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A Case Study of Cultivating Youth Empowerment
Action and reflection with a youth community in Dubai, UAE

Abstract
This paper attempts to reflect upon the framework, process, and outcomes of cultivating youth empowerment by working with the youth community in Dubai. The key question is “How might we understand the relationship between action and reflection in the context of youth empowerment?” Through our organization GYEM (Global Youth Empowerment) we employed relational system mapping to plan and manage youth teams and facilitator trainings. Design thinking provided a framework of learning and action for workshop content development. The system of action and reflection characterized our development process in learning and curating effective content. Our content strived for youth to gain creative confidence, find passion and purpose, and learn tools to implement their ideas to action. We define empowerment as a state in which youth are able to channel the energy within them through their passion onto the community around them. We found that empowerment was a by-product of our participants experiencing the framework of ME = WE. The notion that personal growth depends upon collective advancement and vice versa. Action was manifested through systems-based practical design thinking and real-world action. Reflection occurred through applying systems thinking and design thinking to global issues and exploring possible solutions. This paper seeks to understand youth perspectives on our workshop, youth empowerment, and the empowerment ecosystem by reflecting on GYEM's workshop development and auxiliary activities.

Background
Dubai is an incredible, fast growing city where global youth citizens building a new habitat invite multicultural collision which necessitates a need for new and better understandings, insights, experimentation, and innovation. However, it is a challenge to provide youth a safe space in which to build their self-esteem and discover their passion while breaking down cultural and economical barriers in conjunction with the youth’s home, school, and community. There are 350,000 youth in the UAE, and unemployment rate is 25% (Arab Youth Survey 2014) and as a result time is spent on leisure, media, and retail outlets. Additionally, youth participation in their communities and volunteerism is low and there are few opportunities for them to engage in communally productive and meaningful programs. I pondered the opportunity for youth development in relation to society while teaching my students and simultaneously raising my own children.
Methodology

Questions, Tools, and Relations

A methodology was constructed by combining conceptual framework, empowerment engine, design tools and system thinking. Reflecting on the applicability of workshop tools and expected outcomes, system thinking of content development, operation, facilitator training, and building an empowerment ecosystem was considered. This empathic question of “How might we better understand what youth need?” is a driving force to design and develop the organization, workshop content and delivery. Learning by doing, co-design, gamification, storytelling, and design thinking are core tools for planning and implementation. To build a methodology that facilitates the process, these 4 questions were defined as crucial to this empowerment effort; 1) Empathy: How might we better understand what youth need? 2) Engine: How might we better design empowerment tools and assess the outcomes of workshop? 3) Tools: How might we relate system thinking and design? 4) Suggestion: How might we envision systemic design (ecosystem) for empowerment? This diagram attempts to demonstrate how the empowerment engine is connected to the progressive development of GYEM workshop (tools) and systemic growth of Youth Movement (goal).

Framework

ME (ANA) = WE (NAHNU) is a core concept of transformative empowerment because it includes the individual and the community. Youth are able to channel their energy to create an impact whether positive or negative. They can strengthen their path of self-discovery by connecting their passion to paths of service, which leads to self...
empowerment and contribute to collective effort to positive social change movement. This concept is based on two assumptions in terms of generating transformative power and sustaining symbiotic growth for the empowerment. 1) **The transformative power within youth** is a natural phenomenon. What if the state of a youth’s mind is like plasma? According to Michael Mullio, plasma is a state of matter, a mixture of freely roaming negative and positive charges that require a field to emit light. If empowerment can be visualized as light, then the field can be a workshop or any educational tools, and the charged plasma is a state of the youth’s mind. 2) **A symbiotic organic growth of movement** is a key goal. It was intended that the effort includes vision, languages, and process, was rooted in Arab cultural mentality and value. A national ethos of mutual respect and care of each other manifested in *Nose Kiss*, which is a cultural epitome of relationship between individual growth and social advancement. Because a youth's path to self discovery is imminent, youth efforts and energy could be harnessed to contribute to sustainable social impact.

**Empowerment Engine**
Each workshop activity is designed to have participants experience the following 6 steps of in order to activate their own empowerment process; 1) SEE: Perception and Trust, 2) INTERACT: Empathy, Communication and Attitude, 3) EXPRESS: Confidence, Passion and Purpose, 4) GAIN: Habit, Knowledge, and Tools 5) APPLY: Teamwork and Project Management, 6) CONNECT: Resources, Mentorship and Networks.

