

# Call for Abstracts

International Conference

## “Frugal Innovation for Sustainable Global Development”

7 & 8 November 2017 | The Hague | The Netherlands



On 7 and 8 November 2017 the Centre for Frugal Innovation in Africa organizes an international academic conference on Frugal Innovation for Sustainable Global Development. During the conference a broad range of paper presentations and panel sessions will take place wherein Frugal Innovation as a means in the global aspiration to reach the UN Sustainable Development Goals will be discussed. The conference will also be used to further develop ideas for the Frugal Innovation research agenda.

### CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

[info@cfia.nl](mailto:info@cfia.nl)

### *We now invite abstracts for paper contributions*

Since the Economist coined the term Frugal Innovation for the first time at a global level in 2010 (The Economist, 2010) the discussion of what Frugal Innovation entails has been fed from multiple angles. Engineers have presented it as a new and creative means to develop new products, services and systems for those living at the bare minimum at the Bottom of the Pyramid, the well-known concept developed by Prahalad (2002).

Circumventing and breaching technological and material contextual barriers (constraints) is presented as the way to produce affordable products to BoP consumers. Social scientists however have perceived Frugal Innovation in a different way, focusing not so much on the material context and technological aspects but more on social context and daily economic realities that constitute a product's acceptability and influence the suitability of business models.

### DETAILS

- Selected papers will be presented;
- Our ambition is to publish a selection of presented papers in an edited volume or special issue;
- The deadline for sending your paper abstract (max. 500 words) is **15 April 2017**. You can send your abstract to [harmesen@iss.nl](mailto:harmesen@iss.nl);
- Full papers need to be submitted before **1 September 2017**. Contributions may contain a maximum of 8000 words including notes and references;
- We encourage contributions from scholars from outside the European Union.

Whereas this definitional debate has not been drawn to a conclusion it is time to move towards a different level of analysis and to assess Frugal Innovation not only as a theoretical concept, but also as a policy tool in responding to three significant sustainability (social, economic, environmental) challenges in an ever more complex world.

Firstly, an increasing number of people worldwide are dealing with the negative impacts of globalization in the shape of the increasingly unequal distribution of wealth. Although the percentage of people living in absolute poverty worldwide has decreased due to economic growth induced by globalization, the actual number of poor people is increasing as a result of population growth. And whereas the face of poverty may be changing somewhat, the outcomes stay the same: the exclusion of people from meaningful economic participation and secure livelihoods. Simultaneously, poverty and socioeconomic exclusion increasingly is not only a problem anymore of developing countries as the number of poor people in the developed world is growing as a result of recent economic and financial crises.

At the same time, globalization has led to increased international competition. Brazilian, Indian and Chinese firms are able to compete on labour costs, resulting in the shift of the bulk of actual manufacturing from developed to emerging economies. However, their primary focus on cheap products that are often qualitatively inferior to Western products is rapidly changing. Southern Multinational Companies (MNCs) increasingly move towards the development of products that are still affordable, but at the same time present a good alternative for Western products in terms of quality and responsibility in the production process. It seems that not the price of labour, but the choices made by firms in trade-offs between product prices, quality and responsible production methods will define the competitiveness of businesses in the global market. The resulting 'fight for the middle (market segment)' will show interesting changes in both Southern and Western firms' production processes. Frugal Innovation will play an important role herein.

Finally, consumers are becoming increasingly aware of product features beyond price and quality. They are more and more aware

of what the production of a good means for the environment, resulting in maker movements that are searching for incorporation of environmental integrity, resilience and sustainability in products, services and systems, also in developing country settings in which consumer goods need to endure harsh circumstances. This asks for a different approach with a smaller footprint on the environment.

Frugal Innovation can be part of an answer to these worldwide challenges. The conference aims to contribute to a more empirical perspective involving a wide array of case studies from practice that allow us to draw generalizations that may feed future policy and decision-making in both governments and firms.

To further the discussion on Frugal Innovation's potential we call for contributions to the international conference "Frugal Innovation and Sustainable Global Development" that will take place in The Hague, the Netherlands on 7 & 8 November 2017.

We are looking for empirical studies that cover the potential of Frugal Innovation in relation to global inequality and inequity, shifts in global competitiveness, and environmental sustainability. Special interest goes out to papers that add new dimensions to the debate; for example to the role of gender, Frugal Innovation's transformative capacity at a sector or macro level, both in formal and informal economies, empirical studies on polycentric collaboration in Frugal Innovation, empirical studies and theoretical contributions on reverse innovation (who owns the idea/knowledge when basic concepts are hundreds years old? What roles can standards play when reversing non-codified/codified indigenous knowledge?), trade-offs between competition, global development and environmental sustainability, scenarios of frugal innovation for sustainable global development, etc. We also very much welcome papers that analyze the role of specific actors in frugal innovation: formal and/or informal enterprises (MNEs, SMEs, conglomerates), governments, RTOs, incubators, i-Hubs, start-up networks, knowledge centres (universities, tech labs, communities).

There is no limit in terms of geographical focus. We see Frugal Innovation as a global concept and are interested in both bottom-up and top-down perspectives as well as polycentric combinations of these approaches.

## CENTRE FOR FRUGAL INNOVATION IN AFRICA

**The Centre for Frugal Innovation in Africa is an interdisciplinary research centre that is part of the strategic cooperation between Leiden University, Delft University of Technology and Erasmus University Rotterdam.**

With a team of economists, engineers, industrial designers, health experts and ethicists we study Frugal Innovation, a recently coined concept in innovation management that is all about developing, producing and marketing affordable products and services for and in cooperation with consumers who live and work in low-income and resource constrained environments. We focus on Africa, where resource limitations in general are highest; leaving society with many challenges. Frugal products are robust, easy to use, easy to maintain and aimed at adequately tackling a local problem without adding unnecessary functionalities.