Culture and value trade-offs for successful entrepreneurship in Africa

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Abstract

In Africa slowly but steadily a transformation is taking place in the management styles of enterprises. There is a trend towards more precise time management, more precision in dealing with increasingly sophisticated technology, more feedback from the bottom to the top in order to manage the processes properly, more professionalism and independence of the individual worker.

This contribution makes two points: first, neither cultures nor the so-called mental states of individuals are ever static, but always on the move. Second, the force of passion and inspiration by which particular cultural values are endorsed in a particular context makes all the difference in their impact.

The importance of these two propositions comes to the fore, if the concept of an "economic culture" is taken into consideration. The claim of the authors is that the ongoing cultural transformation can be better understood in the dynamic approach of cultural values as proposed here.

Keywords: development, economic culture, intercultural management, values, entrepreneurship

Introduction

Usually in intercultural management two opposing values or "dimensions" are distinguished like collectivism versus individualism, hierarchy versus egalitarianism (Hofstede 1997, Trompenaars & Turner 1999, Steers et. al. 2010). The score of different cultures on these dimensions is measured according to these parameters in percentages. First the authors want to highlight why this approach has been an important innovation in the usual procedures of anthropology. Then they will show why this approach is not as objective as the use of exact numbers and percentages may suggest. Human situations are too complex and fluid (Ndegwah, 2007: 76). The aims of this contribution are threefold. 1. It will be shown conceptually and by means of examples that we constantly move between different cultural values and that those cultural values mutually interpenetrate and fine-tune each other. 2. It will be taken into account that passion and inspiration are leading in the direction that a culture may choose to pursue. 3. It will be established how social and economic institutions are shaped by such passion, inspiration and the ensuing interaction of values. These points are clarified by using examples from Western and African history.

The innovation of the cultural "dimensions" approach

Before and during the Second World War anthropologists were intensely occupied with racist philosophies. Most famous are the measurements of skulls and assumptions about the supposed intellectual inferiority of particular races. In the aftermath of this approach anthropologists have become hypersensitive with theoretical speculations about the character of different human races. This would imply an essentialist understanding of culture. The differences within a particular culture or society are often bigger than the differences between different cultures and societies.

To say, for instance, that the Japanese are very obedient and polite people from this point of view is an unacceptable generalization since there are always those Japanese and even strings of tradition in Japan that have a different orientation. Or stating, in the same vein, that Africans are collectivistic is also an exaggerated assumption since there are also stubborn and individualistic elements in African culture, and these have always been there, even during colonialism at the time of the big chieftainships in Africa (Ayittey 2006; Ndegwah, 2007: 372). When in the early 90s Hofstede published his work on cultural differences he based his research on a vast amount of data from all over the world from IBM questionnaires researching the attitudes of their personnel. He classified them into four or five, later even six, supposedly universal cultural dimensions. He aggregated the results in general concepts like power distance, collectivism, individualism, uncertainty avoidance and gender orientation. Especially by using percentages the existence of cultural differences became undeniable. The use of generalizations in cultural analysis became more accepted. International companies started to use this material for training their employees to make them sensitive to a more diplomatic attitude in intercultural negotiations. In their work Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1999) followed this procedure but they used a somewhat different set of cultural dimensions, which was derived also from earlier work of sociologists like Weber, Parsons and Hall (Steers et. al. 2010). Although this development has not remained without criticism, one might say that it has come to dominate the landscape of intercultural management and management training.

This quantitative approach lends a status of objectivity to the research, because numbers cannot be wrong. Nevertheless, the categorization of the questions is subject to interpretation and therefore ambivalent, more so because different concepts have different meanings in different cultures (Heine et. al. 2002). In particular, the concepts of feminine and masculine cultures as proposed by Hofstede have suffered criticism (Moulettes 2007, Hamada 1996). Feminine cultures supposedly put less emphasis on role differences and have more attention for care, whereas masculine cultures show the opposite features like competition and role differences. But some cultures may stress role differences and still not endorse strong competitive behavior, at least not openly. The Saudi are a case in point.

