"Innovation In Affordable Housing" – An Interview With Moladi's Hennie Botes

Hennie Botes
Photo: greenleapreview,com

Hennie Botes founded [Moladi](#) in 1986, after building a global business as an entrepreneur and inventor. His ability to think outside the box has led him to found a company that is revolutionizing the affordable housing market through design, innovation, and good-old fashioned ingenuity.

Can you tell us about how Moladi came about? How did you come up with the concept?

Let's start at the beginning. As it happened, my first invention was a plastic baby bath that fit across the bathtub and gave young mothers an easy and safe way to bathe their newborn children. The design was sold the world over, and gave me the freedom to found Moladi.

Moladi was the result of my own difficulties with building with brick and mortar.

In South Africa, and many developing countries, we still suffer from a colonial

mentality. Our education system does not teach us how to plant and grow food or build things. And that is a tragedy. Africa will have to uplift itself, and learn how to build things itself.

The challenge for so many local housing developments is the lack of skill. We know how difficult it was to put bricks on top of each other in a straight line, and, once the wall is built, to plaster it.

Moladi was a way I saw to build a construction system which could evolve into a job-creation tool itself, since it *does not require skilled labor* – in fact, over 90% of a construction team on a Moladi housing site consists of unskilled laborers.
My first attempts at building the right mold was not exactly a success but the geese on the farm got a dam as result. Gradually, and this the way with all innovation, you learn from your mistakes. The result was the Moladi building system.

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Noam Chomsky: Trump's First 100 Days Are Undermining Our Prospects for Survival

Donald Trump
Photo: wikipedia.org

The first 100 days are considered to be a benchmark for presidential performance. This is part of the legacy of FDR, who managed to reshape the US government's role in the economy within the first 100 days of his administration. However, the fact of the matter is that usually, a first-time president doesn't have the slightest inkling of what governing from the Oval Office is all about. There's no better proof of that than the early records of the most recent US presidents, from Nixon to Obama. Nonetheless, no recent US president has demonstrated such an overwhelming ignorance about governing as the current occupant of the White House.

But is Trump's apparent inability to govern and conduct himself in a remotely conventional manner an innate character flaw or part of a well-conceived strategy aimed at a society that loves reality TV? Is Trump's fondness for Putin simply an "infatuation" with a strongman and admiration for autocratic rule, or something of a more political and strategic nature? And what does Trump mean when he says "jobs?" In this exclusive Truthout interview, world-revered public intellectual Noam Chomsky shares for the first time his views about the first 100 days of the Trump administration.

C. J. Polychroniou: The first 100 days of Donald Trump in the White House are characterized by complete disrespect for the truth and the freedom of the press and, overall, a style of political leadership that is not merely authoritarian but also smacks of fascism. In your view, is all this part of a preconceived strategy or simply a reflection of the whims of a person with a very fragile ego?

Noam Chomsky: I don't pretend to have any special insight into the mind of this strange person, though the people around him have been fairly coherent, in particular Steve Bannon, who seems to be the shadowed figure behind the throne.

What is happening before our eyes appears to be a two-pronged operation, I presume planned.

Bannon/Trump (and the pathetic Sean Spicer, who has to defend the latest shenanigans in public) have the task of dominating TV and headlines with one wild performance after another, the assumption apparently being that his fabrications will quickly be forgotten as the next episode displaces them, and the base will be satisfied for a time, believing that their champion is standing up for them. So, who remembers the millions of undocumented immigrants who "voted for Clinton," or the charge that that really bad guy Obama ("sad!") literally wiretapped poor Trump — a claim now downgraded to irrelevance, but not withdrawn — and so on? Look how well the birther tales played for many years, ending hilariously with Trump blaming Clinton for initiating the farce.

Meanwhile, the real work is going on more quietly, spearheaded by Paul Ryan, a different and more malicious kind of posturer, who represents the most brutal fringe of the Republican establishment and somehow manages to present himself as a man of ideas, maybe because — as Paul Krugman argues — he rolls up his sleeves and uses PowerPoint. The ideas are quite familiar. They are the standard fare of the component of the Republican establishment dedicated with unusual ferocity to enriching the rich and powerful — bankers, CEOs, and other types who matter — while kicking in the face the vulnerable, the poor and Trump's rural and working-class constituency. All of this abetted by the ultra-right billionaire cabinet and other appointees, selected very carefully to destroy whatever within their domains might be helpful to mere humans, but not to the chosen few of extreme wealth and power.

The consistency is impressive, if not breathtaking.

With the collapse of the shameful GOP health care proposals, we are likely to see this scenario enacted with real passion. The White House and its congressional allies have many ways to undermine the current health care system, which, with all its flaws, is a considerable improvement over what preceded it though still well behind comparable societies, let alone what the population wants and deserves,

: a rational single-payer universal health care system. That is a fairly resilient phenomenon over many years, with some variation, quite remarkable in that there is virtually no articulate elite advocacy of this sane and popular position.

Of course, undermining the system will harm a great many people, but that cannot be a consideration. After all, Ryancare was going to add some 24 million to the ranks of uninsured, which might kill more than 40,000 people annually according to an analysis by health care specialists Steffie Woolhandler and David Himmelstein. If the health system can be substantially damaged, and people really do suffer sufficiently, then the propaganda drumbeat can proceed to blame the disaster on the political opposition, and maybe even get away with it. A good deal is possible in the era of "alternative facts." We are already witnessing the early stages.

The lead character in the show does indeed present himself as a thin-skinned megalomaniac whose only ideology is Me. But his appointments, and the policies for which all of this is a cover, are too systematic to be merely random shots.

As I mentioned, the policies being formulated and enacted are drawn from the playbook of the most reactionary fringe of the Republican establishment. The abject service to private wealth and power is accompanied with an authoritarian and fundamentalist program to transform US society. The project is driven by the Bannon-Sessions vision of a society devoted to Judeo-Christian roots and white supremacy, eliminating such pernicious and threatening nonsense as arts and humanities, upholding the Betsy DeVos doctrine that public education has to be dismantled, while if science conflicts with religion, then too bad for science. Meanwhile, we are to wave a mailed fist at the world while cowering behind walls and rebuilding the "depleted military" that is the most powerful force in human history, dwarfing any collection of competitors. All of this resonates with at least parts of a society that has long been the safest and most terrified in the world.

The fundamentalist project goes well beyond getting rid of arts and humanities. Science is also in the crosshairs. Trump's budget cuts medical research. There's been considerable attention to his dismantling of the EPA [Environmental Protection Agency], now pretty much in the hands of associates of James Inhofe, the Senate's leading climate denier, who has explained that if God has decided to warm the Earth, so be it. But that's the least of it. For action and research on

climate, EPA is a small actor. Far more important is the Department of Energy. Its Office of Science is scheduled to lose $900 million, nearly 20 percent of its budget. DOE's $300 million ARPA-Energy program is eliminated completely. That's in addition to deep cuts to the research programs at the EPA and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and a 5 percent cut to NASA's earth science budget.

In Congress, the science-deniers can scarcely contain their glee now that the wrecking ball has opened the path for demolition of the heresies of the modern world. Lamar Smith, who for years has used his position as chair of the House science committee to harass scientists, now feels free to openly acknowledge that "the committee is now a tool to advance his political agenda rather than a forum to examine important issues facing the U.S. research community."

An appropriate comment on all of this was made by Stephen Colbert, when the Republican-run legislature in North Carolina responded to a scientific study predicting rapid sea level rise by barring state and local agencies from developing regulations or planning documents anticipating a rise in sea level. "This is a brilliant solution," Colbert said. "If your science gives you a result that you don't like, pass a law saying the result is illegal. Problem solved."

Most important of everything that is happening is the attack against future generations, in fact even against those coming of age today, as Trump and allies, departing from the world, cheerily lead the race to environmental destruction while the rest take at least halting steps toward averting a looming catastrophe — which doesn't weigh in the balance against fabulous profits tomorrow for the select few.

A few years ago Republican governor of Louisiana Bobby Jindal took a little time off from his campaign to drive the state even deeper into the abyss to warn that Republicans are becoming "the stupid party." The respected conservative analyst [Norman J.] Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute described the current party as a "radical insurgency" that has abandoned parliamentary politics…. Has any other organization dedicated itself with such enthusiasm to undermining our prospects for decent survival? And not in the distant future.

What do you make of Trump's recent attacks over FBI Russia leaks? Clearly, this is not the sort of thing one would ever expect from a US president, so what do you

think it's all about?

Very little that comes out of the White House would be expected from a US president. But another question comes to mind as well. What is this all about? When Obama was presenting himself to the public before the 2008 primaries, one of his proudest accomplishments — in fact, one of the very few of his senatorial career — was impassioned support for Israel's murderous invasion of Lebanon. He even went so far as to cosponsor legislation calling for strong action against any country that might impede the assault. Has anyone on the Trump team been accused of similar support for Russian crimes? True, there have been some entirely improper acts, notably Michael Flynn's failure to register as an agent of Turkey. But that is not the focus of the anger of the Democrats, whose primary concern in this affair seems to be to extinguish one of the few rays of light in the Trump performances, his indications of concern to reduce tensions with Russia that might well explode to terminal nuclear war. It's perhaps of some interest that one may turn to the leading establishment journal, Foreign Affairs, to find an [informed analysis of the fierce liberal opposition to such sensible moves](#) and its background.

An argument could be made that a major part of the explanation for Trump's apparent infatuation with Vladimir Putin is not only the fact that "The Donald" is naturally drawn to strongmen, but also that he sees Russia and the United States as the only stalwarts left that are able and willing to halt what they see as the "decline" of Western Christian civilization by targeting large numbers of Muslims, thereby preventing the alleged "Islamization" of the Western world. Do you see any validity behind this way of conceptualizing Trump's mindset?

As I said, I don't claim any particular insight into his thinking. The term "infatuation" seems to me too strong, at least on the basis of what I have seen, though he has expressed admiration for Putin, much like Marine Le Pen and other unsavory political figures who are rising in the West. If Trump's concern is "rolling back the Muslim hordes," he need go no further than Europe, where [a majority of the population favors a complete ban on Muslim immigrants](#), including those fleeing from countries ravaged by Europe, in some cases for centuries. These are among the signs of the severe moral-cultural crisis of the West that is mislabeled a "refugee crisis."

NATO troops recently held a military exercise near the Norwegian-Russian

border. This is clearly an act of provocation, so one wonders if Trump supported this move. Any thoughts on the matter?

Very clearly. These are among the provocations that increased under Obama-Clinton and apparently continue without change under Trump. I don't think he and his associates have had much to say about these provocations, which trace back to NATO expansion after the collapse of the Soviet Union. The mounting provocations on both sides of the border underscore the wisdom of European historian Richard Sakwa's observation that NATO's prime mission today is "to manage the risks created by its existence." And it's worth remembering that it's the Russian border, not the Mexican border, and a border that is on the invasion route through which Russia was virtually destroyed twice by Germany alone in the past century.

In Trump's "America first" vision, military superiority over other nations includes the US being "on top of the pack" on nuclear weapons. Do you think we will see the end of Pax Americana under Donald Trump's presidency?

Trump's position on nuclear weapons is unclear, but many of his comments have been worrisome, in particular his dismissal of the New START treaty on mutual Russia-US reduction of nuclear weapons as a bad deal for the US, in a phone call with Putin. The treaty is a good deal not only for the US but for the world, even though partial. And it would be bad news indeed if Trump chooses not to renew it. In general, on nuclear programs he seems to have kept so far to Obama's dangerous modernization program. And being "on top of the pack" on nuclear weapons means little, since even a small number would be enough to destroy everything.

Trump has, of course, proposed sharp increases in the already bloated military budget, at the cost of social programs despised by the establishment Republicans who pretty much run the show. And he has relaxed conditions on use of force, removing oversight, decisions that have already led to several major atrocities.

As for Pax Americana, it has hardly been much of a Pax. It is not coming to an end, but it is continuing to decline, just as American power has declined since its peak at the end of World War II.

In this connection, however, it is important to bear in mind revealing insights developed in recent work by political economist Sean Starrs, exploring some

significant consequences of the neoliberal globalization of the world economy of the past generation. As he discusses, corporate ownership of the world's wealth is becoming a more realistic measure of global power than national wealth as the world departs more than before from the model of nationally discrete political economies. The results of his investigations are quite striking. It turns out that in virtually every economic sector — manufacturing, finance, services, retail and others — US corporations are well in the lead in ownership of the global economy. Overall, their ownership is close to 50 percent of the total, roughly the maximum figure of estimated US national wealth in 1945. This was the figure used by the revered figure of American diplomacy George Kennan, for example, when he advised in 1948 that our central policy goal must be to maintain the "position of disparity" that separated our enormous wealth from the poverty of others, referring specifically to Asia, though the import was more general. To achieve that goal, he advised, "We should cease to talk about vague and … unreal objectives, such as human rights, the raising of the living standards, and democratization," and must "deal in straight power concepts," not "hampered by idealistic slogans" about "altruism and world-benefaction."

Kennan was soon removed from the decision-making apparatus because he was considered too soft-hearted to deal with this harsh world. Much as today, there may then have been real opportunities for détente at the time, dismissed in favor of much harsher policies. These soon contributed to threats registered by the Bulletin of Atomic Scientists expert advisers, who moved the hands of the famous doomsday clock forward to two minutes to midnight in 1953 after the US and Russia exploded hydrogen bombs. That's the closest it has ever been to terminal disaster. It is hardly comforting to note that a few days into Trump's term, the clock was moved again to 2 ½ minutes to midnight, the closest to doom since 1953, advancing from an ominous three minutes to midnight during the two preceding years.

Returning to Pax Americana, American decline is real, in state power, while US ownership of the world economy is overwhelming. These changes in the nature of world order, commonly overlooked, are of no slight significance.

Trump ran on an "anti-establishment" platform, yet his budget cut proposals and overall economic policy agenda favor the rich and will make life for struggling Americans even more difficult. First, what are your thoughts on his budget cuts, and, second, do you think this will make his supporters realize that he pulled the

biggest trick on them in the history of US politics?

Trump's budget proposals are very clear: expand the military and lavish gifts on the rich and powerful, while the rest are somehow to fend for themselves, including his rural and working class constituency. For the moment, they seem to be keeping to the faith that somehow Trump meant what he said and will bring back jobs. On this matter, we should recall that for a long time the word "jobs" in US political discourse has been the conventional way to pronounce an obscene seven-letter word — which I will not spell, out of concern for the thought police. It begins "p-r-o" and ends "f-i-t-s." The resort to the euphemism goes back many years. Some will remember George H.W. Bush's trip to Asia in order to gain "jobs, jobs, jobs," as he proclaimed. Others fall into line, including the media.

