

Internship for the project **Indigenous Climate Observatories:** *Creating engaging and interactive ways to communicate the project*

Agnes Elfvingsson, Interaction Design Bachelor student
School of Arts and Communication (K3), Malmö University

Internship under the supervision of **Lizette Reitsma**, Associate Senior Lecturer
School of Arts and Communication (K3), Malmö University

The Indigenous Climate Observatories – Local Knowledge for Local Action research project, which has been running for the past two years, is an interdisciplinary research collaboration between Malmö University researcher Lizette Reitsma and other partners*.

The project acknowledges that Indigenous communities and Indigenous knowledge are underrepresented in climate research and policymaking. Using a participatory design approach that emphasizes mutual learning, it explores the question: *How can we collaborate to better understand local climate change?* The project partners with Indigenous communities in Borneo, Malaysia (focused on connections to the river / forest), Eswatini (focused on biodiversity), and Lesotho (focused on weather patterns). Seven climate observatories have been co-developed with researchers, institutions, and Indigenous communities [1].

My task

Under the supervision of MAU researcher Lizette Reitsma, one of my tasks were to develop a platform for communicating project outcomes and finding interactive ways for stakeholders to contribute. The brief was as follows:

- Collaborate with project researchers to develop a website for the project.
- Explore and shape a potential Design Process Model for communicating the design process in the project.

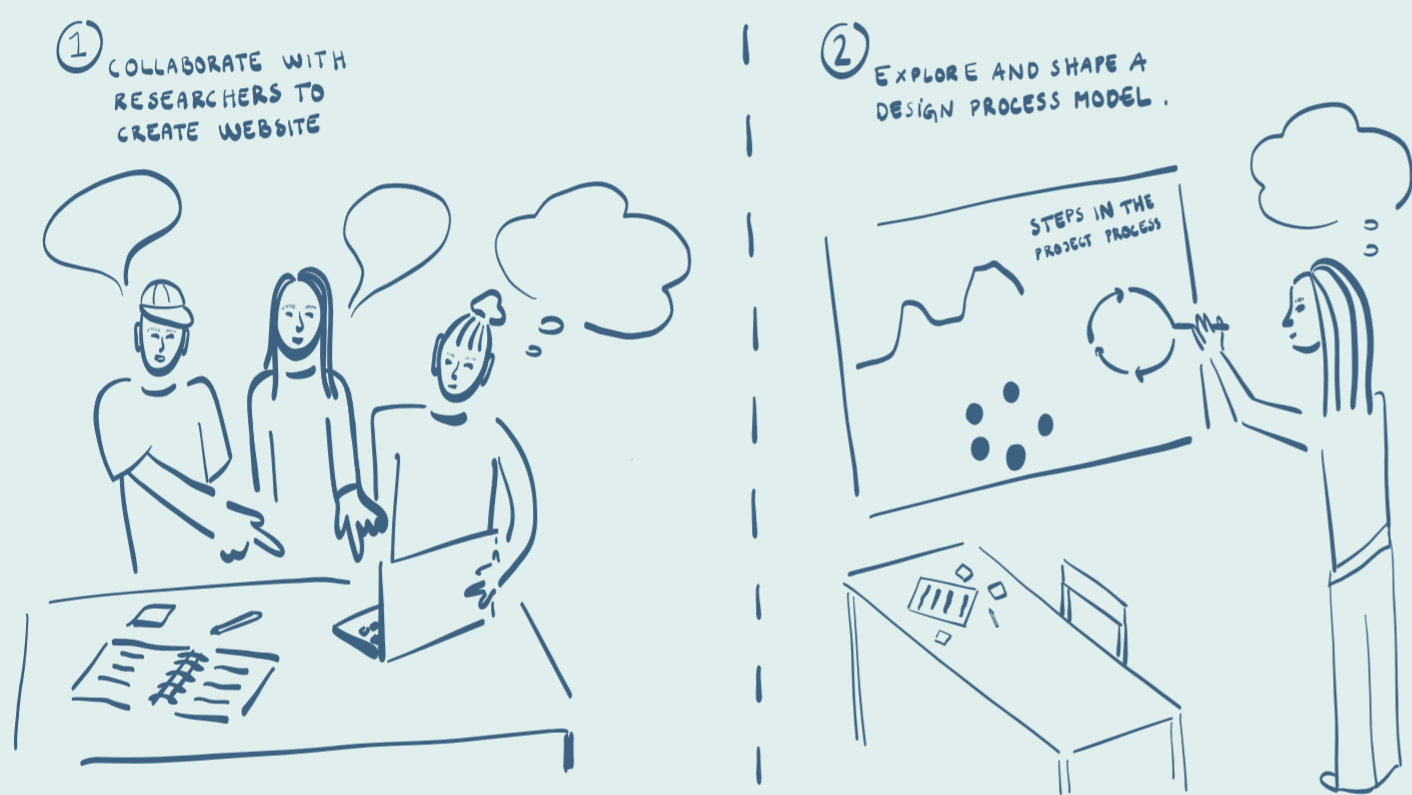


Figure 1: Illustration of the two parts of the task.

Process and Methods

The methodology for the two parts of the task aligned with the principles of participatory design, user-centered design, or a combination of both.

The Website

- Informal meetings with project researchers throughout the design process.
- Continuous iteration of design based on researcher input.

The Design Process Model

- The creation of a prototype of a toolbox showcasing and explaining the Design Process Model.
- Prototype testing (7 testing sessions).
- Iteration based on testing insights.

HIGHLIGHTS

Desktop research and an extensive literature study were needed throughout the task to understand the research field and related research for grounding of the design and methodological choices.

Apart from creating the content, the task required developing my graphical design and GUI skills by making the graphical profile for all two projects within the task, with all the illustrations, the logotype, and the general design.