Another issue is the categorization of these differences within the framework of "national cultures". In sub-Saharan Africa, in countries with sometimes 40 (Kenya), sometimes even 200 (Nigeria) ethnic groups within one nation, doing so is highly problematic. Differentiation would be required between different tribes, but also between rural areas and cities and on top of that differentiation according to social and political affiliation. In addition, there is an ongoing debate and political struggle within these societies themselves for either a more civil society type of values or more tradition oriented values, in which power distance, status and group membership are more important (Eberly 2008, Kasfir 1998, Keane 2001, Karviraj 2002). Societies may evolve in different directions. Even within Western traditions different nations are characterized by different versions of civil society values. Italian civil society differs widely from the US type of civil society or France or Germany (Rosenstock-Huessy 1993).

Luckily, it is generally accepted that a conceptual/statistical cultural analysis should be checked by events, occasions and stories from actual practice. Generalizations like the rough grid of cultural dimensions of Hofstede are useful, but one should always follow the thread back from the typical and general towards the individual and the contingent. The story should be told, both of different lines of culture, and of the different biographies of individuals. "The African situation is so varied and diverse that it is safe to talk of many Africas, sociologically speaking, that exist side by side in the common geographical Africa, and yet their demarcation is not clear-cut" (Ndegwah, 2007:97). The entrepreneur who quickly consulted the website of Hofstede and found some easily understandable conceptual distinctions may as easily run into difficulties in coping with the concrete way of communication and living in an African society, misinterpret everything and as a consequence lose on his investment.

A. Priorities and interpenetration of values

Most problematic, however, and this is one of the focal points of this contribution, is the fact that this type of research in the end results in a static picture of culture. This may suit the supposed objectivity of the research and it is reinforced by the habit of contemporary philosophy to analyze mental processes in terms of "states of mind". But our minds are never in a steady-state and our values and emotions are even less stable. We always move from one value, virtue or emotion towards another. We should actually follow these experiences phenomenologically like Levinas does in his phenomenology of responsibility (Levinas 1961). The assertiveness for instance that characterizes our speech at one moment is already turning into the receptiveness of listening when we finish. In

defending a particular position in a debate a person may be already on the move towards another position that also deserves some understanding. We have a plurality of voices, meanings and feelings in our head over which we try to preside. A static conceptual analysis based on empirical data cannot, therefore, do justice to such pluralism and movement (Kroesen 2014). Culture is quite a fluid reality (Ndegwah 2007:37, Droogers 2003: 61). Values interpenetrate each other. They mix with each other. In order to corroborate this observation the authors selected some of the important distinctions from the above-mentioned literature to scrutinize them by means of a phenomenological description of their application in the Western and African context. This exercise will help to understand and describe and maybe even give some orientation to the process of transformation sub-Saharan Africa is going through.

1. Understanding individualism as different from atomism

It is generally accepted that Western culture is individualistic and cultures from the east and south are more collectivistic. Taken at face value there is obvious. Visitors and tourists from the east and south coming to the west are under the impression that everybody is doing as he or she likes. In a group discussion Western people immediately and without reservation express their personal opinion. They do not even seem to listen to each other and nobody is chairing the meeting. Less striking to the Westerners themselves, but more so to African or Asian participants, is the fact that disagreement is a normal part of the process and taken for granted. This pluralism of standpoints is often understood, also by the Westerners themselves, as a form of fragmentation. But should also be understood positively as a legitimate part of the process of reaching an agreement. Everybody speaks out what he thinks and fragmentary understandings and differences in opinion are brought together to create a common support base. But in that case individualism is not as atomistic as it is often judged to be. It can be part of an open dialogue based on equal footing. The moment I say "I" implicitly I also say "you". But if this is the true experience of individual expression, individualism is actually turned into a social phenomenon. Individuals express themselves towards each other in order to reach a common understanding. In the same vein the use of cell phones has sometimes been misunderstood as a sign of individualism (Choi 2009). Every individual has a cell phone. One at least. But if this is considered as a sign of individualism it is overlooked that they are used for communication. This more nuanced understanding of individualism is confirmed if we look at the institutions underpinning society. Although Western societies are considered to be individualistic, social security has been better arranged than in developing countries, which are more collectivistic. How come? Apparently individualism does not mean that everybody is on his or her own, and collectivism does not always mean solidarity. On the contrary, in the West anonymous and institutional arrangements are in place for the elderly who cannot work anymore and for those who are jobless. Trade unions, employees, government regulations and employers' organizations take care of this social security system in a systematic and well-structured cooperation. And the anonymous and impersonal application of rules is a social condition for such individualism. The security system makes the individuals less dependent on family loyalties. The arrangements for poverty alleviation in 17th century Western society by the state and by civil society organizations gave the final blow to clan solidarity in the West (Rosenstock-Huessy 1993). It was not necessary anymore.