**Literature Review**
The study of relations of Design Thinking/Practices (Reflection) and System Thinking/Practices (Action) attempts to understand the symbiotic relationship of action and reflection leading to empowerment, which can be found in various publications and projects. In design discipline, Victor Papanek wisely implied a direct connection of design and system thinking in his book, Design for Real World, "All men are designers. All that we do, almost all the time, is design, for design is basic to all human activity.” In youth empowerment practice, *Generation Waking Up (GenUp)* is an exemplary global campaign with a vision and systemic approach to awaken young people with urgent global challenges and opportunities and to empower them with training and mentoring. Many Design Thinking Tools have been developed and used to assist in innovative projects such as HCD (Human-Centered Design) by IDEO, CAT (Collective Action Toolkit) by Frog, DIY (Development Impact and You) by NESTA, which are available online and tested in GYEM workshops and in a design course at Zayed University. Some collaborative and integrative design practices are projecting a power of relating thinking and practice and providing processes and tools for better practices; 1) academia: Implementing Impact course at SVA, d School, 2) community: OpenIDEO, 3) industry: Models of Impact, HCD, and CAT 4) government: Spark and the great recovery at Design Council.

**GYEM Story**
As a designer, design educator, mother, and new resident of Dubai in 2006, it was challenging without a youth-centered platform to express, experiment, and explore both my students and my children's creativity and aspirations. I questioned how I would guide my

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students and kids through their journey to understand the importance of service. When my daughters and I realized that we both were struggling with lack of awareness and opportunities for youth in high school and university, we asked what if we started doing a small scale youth activity? This was the birth of Global Youth Empowerment Movement (GYEM), the name of movement and a life learning push-pull partnership.

Workshop Evolution

GYEMworkshop (KNOW-DIG-ACT) 2009
The first workshop was designed and developed with the following questions: What engages youth? What tools and processes are needed? How can we deliver them? The answers were for youth, with youth, and by youth. A KNOW-DIG-ACT workshop structure in 2-day workshop facilitated with 23 participants from GCC region through social media and word of mouth. A Framework was built around co-design, role-play, storytelling, act-out, research, problem/solution mapping, brainstorming. We aimed to create an unconventional experience to KNOW what’s happening in the world and DIG deeper with learning from case study, consultative debate, storytelling, and acting out solution. Then we discussed the sustainable solution, ACT for this youth community in Dubai. One outcome was the understanding for the need of a youth space and a service project. We participated in Terry Fox run 2010 by building a trash monster, a participatory art project to bring environmental awareness to the general public at the event.

GYEMworkshop (Self- Society- Service) 2010-2012
We approached the community for their support for a dedicated space. With Dubai Festival City (DFC), a generous sponsor, we launched the Global Youth Empowering Movement (GYEM) and opened a GYEM center. It was a triumphant confidence building story for the youth team to have their voices heard and transform their new space to a bright welcoming community resource and an example of a successful participatory design project. Many people were engaged in and contributed to building the space and hopes with their time, food, paint, and words of encouragement. The workshops and other activities were managed by youth. GYEM seemed welcomed by the community and we continued to use service projects as fuel for growth. Other supportive activities included were Japan night, Santa, Water Bucket, etc. Graffiti Tunnel, Water project, etc. Many individuals and organization from the community supported these projects with their time, paint, food, venues, and words of encouragements.

After losing the center, we reached out to local like-minded organizations such as Thejamjar (community art center), Traffic (gallery), and Wild Peta (restaurant). Knowing the importance of integration among Emirati and expats’ youth communities, we attempted to reach out to Emirati youth conducting a workshop at Zayed University, which taught us that the workshop needs to develop new languages for this specific audience. Though our community projects such as SIKKA ART FAIR to run a meaningful conversation, Vigil night for Japan Tsunami victims, art auction to help out Malawi kids, which brought youth engagement move forward, it was a struggle to be systemic and sustainable without a Non Profit license in Dubai. However, meeting the requirement of having 20 Emirati as board members provided unworkable.