It will take creative propaganda initiatives to sustain the con game in Trump's case. Sooner or later, the veil will fall away, just as it did with Obama's "hope" and "change," at that time shifting working-class votes to their bitter class enemy. If that happens, we can expect that the Trump-Bannon crowd will seek to divert attention in one of the many familiar ways — perhaps conjuring up some threat to American security (or if there is one, exploiting it). Or, perhaps, scapegoating the most vulnerable: immigrants, Muslims, welfare recipients (one of Reagan's disgusting techniques), and other available targets. That could turn very ugly. It could lead to the "friendly fascism" that sociologist Bertram Gross predicted 30 years ago. Or worse.

At the same time, there are very promising opportunities ahead. A serious program to heal the pathologies of the neoliberal era could attract very broad popular support. There already is popular support for progressive programs. One example I've already mentioned: Most Americans continue to prefer a government health care program of the kind that functions far better than ours in other developed countries.

Another example was provided recently by Fox News. [They conducted a poll] asking who is the most popular political figure in the country. In the lead, by a very large margin, was Bernie Sanders — even more so among the young, the hope for the future.

The success of the Sanders campaign was quite remarkable, a sharp break from political history. For over a century, elections in the US have been mostly bought.

But here was someone who was scarcely known, who had virtually no support from the wealthy or corporate sector and was dismissed by the media, and even used the scare word "socialism." He would very likely have won the Democratic nomination had it not been for the shenanigans of the Obama-Clinton clique that dominates the party — and that has almost ruined it at local and state levels in recent years. And he might very well have become president.

Sanders called for a "political revolution," and with the sharp rightward drift of the past 30 years of the neoliberal assault, the term may not be inappropriate. His basically New Deal proposals, however, would not have surprised Dwight Eisenhower. It is useful to recall the nature of conservatism at the outset of Eisenhower's term in 1952, when he said, for example, that he has

> *no use for those — regardless of their political party — who hold some foolish dream of spinning the clock back to days when unorganized labor was a huddled, almost helpless mass.… Today in America unions have a secure place in our industrial life. Only a handful of unreconstructed reactionaries harbor the ugly thought of breaking unions. Only a fool would try to deprive working men and women of the right to join the union of their choice.*

And more generally, Eisenhower held that those who question New Deal policies have no place in the US political system.

Such ideas are not far below the surface, even as the political class has shifted very far to the right, with Clinton Democrats becoming what used to be called "moderate Republicans," and Republicans mostly drifting off the spectrum. They can be revived. The Sanders campaign was a dramatic illustration — not the only one. And those are by no means the limits of legitimate aspirations.

It's easy to succumb to a sense of futility and despair, but objective circumstances provide no justification for that stance. There have been many gains over past years thanks to struggles undertaken under far harsher conditions than those of today. These gains provide us with a legacy that offers a great many opportunities to avoid the worst, and to move on to a much better future.

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About the author:

C.J. Polychroniou is a political economist/political scientist who has taught and worked in universities and research centers in Europe and the United States. His main research interests are in European economic integration, globalization, the political economy of the United States and the deconstruction of neoliberalism's politico-economic project. He is a regular contributor to Truthout as well as a member of Truthout's Public Intellectual Project. He has published several books and his articles have appeared in a variety of journals, magazines, newspapers and popular news websites. Many of his publications have been translated into several foreign languages, including Croatian, French, Greek, Italian, Portuguese, Spanish and Turkish.

Socrates Mbamalu ~ How Can African Languages Be Protected?

An endangered language is defined as a language that is at a risk of falling out of use as its speakers die out or shift to another language. Many African speakers have shifted to other languages, mostly foreign languages and many African indigenous languages are on the brink of being endangered, nearing extinction. How African governments save these endangered African indigenous languages?

In a continent of 55 countries and over 2,000 languages, it is shocking that the official languages predominantly used are foreign languages. It is even worse that the medium of instruction in learning institutions are foreign languages. The marginalization of indigenous languages leaves many of the African languages without a role to play.

For a language to survive, it must have a defined and clear role that it plays in the society. It could be used as the language of the immediate community to communicate, which could as well be the mother tongue. It could be used as the language of wider communication, (a language used by people as a medium of

communication across language or cultural barriers), which is the case for example with lingua franca. It could be used as the language of religion, for example Arabic in the Koran.

With the lack of a clearly defined role, a language tends to get less used. When a language has fewer speakers, the language eventually dies (language death). Due to language shift, when speakers shift from using one language to another, either due to economic gains or other reasons, the language becomes endangered, and if not protected, it will eventually die.

Read more: https://thisisafrica.me/can-african-languages-protected/

Read also: Ngugi wa Thiong'o calls for preservation and inclusion of African languages in learning institutions

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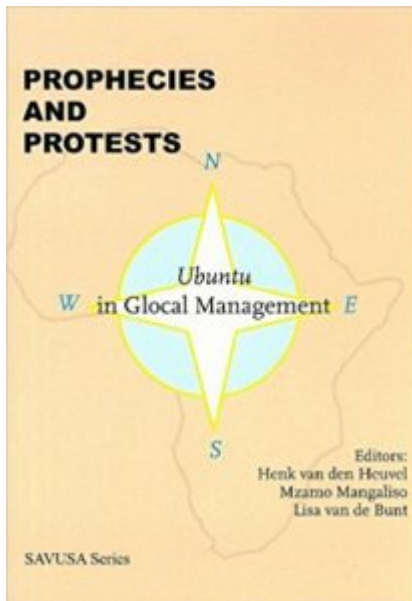# Prophecies And Protests ~ Ubuntu In Glocal Management ~ Contents
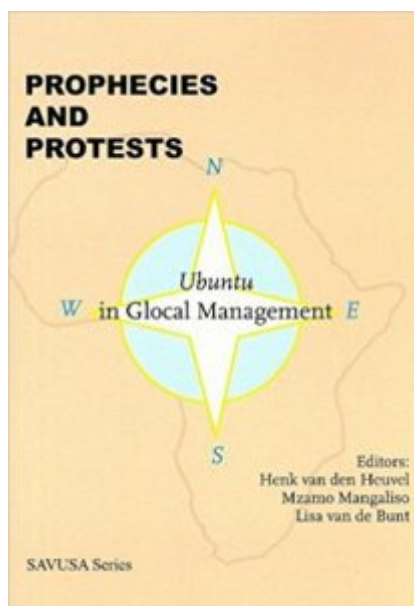
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Henk van den Heuvel – Introduction. Prophecies and Protests ~ Signifiers of

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Introduction. Prophecies and Protests ~ Signifiers Of Afrocentric Management Discourse

Since the early 1990s, dominant management discourse in South Africa has been contested by a locally emergent perspective that has come to be known as 'African management'. It is doubtless still a rather marginal perspective, but one could argue it is a rather influential one. Over the years, African management has received quite some media attention.**[i]** Presently, a number of South African firms strongly sympathise with Afrocentric approaches, and actually make efforts to implement their principles. *Eskom Holdings Limited* is a case in point, which is contributing about 50 per cent of the total energy production in Africa with its approximately 32,000 employees, operating in 30 countries on the African continent. This 'public enterprise' that happens to be 'Africa's largest electricity utility', has been undertaking bold initiatives to institutionalise its 'African Business Leadership' vision, illustrating a contemporary appropriation of 'African management' philosophy. Another example may be First National Bank (FNB).**[ii]** For several years, Mike Boon of *Vulindlela Network* has been actively involved in an organisational transformation initiative to change FNB's organisational culture. Boon, who is the author of *The African Way: The power of interactive leadership*, is considered a renowned author on 'African management' issues (Boon 1996). Peet van der Walt, chief executive of FNB Delivery – also the man who approached Boon for this grand operation – stated that the initiative has met with overwhelming success (*Sunday Times* 28 April 2002). Eskom and FNB are two of the better-known illustrations, but several other organisations could be mentioned that are drawn towards to Afrocentric perspectives. Of course, we should not forget about the past experiences of *Cashbuild*, a wholesale company in building materials that was extensively described by Albert Koopman:

… we took up the challenge to change – really change – our business so that our people would see a different reality. And that would change their perception. […] We knew that our workforce was alienated from our system (they never understood it in the first place and never reaped the benefits from it either) and that we had to do a mighty good job to bring them into our business as 'co-owners'. How else could they start believing in our business other than by reaping direct benefits from it? (Koopman; Nasser et al. 1987)

Overall, however, the dominant management and leadership style in South Africa is still mostly described as 'western'. Usually, South African management is not only typified as 'western', but also as 'North European', 'Eurocentric', 'British', and 'Anglo-Saxon', or even as 'American'.**[iii]** These terms are rarely well-defined, or differences clearly explained. There seems to be a consensus however, that British influence was amongst the strongest, and was assumed to have lasting effects. Textbooks and handbooks that are used in universities and business schools in South Africa are primarily written either by American or European authors, or else by local authors who write in a similar 'mainstream' tradition. An Afrocentric perspective could be a response to the felt need for 'a contextualised approach' to management and organisation in South Africa; at least that is how the issue was approached initially.

There is a body of literature on 'African management' (e.g. Boon 1996; Lessem and Nussbaum 1996; Mbigi 2006; 1997) and on management and organisation on the African continent (e.g. Blunt and Jones 1992; Jackson 2004; Kennedy 1988; Wohlgemuth, Carlsson et al. 1998). However, no book has yet brought together advocates of Afrocentric management approaches, practitioners, and academics, to analyse and contemplate on this fascinating and rapidly changing subject in a joint effort. Our focus is on the 'African management' discourse as a South African phenomenon, more precisely as an Africanist vision (or visions) on management and organisation.

Fostering dialogue
In June 2004, a two-day seminar on 'Afrocentric management approaches in South Africa' was held in Amsterdam, organised by the *Faculty of Economics and Business Administration* (FEWEB) and *SAVUSA* (South Africa – Vrije Universiteit – Strategic Alliances) of the *Vrije Universiteit*, with financial support from the *Dutch Interchurch Organisation for Development Cooperation* (ICCO). About thirty participants from Africa, North America and Europe met to discuss a number of papers that were presented, by some key initiators of the Afrocentric management debate in South Africa, such as Lovemore Mbigi, Albert Koopman and Ronnie Lessem. The main goal of the seminar was to start up a dialogue between practitioners and scholars to exchange views and ideas on the meaning of 'African management' discourse, and to discuss possible implications for business practice. During these two days, the proposal was made to produce a publication as a result of the seminar, with the purpose of engaging a larger

audience in this experience and of furthering the dialogue.

This edited volume aims to inspire both readers interested in African studies and readers involved in issues around management and leadership in organisations. The book specifically deals with a subject area where African studies, and studies in the field of management and organisation, meet. Primarily it is a scholarly publication, which will mainly be read by academics. It presumes an affiliation with studies in the domain of management and organisation, and a basic knowledge of recent cultural and economic developments in southern Africa, especially South Africa. Which will mainly be read by academics. It presumes an affiliation with studies in the domain of management and organisation, and a basic knowledge of recent cultural and economic developments in southern Africa, especially South Africa.

The reader will not find case studies or detailed evaluations of applications of 'African management' principles in practice in this book. Contrary to this, the book focuses on ideas, on written text instead of on empirical research. It wants to bring together a collection of views on what 'African management' is about, what its principal claims are, and how these could be interpreted. Moreover, it aims to foster a dialogue between believers and non-believers, based in (South) Africa and elsewhere. Usually, these two groups hardly ever get together and seldom interact, but live and work in separate arenas. The *believers* in this case are 'African management' proponents, who could be considered as *prophets* or *protesters*. The *non-believers* are critical of this phenomenon, sometimes even skeptical, as they try to demonstrate, using rational arguments.

The subject of Afrocentric management approaches seems to render strong responses, from *any audience* of people involved in management, academia, or otherwise. These responses are usually either extremely positive or very negative. This seems to be the nature of the debate. Moderate opinions are rarely expressed. Whenever believers and non-believers do meet more often than not a clash ensues between proponents and critics, while outright skeptics seem too impatient to consider any interpretative readings of Afrocentric management discourse that seek to go beyond its most obvious features.

Why these strong responses? The question rises whether opposing value systems and worldviews are involved, or if another opinion of what constitutes (local) knowledge and 'truth' could be a major reason for such vibrant debate. Is

there a conflict of interests? One wonders whether the issue of 'cultural difference', that appears so overwhelmingly difficult to bridge, lies at the base of this, in particular the binary position of 'African' versus 'non-African'? If this is the main issue, the question is whether these differences are 'for real' or merely presented as such, while in fact signifying something else. If so, what could they be symbols of? Moreover, if cultural difference is principally treated in absolute terms, the question remains how to deal with these (real or imagined) differences in the daily practices of management and organisation.

Essentialism

Notions of 'African culture' and 'traditional values', such as *ubuntu* for instance, are paramount in the construction of 'African management' philosophy. Some observers are especially watchful for a possible manipulative use of such concepts, when they are for example used in a context of management and leadership. To some, reference to these notions may be enough to shy away from the debate. This book is an attempt to turn that tide. As a result, the editors hope to stimulate interdisciplinary assessments that seek to develop critical perspectives, in a considerate way.

The concept of ubuntu is subject to a lively academic debate. Critics deem it problematic to simply lift this ancient concept out of its original rural context and ruthlessly transplant it into a completely different, modern urban environment (Jackson 2004: 7; Van Binsbergen 2001). In that way, ubuntu becomes completely detached from its original web of social relations. Consequently, contextualized meanings of local ('indigenous') knowledge are disregarded. Some commentators even openly doubt whether there is any real substance to what remains of 'indigenous culture' in South Africa (Bernstein 2002). Furthermore, the complex ways in which notions of ubuntu have been transformed throughout the ages as a result of colonialism, apartheid and globalisation, tend to be overlooked.

Ubuntu philosophy ... constitutes not a straight-forward *emic* rendering of a preexisting African philosophy available since times immemorial in the various languages belonging to the Bantu language family. Instead, ubuntu philosophy will be argued to amount to a remote *etic* reconstruction, in an alien globalised format, of a set of implied ideas that do inform aspects of village and kin relations in at least many contexts in contemporary Southern Africa; the historical depth of these ideas is difficult to gauge, and their format differs greatly from the

academic codifications of ubuntu (Van Binsbergen 2001: 57).

The idea of ubuntu has been turned into a modern commodity, wrapped up in a global format, as Van Binsbergen argues. As such, it has acquired a meaning quite different from what it could once have meant in its original context. Nevertheless, this is generally how ubuntu is represented in 'African management' discourse in South Africa: as an illustration of an essentialist perspective on 'African culture', as something unchanged and unchangeable, a homogenising concept that supposedly ties all Africans together.