Often the counterargument is brought forward that the West could provide the finances needed for such a social security system. But that argument works both ways. The independence from patronage and clan systems that the social security system created turned dependent labor forces into productive citizens. In combination with state financed education for all citizens it created a capable and flexible labor force (Rosenstock-Huessy 1993).

This phenomenological, descriptive analysis provides us with two competing concepts of individualism. Individualism may point to independence, but it also points to communication. The paradox is that both take place at the same time. My individual judgment is not just the opinion of a stubborn individual, but also a trial, a proposal, an invitation that can be answered by a confirmation or even a refutation from the other side. My initiative is just a moment in a process in which the other takes over and in which both of us bear the burden of disagreement, lack of recognition and so forth. In such a dialogue self-defense gradually turns into shared understanding and such common support base eventually leads to institutionalization of a new policy (Kroesen 2015).

Was something like this not present in traditional Africa? The African Indaba, the time-consuming consultations of the elders in the Council of Elders, represents much of the same process. The Chiefs could not just decide on their own, even if they were respected as the embodiment of the voice of the ancestors (Ayittey 2006). They were treated with religious respect, and by this fact they were also expected to be the voice of old traditions. The voice of the ancestors and the voice of the elders functioned as checks and balances on too much autocratic individualism. There was always some tension between the elders and the chief. If the chief went too far in his autocratic exercise of arbitrary rule, he could be murdered, chased away, dethroned, or the elders could take their families and move to a different area, join another tribe or start a new one. In Western societies this individualism and dialogue has been institutionalized on a larger scale, not anymore on the level of clan or ethnic group, but on the level of nations comprising a large number of clans mixing amongst each other. In the process individual expression has become more articulated and pronounced. Individuals are free to make their own choices, because they are not dependent anymore on their families financially. The individual has become an independent entity in the society, but at the same time the social responsibility that individual judgment is supposed to serve, is much wider and goes beyond one's own family, clan and tribe on to the nation and even beyond. Individual responsibility gradually becomes responsibility to the neighbor worldwide (Levinas 1961).

The price to be paid for the exercise of individual judgment and dialogue on this larger scale consists in the fact that it became less personalized. It is regulated by law, parliamentarism, the press, and public opinion. The advantage of this systematic large scale society is the easy realignment and shifting memberships of individuals, companies, professional groups and constantly changing coalitions.

2. Different forms of collectivism and the collectivism of team spirit

Just like individualism collectivism is not a monolithic concept. Normally collectivism means that the group goes before the individual. Although again, at face value seems to be evident, it can be true to different degrees and in different ways. Many Westerners tend to admire the African collectivism as something good, until they discover how much closed in-group mentality is covered by that term (Sardan 1999). Different collectives, clans, families,

enterprises, governmental departments and so on compete with each other and do not trust each other (Wiarda 2003, OSSREA 2009). Collectivism often works pretty much like the Arab saying: "I against my brother, my brother and me against the family, my family against the clan, my clan against the tribe, my tribe against the other tribes, etc." Inasmuch as collectivism is taken in an ethnic/tribal sense, it precludes the existence of a public space. The only public space where trust is possible is within the 'we-group'. In other words, where trust is limited to the 'we-group' public space cannot really develop. For this reason the other side of the coin of collectivism is the often endemic corruption, baptized in all sorts of names to make it sound good and acceptable. If family is all that counts, it is legitimate to approach everything and everybody else in an instrumental way. A job in the government bureaucracy then easily becomes a means to provide the family with all it needs. Family and clan members may be conveniently appointed on jobs for which they are not qualified. In the 90s a Dutch football trainer left Saudi Arabia because every clan had to be represented in the national football team irrespective of performance. When he put aside that demand in order to compose an efficient team, he was fired. In Bangladesh a director of an NGO received funds for installing two prototype tanks for water harvesting. He put one at the office of his NGO, and the other at the house of his brother. If he had not done so his family would have considered that a neglect of family responsibilities. But from a Western perspective it is corruption.