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**GYEMworkshop XYZ: Innovation - Self Discovery - Social Impact - Bootcamp 2014 and 2015**

The second stage was where GYEM moved from accruing status as an NGO to LLC. This move concentrated on getting a business license and on attempting to gain sponsors for GYEM to establish a new center. But we had to learn to be creative to offer mobile workshops in the city. The biz structure is only running sponsored workshops usually partnering up with schools for their students to attend. We finally registered as profit company; GYEM LLC with a new name, Global Youth Empowerment. The government didn’t allow us to have ‘MOVEMENT’ in the name. Biz development and social innovation driven content development was on its way and attracted wider audience to this movement. GYEM Bootcamp on August 2-20, 2015 was delivered by collaborating with Khalifa Fund & Ministry of Culture. It's a summer entrepreneurship bootcamp under the theme of HEALTHY EATING at the youth center in Sharjah, Ajman, and Ras Al Khaimah. The camp has already warmed up with 22 brilliant and passionate Emirati youth facilitators and over 100 youth participants (age of 12-20). **Impact**: Multi-location community-based learning and explorations were well received. Using a social impact canvas was also useful for their rapid prototyping and pitching. **Successes**: Integrated with community with hand-on onsite activity to practice their empathy and experience rapid prototyping. **Needs**: LAW (life after workshop) was not implemented. Hotspot was the only community supported activity.

**Facilitator guide and training**

As facilitation requires empathic systemic thinking with sufficient knowledge and art of communication skills, well-trained and prepared facilitators are a key to success of workshop. It was critical to have facilitators ready to drive the empowerment process. A facilitator training was structured in 4 days with the following key conceptual goals:

- **Roles and responsibilities along with capacity to interact with participants and deliver content efficiently.**
- **Use of mapping:** understanding the workshop content and logistics throughout 4 days facilitator training (Me + Me/Team + Content + Delivery).
- **Culture of Empowerment:** Describe how we aim to have our facilitators run the sessions & control energy and how they engage in unconventional, dynamic, learning, learning-by-doing, role play, storytelling, and rapid prototyping based on design thinking & system thinking.
- **Understanding transformative empowerment:** making a Mobius Strip experiencing a relationship between front (ME) and back (WE) by flipping one side and connecting to the other. It makes them question what made the action of flip and connect? What is that the role of workshop? Flipping through self discovery and learning tools and connecting through prototyping ideas into action, which is not the end but just a beginning of empowerment.
Workshop Activities, Design Thinking and Other Elements

Design Thinking and Workshop Activities: Design thinking was used in mapping context, user profile, scenarios, problems and solutions. Some characteristics of activity tools are unconventional, playful, group dynamics, non-judgmental, and hands-on. Each activity is designed to have participants activate their own empowerment engine relating action and reflection such as self discovery (self-limited/self-empowered), problem finding (self/society), persona mapping (empathy map: users/their perceptions), impact canvas mapping (impact canvas: idea/action), pitch (your idea/audience). For example, Empathize: Empathy Map. Define: Need Statement. Ideate: Brainstorming and Building Impact Canvas. Prototype: Build Prototype. Discuss: Story and Pitch.

Individual/collective growth of the team grew playing while new requirements opened up many roles such as entrepreneurs developing the vision and execution, delivering workshop, and other extra service projects and managing space, funding, marketing, and delivery of programs. In retrospect, the entire process can be seen in design thinking steps; 1. Empathize with Youth: Understanding youth who has relations between self-others-community-world 2. Define an Empowerment: how youth see the empowerment and movement through action and reflection including survey and interviews learning from their own journey, insights, and suggestions. 3. Ideate Youth Movement: A collective advancement of realizing their own potentials. 4. Prototype: building operation, workshop development and delivery was prototyped, tested, and refined by feedback. 5. Discussion: Further consultation among

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stakeholders need to build an ecosystem of transformative empowerment, which takes a village.

GYEM Impact

Youth Profiles
To understand the impact of GYEM, it was decided to gauge the perceptions and opinions of different youth who were involved with the GYEM workshops as participants, facilitators or both. A generic purposive sampling was chosen so that the information gained could be relevant to the subject of youth empowerment but also as feedback for the GYEM workshops (Bryman, 2012). The youth chosen were treated as Key Informants because they were formerly involved in the GYEM workshops. Additionally, their backgrounds in social engagement before the workshop and their vision post-workshop were distinct. Therefore, the impact of the GYEM workshop can be compared between very diverse youth, thus, allowing insight from multi-perspectives. Subsequently, they were classified by their “Motivation” and “Starting Point” before the GYEM workshop and their “Vision Now” post-workshop (See Table 1). The aim was to gain insight with questions; how they perceive empowerment, the GYEM workshop, and the current youth empowerment ecosystem in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and what is needed to create a successful ecosystem. Their views, meanings, values, and wishes for next steps were documented.

