

JAYDON FARAO

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PROFESSIONAL SUMMARY

PhD candidate and UX researcher with cross-disciplinary background bridging mechatronics engineering, health innovation, and human-centered design. Expert in community-based co-design and qualitative methodology with 5+ years conducting multi-site ethnographic studies across South Africa. Published researcher with proven track record leading international collaborations, translating complex user needs into actionable design frameworks, and building trust-based relationships with underserved communities. Specializes in ethical research practices, cross-cultural facilitation, and designing inclusive technologies for diverse populations.

CORE COMPETENCIES

Research: Qualitative interviewing • Usability testing • Co-design methodology • Thematic analysis • Ethnographic fieldwork • Story circles • Speculative design

Tools: NVivo • Adobe XD • Figma • Python • Android Studio • Project management

Strategy: Design thinking • High-fidelity prototyping • Cross-cultural facilitation • Participatory design • Community relationship building

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Lead Researcher – Digital Storytelling & Community Engagement

Ocean View Community Project, Cape Town • 2022 – Present

- Designed and facilitated multi-year participatory design research with historically marginalized community shaped by apartheid-era forced removals, managing end-to-end research from recruitment through data synthesis to publication
- Conducted 30+ in-depth semi-structured interviews and 5 co-design workshops with 50+ participants using story circles, speculative design scenarios, cultural probes, and collaborative prototyping methods
- Led research exploring community radio as platform for digital storytelling, resulting in sustained community-led content creation and radio programming beyond research timeline—demonstrating successful community ownership
- Developed relational consent protocols adapted to community governance structures, addressing ethical challenges of iterative engagement, participant autonomy, and culturally-appropriate research practices

Researcher – Digital Maternal & Child Health

Multi-Site Community Digital Health Study, Limpopo, Gauteng, & KwaZulu-Natal • 2021 – 2023

- Co-designed digital health interventions across 4 rural and peri-urban communities (Ga-Dikgale, Soweto, Sweetwaters) with distinct linguistic, cultural, and governance contexts involving community health workers, mothers, traditional leaders, and healthcare providers
- Facilitated 8 participatory design workshops using journey mapping, persona development, and co-creation exercises to identify community-specific health information needs and technology adoption barriers
- Conducted cross-site reflexive thematic analysis across 70+ field memos and workshop materials, maintaining transparent analytic audit trail and synthesizing findings into published user-centered framework for mobile health
- Collaborated with interdisciplinary team (computer scientists, public health researchers, community liaisons) working across language barriers (English, Afrikaans, Sepedi, isiXhosa) with professional translators

Researcher – AI & Emerging Technologies

Culturally-Grounded AI Futures Research, Ocean View • 2025

- Designed speculative co-design research exploring community perceptions, hopes, and concerns about AI technologies, using low-fidelity prototyping and deliberative methods to surface community values and design preferences
- Facilitated workshops using speculative scenarios and participatory exercises where participants imagined, critiqued, and designed AI concepts incorporating community language, cultural representation, and local values

- Created culturally-grounded AI concept prototypes based on workshop insights, demonstrating how community input can shape early-stage technology design for inclusivity and cultural relevance
- Analyzed qualitative data revealing community-specific concerns about algorithmic bias, job displacement, data privacy, and representation—insights applicable to ethical AI development and deployment

UX Research Assistant | Wikimedia Research & Qhala Limited | 2021 – 2022

- Executed user research on digital media consumption patterns across African continent, conducting 16 in-depth interviews with content creators and consumers, performing qualitative analysis, and delivering stakeholder presentations with strategic recommendations

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Co-Chair, Global Inclusion & Equity • PDC '24 (Malaysia) & CHI '25 (Japan) Conferences • 2024 – 2025

Leading accessibility initiatives for premier HCI and PD conferences with 1000+ attendees, coordinating global participation programs, and managing SIGCHI Development Fund grants for underrepresented researchers

Co-Organizer, Co-Design Summer School • PDC '24 (Malaysia) & AfriCHI '25 (Egypt) • 2024 – 2025

Designed and facilitated participatory design training programs for PhD students, recruiting expert facilitators, establishing community partnerships, and securing funding for international research capacity building

Teaching & Research Mentorship • University of Cape Town & International • 2019 – 2025

Teaching assistant for Master's IT courses, class facilitator for Health Innovation & Design programs, and visiting instructor at University College London (UK) training research nurses on mobile health applications

EDUCATION

PhD, Computer Science (HCI & Participatory Design) • University of Cape Town • 2020 – 2026

Dissertation: Relational Futures: An Ubuntu-Informed Framework for Community-Centered Co-Design in HCI

MPhil, Health Innovation • University of Cape Town • 2018 – 2019

Dissertation: User-interface design and evaluation in a mobile application for detecting latent tuberculosis

BSc (Honours), Mechatronics Engineering • University of Cape Town • 2014 – 2017

Contemporary Participatory Design Seminar • Aarhus University, Denmark • 2024

HCI for Wellbeing Summer School • University of Bremen, Germany • 2023

SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

- Farao J., Van Riel, S., Till, S., et al. (2026). *I Participate, Therefore We Benefit: Ubuntu as a Relational Compass for Ethical Compensation in HCI*. In *Proceedings of CHI '26*.
- Farao, J., Pillai, A. G., Mthoko, H. et al.. (2025). *"This Journey is Never Truly Over, For the Ball I Carry is Always Moving": Future Obituaries and End-of-Life First Design*. In *Extended Abstracts of the CHI '25*.
- Farao, J., Mthoko, H., & Densmore, M. (2024). *Transformative Narratives: Fostering Ubuntu-Inspired Participatory Design Practices*. PDC '24.
- Till, S., Farao, J., Coleman, T.L., et al. (2022). *Community-based Co-design across Geographic Locations and Cultures: Methodological Lessons from South Africa*. PDC '22. (Co-first author)
- Farao J., Malila B., Conrad N., Mutsvangwa T., Rangaka M.X., Douglas T.S. 2020. *A user-centred design framework for mHealth*. *PLoS ONE* 15(8)

AWARDS & RECOGNITION

- Doctoral Fellow, Hasso-Plattner Institute Research School at UCT (2022–2026) – Competitive fellowship for advanced HCI research
- Best Paper Award, InterSol 2021 Conference – Excellence in ICT for development research
- SIGCHI Development Fund Grant (2025) – Secured funding for AfriCHI co-design summer school
- Winner, FLUX Business Challenge (EduTech) – First place in UCT entrepreneurship competition