

Africa's first Design Thinking Conference

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The Hasso Plattner d-school Afrika at UCT will be hosting the prestigious [d.confestival](#), the first design thinking event of its kind in Africa, and will open the doors to its new home on the university's middle campus - an architectural marvel and first of its kind in Africa.



The Hasso Plattner d-school Afrika at the University of Cape Town, together with the Global Design Thinking Alliance (GDTA), will be hosting the third d.confestival, previously hosted in Potsdam, Germany in 2012 and 2017.

This year's event will run from 12 to 14 October. As Africa's first Global Design Thinking event, this three-day conference-meets-festival will take place at the HPI d-school Afrika at the University of Cape Town. The hybrid event will be hosted live and will also be accessible to virtual participants.

Themed “*Design thinking matters now*” the d.confestival will bring together international innovators, design thinkers and change makers from business, government, education and the social development sector to exchange ideas, share best practices, and map the future direction for design thinking practice to deliver value and impact in our world. Keynote speakers include German entrepreneur, philanthropist, and founder of the Hasso Plattner Institute (HPI) Prof Hasso Plattner, Stanford d-School co-founder and executive director, George Kembel, and UCT vice-chancellor, Professor Mamokgethi Phakeng.

Director of the Hasso Plattner d-school Afrika at UCT, Richard Perez says that the d.confestival is an incredible opportunity for us to connect the global design thinking community, who are curious about design thinking as a human centred framework and mindset to solving complex problems. “To officially put us on the global stage as leaders in Design-led Thinking on the continent. Africa is a continent brimming with creative potential and this, together with design thinking’s human-centred problem-solving approach, has the potential to birth powerful responses to the challenges we face not just on the continent but around the world”

UCT’s vice-chancellor Prof Mamokgethi Phakeng says that since the d-school was established at the university “we’ve seen how design-led thinking can unleash graduates’ potential to lead in diverse contexts, work across disciplines and tap into their creativity to respond creatively to real-world challenges.”

People attending the unique event, which will merge the rigour of an academic conference with a festive interactive experience, will also be able to experience the brand new Hasso Plattner d-school Afrika building, situated on UCT’s middle campus.

An architectural focal point, the building has been designed in such a way as to allow people, who may not be entering the building as students, to interact with the building, pass underneath its big, curving glass roof, and feel the energy and passion of what is happening inside and around it.

Designed by KMH Architects in Cape Town, the project began in 2017 and had to meet strict sustainability requirements from the beginning to fit in with the university’s sustainability goals. A major target was for the building to be granted a 6-star Green Star rating from the Green Building Council of South Africa.

To be certified and become the greenest building in academia on the continent, the d-school will have to prove sustainable across nine categories, from adopting environmental management principles during construction, to encouraging the use of alternative transport and improving surrounding socio-economic conditions.

“So, it’s an awesome building,” says Perez. “But it has an awesome purpose and responsibility too. From the start, we

imagined a building that would become a birthplace for the teaching and learning of the mindset that leads to the bright ideas needed to secure a better future for Africa and the world.”

Positioned as the centre of excellence in design-led thinking in Africa, the d-school has empowered people with design thinking capabilities since 2015, enabling them to create human-centred solutions to problems faced by an ever-changing world. UCT is one of just three institutions in the world to have a d-school, the other two being Stanford University in the United States and Potsdam University in Germany. Together with 22 other educational institutions that teach, research and further develop the methods and mindsets of design thinking, the d-School is a member of the Global Design Thinking Alliance, established in 2017.

Visit the [d-School Afrika](#) website to find out more about the d.confestival.

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The Hasso Plattner d-school Afrika at the University of Cape Town are the leaders of excellence in design-led thinking on the continent. We offer courses in design-led thinking with a focus on solving real-world problems for students, professionals and organisations.

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