Table 1. Youth Profile.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Gender/Age</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Countries Resided In</th>
<th>Bachelor Degree</th>
<th>Motivation</th>
<th>Starting Point Before the GYEM Workshop</th>
<th>Vision Now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Afaf Khaled</td>
<td>F/21</td>
<td>Syrian/Syrian</td>
<td>UAE/Syria</td>
<td>International Development</td>
<td>Highly Motivated</td>
<td>Involved in community</td>
<td>Curriculum Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yousif</td>
<td>M/23</td>
<td>Iraqi</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>International Politics</td>
<td>Unmotivated</td>
<td>Uninvolved in community</td>
<td>Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ibrahim</td>
<td>M/21</td>
<td>Emirati</td>
<td>Bahrain/KSA/UA</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Highly Motivated</td>
<td>Involved in community</td>
<td>Biz Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farida</td>
<td>F/23</td>
<td>Emirati</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>Integrated Strategic Communication</td>
<td>Motivated</td>
<td>Involved in community</td>
<td>Studying International Relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suzan Shedid</td>
<td>F/22</td>
<td>Egyptian</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>Development &amp; International Studies</td>
<td>Highly Motivated</td>
<td>Uninvolved in community</td>
<td>Consultant Blogger Writer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JC</td>
<td>M/21</td>
<td>Filipino</td>
<td>Philippines/UAE</td>
<td>Film Production</td>
<td>Unmotivated</td>
<td>Uninvolved in community</td>
<td>Filmmaker</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicole Antoinette</td>
<td>F/20</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>UAE</td>
<td>Theatre Study</td>
<td>Unmotivated</td>
<td>Uninvolved in community</td>
<td>Studying Drama and Film</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The Key Informants worked on an initial survey consisting of 23 long-answer qualitative questions and 10 quantitative scale questions. Data from answers were collected. The data helped to gauge their emotions related to their previous answer and how intense they saw certain impact etc. Afterwards, follow up interviews were conducted for deeper

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understanding of survey responses. The interview guides were qualitative and semi-structured, which allowed for them to gauge their opinions with the least amount of influence from the interviewer’s perspectives (Bryman, 2012). This resulted in useful input because they were able to share personal stories. The content of the survey and the interview are: 1) personal background, 2) view of empowerment, 3) current youth empowerment status in the UAE, 4) opinion of the GYEM workshop and its impact, 5) what would take to build a successful youth empowerment ecosystem. The interviews were analyzed in reflective and inductive way and the thematic analysis aimed to deeply understand each Key Informant’s context and perceptions (Bryman, 2012) via correlational analysis.

**Key Findings**
A diverse set of answers were gathered; harmful habits/addictions, positive, negative and passive mind-sets, missing role models, seeking cool factors/trends/peer pressure, yet checking on values on responsibilities, and feeling respected by society. Discussing “UAE Youth Empowerment Ecosystem” and “GYEM Workshop” helped in assessing the current situation GYEM is operating in and how successful the GYEM workshop was. Further delving into “Empowerment” and “Youth Empowerment Ecosystem” helped gain knowledge as to how different youth see the concept, how their personal experiences taught them, what they see is missing, and how they would tailor their own “perfect” ecosystem. Below tables captures their opinion, our understanding of their opinions, and collective definition. Synthesizing this information suggests what youth are going through and what possibly needs to be done to better their situation.

**Empowerment** When discussing this area there was natural overlap between empowerment and how to empower. Across all the Key Informants, there was a common theme of associating empowerment with autonomy, competence, confidence, investing in youth abilities and skills, and the ability to safely co-exist in a common space with other youth to exchange insights and ideas. There was a clear emphasis on the need to support youth via intangible assets such as role models and mentors and tangible assets such as physical spaces and financial support. The most important learning point was that they associated empowerment very strongly with pursuing a passion, a project, or being able to actively make a difference in one’s community.
Table 2. Empowerment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Empowerment</th>
<th>Analysis (Our Understanding)</th>
<th>Collective Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Giving youth the know-how and self-confidence through mentorship, role models, and safe spaces.</td>
<td>Empowerment is a very personal process. It can be activated when a space/program can offer an opportunity for them to grow and glow with a balanced support mentally and materially.</td>
<td>Empowerment is a state in which youth are able to channel the energy within them through their passion onto the community around them.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Understanding their needs & helping them discover their talents and abilities is important in addition to taking youth seriously. The spaces need to be regularly used and provide material support where they can come and exchange ideas.