The Chinese and the Japanese societies have a collectivist attitude in a sense quite different from Africa. Societies marked by overarching imperial traditions, often more by force than by training, cultivated broader responsibilities among their members. Social obligations would not only be due to family members, but also to the imperial bureaucracy and civil servants. Ideally from a hierarchical perspective society should function smoothly like a huge machine in which everyone plays his part. Harmony, in the sense of the adaptation to the hierarchy, requiring polite and respectful behavior, is more in the foreground in this understanding of collectivism. In such societies public space is present, albeit in a limited sense. It is dominated by imperial power and authority. The individuals are supposed to adapt to their functional role within a comprehensive social machinery. It is more adaptation than commitment.

Public space in its proper sense, can only be installed where there is public trust apart from state authority and family loyalty. It takes a civil attitude and a civil society, meaning that individuals and groups can change their loyalties according to preference and opportunity (Stackhouse 1984). This may be called team spirit in distinction from collectivism. In a team individual players coordinate their (different) efforts. In a true collective the differences are erased by the identification with the same symbols, values, and convictions. In team spirit from different perspectives and opinions a support base for common action is created. Such a civil society mentality cannot survive without coordinating mechanisms of its own, not induced by either the family or the state. A civil society is marked by volunteer associations with shifting and multiple memberships (Popper, 1965). Institutionally such an atmosphere of volunteer associational life may only develop within an enabling environment that is marked by rule of law and equal access to the state bureaucracy, without the mediation of "friends", privilege and clientelism (Fukuyama 2011)

For a dynamic understanding of the interaction and mutual influence of cultural values, it is important to underline the difference between team spirit and collectivism. As part of a 'we-group' there is little room for differences.

People are part of such a group as subsumed under a common denominator of membership. The group code is reflected in every individual (Ndegwah, 2007). Team spirit, on the contrary, includes differences of opinion, tensions between individual judgment and as a consequence cooperation as well as shifting memberships. Team spirit can for that reason be described as a mutual interpenetration of collectivism and individualism. Small-minded collectivist or individualist attitudes are overcome by making them part of something bigger, even while maintaining the differences within the cooperation.

Teamwork and teamspirit has also been part of African tribal society. It was characterized by the cooperation of different family lines in different villages. It is already mentioned how different families could move from one tribe to the other in case of disagreement or start a tribe on their own. Individuals could speak out in public, often also women were allowed the right to speak in public. The large scale nationwide societies could only come into existence by accepting pluralism and differences of opinion and antagonistic policies as part of the larger political system. By exercising anonymous trust and pluralism under the umbrella of a universalistic state at the top gradually clan membership could be pushed back. This wouldn't have been possible without the inspiration and influence of the church, which was present already in all the tribes before states were organized, so that on top of this presence larger state units could be built (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938). The individual was loosened gradually from his clan solidarity. In our times the individual has been loosened from group ties to such an extent that he or she may even lose a sense of belongingness. If too much authority and traditional in-group mentality is the curse of Africa, the curse of modern Western society is the uprooted individualism of individuals without belongingness (Hardt 1995).