What are the implications of such a perspective? Does it come with a claim to 'original alterity', a state or quality of 'being other', 'being different'? Does it imply an exceptional moral status? Claims to African tradition could be used to supply 'signs and meanings of African authenticity'. From another point of view, traditional 'authentic African elements' might serve as 'weapons for a radical criticism' by means of strategic essentialism (Mudimbe 1988: 153).

Essentialism is a core issue in this book. Arguably, 'African management' philosophy is highly essentialist by nature. Does this mirror dominant 'western' (ethnocentric) essentialist discourses of 'management' and of 'being African'? In reply, this book invites the exposure of non-essentialist perspectives. Taking into account, of course, that responses to an essentialist discourse could perhaps also be essentialist to some extent.

The idea of cultural determination is another feature of the 'African management' discourse that can be found in this book. In this perspective, culture is not so much seen as the *knowledge* that a person needs to be able to understand and 'make sense' of a situation, but rather as an independent variable. Cultural determination implies a causal relationship between 'culture' and 'social action'. The chapters by Mbigi and Mangaliso are examples of deterministic thinking; both authors seek to promote ubuntu as a management concept. Perhaps, an essentialist and generalising approach is to some extent unavoidable in any management philosophy. Would a management 'prophecy' not loose much of its captivating power and attractiveness, if it would endlessy elaborate on the endless cultural complexities, tensions and paradoxes in society and managerial contexts? Is 'African management', as any fascinating or fashionable management vision, not particularly appealing to its potential users for its holistic and imaginative character that goes beyond conventional

boundaries and horizons? Could we say that it is appropriate or inappropriate to speak of ubuntu and 'African management' philosophy in rather essentialist and deterministic terms? Only through a conversation, we might explore hidden meanings, deficiencies, and reasons why this issue has come about. We might also learn something about the 'strategic essentialism' that the philosopher Mudimbe referred to. The question why ubuntu has become such an appealing idea to many is a fascinating one, while ubuntu is 'out of place', yet seen as 'an African thing' that promises surprising points of view.

... ubuntu, when appealed to in the modern management of urban and national conflicts, can be effective, but not because it summarises the internalised cultural orientations of the Africans involved in such conflict – very far from it, for these Africans are largely globalised in their world-view and practices, and are no more governed by village rules and allegiances than people in similar urban and national arenas in other continents. Despite having rural and small-scale face-to-face relationships as its referent, ubuntu can be effective, in the first place because it is appreciated as an African thing, but in the second place and especially because, despite its globally-derived format, it introduces non-global, particularistic and intimate elements in the very heart of Southern African globalisation. Ubuntu can work precisely because it is novel, out of place there where it is most appealed to. It allows the conflict regulator to introduce an unexpected perspective to which (for historical, identity and strategic reasons) few parties could afford to say 'no' (Van Binsbergen 2001: 74).

From a dominant management perspective, it seems quite tempting to criticise 'African management' prophets. This makes one realise that culture should be treated as a power process, related to ideology and knowledge. Dominant discourses come with claims to 'the truth' and 'normality' that will be defended when contested by an alternative perspective.

It requires constant discoursal effort continually to reassert the status of a discourse as 'true', objective, neutral or normal and to displace other emergent discourses, labelling them as abnormal, disordering or political (Wright 1994: 25).

When representatives of dominant management discourses in South Africa actually begin to feel challenged by Afrocentric perspectives and become defensive of their dominant approaches, this could perhaps be an indication that they are starting to reflect on their own management practices, their 'worldview',

and maybe even about changing political realities.

Prophets and protesters
Perhaps the title of this book, 'Prophecies and Protests', requires some explanation. 'Prophecies' refers to the Afrocentric management visions that are presented in the book. To some extent, they are characterised by rather sweeping claims, suggesting farreaching consequences. Somewhat provokingly, 'African management' advocates could be seen as prophets. Some may turn out to be true visionaries; others will perhaps be unmasked as 'false prophets' eventually.

Afrocentric management prophets criticise for instance South Africans who they say have lost their sense of cultural identity; 'westerners' would suffer from a similar symptom. The question is whether traditional African notions nowadays still belong to the cultural make-up of a person's self-representation in South Africa. Do people deliberately hide such cultural features in formal organisational contexts, out of fear for being seen as inferior, old-fashioned, or backward? In the 1980s, black managers in South Africa were advised to 'deculturalise'. They were told to 'to "dump" their cultural heritage to succeed in white business' (Reese 1981: 23). Will they now, 20 years later and after the radical change of rule in 1994, have to (re-)negotiate their ('African') cultural identity within their organisations (Luhabe 2002: 167)?

Alternatively, perhaps people choose to constantly adapt to differing situations, and accordingly use their identity strategically, in flexible ways, depending on how to achieve specific goals or obtain access to scarce resources. Likewise, managers – regardless of ethnic or cultural background – may continuously adapt their behaviour according to the situation and thus conform to traditional cultural values situationally (Human 1996: 177). There are so many questions relating to cultural identity issues in a (South) African context, and the prophets raising these questions, may indeed have a point in asking them.

Secondly, protesters refers to the kind of criticism articulated throughout Afrocentric management discourse that supposedly argues against conventional management practices in South Africa, for instance against over-bureaucratisation, uncongenial relationships or a lack of spirituality. There is a parallel with anti-globalist sentiments directed against individualisation, marginalisation and social exclusion, issues for which identity-based social movements in southern Africa may find some comfort in the ubuntu concept:

The radical project, under these circumstances, has to be one that finds relevant answers to the question how social movements that are based on challenging the individualising and barbarous logic of the global economic networks can transform them into one that has as its major term the survival and continued evolution of the human species as a biological and social category of free and autonomous beings, bound together by the profoundly humanistic ethos of ubuntu in the universe.(Alexander 2001: 138-9).

This is not to suggest that the 'African management' community in South Africa would in some way be affiliated with a larger anti-globalisation front, such as the *Anti-Privatisation Forum*, but similar sentiments and desires could be a factor in popularising 'African management' discourse. In fact, it is not being advocated as 'anti-western', 'anti-globalisation', or opposed to capitalist development at all. On the contrary, 'African management' prophets rather seem to flourish within a capitalist economy, as some well-to-do management consultants show us. They nonetheless represent a cultural protest group, in the sense of contesting mainstream opinions in management. Such claims often meet with scepticism, and even with hostility:

... discourse plays a role in various forms of resistance and counter-power, in protest songs, banners, ethnic media, dissident scholarly work, and so on. However, since minority groups and (other) anti-racists seldom have as much access to the dominant media or other forms of public discourse as the mainstream elites, their discourse is usually effectively marginalized, problematized or ridiculed. (Van Dijk 1997: 165)

African management advocates' protests seem to opposed a 'western' hegemonic position, and ('western') claims of universalism in the domain of management and organisation. In South Africa, existing ('Eurocentric') organisational norms, management practices and leadership styles are largely taken for granted; they seem to be untouchable, something which 'African management' discourse seeks to question. The almost self-indulgent conceit with which global management is practised in an African environment is revolting to many 'African management' thinkers, and this causes them to raise fundamental questions. Their *corporate crusade* is not limited to South Africa. Afrocentric management discourse pretends to bring humanity back into the workplace, putting people at the centre of organisations, and to inspire employees and employers to re-create notions of *Africanness.***[iv]** The latter will be discussed in

more detail in the paragraph on identity and belonging.

Challenge and contestation form an indisputable element of 'African management' discourse. Although its advocates do certainly not constitute a grassroots protest group, they could still be conceived in terms of a community or movement. Those who strongly identify with the idea of 'African management' can tacitly become part of this community, suggesting a sense of belonging. Ever since the concept was established in South Africa, people started referring to it as 'ubuntu movement' (Jackson 2004: 250) or 'African management movement' (Thomas and Schonken 1998; Maier 2002).**[v]**

Glocalisation
This book's subject – ubuntu in relation to management – can be seen as an illustration of the cultural dimension of globalisation, of what Roland Robertson called *glocalisation* – a contraction of the words 'globalisation' and 'localisation' –in the sense of new cultural products that are being created:
… clearly many have seriously underestimated the flow of ideas and practices from the so-called Third World to the seemingly dominant societies and regions of the world.
(Robertson 1995: 38-9).

Global cultural processes comprise creative local processes and the production of new culture in which 'the local' and notions of 'home' and 'community' are emphasised. What happens at the local level is itself constitutive of globalisation. Thus, globalisation is a two-way process of influencing (Hart 2002: 14). This does not mean, however, that globalisation would actually have caused 'African management' discourse to emerge in South Africa; still, it has come up against a background of globalisation and as part of larger global cultural processes. Likewise, in other parts of the world, especially in Asia, local management and leadership discourses have come forward, in which notions of traditional values and indigenous knowledge are also given emphasis (e.g. Hayashi 1988; Van Wolferen 1989; Redding 1993; Chung, Lee et al. 1997). The actual circumstances, the specific moment, and the ways in which ideas with regard to Afrocentric management philosophy have been externalised, articulated and disseminated, are specifically related to local South African political and cultural contexts during a time of transition from apartheid to majority rule.

Glocalisation, in the sense of a two-way process of cultural influencing, raises

the prospect of 'exporting' ideas around ubuntu and management to places beyond (South) Africa. The global and the local are influencing each other, are intermingling, with the local eventually giving something back to the global. Thus, a form of glocal ubuntu could come into existence, as 'African management' prophets anticipate. The image that innovation always comes from 'the West' is being discursively reversed. 'African management' advocates radiate optimism. If one accepts the idea of Africa as the 'cradle of humankind', meaning that human civilisation started in Africa, this acknowledges Africa's crucial role for humanity and worldwide civilisation.**[vi]** This is in defiance of more dominant views of Africa's 'primitiveness' and dependency.**[vii]** In this reasoning, if humankind indeed emerged from Africa and man was able to develop tools to survive, to multiply and spread over the world, why would it not be possible to develop new perspectives on management and leadership here? In other words, Africa could have 'something special' to offer to the world, especially in the realm of humanity and spirituality, an important message, a solution to certain difficulties that other societies (in 'the west') suffer from. An example is provided by the book *Lekgotla. The art of leadership through dialogue* by Willem de Liefde, a Dutch author who has worked for years as, amongst others, a managing director in Africa and who recognises the spirit of lekgotla, the traditional Batswana meeting point around a fireplace. Initially the book was published in Dutch to inform managers in Europe about the concept of 'African tribal leadership'. A year later, it was translated into English and launched onto the South African market (De Liefde 2003).**[viii]** This is a quite extraordinary illustration of the popularity of the idea of glocal ubuntu.

Competitiveness
Being constitutive of globalisation itself, in a somewhat paradoxical way Afrocentric management discourse seeks to challenge 'the global' to the point that it imagines itself teaching the world about ubuntu. This could be realised by achieving what Ronnie Lessem has called the Southern African Businessphere in his 'Four Worlds of Management' model (Lessem and Nussbaum 1996; Lessem 1994). According to this model, 'southern' and 'eastern' orientations are less prominent in South African corporate cultures and business realities than 'western' and 'northern' orientations were.

... corporate culture in the north is characterised by rationalism, in the west by entrepreneurship and pragmatism, in the east by holism, and in the south by

humanism (Lessem and Nussbaum 1996: 13).

According to Lessem, embracing all 'four worlds of management' – an integration of 'western', 'northern', 'eastern' and 'southern' perspectives – is something that not only the South African business community should do, but is a message to the whole world, since there are business lessons to learn from South Africa. Mbigi and Mangaliso support this idea, as they will explain, in chapter 1 and 5 respectively.

With South Africa's official re-entry into the global economy after 1994, and the ensuing intensification of its global interactions, companies have been struggling with issues like the increased worldwide competition, corporate identity, diversity management and transformation. Under these circumstances, the South African private sector attempts to become globally competitive above all. 'African management' discourse, including the 'four worlds of management' model, claims to be able to provide the tools to achieve that goal. Strategic business considerations and 'enlightened self-interest' can be motives to become absorbed by an 'African management' approach. This relates to what Mbigi in his transformation workshops ironically categorises under 'survival strategies for whites in South Africa'. Against the background of *black economic empowerment* initiatives and measures of the South African government in the area of affirmative action within the labour market, white managers may fear their own replacement or redundancy in due course for the sake of the upward mobility of black managers. Therefore, they will have to review their strategies and 'adapt culturally' in the context of the 'New South Africa'. Identification with Afrocentric discourse may thus emerge as an option for economic survival. It would certainly be worthwhile to consider the motives of entrepreneurs and managers in South Africa for drawing on an 'African management' rhetoric that may not always be merely normative or altruistic. To enable the reader to position Afrocentric management discourse within South Africa, a brief description of the context in which it emerged, follows next.

A mood of change and a change of mood
The emergence of the discourse on ubuntu in relation to management has to be considered in the light of the transition and transformation in South Africa in the late 1980s and early 1990s (Van den Heuvel forthcoming). Against a background of political violence, strikes, and widespread feelings of insecurity in the years prior to 1994, (white) entrepreneurs and business people feared a

nationalisation of the industry and the unknown consequences of black majority rule in terms of macro-economic policies. Simultaneously however, a sense of optimism and excitement arose among a small but significant group of business leaders, marketing and management 'mavericks'. The positive imagery of a future multicultural democratic South Africa appealed to them and unleashed hitherto unknown energies. In this condition, ubuntu – presented as an 'indigenous African style of participatory management' – offered a source of inspiration, also to white South African entrepreneurs moving away from
paternalistic and discriminatory approaches to management:

As this country rediscovers its pride in itself, we are discovering the magic of the Afrocentric, rather than the Eurocentric, path to the high ground of shared Values (Lascaris and Lipkin 1993: 45).

Afrocentric values became associated with something mysterious and fabulous. All of a sudden, the 'African culture' that used to be ignored in conventional management literature in South Africa and that was deemed inferior and used in a divide-and-rule strategy in the Bantustan policy under apartheid, acquired a renewed recognition. Peter Vundla, Chief Executive Officer of *Herdbuoys* in the 1990s and one of the very few 'early' black managers in South Africa at the time, commented:
We need to redefine management in this country by appreciating the African-ness of our people (Lascaris and Lipkin 1993: 46).

A remarkable transition from apartheid to democracy brought about a search for 'a (South) African way' of managing organisations, inspired by 'African culture'. As Nick Binedell, who became director of Wits Business School in Johannesburg in 1992, put it:
*… what was very clear at the time was … that the dynamics of South Africa and African culture were not really addressed in organisations.***[ix]**

In the early 1990s, Peter Christie and Nick Binedell were actively involved in facilitating the South African Management Project (SAMP) that ran at Wits Business School. SAMP constituted a vital platform for the expression of views and debates on ubuntu and Afrocentric management. With several publications coming out of that initiative, 'African management' was definitely launched as a 'new' management concept in South Africa. Peter Christie wrote the following in a preface to the book *African management. Philosophies, Concepts and*

Applications:

Management of African organisations has traditionally been largely neglected by the mainstream business literature. (Christie, Lessem et al. 1994: s.n.) From the outset, it was not immediately clear to all that 'African management' was notsymply synonymous to 'managing organisations in Africa'. The former was particularly an identity-related perspective, as the adjective 'African' suggests. It entailed a vision of what 'Africanness' would mean in the context of management and organisation in a post-apartheid era, with highly normative ideas, assuming that (black) African people all shared specific cultural characteristics.