Empowerment is a very personal process. It can be activated when a space/program can offer an opportunity for them to grow and glow with a balanced support mentally and materially.

Empowerment is a state in which youth are able to channel the energy within them through their passion onto the community around them.

A need for more youth-centered spaces, and efforts related to youth empowerment tend to be dispersed in the UAE.

Table 3. UAE Youth empowerment ecosystem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>UAE Youth Empowerment Ecosystem (Youth Opinion)</th>
<th>Analysis (Our Understanding)</th>
<th>Collective Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The youth empowerment ecosystem in the UAE can be classified as premature.</td>
<td>Since 2011, the creative community scene has slowly been growing as Dubai tries to become a youth centered city.</td>
<td>The youth empowerment ecosystem in the UAE can be classified as premature.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

There is no clear or cohesive platform that an individual can go to if they wanted to somehow get involved with a community project or look for a mentor. Effort related to youth or youth empowerment seems to be dispersed.
The workshop was described as “Community”, “Shocked”, “Connecting”, “New Perspectives”, “Self Aware”, and “Lifelong Mark”. It was a new exciting learning experience to each of them.

Table 5. GYEM workshop summary.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>GYEM Workshop Summary (Youth Opinion)</th>
<th>Analysis (Our Understanding)</th>
<th>Collective Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is a strong perspective that the workshop is about self discovery, realizing one’s potential,</td>
<td>It is powerful to engage and motivate them, yet the sustaining elements such as learning</td>
<td>A tool for youth to engage in self discovery and creative confidence yet it needs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>empowering, connecting with others, absorbing different perspectives, and soft skills development.</td>
<td>specific skills and socializing activities to build their own learning community are needed.</td>
<td>follow-up support and a consistent platform.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More content about competence regarding how society works, different types of skills and follow up</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sessions &amp; regular meet-ups.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
There was a strong correlation between the Key Informants describing a successful youth empowerment ecosystem and describing what kind of spaces they believe youth need within society. Summarily, they visualized a space where youth can strengthen their skills, exchange ideas and knowledge with their peers, and interact with role models and mentors in regular bases. The incentives discussed for youth to go to such a place where monetary, mandatory incentives (as part of their school requirements), cultural incentives (in line with their national identity), and social incentives (interacting with their like- mind peers and making friends). It might provide intangible assets such as mentor support, skill development, and self expression in addition to tangible assets such as accessibility to the space itself and financial support such as an investor network.

Table 6. Youth empowerment ecosystem

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Youth Empowerment Ecosystem Summary (Youth Opinion)</th>
<th>Analysis (Our Understanding)</th>
<th>Collective Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Such a space would need to be accessible, consistent, and events need to be regularly happening where it is safe, creative and youth can discover their talents, connect with other youth, and create bonds. The way this program or space is communicated with youth needs to “speak their language”. Which means they need to be able to associate with it, with the role models that are there, and be interested in what is happening. Therefore, it should be aligned with their mind-set, values, and priorities while being communicated through the right channels.</td>
<td>They want the best systemic support from the surrounding society to continue their path of service and engagement with strong sense of belonging, ownership, and hope.</td>
<td>Systemic support from society that invites youth to grow and continue their engagement with a strong sense of belonging, ownership, and vision.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Discussion
The findings suggest that there is a strong need for a space existing solely for youth, yet is well integrated into the society surrounding it wherein they gain skills and experiences outside their schooling. An interesting note was that youth who started off as “unmotivated” would fixate on the need for the space to be safe and creative and others who started off as “motivated” or “highly motivated” would branch out into discussing how the surrounding society would need to systematically support this. The most important finding was that the workshop was a very useful experience but in order for impact to be sustainable, follow-up mechanisms compulsory along with mentorship and regular meet-up sessions. The suggestive final outcomes are youth having sense of identity, belonging, empowerment along with creative confidence, sufficient knowledge and skills, proper mentorship, and faith in humanity. Finally, an ecosystem is proposed through self-discovery of finding passion and creative confidence, involving self, family, friends, activities, learning, mentorship, institution, industry, government support, city communities, and global communities. 