3. Power distance, egalitarianism and feedback mechanisms

After all that has been said about individualism, egalitarianism and collectivism, we can be shorter on power distance. In Africa, but also in India and China, the boss is much more the boss, generally speaking, than it is the case in the West. His word is final. He will not be opposed or criticized, not in public at least. But this is not without a price. The managers at the top of the hierarchy may hardly have sufficient knowledge about the problems at the shop floor. If such a feedback loop from the bottom to the top is lacking it is easy for management to innocently make wrong, uninformed and biased decisions. Differences in power and status may make the top of the hierarchy indifferent towards the bottom. One typical case is seen in the Indian government efforts to help poor farmers in rural areas (Gupta 2012). It sets aside huge amounts of money for poverty alleviation, and development of the rural areas, by serving them with renewable energy and clean water provisions. However, the bureaucratic process from top to bottom, skims the money and other resources to such an extent that by the time they reach the bottom of the societal pyramid often not much is left for the intended beneficiaries. In the mostly paternalistic management style of the African countries similar problems do arise. An important reason that small and medium-sized enterprises do not grow is due to the fact that the employees feel bossed around so much that this kills their initiative and creativity (Kroesen, Darson & Ndegwah, 2015). As a consequence they do not feel responsible for the company and they prefer to start their own business if they can. As a result the company may not benefit from them; their individual judgment is not exercised and a professional attitude is not developed.

For our purposes it is important to note that egalitarianism/individualism over against hierarchy/status/power distance is not a static distinction of two opposites. There are always and there always have been trade-offs between the two and there is mutual interpenetration. In a sound and healthy business environment a change and exchange can take place between obedience of the employees on the one side and an individual and professional judgment of the employees on the other side. If employees express their individual judgment, often based on their professional knowledge, in fact at that very moment they are on an equal footing with their bosses. On the basis of their professional knowledge they can challenge their authority. Actually there is no authority at that moment. They have become partners in solving the problem before them, despite their differences in position. In China expressing criticism of them is still so dangerous that it often can only be done during a party when the employer and the employee are both drunk. The next morning seemingly everything has been forgotten and didn't take place. But the boss does well to remember what has been said to him at that one moment of openness and do something with it. Actually, we are better off if we can move from one value to the other, between egalitarianism and hierarchy and participate in both, openly and explicitly. Here too, like in the other examples mentioned, alternation and mutual interpenetration and mutual correction of different values seems to be the most efficient.

4. Initiative, uncertainty avoidance, shame and criticism

In taking initiative, and while confronted by uncertainty, by shame and/or criticism, our relationship towards change and towards the future is at stake. Uncertainty avoidance points to the difficulty of leaving one's comfort zone and going into the open with an uncertain destiny. It is easier to stick to the past, to the existing rules, and remain on the safe side. People who stick to tradition do not take unauthorized initiatives, because the stakes and risks are high, especially in closed in-group societies. As an example the situation of electricity provision in the inland of Surinam can be mentioned. Diesel powered generators are ordinarily used, while the fuel needs to be brought in by airplane due to lack of infrastructure. The installation and maintenance of PV systems would be easier and cheaper. But not only do vested interests stand in the way of change, there is also a cultural obstacle. Risk and uncertainty avoiding civil servants do not take the initiative to develop an alternative energy policy. If they do so and fail, they will lose face (Lieuw 2013).

Each value always implies a specific way of dealing with time and with social relations (Joas 1999). In the case of taking initiative a person is actually bridging the tension between the past (go with the flow) and the future. This implies change, and possibly disruption (Rosenstock-Huessy 1981). It means to take the next step, involving and convincing others to create a support base. Whoever takes initiative is trying to convince others to take the next step with him. That is what it means to be in dialogue: the attempt to bend the inclination of the other participants. The one who is criticizing, however, did already put himself more or less outside of the group he is criticizing. He or she is on his or her own. He or she is taking a leap forward or may be even be thrown out. Such a leap forward often is a lonely way into the future and takes courage and overcoming of shame. Shame as well has to be understood as a social phenomenon. It describes our relationship to the group we are part of, or maybe, depart from. Shame is felt by those who are on the verge of falling outside of a group (Rosenstock-Huessy 1981). Such a person feels like a stranger within his or her own environment. Criticism and shame often go together. The

one who is leaving the group and putting himself outside of it in criticizing it still feels the loyalty towards the group and has to overcome the shame of not belonging anymore to it. Sharp criticism is often coming from disappointed loyalty.

It is important to note that understood in this way, initiative and criticism are a continuum. They mutually interpenetrate one another. The distance towards the group can be bigger or smaller. Criticism and dialogue can go hand in hand. Every criticism towards the group can be accompanied by more or less loyalty. The more loyalty there is, the more difficult it is to express criticism. Innovation implies uncertainty, criticism and initiative or out-of-the-box thinking (and acting!). Otherwise it would not be an innovation but rather repetition. Nowadays everybody wants innovation but real innovation unavoidably is a lonely process, often without much recognition. The one who really goes along untrodden paths should not expect gratitude from his fellow humans.