The ubuntu concept

Further to its normative character, Afrocentric management discourse seems to be characterised by a search for cultural purity and authenticity. This is illustrated by the use of ubuntu, the key concept in this respect. Ubuntu is a term derived from the Nguni language group in southern Africa, expressing a strong sense of community, collective morality and unconditional solidarity. The equivalent in Sotho languages would be botho, and umunhu in Shona.**[x]** It supposedly stands for the essence of being human, shared humanity or humaneness, and for the essence of Africanness. The frequently cited phrases 'A person is a person through others', and 'I am because we are', a reading in English of the African aphorism in Zulu (and Xhosa) *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* and in Sotho *motho ke motho ka motho yo mongwe or motho ke motho ka ka batho*, are used to illustrate the meanings ascribed to ubuntu. Supposedly, it articulates 'a basic respect and compassion for others':
It is both a factual description and a rule of conduct or social ethic. It not only describes human being as 'being-with-others' but also prescribes how we should relate to others, i.e. what 'being-with-others' should be all about (Louw 2002: 5).

The type of noble virtues associated with ubuntu concern cooperation, reciprocity, hospitality, kindliness, mutual trust, respect and equality, but simultaneously it seems to be a rather open-ended construct that may serve as a container for a variety of meanings.

Ubuntu is an ideal concept, often flawed in interpretation in practice. Because the word is being thrown around in popular media, its meaning has become ambiguous and unclear. (Venter 2004: 149)

An Afrocentric cognitive framework and key concepts such as ubuntu may remain rather vague, specifically what they supposedly mean in a modern management context. This is an advantage at the same time, for it creates space to discursively develop such concepts within specific organisational environments.

The origins of ubuntu take us back to rural village life in pre-colonial Africa, where it supposedly was a key value in traditional social organisation. In current Afrocentric discourse the notion of ubuntu is revitalised and re-invented. Amongst its several domains of application, it is also given a central place in conceptualisations of leadership and management in modern contexts, assumingly still resembling 'authentic' African traditions and values. This assumption can be problematised in at least two ways. Firstly, the idea that African values and traditions can be taken as components of a homogeneous entity, with only some minor regional variations, is problematic. This assumption largely ignores the wide diversity of civilisations and differing cultural orientations throughout Africa that have developed in the course of times. Secondly, the notion of something 'authentically African' is also questionable. A plethora of cultural interactions and diffusion that went on for many centuries both within Africa, and with (past ancient) civilisations outside the continent, would be entirely ignored. Such processes have intensified in the era of globalisation. Processes of cultural diffusion in Africa have probably been taking place since the very beginnings of humanity. At best, indigeneity could be considered a temporary condition. 'From prehistoric times down to today', wrote W.E.B. du Bois already in the early twentieth century, 'Africa is ... primarily the land of the mulatto', which is quite a remarkable observation for a man of his time (Du Bois 2002 [1915]: 36).

Identity and belonging
The South African philosopher Mogobe Ramose, who has greatly inspired Heinz Kimmerle's thinking about ubuntu, has profoundly studied, and reflected on, this concept. Ramose is convinced that the notion of ubuntu can be of great value to contemporary South African society, in spite of (or perhaps thanks to) its ambiguity and flexibility (Ramose 1999). Its value concerns for instance its reconciliatory potential, and the idea that it could provide a sense of identity, self-esteem, and belonging. Its popularity should be considered in the context of a society where 'negative images of self' subsist amongst black intellectuals (Mamdani 1999: 127). In this view, the notion of ubuntu becomes an ideological tool, and is instrumental as an identity-marker. Again, this can also be interpreted

in a different way, raising critical questions about the prospects of realising a society based on ubuntu principles, such as for example Jan Boessenkool and Henk J. van Rinsum will do in chapter 7 of this volume.

Attributes ascribed to ubuntu are analogous to the rhetoric around *African Renaissance* that is said to have the power to provide the 'seeds of hope' that the continent is so desperately seeking for: the desire for 'a new beginning', for which in a post-cold war context the timing would be exactly right (Okumu 2002: 145-6). It underlines 'an increasingly powerful appeal strongly articulated by intellectuals, for a new future for Africa', opening up exciting possibilities to change the lives of people across the continent (Vale & Maseko 2002: 129-30). Such claims are also linked to the project to 'decolonise the mind', shaking off feelings of humiliation and inferiority. The historical dimension, the recognition of a long history of domination and 'unfree' labour in South Africa, is an essential aspect in the contextualisation of this emergent local approach. Precisely this aspect, the impact of human suffering and experiences of humiliation in the South African workplace of the past – for both employees and employers – often seems to be overlooked in evaluations of 'African management' discourse in contemporary business practice.

It should be acknowledged however, that there also non-essentialist ways to approach identity formation in an African setting, for instance in terms of – negotiable, multiple, complex and dynamic – identification: '… each act, each signification, each decision risks opening new meanings, vistas and possibilities' (Nyamnjoh 2001: 30). Francis Nyamnjoh believes that most people in Africa refuse to think in dichotomies and 'to be fenced in by particular identity markers'. 'Being African is not a birthmark', he says, seeing African identity as a process. Besides the potential value of the ubuntu concept, its ideological use and its function as identity-marker, some other critical notions will be raised in the following section.

Hard questions
Visions of 'African management', with their optimistic and hence to some extent onesided illustrations, tend to ignore potential negative consequences at the implementation side. For instance, in 'African management' discourse there is generally an emphasis on social obligations towards the community instead of 'individual rights'. This presupposes an unconditional compliance to the social group. How does this relate to the free will of the individual, and how could this

work out in organisational practice?

In relation to this, Christoph Marx published a challenging article, in which he compared Africanist versions of ubu and ubuntu with culturalist representations of Afrikaner nationalism. Marx emphasises that with the revitalisation of ubuntu – also embedded in African Renaissance ideology – a 'romanticised and largely ahistorical image of Africa' is invoked. All this is presented in explicitly conservative terms, denying the cultural diversity of Africans (Marx 2002: 65). Consequently, the Africanist culturalist nationalist idea, which also characterises 'African management',

... centred on the notion of 'Ubuntu', is preparing the ground in which the 'flowers of evil' might once blossom again in South Africa (Marx 2002: 50).

In extreme phraseology, Marx sends out warnings for 'fascist ideas of "corporation management"' justified by Afrocentric management discourse (Marx 2002: 65). In addition, the discursive use of ubuntu in post-apartheid organisational contexts could lead to the covering-up of conflicts, by displaying subtle mechanisms of social inclusion and exclusion, and as a consequence of strong appeals to Afrocentric notions of egalitarism, friendliness and togetherness. Van Binsbergen has also pointed at 'the potential dangers of ubuntu as mystifying real conflict, perpetuating resentment' that,

in his view, was demonstrated for instance in the dealings of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission* (Van Binsbergen 2001: 57). Supporters of critical management studies tend to highlight the 'hidden agendas' behind humanistic management approaches, such as alternative means of control and 'soft domination' in the workplace under the disguise of 'communalist interests' (Clegg, Kornberger et al. 2005: 168-9).

There are probably no unambiguous answers to the 'hard questions' and to critical notions. It will have to show in actual practice. Since the implementation of management concepts always depends on particular institutional contexts, prevailing power configurations and interests at stake, it is likely that practical experiences with Afrocentric management principles will inherently be highly differential.

Contributions
After these introductory remarks, I will briefly present the respective chapters in this volume. As announced earlier, the reader will come across a wide spectrum

of views. Lovemore Mbigi is a management consultant, motivational speaker and workshop facilitator, who strongly identifies with an Afrocentric worldview. He is proud to be called a *tribesman*, and he has made it his mission in life to disseminate his ideas on 'African management' philosophy. To some extent, Mbigi is also associated with the academic community, but altogether he does not sit too easily into this category. He is habitually referred to as 'Professor', regularly involved in lecturing assignments and also a mentor and supervisor to numerous southern African students. Nevertheless, and he is the first one to point this out, he is not 'a typical professor'. Mbigi claims to have branded the concept of ubuntu in relation to management. His contribution should in the first place not be seen as an academic assessment of the concept, but rather as an attempt to promote 'African management' as a management philosophy. Therefore, it is clearly a managerial text, revealing his personal vision.

In the first chapter Mbigi explains, sometimes somewhat provocatively and prescriptively, what ubuntu means in an Africanist interpretation, and how it could contribute to revitalising organisations in South Africa, and help business leaders and employees to rediscover and harness their *African cultural heritage*. Mbigi has been making his proclamations in an animated prophesying campaign for more than fifteen years now, if not more. He is, as it were, almost a personification of ubuntu in relation to management in southern Africa, as he was already on the scene when it all came about in the early 1990s. What is more, he is still actively committed to keep the discourse alive. His 'statements of belief and aspiration' in the spirit of an Afrocentric management approach should not be confused with 'descriptions of reality', as Van Rinsum and Boesenkool point out in chapter 7.

In chapter 2, Luchien Karsten complements Mbigi's views with a closer look on management and leadership concepts used in Afrocentric discourse, highlighting the importance of language use in the domain of management and organisation, relating to specific worldviews. Karsten examines the nature of management concepts, management fashion, and knowledge transfer. Thus, he assesses what ubuntu has in common with (other) management concepts. He argues that this concept represents an African worldview that is not captured in conventional American or global management speak that is supposed to be 'universal'. Even though one could classify 'African management' and ubuntu in terms of *management fads*, Karsten believes it has very valuable implications in

the context of management in an African setting.

In chapter 3, through an interlocking philosophical excursion, Heinz Kimmerle discusses in further detail the idea of ubuntu and in particular Ramose´s interpretations of it. He provides – in a somewhat generalising manner – an overview of a variety of meanings pertaining to (equivalents of) ubuntu and communalism in a wider African spectrum, to grasp a number of different connotations and nuances in the use of these concepts in the domain of African philosophy and art.

Taking this publication as a vantage point for further enriching Afrocentric management thought, David Weir reflects on Arab and Islamic features of management and organisation in chapter 4. He suggests that Arab and Islamic conceptualisations could substantially enrich Afrocentric perspectives, since in practice – as his contribution surprisingly shows – there are some striking similarities between Islamic and Afrocentric perspectives on management. Weir's publication is also a clear illustration of Africa's cultural diversity, also in the domain of management and organisation, thus simultaneously countering homogenising Afrocentric conceptualisations.

In addition, Mzamo Mangaliso and Nomazengele Mangaliso explain their views on the potential value of ubuntu and management in chapter 5. They present and promote this approach, in a professional, academic style. Yet, it clearly shows that they reside with the prophets, also promoting the glocal dimension of the discourse. Mzamo and Nomazengele Mangaliso were born and raised in South Africa, ut they have been living and working in the United States for a very long time, integrating their professional experiences from that continent into their own management views. Thus, they try to inspire also a 'non-African' audience with South Africa's management lessons. Their contribution is probably particularly appealing to practitioners.

Perhaps, the essentialist features of 'African management' discourse that are so often criticised in academia both in Europe and in Africa itself, may turn out to be instrumental in provoking challenging conversations that would otherwise not take place. Such conversations possibly help to identify and break certain taboos in organisational and management discourse – for example with regard to 'ethnicity' or 'traditional religious values', and to show how these notions become manifest – or not – in modern organisational contexts, confronting 'modernity'

with 'tradition' inside South Africa.

In chapter 6, Peter Franks develops this argument in his own contemplative way, polarising notions of 'modernity' and 'tradition' to make his point clearer to us. Tapping from many years of personal managerial experience, Franks' contribution represents an interpretative point of view, with amazing insights from organisational realities in a South African rural context.

In chapter 7, Henk van Rinsum and Jan Boessenkool take an outspoken critical stance in the debate, highlighting the political dimension. They point at the metaphoric power of Afrocentricity, arguing that the emphasis on Afrocentric management approaches implies a dichotomy with Eurocentric management, which rather symbolises an urge of Africans to liberate themselves from colonialism and apartheid. Van Rinsum and Boessenkool draw attention to the tensions and paradoxes around this debate. In particular, they wonder whether 'fancy' ubuntu talk by prosperous businesspeople and smart consultants is not merely a strategy to conceal the mounting poverty gap in South Africa.

Finally, co-editors Mzamo Mangaliso and Lisa van de Bunt review all contributions, adding their insightful evaluative comments.

A methodology of listening
Dialogue is not just about talk. It is also about listening. The 'methodology of listening', which Heinz Kimmerle discusses in chapter 4, is also suggested here: listen patiently to what the other person has to say. This requires openness and dedication, but it also takes courage to confront one another with opposing viewpoints. To the extent that identities are involved in this dialogue, these are not just about assumed differences like 'African' versus 'European', or 'Afrocentric' versus 'Eurocentric' points of view. For instance, professional identities play an important role in this context. Obviously, a management consultant probably has other ways of interpreting social realities and presenting a management vision than a scholar or a business leader will have. A further differentiation exists among academics, largely depending on their specific disciplinary embedding or epistemological viewpoint. Naturally, a philosopher tends to highlight other aspects than a scholar of management studies or an organisational anthropologist. The reader will therefore hit upon highly diverse views on Afrocentric management perspectives. This is exactly what makes the book so unique and absorbing, but of course, it is quite

impossible to give a comprehensive and 'definite' perspective. The dialogue moves on.

First, we should read and listen carefully to what ardent representatives of Afrocentric management thinking are telling us, and see what terminology and images they call upon to put their message across. Using terms such as Prophecies and Protests, believers and non-believers in this context reveals that apparently there are religious aspects to the debate. Perhaps the time has come to start listening to what Africans actually have to say about African ideas on spirituality and religion, and to take things literally as they are told, instead of immediately forming incomplete or badly informed opinions.

We must move away from a common Western tendency to define religion almost exclusively in terms of a search for meaning in life (Ellis and Ter Haar 2004: 3).

