortium that focus on transdisciplinary elements of FRACTAL's work and include discussions around the LLs. The full list of FRACTAL publications is available on their website here.
- https://futureclimateafrica.org/news/fractal-hosts-learning-lab/ | A write up of the very first LL to be hosted by FRACTAL.
- WISER-FCFA co-production manual case #9 | A four page summary, which neatly unpacks the Learning Lab approach that FRACTAL took.

Links: ACDI   SEI   UNZA   FRACTAL   FCFA   WeAdapt   START