African traditions know about initiative, dialogue, criticism, as well going against the group. Although a collectivist and traditionalist attitude is strong and has always been strong in the tribal African traditions, the tribes as well had to alter their ways may times as a matter of contingency. For instance, the Pökot people of Karapökot, North-western Kenya always circumcised their boys and girls, but due to frequent attacks from their neighbors (the Sebei, the Karamojong – of Uganda – and the Turkana – of Kenya), they stopped and only retained it among the girls. For the boys they adopted a plain ritual called sapana that was borrowed from their Turkana neighbors and never included the cutting off of the foreskin (Ndegwah, 2004: 87). Thus choices had to be made, alternative policies were proposed. Within and among the tribes like in modernity there was enough to differ and quarrel about. By means of the age group system checks and balances were installed. Every generation, comprising a time that span between 4 and 15 years, would form an age group and have its turn to obey and rule and abdicate. If the ruling age group goes too far in autocratic rule, or if the chief as tribal leader would go too far, the elders would criticize him, the next age group might counterbalance or revenge a detested policy and so on and so forth.

In the Western tradition change and initiative, or the predominance of the future over the past, has received increasingly emphasis and has become an established part of society, if that ever can be the case. Since the French revolution the word "new" has become an attractor and change has become more legitimate than tradition. Too much (empty) change and novelty may even become a problem, if consumers need to be convinced from day to day they should buy a product because it is "new".

This predominance of the future might not have come about without the orientation on the future derived from the Jewish Christian tradition within European history. The orientation on prophets criticizing the powers that be and martyrs and revolutionaries suffering in the process of changing society was the revolutionizing power of the West (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938). By this inspiration the lower echelons of society took the courage to change their ways. This revolutionary spirit and taste for change also became part of the secular mindset in the thrust forward set in motion by the French Revolution and even the Russian Revolution. It strongly marked the Western tradition.

5. Achievement, labor, experimentation

Status can be derived from position or achievement. Status by position means that it is derived from traditional loyalties, family ties, caste or patronage. Status by achievement points to personal ability and success. The relation

between achievement and labor should be emphasized in this regard. Achievement implies labor and in traditional societies those at the top do not have to work, at least not do laborious work – labor. Often those at the top of the firm take decisions, but do not enter the shop floor due to power distance and difference in status. In India a lot of professors are Brahmin, including in entrepreneurship; and yet Brahmin are usually not entrepreneurs, because it does not befit their status. Historically the attitude towards labor is related to the attitude towards change, to the future. This change in attitude towards labor has been brought about by the monasteries in the West (Ferguson 1962, Rosenstock-Huessy 1993) during the Middle Ages (with parallels in Buddhist traditions in India and China), a change that later by Protestantism was translated to society at large. Labor wasn't any more a matter of contempt, but a value. In order to improve life and lead people on the way of future justice, labor was to be honored and valued (Weber, 1963). Frugality, time management, team spirit, labor – all these human character traits and values have their source in the commitment to install a higher level of justice and of cooperation. Affiliated with those values is also scientific experimentation (implying labor) as a way towards progress. Progress does not come from idleness and contemplation of the happy few at the top (like in platonic philosophy), it comes from intellectual effort exposed to laborious experiments, experiments that were necessary to realize change, in search for future justice.

For our purpose, a more dynamic understanding of values, it is important to point out that the "attitude" towards labor is not so much an attitude, but more a movement, an act. In labor and in planning I objectify my powers and my time, I treat my body and my time as an object in order to reach a higher goal (Rosenstock-Huessy 1963). That means that the movement goes from inspiration for future justice towards treating oneself as a means. In the process the social element is also there. If, like in the monasteries or in the Calvinist movement, others participate in the same process of change, that brings an alleviation of an otherwise heavy burden on one individual. Only together we can change the realities in the world outside, by shared labor. Such movements using labor in order to bring about change have always been there. It has been pointed out that in the early times of building pyramids in Egypt the laborers were well taken care of and apparently well motivated to do the job. The vision of future justice overcoming tribal divisions has always been in the background (Rosenstock-Huessy 1963). Anywhere and every time where people were under the imperative to realize larger social and political unity, they had to honor labor, hard work. The difference between these historical movements and modernity may be in the extent to which this attitude has become ingrained in society. In the West, as often has been pointed out, even those who do not believe in any spiritual higher goal, still value labor as if it were a medicine of itself. They are still in the mood although the original inspiration faded away. The question is how long that can last.