This volume is considerate to the potential value that Africa-oriented or Africa-inspired perspectives could add to management and organisational thinking, but without turning a blind eye to critical notes. Admittedly, not all issues that could be raised in an interrogation of 'African management' discourse are covered here. The editors acknowledge that there are several omissions. Readers may experience the lack of assessments of practical 'African management' experiences as a lacuna. For instance, how do people at the receiving end experience ubuntu management? And how do trade unions in South Africa perceive Afrocentric management approaches? Additionally, one may observe that the gender issue has not at all been addressed. Both 'African management' prophets and scholars – considerate and/or critical – have neglected this issue. How is the role of women conceived in 'African management' philosophy? Are specific gender roles defined? If the gender issue would turn out to be entirely ignored, what implications could this have on the position of women in organisational contexts? Therefore, we would like to invite readers to provide feedback and suggest additional points for debate in relation to Afrocentric management approaches. In any case, in this publication the non-believers have made efforts to focus on the believers' points of view, allowing Africans the possibility to express matters in the terms they feel are appropriate. Vice versa, the prophets encounter other perspectives and opposing views. The outcome of the process is unknown as of yet, but the editors believe in dialogue as a virtue in itself.

NOTES

i. For example newspaper articles, book reviews and magazine features published in: Namibia Economist, 17 October 2003; Business Times, 12 October 2003; Financial Mail, 25 July 2003; Beeld, 23 July 2003; Die Burger, 16 October 2003; People Dynamics, March 2003, November/December 2002, February 1998, January 1993, October 1992; Patriot, 19 August 1999; The Star, 20 April 1997; Beeld, 7 October 1996; Sunday Times, 24 September 1995; Financies & Tegniek, June/July 1995; The Economist, 18 March 1995; The Natal Witness, 27 July 1994; The Daily News, 11 November 1991; Business Day, 31 October 1991.

ii. A qualitative case study research on employees' perceptions of 'African Leadership' in FNB was facilitated by Wits Business School in Johannesburg and carried out in 2005-2006 by Elske van der Pol, MA student of the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam.

iii. In a range of interviews with South African managers as part of a field research on 'African management' discourse, carried out between June 2003 and June 2004, these terms were mostly used to describe in general organisational culture and management and leadership styles in South Africa (Van den Heuvel forthcoming).

iv. For an in-depth discussion of identity formation in an African context, in relation to management and leadership, see Van den Heuvel (forthcoming).

v. Thomas and Schonken use this term in a somewhat disdainful manner.

vi. A central assumption in Afrocentrism is the image of Africa as the 'cradle of humankind', alluding to Africa's assumed uniqueness and ancient character. Reference is made to scientific – or semi-scientific or pseudo-scientific – accounts that would affirm this claim, such as the book Out of Africa's Eden. The peopling of the world (Oppenheimer 2003). Oppenheimer asserts that 'a group living in central Africa 150,000 years ago are the ancestors of everyone living today' and that 'everybody who is not African can be connected by mitochondrial DNA to a single woman who apparently left Africa with a band of humans 80,000 years ago' (Cape Argus 2003).

vii. For a discussion on imagery of Africa and notions of Africa's primitiveness, see for instance Ashforth 1990; Blok 1997; Corbey 1989; Davidson 1994; Fabian 2000; Jahoda 1999; Mudimbe 1988; Rigby 1996; and Wylie 2000.

viii. For a review of this book see Van den Heuvel and Wels 2004.

ix. Interview with Professor Nick Binedell, Gordon Institute of Business Science, Illovo, 6 August 2003.

x. In Shona munhu means 'person' and umunhu means 'human nature' (Hannan

1984: 390).

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Prophecies And Protests ~ A Vision Of African Management And African Leadership: A Southern African Perspective
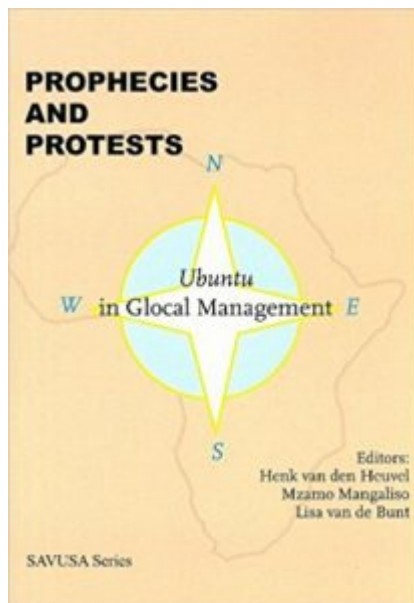
The purpose of this chapter is to explore the philosophical and cultural dimensions of African management and African leadership. The specific intention is to provide a vision of what African management has come to mean in my own life, as a person, raised in the Zezuru tribe (in Zimbabwe), schooled in Zimbabwe and, having built a career in Southern Africa, as a writer and practitioner/consultant who has applied African principles to management. Rather than purporting to be a descriptive study surveying the field of African management, this chapter takes a more phenomenological approach and is offered as an example of how African management has been applied and promoted during the past 15 years of my career. My hope is that it is seen as an attempt to give readers a deeper understanding of the cultural world which has influenced my life and work, and that readers, both African and non-African, will be inspired to envisage what African management could be. In my own view, African management principles, as I have learned to apply them, have the capacity to mobilise collective business transformations in a unique and effective way. The chapter attempts to illustrate some of the reasons for the effectiveness I have witnessed in the application of African management strategies. Rather than purporting to provide empirical research for these methods, these are descriptions and personal accounts of what they are and why they work.

African management
African management has origins similar to modern management, in that its roots lie in African oral history and indigenous African religion. In 1993, *People Dynamics*, a South African personnel management magazine, published two essays, in which I articulated the African philosophy of ubuntu as a basis of effective human resources.**[i]** In the same year, Ronnie Lessem, Peter Christie and myself co-authored one of the earliest texts on African Management in South Africa (Christie, Lessem and Mbigi 1994). The book included an article on the application and adaptation of indigenous African religious concepts and practices to organisational transformation at Eastern Highlands Tea Estates in Zimbabwe. In fact it was due to my positive experiences as CEO of this company, which inspired me to abandon my career as a business director and devote my life to the

articulation of African and cultural values and philosophy in management.

At Eastern Highlands I had successfully applied a variety of African cultural and religious practices and concepts to the organisational challenge of transformation management. These included: the adaptation of traditional rituals and ceremonies used in African religion; encouraging group singing and dancing to build morale, enhance production processes and engage large groups in collective strategy formulation, and the use of myths and story telling to build leadership and organisational cohesion. With contributions from other writers at the time, such as Reuel Khoza, Peter Christie and Ronnie Lessem, African management as a field of study and practice began to flourish as a discipline in South Africa, from the early 1990s. The African philosophy of ubuntu and its emphasis on interdependence and consensus provided its foundation.

Compared with western management theory and practice, African management is characterised by flatter structures which stress inclusion, interdependence, democracy and broad stakeholder participation. Rather than formal, uniform policies, African managers call for an emphasis on flexibility in relation to policies, which can be easily initiated, changed and transformed through a broad-based collective, mass-scale consensus and participation of many stakeholders. Instead of the tendency towards impersonal relationships in western management theory**[ii]** within an organisational context, African culture calls for highly personalised relationships. In African organisations, harnessing spiritual and social capital is an important management challenge. While there is hierarchy in African organisations, respect for hierarchy is emphasised in ceremonies. What drives organisations, more than official roles within a hierarchy, is the informal power that derives from natural social clusters, and consultation and negotiation depend largely on who owns the issue. Representation of all stakeholders and inclusion of all groups are given emphasis, so that African management is more about allowing multiple leadership roles and greater flexibility. Finally African management tends to prefer a web of interdependence of roles, relationships and competencies and is less concerned with structure and function than western management.

Religious ritual and ceremonial foundations of African management
One of the core assumptions of my work as a practitioner and theorist of African management is the fundamental acknowledgement that, generally speaking, as Africans, we do not have a scientific western consciousness. Our African

consciousness is deeply rooted in religion and spirituality in which symbolism and the expression of behavioural actions are more important than scientific logic. Rituals and ceremonies, symbols and mythology are all relevant and it is important to understand the link between these elements and African cosmology.

In African cosmology reality is deeply rooted in spirituality and spiritual interpretations of events, rather than in scientific interpretation of events. Therefore there is greater openness to what the spirits can do for you, or any communal organisation. In my own experience, such acknowledgement of spirituality is core to understanding African culture and African management. What tends to be in the minds of people I have worked with is how to harness spirituality. Questions that are asked are: how do you understand events spiritually? How do you petition the ancestors? How do you bond with those who have passed on? How and when do you give thanks? In essence, this is how the spiritual realm affects reality.

Mythology is an important part of the foundation of African management. Myths tell us who we are and our possibilities of becoming, as well as where we are. In fact, Joseph Campbell (Campbell and Moyers 1988) was right when he said: 'What myths are for is to bring us into a level of consciousness that is spiritual'.

Indigenous religious rituals and ceremonies of transformation are an equally important aspect because they harness our emotional and psychic spiritual energy. These provoke contemplation and reflection to release us from the stultifying routines and common sense of daily life. They bring about the artful and joyful side of life. Their seductive beauty lies in the ugliness and uniqueness of their ceremonial regalia. It is important that rituals and ceremonies should be accompanied by rhythmic dancing and drumming, as well as singing which brings absorptive, as well as inspirational capacity. The sad reality is that without dance, music and singing, as well as bonding rituals and ceremonies in our life we suffer from high levels of self-alienation. Detailed below are some of the rituals and ceremonies of African Shona tribal religion that have been instructive in the design of transformation processes and practices I have adapted in southern Africa.

It is important to reiterate that the vision articulated in this chapter and the theoretical work offered, represents a view grounded in personal experience as a person born in the Zezuru tribe, which is one of the ethnic groups in the broader

Shona tribe. While there are variations that exist in other Shona ethnic groups, such as the Karanga, and Manyika, the underlying cosmology is shared for the most part. In the interests of simplicity, I will generalise and use the term Shona, while acknowledging that there may be subtle differences among the ethnic groups just mentioned. This section will cover the following rituals, which I have begun to develop into a theoretical body of knowledge and to use as a basis for practical interventions.

– Corpse shadow theory / ritual;
– Crossroads theory / ritual;
– Dandaro renewal ceremony;
– Mukwerera Rainmaking Ceremony.

Corpse shadow cleansing ritual
In Shona tribal religion a dead body is not supposed to have a shadow, and a specific ritual, known as the corpse shadow cleansing ritual, is carried out when there is a shadow.**[iii]** A shadow indicates unfinished business on earth, which prevents the dead person's transformation into the spiritual world beyond. A shadow also indicates that the person failed to have closure on a particular issue, such as bitterness over personal ill-treatment.

In order to deal with this transformation challenge, the family will have to consult a diviner for guidance and clarification. This is usually followed by a cleansing ritual. This enables the deceased person to proceed with the benefit of personal spiritual transformation into the world beyond.

Transformation leadership applications
This ritual, embodying a cleansing process, has been adapted for transformational purposes in the work place, as a way to express and uncover unresolved and unexpressed issues. The first step in transformation is to create inclusive platforms to deal with organisational grievances, fears, ghosts, tragic aspects of their collective history and pathologies. Examples of organisational issues which typically arise are: the tendency to blame and scorn others; negative feelings of helplessness and passivity; secrecy and denial; unexpressed collective historical grievances; unexpressed collective anger and bitterness; unexpressed collective fears and insecurities; collective alienation and isolation and finally avoidance and turf protection. The expression and healing of these negative spirits and feelings will enable the organisational community to free its collective energy and grapple

with positive endeavours such as creating an inspiring image of its future. This has to be done within a flexible strategic agenda.

My experience is that it is very difficult to connect with the spirit of the organisation without the use of mythology, oral history and storytelling. It is not an intellectual journey but an emotional and spiritual journey. The use of collective dancing, music and singing is also imperative.

The cleansing process works in the following way. Organisations hold a three to five-day transformation ceremony around core strategic themes and key issues. These are called burning platforms, since they provide a context for people to give voice to burning issues. The agenda should be flexible and open to allow the expression of negative feelings, which opens the way to clear thinking. It is advisable to start with key role-players, some who are pro-change and some who are against change. It is important to lead the discussion in such a way that they articulate their change positions and agendas. Then, the facilitator makes the case for change and designs an inclusive process to manage the articulated change issues. Finally, it is important to formulate an inclusive process to craft a shared future vision, as well as a pathway to a shared desired future.

One client, the South African Post office, chose to use the burning platform process, at a point in time when they were experiencing a loss of R500 million a year. Racism was so rampant that the organisation was losing skilled managers, both white and black. There had been so many internal conflicts during one year (1998) that the human resources department had had to institute 4,200 different mediations. According to the human resources manager, most of these cases were racially motivated. In addition, people alleged that there was fraud in the organisation of R1 million rand. When we came to discuss the value drivers of the company, they said fraud around registered letters was a key one and had to do with the presence of syndicates. During the first days it was very difficult for whites coming to the workshops to share rooms with blacks, but after a number of workshops that was no longer an issue. As a result of the burning platforms and the building of group trust and group cohesion the Post office was eventually able to identify and then bust some of the syndicates that were involved. They couldn't function properly as an organisation, until the burning platform processes were completed. They went on to make R750 Million a year. After a twoyear period, there was a great improvement in race relations. They eventually went onto commercialise some of their business units.

Cross-roads ritual

In a traditional context, this ritual is intended to help an individual and a group to deal with cross-roads issues in their life in order to leap into the unknown future. The purpose of the ritual is to help individuals and groups find a way to turn their backs on the unwanted present and past. The ritual is done at night in birth clothes at a four-way stop or cross-roads with the help of a diviner. The diviner will help the individual and relevant family group to articulate the issues that are faced, standing at the cross-roads.

The participants of the ritual face the four sides of the earth and utter incantations or mantras around their specific cross-roads challenges. They travel back home without looking back. They then eat red millet porridge mixed with cleansing herbs from the same bowl with clenched fists to signify their new fighting spirit. Every member in the extended family has to participate. This is known to harness the creativity of the group.

Transformation management applications

Anchoring strategic themes and burning issues should be the basis of designing learning materials for transformation workshops. The design of transformation workshops should be rooted in the cross-roads issues facing the organisation and the workshop participants, so as to facilitate emotional and spiritual connection. The facilitator must first deal with the negative issues from the past to enable the organisation and participants to harness the creative energy needed for forward movement. It is important for the facilitator to avoid becoming a hostage of the tragic element of someone's history. Human beings have the capacity to overcome their limitations and reinvent their life and future. Heroes have demonstrated this capacity throughout history by turning disadvantages into advantages. In working with groups, do not blame the past; overcome its limitations and constraints. This is the essence of creativity. We cannot change our past. The past is our heritage. Our duty as such is not to condemn history; our duty is to change history. The goal is to create a sense of a shared destiny and a shared vision, as well as a shared performance agenda and shared bonding rituals to create shared meaning.