The main learnings from the task are co-creating design proposals, prototype testing, ideation, and interpreting a brief from an “employer”.

Project outcome

The website serves as a platform for project updates, raising awareness, and attracting interest. One site feature is a printable Toolbox, which showcases the design process model created for the project. The Toolbox not only explains the design process but also serves as a guide for structuring the creation of a climate observatory or reflecting on the process for those who have already built one. These two elements—the website and Toolbox—inform about the project while encouraging community and individual action.

Project website: Showcasing the Research Project and Raising Awareness

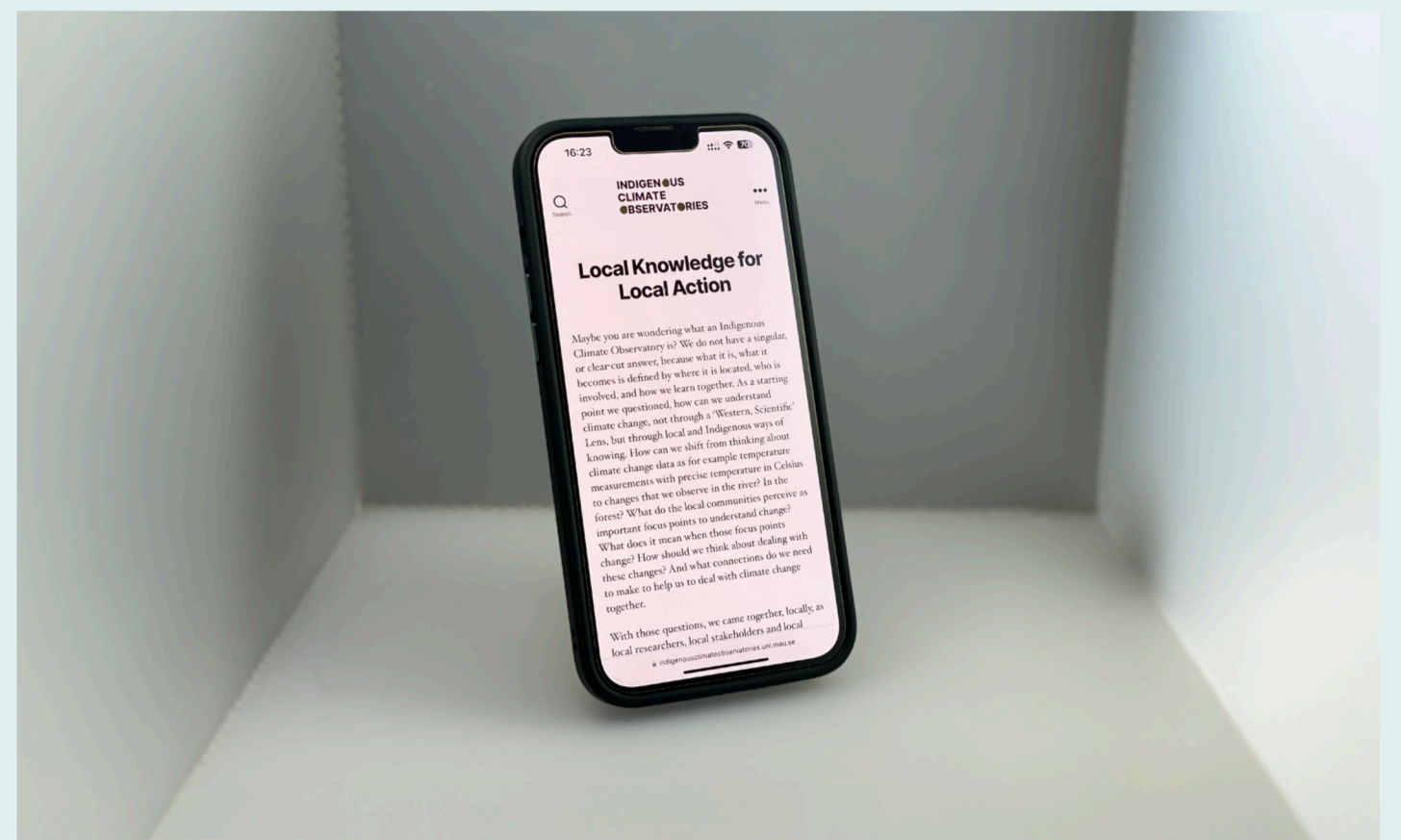


Figure 2: A website for the project developed under the MAU domain with the requirement to be built in WordPress.

Key features included ensuring ease of use for future updates by creating an instruction manual for the researchers and maintaining consistent, accessible content. An important aspect was facilitating two-way communication and user engagement, giving the website an interactive tone rather than a static one. Also, seamless navigation between this site and the sites of researchers' universities was ensured.

Design Process Toolbox: Communicating the Project's Process and Encouraging Action



Figure 3: The Toolbox for the project's design process.

The design process model was requested to illustrate circularity, leading to a spiral seashell structure with five process steps. The layout, content, and illustrations in the Toolbox were iterated and refined through prototype testing for clarity of purpose and for usability.

The Toolbox consists of three parts. The manual for how to use the toolbox, a separate print containing information about the research project and extra illustrations of the steps to cut out and use, and a larger printed shell (see Figure 3 for all the three parts).

* The Eswatini Institute for Research in Traditional Medicine Medicinal and Indigenous Food Plants, the National University of Lesotho, the Lesotho Meteorological Services, and University of Technology Sarawak.

[1] Malmö University. (n.d.) Indigenous Climate Observatories: Local Knowledge for Local Action. <https://mau.se/en/research/projects/indigenous-climate-observatories-local-knowledge-for-local-action/>