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# Editorial

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The perennial desire to drive home the imperative of design for social good is reinforced by the first article in this edition of the journal. In the article *The VHEMBE filter: a product for rural South Africa*, authors Angus Campbell and Martin Bolton document a South African design project that focused on an intervention aimed at social upliftment and the impact the outcome could offer a very large segment of society through improved water quality. The article illustrates how a user-centred approach was employed to improve an existing product, the *Filtron* water filter, to ensure that it was better suited to users living in rural settings. The development of the resulting design, named the *Vhembe* water filter, formed part of a larger collaborative research project that aimed to investigate whether an intervention that improves water quality would measurably improve the health of people using the intervention. Research data was based on field work conducted in approximately 25 rural villages in the Vhembe district of the Limpopo Province, South Africa.

Johann van der Merwe argues for the renewal of design. In his article *Cybernetic conversations: designing ourselves towards discovery*, he suggests that systemic thinking is something that had a place in design and that this place was somehow lost. He contends that by cultivating a new outlook designers can rediscover and reinvent a systems mindset through the dynamics of a cybernetic design conversation, which in itself is a notion based on a social systems design structure. Van der Merwe maintains that the process of design is a reciprocal social act of communication, but that designers are entrapped by attempts to gain full control not only of the process but of the outcomes as well. He proposes

the idea of intrinsic control, which in turn, opens the debate as to whether arguments should proceed from, or to, first principles.

In his article *Toward local identity in South African architecture* Christo Vosloo presents three perspectives with the aim of extracting transferable design strategies that can be applied by architects during the process of developing a national architectural identity, even though, he contends, this is a goal that will continuously remain 'in process'. In his view the search for national identity implies that architects should not only consider the specifics of the macro- and micro-locality, but also a variety of factors, including existing knowledge in the form of precedent and theory. The first perspective outlined in the article is the historical precedent of Cape Dutch architecture. The second perspective discussed is the response to globalisation that has resulted in a range of related architectural theory, the most prominent being Critical Regionalism, a theory that has found widespread international acceptance. The third perspective the article deals with is the work of South African architect Gawie Fagan, an acknowledged Critical Regionalist who has interpreted Cape Dutch architecture in a modern idiom. Indicators from the three perspectives are finally synthesised into a set of design guidelines.