It helps the process to use a credible external facilitator, but leadership at every level of the organisation and community should own the change through high visibility at change ceremonies and rituals. Rituals and ceremonial leadership cannot be delegated, as the primary task of leadership is to create meaning and manage focused attention. The facilitator must foster an inspiring victory

paradigm to overcome a victimhood paradigm that often leads to paralysis and inaction. He or she can use non-verbal communication. For example, it is possible to fight resistance to change with clenched fists. It is also important to create a collective fighting spirit of optimism. As leaders we cannot give what we do not have. We have to first create hope within ourselves to inspire us to peak performance.

Dandaro renewal ceremony
The ceremony is used for both renewal and remedial purposes. It is facilitated by an external diviner, and participation by a community of relatives and outsiders is essential. The Dandaro renewal ceremony focuses on the specific challenge faced by a particular extended family. It is a night-long affair, during which collective contemplation and reflection are mandatory. Although it is facilitated by a particular spirit of divination, all the spirits present are allowed to commune as soul mates and descend from the world beyond and assist in giving guidance to the family on the cross-roads challenges under consideration. This particular ceremony is always accompanied by collective singing and dancing, as well as drumming, and punctuated by the ululation of women to welcome spirits.

The singing of the ceremonial songs is always accompanied by spiritual wailing (kukaiva) to call the spirits for guidance, and punctuated by a special form of meaningless humming (mahonyera). In between the singing participants give their didactic message in conversational style.

Transformation management applications
At Eastern Highlands Tea Estates I re-enacted the Dandaro renewal ceremony as an inclusive education forum for organisational renewal to allow collective strategic reflection and dialogue involving everyone in the organisation. This was inspired by childhood religious experiences at the feet of the spirit cult of Dembetembe, the Rain Queen of the Vattera Clan of the Shona tribe. She had adopted me and appointed me as her personal assistant and prince at the age of three.

Organisational education should not just be an intellectual affair, but also a ceremonial and collective bonding affair, permitting joyful dancing, singing and drumming, so as to allow for feasting and the harnessing of the collective creative and spiritual genius of the organisation. It is difficult to develop and mobilize the emotional, social, creative, and spiritual intelligence of the organisation, which

will dilute the impact of the transformation interventions of the organisation.

Mukwerera rainmaking ceremony
The Shona tribe of Zimbabwe has three major ceremonies. Ruvhuno is a ceremony that celebrates the ripening of crops. Rukoto is a ceremony which celebrates the harvesting of crops. The African American community has reinstituted this in the Diaspora in the form of Kwanza Celebrations.

The Mukwerera rainmaking ceremony (Lessem and Nussbaum 1996) is the most important strategic ceremony or forum that takes place before the rainy season, to allow collective strategic planning by the community. It is led by the Rain Queen or Rain King. It is an all-day affair which includes community education, mobilization and social bonding. Every family participates in its preparations and subsequently in the celebrations. Several bulls are slaughtered and eaten together with other food during the celebrations. For this ceremonial occasion, other lower level spirits are not allowed to participate, as the highest spirit, the Rainmaker Spirit, who is a representative of God on earth, is in charge. In the spiritual hierarchy this is very important and it is strictly enforced. Ceremonial collective singing, dancing and drumming is imperative, as well as collective bonding punctuated by ululation to express joy and gratitude to God and the spirits in the world beyond. During the celebrations the strategic challenges facing the community are hotly debated.

Transformation management applications
At Eastern Highlands Tea Estates I re-enacted the Mukwerera ceremony to democratize organisational strategy formulation, mobilization and effectuation. I called it the Production Festival and in Nampak I called it the World-class day, to capture the organisation's aspiration to attain world-class manufacturing status.

This strategic ceremony allowed both organisations to undertake effective strategic mobilization, renewal, reflection and implementation, as well as strategic education, so that employees could effectively become both strategic thinkers and doers. The organisations also succeeded in becoming time-based and team-based organisations, which accelerated value creation, as well as in becoming learning organisations, which in turn accelerated knowledge creation, sharing and application. The ceremony also inspired organisational creativity and innovation as illustrated in the diagram detailed below:

Figure 1.1: Organisational creativity
and innovation

African indigenous knowledge creation and its relevance for management African indigenous knowledge systems and strategies for collective learning still have to be adapted and made universal so that they may become more relevant for management in other contexts. Their potential role in education, learning, knowledge creation and transformation has yet to be fully understood and articulated in the west.

African culture offers a very important element in transforming organisations and communities, because it requires the co-creation and integrated alignment of worldviews through shifting paradigms. Indigenous knowledge, ceremonies and learning processes provide inherent wisdom in this area.

African learning systems, however, focus on implicit rather than explicit knowledge and knowledge is uncodified rather than codified. The greater part of human knowledge is uncodified implicit knowledge that is difficult to access, transfer and learn. Uncodified implicit knowledge can only be accessed and learned through experience. Implicit knowledge, according to the Japanese thinker Ijiro Nonaka (Nonaka and Takuchei 1995), can only be transferred through practical experience based on relationships and trust between the learner and the mentor. This is where African indigenous knowledge creation has an excellent contribution to make. Most business knowledge is not codified and is also implicit. African collective and traditional educational methods have the potential to add value to business education, since they are so instructive in transferring uncodified implicit knowledge and in facilitating the rapid and collective learning of whole communities. African processes as highlighted in the rituals mentioned above, as well as collective learning systems to be discussed in these paragraphs shed light on practical experiences which are highly relevant in enhancing the collective learning. Collective learning requires both the social

capital of trust and the intellectual capital acquired through reflective action. It is therefore important to draw inspiration from indigenous collective learning rituals and practices, such as African tribal initiation ceremonies, in our search for collective learning practices required to democratize knowledge and skills in modern organisations.The practices of the African collective learning systems are summarised in the following paragraphs.

The underlying philosophy stresses learning by doing, that is, reflective action learning. Learning is viewed and experienced as a collective effort; not just an individual effort, thereby embracing the fundamental philosophy of ubuntu. Another core component of collective learning in the African context is the principle 'teach one and learn one'. In African culture, the best way to learn is to teach others so in this particular sense, the sharing of knowledge and skills is vital. Understood in a slightly different way, there is a strong belief that in order to get everything we must share everything. This is echoed by Professor Reg Revans (Revans 1983), who explains it more accurately, arguing that the people learn more from comrades in adversity than from experts on high.

In the context of African culture and knowledge creation, the social process of learning is as important as a learning curriculum or content in terms of programme design. We need to pay particular attention to social processes in terms of the bonding and learning rituals and ceremonies. In addition, collective learning requires us to celebrate and canonize our interdependence, which is the cornerstone of the ubuntu value system. In addition, there are several principles related to collective learning and knowledge creation. These include: the spirit of learning principle; the principle of personal destiny and the principle of learning through life skills.

The core notion of the spirit of learning principle captures the belief that the organisational spirit or climate establishes the unique horizons and perceptions of learning. The principle of personal destiny (*dzinza* in Shona) embodies the idea that learning is accelerated by a high sense of personal purpose, history and destiny as well as career pathing. Finally, the principle of learning through developing life skills means that learning is accelerated by being focused on survival challenges. In this sense, adaptive learning is vital. Again, this resonates with the writings of Reg Revans who states that collectives and groups that adapt to change effectively have a steep learning curve and that their rate of learning exceeds the rate of change facing them. These principles of collective learning

derived from the traditional African wisdom and initiation rituals and ceremonies should guide multi-skilling and transformation efforts in our organisations.

New methods for managing transformation
The creation of a new system is a complex task, because of the fact that one is dealing with unknown elements. Although the known system has been discredited, the new system is unknown. This type of change is fundamental – it recognises the change of the whole system and not just a few elements in it. Political scientists call it transformation. Futurists call it a paradigm shift – a fundamental shift of our worldview is required. This is the type of change organisations are facing in the global economy today. It requires the development of new mass facilitation and mass mobilization methods. The current fascination in Human Resources Management with performance consulting does not deal with this kind of transformation. African peasant revolutions have developed advanced methods of managing transformation; mind shifting and changing of worldviews of a large number of communities. The only western social theorist and social activist who deals with this type of change management in the area of social action, is Saul Alinsky. He detailed this in his seminal work entitled 'Rules of radicals' (Alinsky 1972).

Having both participated in and witnessed the revolutionary struggles in both Zimbabwe and South Africa, I began to adapt the mobilization methods of nationalist and guerrilla movements, to the rapid massive transformation of business and state organisations. My experience is based on transforming a large packaging manufacturing organisation which employed 26,000 employees in South Africa. The entire project took three years to complete. This involved the transformation of racist organisational cultures into non-racial, non-sexist and high-performance cultures, as well as enabling the disadvantaged groups to reclaim public accountability, so as to rise to the challenge of nation building.

The second case where this model was applied was a large railway company that employed 66,000 employees. This transformation model was also implemented with remarkable positive results, by a large postal service and freight company employing over 25,000 people in South Africa.

Key elements of the transformation model
Underlying the practical applications of the transformation model is a number of key elements. The model focuses on the creation of a new reality or system and

also has the potential to enable the co-creation of new paradigms, worldviews and mindsets. The model also focuses on the co-creation of a new memory of the future, shared values and a new shared agenda. Typically, mass mobilization of all employees occurs through mass workshops of 150-500 employees per session, around a new organisational strategic agenda and national vision. This is accompanied by the training and development of a large number of in-house transformation facilitators to run workshops. The training and development of a large number of transformation champions with line experience and responsibilities enhances the capacity of the organisation to implement transformation on a day-to-day basis in their work area. In addition, in the training strategy, efforts are made to ensure the inclusion of a large number of key role-players such as union shop stewards as transformation champions in their respective constituencies and structures. Although the external consultant facilitates 10-30 per cent of the workshops, the primary focus is on building a critical mass for transformation and in-house capacity to facilitate and manage change.

There are a number of additional requirements which serve to build the effectiveness of this transformation model. Every employee must participate in the transformation workshops and the workshops must be cross-functional, multi-racial, multi-level and large, to create high impact and give a sense of high connectivity. The content and process must be the same for every level and every group and must focus on burning issues facing the organisation. High velocity in implementing the transformation programme is key. The whole process must be completed within a maximum of one year, to avoid losing momentum. If the time is lengthened, the transformation process and programme can be deterred through the resignation of key role-players and the emergence of derailing events. Time is of essence. The politics of speed in managing transformation are important. Finally, managing the politics of transformation with key groups and role-players is a vital part of implementing the model successfully.

Programme content
This model was also implemented with amazing success in a development corporation employing more than three thousand employees, and also in a medical service organisation employing more than one thousand employees. The transformation model focuses on developing and publishing high performance systems. At the heart of this transformation model is the need to achieve creative

high performance and competitive alignment. The model has three key elements: capacity building, work transformation, and social and political transformation. Alignment of these three elements to translate into high performance is an essential ingredient for success. The model is detailed in the diagramme below:

Figure 1.2: The transformation model

The work transformation issues include fundamental change elements such as: the development and implementation of best practices through reliable and comprehensive benchmarking systems; the implementation of a process improvement and innovation system; and the design and development of teams. In addition, development of innovative products, practices and systems is enhanced by redefining the competitive rules. In addition, attention is given to the development and implementation of high performance management systems. This includes the management of work, product development and technology.

The social and political transformation issues include the following fundamental change elements: the development of participative governance systems in order to create a fair organisation and society; democratization of information, knowledge and skills so that every employee is both a strategic thinker and doer; the negotiation of a shared strategic performance agenda and finally the development of shared worldviews and a collective sense of shared destiny. Celebration of cultural diversity is an important aspect of the transformation model and this occurs by both valuing differences and identifying similarities.

There is also a deliberate investment in the capacity building of every employee, to develop their strategic capacity to understand work transformation issues, as well as social and political issues. In addition to this, there is a deliberate emphasis on developing global citizenship and a global perspective. The creation

of critical awareness regarding the competitive nature of the global economy is vital; creating awareness in every employee with regard to economic aspects such as: how the global economy works, including the zero sum of its competition; how the national economy works, including the challenges of nation building, as well as the development of a national competitive agenda. The intention is to help ordinary employees to reclaim public accountability and to become development cadres so that they fully understand how their company works and how the industry functions.

The purpose is to create the capacity in employees to understand the survival and competitive challenges at five levels: global, national, industry, company, and personal. The intention of these learning strategies is to shift employee mindsets around governance and public accountability through participative co-creation of new paradigms.

Detailed below is an example of the course content for a three to five day workshop for South African companies:

– The challenge of economic liberation;
– Managing our heritage and the past;
– Management of diversity and affirmative action;
– Management of trust and diversity celebration;
– The challenge of managing organisational and personal transformation;
– SA transitional and transformation challenges;
– Strategic market and performance agenda;
– Building a corporate vision community.

Managing the heritage of the past, present and the future
I have applied transformation management in the South African Post Office (SAPO) to deal with strategic diversity and transformation issues as well as performance issues.

Both were necessary for the Post Office to become economically viable. These collective learning forums were named after selected strategic and transformation themes. They were called Strategic Diversity and Transformation programmes (SDT). The collective learning forums involved 26,000 employees hotly debating the strategic postures and transformation challenges facing the organisation. Each forum was residential and lasted three days.

The focus of the organisational learning process was on breaking even and attaining economic viability two years ahead of the schedule. The process was implemented with my help and an army of trained in-house transformation champions and facilitators, 95 in number. Through collective learning processes the issues were resolved. The same organisation was also interested in managing the difficult aspects of the past. The purpose of this module was to create extreme discomfort with the past in white participants so that they could let go and begin to search for an attractive memory of the future. A few well-selected historical facts would be woven into a tragic historical epic in a very humorous way, to produce disgust with the past and the resolution to create a new future among the participants.

The presenter would take many selected historical facts and weave them into tragic stories and this module was normally presented at the end of day one of the workshop. It used to leave the white participants in a complete state of painful disgust of their past and black participants very angry about their past. Therefore, discomfort was created in both groups and they would go to sleep in a tormented state, ready to travel into the future the next day.

Survival strategies for minority and majority groups in South Africa
The next morning the presenter would help the white SAPO participants to craft a survival strategy to thrive and prosper in a hostile political environment without political power. The presenter would draw examples from minority groups who prospered and succeeded in hostile environments without political power, such as the Jews. The elements of the survival strategies of minority groups must develop into a partnership with the majority and the development of a new patriotic agenda that includes the majority group. From the perspective of the majority group, they have to rise to the challenge of nation building. The majority group needs to shift from a victim-hood mentality to a victor-hood mentality. The majority cannot be both victims and victors. There is a need to make the shift, moving to a decisive resolve and focus on governing the country efficiently and fairly. This requires hard work. This gives the majority group a new positive agenda and vision.

The second day would end with a bonding ceremony around a big outdoor fire. People would share food and drinks. This is punctuated by collective singing and dancing to create the social capital required to chart and travel the difficult and trying road of organisational transformation.