Summarily, empowerment is a process that needs a long-term vision where a space or a

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program takes on the shape of a community that offers youth intangible and tangible support in the shape of exchanging ideas, self expression, guidance from mentors and role models, skills development, and easier access to investor networks to support youth-run ideas.

**Mapping Transformative Empowerment**

A methodology, workshop content, delivery, operation structure and community engagement of GYEM expanded organically starting from home to run a bootcamp at youth centers in 3 cities reaching out to youth. The need remains for consistent and continuous programs for youth, complementing activities and events, follow-up interaction after the workshop, and interactive relationships with relevant networks in order to really facilitate a wholesome “ecosystem” for youth empowerment. This includes being able to reach out to parents, schools, and other places that make up core parts of the youth’s world. Systemic support from society that invites youth to grow and continue their engagement with a strong sense of belonging, ownership, and vision.

![Evolution of GYEM](http://systemic-design.net)

**Figure 3. Evolution of GYEM.**

Cultivating empowerment can start by empathizing with youth, defining a process, ideating and envisioning a youth movement, prototyping a series of workshops, engaging in activities, and operations systems, and then interacting with youth. A healthy ecosystem would organically support a transformative empowerment process. However, a sustainable growth model might be required to cultivate the growth. This diagram showcases a scenario of
building an ecosystem using a GYEM story. A workshop or any empowerment tool is a starting point. An introduction to workshop (Info Session) was either through institution, public announcement, social media presence, and/or word of mouth in personal network. During workshops, participants are exposed to new knowledge and challenges by a supportive facilitator team as finding like minded new friends. After a workshop is completed, LAW (Life After Workshop) plays a major role to support personal and their project implementation. For example, an unmotivated youth completed a workshop with an opportunity to discover his/her creative confidence, passion and purpose, and learn design tools to understand needs, develop an idea, build a prototype, get feedback, and implement their project. Once they experienced the workshop, then they can attempt to convert their ideas into action. Simultaneously mentorship, focus group, skill building sessions and community engagement is highly recommended through service project and meaningful conversations. They as a team learn how to manage project along with research, development, pitch, and implementation also acquire leadership and entrepreneurial skills. Without an ecosystem of community support, a workshop is just a spark which might die out easily without an opportunity to fulfil one’s passion and contribute to society. An organic growth of local community entails activities like volunteer/service projects, where youth are respected and their initiatives are encouraged.

Figure 4. Youth Empowerment Ecosystem.

Active engagement can be understood within 3 aspects; personal reflection, family
support, and other community support. When it reaches a transformation point of ME=WE, it seems that each individual youth finds their own path of service through their passion as if a magical empowered entity coming out of a Mobius strip shown at the top right corner of the diagram. As youth experience empowerment tools, regardless of their motivation, they tend to get involved in contributing to the growth of a system.

Let’s envision a growth of an ecosystem possibly in multi-locations in a city: 1) Workshop and project launch as multiple clusters led by trained facilitators. 2) Project development and implementation by selected team(s) with supportive activities and mentorship. 3) Pitch their ideas and outcomes to jury, get direct support, and share experience with other youth to expand their own clusters. 4) Implementation continues in local and global community. 5) Publication/Exhibition/Youth Festival to celebrate and learn from each other. This model might bring systemic growth of youth empowerment to create a systemic social, positive impact in the community.

Conclusion

**Figure 5. Action and Reflection Relations Towards Empowerment.**

**Action and Reflection Relations:** As youth’s relationship with a world around them is unpredictable, a need toward building a better society is inevitable. As *system thinking and practice* assist to recognize the relationship between self and society, youth can explore to discover their identity, passion, purpose, and relationships with their community, whereas *design thinking and practice* helps to enhance a collaborative and iterative process of finding.
needs and prototyping solutions, and to test and implement. These two processes are interwoven as ‘reflection’ on system thinking and design thinking, and ‘action’ on system and design practice as to the GYEM workshop activities and operation of which the main goal was to spark a transformative empowerment within. It has been a learning journey with family and community together building this initiative; a locally started effort with expat community to expand to Emirati youth community which contributed to building a global citizenship based within contemporary urban place. With this case study, building a support system for youth empowerment might be closer to realization. As UAE strives to become a global leader of innovation and entrepreneurship and Dubai preparing EXPO2020, opportunities for youth to empower themselves and grow their unique contribution through local wisdom are greater. Indeed, youth with their joyful and radiant spirit as global citizens can bring unity and hope for the future through action and reflection.

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