Spirits of African management

Management is not a science but more like an art where knowledge is eclectic with a bias towards religious mythology and oral history, as well as philosophy. Mythology, as mentioned previously, is important in a strategic transformation process Myths serve four functions: A mystical, cosmological, sociological and pedagogical function. The mystical function deals with the mystery of our existence and that of the universe. We always address the transcendent mystery through the actual conditions in the world. The cosmological function shows the shape of the universe, which is the essence of science and highlights how human beings understand the universe. The sociological function supports and validates a certain social order. This accounts for the variation of myth from place to place. The pedagogical function of myth shows us how to live human life under any circumstances. Biblical parables serve as good examples in this regard. For example, Lazarus, the talented ten, and the prodigal son, the latter being about forgiveness and reconciliation particularly in family matters.

In African culture, myths are stories about our collective historical experience, shared destiny and heritage as well as about shared personal destiny (dzinza). These myths have been built around the stories and are integrated with well selected historical facts. The writer uses this technique extensively on the training modules for a variety of topics. They have also been captured live on video for the purpose of training facilitators, change agents and development practitioners.

This technique, which I now call *mythography*, is a very powerful instructional tool for creating new learning paradigms and for building a sense of hope and shared destiny. Mythography is also very effective in managing the spiritual, emotional and social resources of the organisation. It is one of only two techniques that have the potential to manage spiritual resources and raise spiritual awareness. Jesus of Nazareth used a similar instructional methodology, particularly the extensive use of fables and myths called parables. Essentially, Mythography = History + Mythology.

Organisations need role models who are *mythical* heroes to personify and affirm their purpose, meaning and values, particularly in times of rapid change. Mythic heroes give people something to strive for in order to attain both organisational and personal transformation. Mythic heroes also help people to address the contradictions of human life and the mysteries of human existence. This is what

the story of Job accomplished in Jewish and Christian cultures. It poses the question: 'Why do bad things happen to good people?' Joseph Campbell aptly comments in this regard, saying: 'When a person becomes a model for other people's lives, he has moved into the sphere of being mythologized'.

A good example of this is the role Mandela played during the Southern African struggle as a mythic hero. Although he was in prison, he inspired thousands of political activists and freedom fighters. The late Herbert Chitepo played a similar role in the Zimbabwean struggle, although he had been assassinated. This is the role Edward Mondlane, the founder of Frelimo, played in the struggle for the liberation of Mozambique, although he had been assassinated very early in the struggle by hired hands of imperialists. Amilcar Cabral played a similar role in the struggle for liberation in Guinea Bissau, although he, too, had been assassinated by imperialists during the early part of that struggle. Mbuya Nehada, the female revolutionary leader of the first Chimurenga ('revolution') in Zimbabwe, played a similar heroic role in that country's liberation war.

Facilitators and development practitioners can create mythic heroes in communities and organisations to inspire development as well as transformation efforts. This can be done in the following manner detailed below. Firstly, select an individual who is prochange and has done amazing things regarding transformation. Then create a heroic story around this particular individual. It is important to increase his / her visibility in the community or organisation; in this way it becomes possible to reposition the heroic individual in the community or organisation. This intervention not only helps to brand the hero/heroine but helps to create space and a forum for him/her. It also encourages and inspires him/her to achieve in the chosen field. The new result is a mythic hero who personifies the new vision in the values of the organisation. Finally, it is crucial to constantly tell the story, which then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy for the chosen individual. Ultimately, the individual has to find an aspect of myth that relates to his/her own life. Organisations need role models, mythical heroes to personify and affirm their purpose, meaning and values.

In the writer's own transformation projects with the Agricultural Rural Development Corporation (ARDC), Spoornet, Nampak, Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA) and the South African Post Office (SAPO) he endeavoured to mentor and create mythic heroes who would then inspire the transformation efforts.

Religious, philosophical foundations of African management

In addition to understanding the role of myth in transformation, the following sections seek to elaborate on the spiritual and philosophical elements of African culture, which underpin African management.

African spiritual perspective

The African spiritual life is pervasive and deeply rooted in every area of life. There is no separation of religion from any other areas of life and religion is fully integrated with life in a remarkable rhythm. For this reason, social capital – which embodies an organisation's emotional and spiritual resources – is a distinctive competitive factor akin to intellectual capital. Social capital affects the impact of any strategic intervention and the ultimate effectiveness of policies, procedures and processes. But modern management thinking practices and literature are generally weak in managing emotional and spiritual resources, which also help determine the value of an organisation, although there are some authors who are beginning to focus on this area.**[iv]**

Science is not instructive on how to manage social capital in organisations. Social capital is a different form of energy and level of consciousness and requires a different knowledge base. Understanding about the role of spirits, articulated in traditional African religions can contribute to social capital management and its transformation. I have developed, for example, the hierarchy of African spirits, which is transtribal, as a model for managing cultural, emotional, and spiritual resources in an organisation.

In African spirit religion, the spirit represents our ultimate real self, our inner self and total being, and our total consciousness. The spirit is who we really are. In terms of management, the spirit is the ultimate energy and consciousness of an organisation. The spirit carries an organisation's values and essence. The African spirit model serves as a metaphor to capture an organisation's prevailing climate, culture, energy and consciousness. This model can be used as a tool for auditing the dominant spirits and cultural values of an organisation in a live, collective and a participative manner.

The model can also be used as a framework for managing and transforming an organisation's social capital – its emotional and spiritual resources. It can, potentially, be more effective than sophisticated cultural surveys and psychological techniques, which some employees might not understand because

they lack basic literacy skills. The presence of illiteracy is a factor that can skew the result of traditional western surveys.

The model has been used as a diagnostic tool to transform and create social capital in large business and state organisations in South Africa, such as the South African Post Office, Spoornet – SA National Railway, and the Agricultural Rural Development Corporation.

The spirits of management
There are many ways to extract the myths and to discern the spirits of an organisation. You can ask participants to share their most memorable experiences, or ask them to share stories of the most remarkable characters in the organisation. If the stories are negative, it means that the myths and spirits of the organisation are negative. The following descriptions of spirits in the hierarchy may be useful to some readers to help diagnose positive and negative spiritual dimensions within organisations. They are described in the Shona language, but I have found that they have broader relevance.

The destructive spirit
The Witch Spirit Mutakati is the lowest spirit in the hierarchy of African spirits. This is an evil spirit that wants to spoil everything in life and on Earth. In terms of the corporate collective spirit, it is characterized by destructive cynicism, negative thinking, and passive and active sabotage. This spirit devours an organisation's energy. It is a dominant spirit in sluggish businesses and government bureaucracies.

The powerless spirit
The Avenging Spirit Ngozi is usually good but has been treated unjustly. As a result, it harbours anger, bitterness, and revenge. It is the dominant spirit among marginalized and powerless groups in society and organisations. This is the predominant spirit in dispossessed groups and the underclass of any society and organisation. Unless such groups can overcome their bitterness and anger, they will not be able to negotiate a new reality and new vision for themselves or their organisations. They can also become a danger to themselves and society as a whole.

Figure 1.3: The Spirits

Rainmaker Spirit - GODAVA
Hunter Spirit - SHAVI RUDZIMBA
Divination Spirit - SANGOMA
War Spirit - MAIUKWA
Clan/Family Spirit - MUDZIMU WEMHURI
Wandering Spirit - SHAVE
Avenging Spirit - NGOZI
Witch Spirit - MUTAKATI

Figure 1.3: The Spirits

The innovative spirit
The Wandering Spirit Shave is the spirit of an outsider who comes to the family or clan as a White Knight on a specific area or issue. This is an unusual individual who has a particular obsession and unique creative ability. It is the spirit of innovation. This is a weak spirit in many modern organisations in which innovators are not accepted or rewarded but, at best, just tolerated. The key strategic lesson is that innovative ideas may have to come from outside the organisation or from outsiders to the accepted corporate system. That suggests a strong case for employment practices that can attract mavericks, who usually have incomplete or unusual résumés. Organisations may also have to make use of reputable consultants to generate creative ideas. The insiders may be too close to their systems to envision potential realities. It is difficult to challenge a corporate culture from within, as it is career-limiting. The second strategic lesson is that innovation may have to be managed outside of the formal structure, giving rise to the need to create parallel structures for innovation.

The family spirit
The Clan Spirit Mudzimu Wemhuri is a family spirit that is interested in the survival of its group. This spirit enhances group solidarity through specified rituals, activities, ceremonies and symbols. It is important for building team-based, world-class organisations. It also serves to emphasize the importance of rituals, ceremonies and symbols in designing organisational teams.

Figure 1.4: Cultural values associated with Spirits

CULTURAL VALUES	SPIRIT
Morality and dignity	Rainmaker Spirit GOBWA
Performance and enterprise	Hunter Spirit SHAVI RUDZIMBA
Authority: Know the truth	Divination Spirit SANGOMA
Power and conflict	War Spirit MAJUKWA
Survival of one's self and one's group	Clan/Family Spirit MUDZIMU WEMHURI
Particular obsession, ability and creativity	Wandering Spirit SHAVE
Bitterness, anger, revenge	Avenging Spirit NGOZI
Cynicism, negativity, destruction	Witch Spirit MUTAKATI

Figure 1.4: Cultural values associated with Spirits

The personal spirit
The War Spirit Majukwa is a spirit of personal power, conflict and gamesmanship. It helps us understand power cultures and how to create power and influence in organisations. The rise of spider-web structures in modern organisations makes it imperative for individuals to develop power skills for personal influence in order to accomplish objectives.

The spirit of truth
The Spirit of Divination Sangoma knows the whole truth, which is his truth, and is not open to other views. Experts and specialists in organisations typically personify this spirit, as do most traditionalists. The spirit reduces the rate of learning in an organisation and its ability to adapt to change. Therefore we should populate action learning teams with non-experts and mavericks.

The restless spirit
The Hunter Spirit Shavi Rudzimba is a restless spirit and is the spirit of entrepreneurship. It has an eye for opportunity and deal-making. This spirit has a marked quest for pragmatic, creative solutions to survival and competitive challenges. The rituals and ceremonies surrounding this spirit help us develop practices to manage entrepreneurship in organisations.

The relationship spirit
The Rainmaker Spirit Gobwa is concerned about our relationship with the organisation and other people, as well as with our ecological, social, political, economic, and spiritual environments. This spirit takes care of our whole universe and is concerned with truth, morality, balance, and human dignity. This spirit helps clarify the stewardship role of the CEO and the need to take accountability for the whole organisation, as well as being its conscience. The primary role of a CEO is to look after the spirit of the organisation and its total social capital.

Strategic lessons from the Spirit Hierarchy model
In any given situation, there will be two or more dominant spirits that determine the social capital of an organisation. The dominant spirits determine the organisation's outcomes, consciousness, culture and energy levels.

The African Spirit Hierarchy model can be used to audit the dominant culture and values, as well as the organisational climate in a collective, participative manner through dialogues and bonding rituals that allow group psychological departure and rebirth. The ceremonies and symbols that are integrated into the process provide access to the collective unconsciousness of the organisation. The whole process is enhanced by one or more elements of storytelling, singing, dancing and mythography.

It is important to dispel negative spirits for a positive organisational climate to flourish and make renewal efforts sustainable and high-impact. Organisations cannot let go of a negative past and embark on the critical path of corporate renewal as long as there are deadening, routine activities and processes. There is a need to design rituals and ceremonies of departure and rebirth. As a general rule, competent and charismatic outside consultants must facilitate those. Organisations cannot embark on a cultural renaissance without dealing with past grievances.

Organisations have to know where they are coming from to find out where they can go. They have to know who they are before they can know what they can become. Strategic visioning and values exercises have failed because of their lack of a 'spiritual dimension', for want of a better term. Such exercises have ended up with empty slogans that are neither practiced nor taken seriously. Organisational transformation is not just an intellectual journey; it is also an emotional and spiritual journey. In order to access the emotional and spiritual resources of an organisation, appropriate bonding symbols, myths, ceremonies, and rituals are needed.

Cultural and philosophical foundations: A comparative analysis
Cultural philosophy is vital in leadership because it enables managers to understand philosophy and contextual realities. This is what ubuntu; the philosophy of African management can contribute to the management discipline. Ubuntu means 'I am because we are; I can only be a person through others'. It is only in the encounter of others in our relationships that we discover who we are.

This requires trust in others and a canonization of the values of interdependence, respect, consensus, solidarity and human dignity, as a basis of management practices. Management excellence requires us to celebrate the richness and diversity of global cultures.

We are all products of our culture. We can only see what our cultural paradigms allow us to see. Therefore, all managers and employees only see what their cultural paradigms in their organisations allow them to see. The clay material of management is subjectivity. Management is emotional, social, spiritual, political and rational.

Therefore, any approach to the study of management should reflect this complexity and diversity. The current Cartesian scientific paradigm may be necessary but not sufficient in understanding management – it only addresses the rational element of management. Ultimately, the challenge of management is to move from being a science of manipulation, to also being a science of understanding. The discipline of management is culturally biased because it is about the issues of how we organise people and how we manage the work they do. Hence, the management discipline should encompass the great theory of being.

It is important to explore the role of cultural paradigms in organisational leadership. We are all products of our cultures. Charles Hampden-Turner and Alfons Trompenaars (1993) argue in their book 'The seven cultures of capitalism' that we can only see what our cultural paradigms allow us to see. Therefore, all leaders and employees can only see what their cultural lenses allow them to see in organisations. This has serious implications for leadership theories and practices. The national host culture determines how the challenge of leadership in organisations is approached. Thomas H. Kuhn (1996), in his book 'The structure of scientific revolutions', defines a paradigm as follows:

... accepted examples of actual scientific practice, examples which include law, theory,application, and instrumentation together – [that] provide models from which spring particular coherent traditions of scientific research. Men whose research is based on shared paradigms are committed to the same rules and standards for scientific practice.

His observation of creative thought leaders in the scientific fields was that people

who understood the prevailing scientific paradigm in their field and had the courage to think and explore the frontiers beyond it. Organisational leaders should not only be able to understand the culture of the host country in which their organisation is operating, but must also have the personal courage to think outside it. At the risk of over-simplifying and over generalizing, the influence of the four cultures of the four corners of the globe will be examined. It is important to note that every culture has its competencies, strengths and weaknesses. The essence of leadership excellence is the ability to leverage the host African culture and then harness complimentary competencies of the distinct global cultures of the four corners of the globe.

Overview of the global cultural diversity for leadership excellence
Let us start by examining the cultural worldview of the European North and its strategic implications for leadership, theory and practice. The cultural worldview of the North is 'I am because I think I am'. There is an emphasis on rational and scientific thinking. European leaders have harnessed this competency in planning, as well as scientific and technical innovation. In fact, the stunning achievements of European leadership and civilization have been due to scientific and technological innovations, as well as rational planning techniques. Between 1500 and 1700 there was a dramatic shift in the way people pictured the world and in the whole way of thinking in Europe. The new scientific mentality and the new perception of the cosmos gave our European civilization the features that are characteristic of the modern era. They became the basis of the paradigm that has dominated European culture for the past three hundred years, according to Capra (Capra 1982). René Descartes is usually regarded as the founder of the modern scientific paradigm. The belief in the certainty of scientific knowledge lies at the very basis of the Cartesian philosophy and of the worldview derived from it. The Cartesian belief in scientific truth is reflected in the scientism that has become typical of the Western culture. Thus, Descartes arrived at his most celebrated statement Cogito, ergo sum – 'I think therefore I exist'. The European cultural paradigm can assist leaders to plan and create a memory of the future.

Eastern Asian cultural paradigm
The eastern Asian cultural paradigm is characterized by an emphasis on continuous improvement to attain perfection. In fact, most Asian religions emphasize a pilgrimage into inner perfection. From these religions techniques of personal development and perfection have developed, such as yoga from

Hinduism and meditation form Buddhism. The Eastern worldview can be summarized as 'I am because I improve'. According to the Japanese leadership expert Masaaki Imai (Imai 1986):

If you learn only one word of Japanese make it Kaizen. Kaizen strategy is the single most important concept in Japanese management – the key to Japanese competitive success. Kaizen means improvement. Kaizen means ongoing improvement involving everyone: top management, managers and workers.

It means much more than that. It means a philosophy that encourages every person in an industry – every day – to make suggestions for improving everything; themselves, their job, their workplace, their factory layout, their telephone answering habits, their products and their services. The giant Japanese electronic company Matsushita receives some 6.5 million ideas from its employees every year. The cultural business strategy of kaizen inspired the successful Japanese economic revolution because this cultural competency allowed the Japanese to manage mature manufacturing technologies through innovation and team structures such as quality circles. This gave birth to a worldwide revolution in quality through the participatory leadership best practices of Total Quality Management (TQM) and Total Productive Maintenance (TPM).

Western cultural worldview
America is a young successful dominant civilization which exemplifies a western cultural worldview. Since it is an adolescent civilization, it believes in what Robert Reich (Reich 1991) has called the myth of the individual hero. The Western worldview puts emphasis on the individual lone hero who, through his individual nobility, independence, courage and conviction, saves organisations and communities from their fate. This cultural worldview can be stated as: 'I am because I, the individual hero, dream and do'. More specifically, this cultural paradigm translates into: 'Concentrate on your self-interest and you will automatically serve your customer and society better, which in turn will let you serve your self-interest'. The classic representative theorist of the Western paradigm is Adam Smith, whose main thesis is that collective social goals are a by-product of self-interest. Therefore, if each individual pursues their own selfish personal interest, an invisible will automatically serve the common interests of the larger society. Adam Smith published a book entitled 'The wealth of nations', which became a manifesto of American enterprise. Adam Smith summarized the heart and soul of the Western American cultural paradigm as follows:

[This individual] *... intends only his own gain, and he is in this, as in many other cases, led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention. Nor is it always the worse for the society that it was no part of it. By pursuing his own interest he frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it. I have never known much good done by those who affected to trade for the public good. It is an affectation, indeed, not very common among merchants, and very few words need be employed in dissuading them from it ...* (Smith 1937: 423).

Another feature of this paradigm is the guts to dream and the personal courage to put them into action. This cultural paradigm has a visionary enterprising trait which has inspired American economic development and created the largest and most competitive economy in human history. It takes substantial courage and a capacity to dream big to think of inhibiting other planets in the manner Americans have done and demonstrated.

African cultural paradigm of the South
The African worldview is characterized by a deliberate emphasis on people and their dignity – the emphasis on the collective brotherhood of mankind called ubuntu, which is the African perspective of collective personhood derived from muntu or munhu. Ubuntu literally translated means 'I am because we are; I can only be a person through others'. There is deliberate emphasis on solidarity and interdependence which is a key characteristic of African communities of affinity. The Archbishop Desmond Tutu puts it more clearly:

Africans have a thing called UBUNTU; it is about the essence of being human, it is part of the gift that Africa is going to give to the world. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, being willing to go that extra mile for the sake of another. We believe that a person is a person through other persons; that my humanity is caught up and bound up in yours. When I dehumanize you, I inexorably dehumanize myself. The solitary human being is a contradiction in terms, and therefore you seek to work for the common good because your humanity comes into its own in community, in belonging.

The key values of African leadership include five key dimensions. Firstly, respect for the dignity of others. Secondly, there is a focus on group solidarity: an injury to one is an injury to all. Thiedly, teamwork is deeply valued, meaning that none of us is greater than all of us. Fourthly, service to others in the spirit of harmony

is a driving value. Finally, there is a profound value accorded to interdependence: Each one of us needs all of us. Charles Handy, the British guru on management echoes the same sentiments on collective personhood when he writes:

We have to find a personal security in our relationship too. We are not meant to stand alone. We need a sense of connection. We have to feel that it matters to other people that we are there. Because if it makes no difference whether you are there or not then you really begin to feel like a meaningless person. If you have no connection to anybody, you have no responsibility and therefore no purpose (in Gibson 1997).

African cultures stand Adam Smith's premise on its head. In terms of the African cultural paradigm, the needs of the group or community are considered first, and then the invisible hand will automatically take care of the desires of the individual. Serve your society and stakeholders to the best of your ability and you will automatically achieve your own personal goals, which will allow you to align them with the needs of your relevant stakeholders, including customers. It therefore follows that the African leadership paradigm has a bias towards servant leadership. The practices of the African paradigm of leadership are best articulated by Robert Greenleaf (Greenleaf 1996). These best practices are:

Listening: The servant leader seeks to identify and clarify the will of the group. They seek to listen respectfully to what is being said. Listening also encompasses: getting in touch with one's inner voice; seeking to understand what one's body, spirit and mind are communicating. Finally, listening with regular periods of reflection is essential to the growth of the servant leader.

Empathy: The servant leader strives to understand and empathize with others. People need to be accepted and recognised for their special and unique spirit. The most successful servant leaders are those who have become skilled empathetic leaders.

Persuasion: Persuasion is the clearest distinction between the conventional authoritarian leadership style and that of servant leadership. The servant leader is effective at building consensus within groups. The emphasis on persuasion rather than consensus is the heart and soul of African leadership because it is embedded in the ancient African philosophy of ubuntu. According to Nelson Mandela:

Then our people lived peacefully, under the democratic rule of their kings ... Then the country was ours in name and right ... All men were free and equal, this was the foundation of government. The council of elders was so completely democratic that all members of the tribe could participate in its deliberations. Chief and subject, warrior and medicine man, all took part and endeavoured to influence decisions (Mandela, speech from the dock, at his 1962 trial).

According to George Ayittey (1999), African societies have, for centuries, enjoyed a tradition of participatory democracy. The organisational structure of indigenous African systems was generally based on kinship and ancestry. Survival of the tribe was the primary objective. Each ethnic group had its own system of government. These were unwritten constitutions like the constitution of Britain. Customs and traditions established the governance procedures. All African political governance systems in both chiefdoms and kingdoms started at village level comprised of extended families and lineages. Each village had its head chosen according to established rules with checks and balances. The chief was assisted by a small group of confidential advisors drawn from close friends and relatives called the inner council. If he disagreed with them, he would take the issue to the council of elders, a much wider and more formal structure consisting of hereditary headmen of lineages or wards. Their main function was not only to advise the chief but also to prevent the abuse of power by voicing its dissatisfaction and by criticizing the chief. The chief would inform the council of the subject matter to be dealt with. The matter would be debated until a decision was reached by consensus. The chief would remain silent and listen as the councillors debated the issues. He would weigh all viewpoints to avoid imposing his view on the council. The chief did not impose his rule – he only led and assessed the collective opinions of the council.

The people were the ultimate judge on disputed issues. If the council failed to reach consensus, the issue would be taken to the assembly for debate by the people. Every person was free to speak and ask questions. Deliberations continued until consensus was reached. Minority positions were heard and taken into account. In a majority rule process minority positions are ignored. The hallmark of African leadership traditions and practices is consensus democracy in order to accommodate minority positions to ensure the greatest possible level of justice and avoid sabotage during the implementation process. Compromise, persuasion, discussion and accommodation, listening and freedom of speech are

the key elements of the African leadership paradigm. Consensus is difficult to reach on many issues. African political, social and economic leadership tradition is noted for the length of time required to reach consensus and it may take weeks to attain unity of purpose.

Consensus, by its very nature, is the antithesis of autocracy. The problem with the Western cultural leadership paradigm with its emphasis on individualism is that it scorns its own origins in the supportive community. The dauntless entrepreneur is a self-made man. According to Trompenaars et al. (1993): 'This may be a good political argument for keeping the money you have accumulated, but it is a very dubious claim in reality, and one that sells short the many who sustained you'. The view of the African paradigm is that the nurturant community is the cradle of the individual. Therefore it follows that many changes could be made to transform organisations by shaping them as enterprising communities that could increase rather than decrease the individuality if each member. To focus on individuals only is to miss out on all the social and collective arrangements which can be altered to enhance the contribution of the individuals. In African cultures team rewards take precedence over individual rewards; the team is likely to support and reward with their friendship and respect the higher performers and the innovative individuals within the group. If the bonus is paid to individual high performers or individuals identified as more creative, the group is more likely to gang up on those whom they think are most favoured by management, sabotage their performance and socially punish them for their creativity. Star individual performers will benefit substantially from team rewards as opposed to individual rewards.

Healing
Many people have broken spirits and have suffered emotional hurts. Servant leaders should recognise that they have an opportunity to 'help make whole' those with whom they interact. According to Robert Greenleaf (Greenleaf 1996):

The servant as a leader – there is something subtle communicated to one who is being served and led if, implicit in the compact between the servant leader and the led, is the understanding that the search for wholeness is something they share.

Perhaps former President Nelson Mandela can be described as an epitome of African leadership virtues, particularly in terms of healing, compromise and

diversity tolerance, as well as his focus on creating racial harmony and consensus democracy. Nelson Mandela says:

I am prepared to stand for the truth, even if you all stand against me ... I am writing my own personal testament; because now that I am nearer to the end, I want to sleep for eternity with a broad smile on my face knowing that, especially the youth, can stretch out across the colour line, shake hands and seek peaceful solutions to the problems of the Country.

He went on to comment on the destiny of whites in South Africa:

Young Afrikaners had a specific and central contribution to make to the development of the South African nation and had too much potential to allow themselves to be marginalized.

Mandela also said that he had always fought against the domination of the majority by the minority, as well as the domination of the minority by the majority. This is the essence of African consensus democracy which seeks to accommodate minority groups.

Servant leaders seek to nurture their abilities to 'dream great dreams'. The ability to look at a problem from a conceptualising perspective means that one must think beyond day-to-day realities. Servant leaders are called upon to seek a delicate balance between conceptual thinking and a day-to-day focused approach. In other words, in terms of the African leadership paradigm, one of the key functions of leadership is the ability to manage meaning by creating the memory of an attractive future. Leadership has to have the ability to create a shared agenda and vision that is capable of transforming the status quo, as well as the rare ability of enrolling people into the vision and galvanizing support for it. The leaders have to be able to energize people to overcome major obstacles towards achieving the vision of transformation by managing attention to achieve focused excellence. They have the ability to capture their vision in captivating language. Mandela can serve to illustrate this dimension of African leadership practice:

We have triumphed in the effort to implant hope in the breasts of millions of our people. We enter into the covenant that we shall build the society in which all South Africans, both Black and White, will be able to walk tall, without any fear in their inalienable right to human dignity; a rainbow nation at peace with itself and the world.

Self-discipline

Yet another key element is that African leadership practices cherish a warrior tradition. African chiefs and kings were expected to lead their people in terms of war. Management of self-discipline is very important; doing very ordinary things in an extraordinary manner, as well as walking the talk, thus putting their sincerity on constant display in order to create trust. Management of social capital by creating trust is a key element of African servant leadership

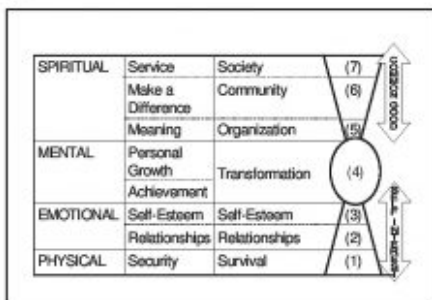Figure 1.5: Seven levels of consciousness. Source: Barrett 1998.

Figure 1.5: Seven levels of consciousness. Source: Barrett 1998.

Consciousness

In terms of the African leadership paradigm, leaders have to be sharply awake. They have an inner serenity. They have a high degree of personal consciousness. High consciousness can only be attained through a personal spiritual journey, by reaching into the depths of our spiritual inner resources to transcend our self-interest and attain a high level of personal transformation to be able to focus on the common good in service of society and the enterprising organisational ability. This also enables leaders to overcome the limitations of their historical circumstances inspired by a sense of personal destiny, which enables them to infuse spiritual energy into the organisation. For this to happen, leaders have to have a sense of connection with both the past and the future. They need a sense of legacy inspired by being rooted in their culture and traditions. In the African worldview, leaders are the custodians of culture and a particular civilization. They have to have a highly developed sense of personal destiny (dzinza) by knowing who they are, to become what they know they can become, by knowing their personal and family history, as well as tribal and national history to serve as a compass and a reference point in order to find their paths in a changing world.

Conclusion

The genius of European (North) leadership tradition lies in planning and technical innovation. The genius of the American (West) leadership tradition lies in entrepreneurship and a bias for action. The genius of Asian (East) leadership tradition lies in process innovation to attain quality and perfection. The genius of African (South) leadership tradition lies in ubuntu – interdependence of humanity by emphasizing human dignity and respect through consensus democracy and people mobilization, solidarity and care. Therefore, Richard Pascale (Pascale 1990) was right in saying:

Leadership reality is not absolute; rather, it is socially and culturally determined. Across all cultures, in all cultures and in all societies, human beings are coming together to perform certain collective acts, encounter common problems which have to do with establishing direction, co-ordination and motivation. Culture affects the way in which they can be resolved. Social learning also establishes horizons of perception.

NOTES

i. These essays were awarded a prize by the Institute of Personnel Management (IPM) for their originality.

ii. Some of the writers who have articulated classical management theory in Europe and America are Peter Drucker (2005) and Kurt Lewin (1973).

iii. In my own experience, the corpse shadow ritual is commonly found in all Nguni groups in South Africa.

iv. Some examples: Patricia Auberdine (Megatrends 2010) writes eloquently on the emergence and importance of spirituality and spiritual capital in organisations; Verna Allee (2003) is very articulate about the role of relationships and social capital in the evolution of intellectual capital.

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