6. Universalism, pluralism and equal access

Among the cultural distinctions or "dimensions" often mentioned in the literature universalism versus particularism takes a special place. As one of the cultural values it is supposed to describe a human character trait or attitude. This is true inasmuch as universalism means equal treatment and sticking to the rules and not bending the rules according to privilege or status. But at the same time this very statement shows that individual human qualities and values on the one side and social institutions on the other side are to a large degree intertwined and

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interconnected. In societies where rule of law is not firmly established institutionally and where ethnic or caste or patronage related privileges overrule equal treatment by the government bureaucracy, the human character trait/virtue of treating people without preference is also underdeveloped and vice versa. This situation resembles the value of freedom of opinion and expression: if there is no free press the ability of having an opinion of one's own, and to exercise one's individual judgment, freedom of speech and expression will soon be underdeveloped because it is not trained. In addition, if we keep in mind that in Nazi Germany this so-called "achievement" of the West of freedom of expression was easily overrun and oppressed so that nobody had the courage to speak out in public anymore and everybody followed the group and the horde, we are warned about the fragility of such values.

In traditional African societies often the council of elders had the role of creating some level of equal treatment and preventing autocratic and arbitrary rule by the Chiefs. In a sense they were the embodiment of the rule of law. The age groups which kept each other in check also were an important means. The increase of technological and economic scale changed all that. After the decolonization process it seems that everything went wrong in Africa (Ayittey 2006). The voice of the elders and of the tribal institutions was suppressed, traditional markets were even forbidden and instead the governmental bureaucracy tried to run the economy, and a non-African type of tyrannical and autocratic rule came into being like there never was before. How come? It is not only due to the example of the colonizers, because under colonial rule there were sometimes more freedoms than after the decolonization (Ayittey 2006).

A factor that contributed enormously is scale. We mentioned this phenomenon before. A larger scale society needs more abstract systems of checks and balances, like established in rule of law, and needs more general, non-personal and neutral or anonymous trust and shifting memberships, mixing the populations. If this larger scale is introduced with and in-group mindset everything goes wrong. Modern technology and modern bureaucratic systems made it possible to rule and control the lives of many tribes and ethnic groups by means of the centralized government bureaucracy. In the same process the traditional checks and balances on power were removed. The technical novelty of having a standing army provided with modern weaponry put the option of dethronement of a chief or any other form of rebellion from below out of function. Control of the state by a coalition of tribal elites prevented the emergence of an open civil society by controlling the bureaucracy in order to keep the other tribes in check. It may not have been a policy deliberately designed by some awkwardly bad people, but it has to be considered as a process that was unavoidable due to the increase of scale and the lack of trust between the different groups constituting the society.

As long as the tribal and ethnic groups are not dissolved into a civil society of individuals changing their coalitions, a civil society also secured by public trust, there is no other way of expressing one's opinion and defending one's interests than via the group, with preferably a strong man at the top, who gets things done. That clarifies the task put before Africa today – how to translate old traditions of tribal democracy into the large scale political institutions of an open civil society and universalist rule. In European history the same problem has been a long-lasting obstacle for economic development and technical advancement. The dissolution of the tribes due to the monastic movement, later the city movement, later Protestant congregations, later individual genius and public opinion, has been a decisive factor of change in Western history (Rosenstock-Huessy 1993, Berman 1983). But change from the

bottom up couldn't have had a lasting effect if it wouldn't have been supported by the emergence of rule of law from the top, equal treatment, law enforcement, to which also the governmental authorities (and the church authorities!) were subjected. From that example it might be learned that this change is inevitably a slow process with many setbacks. A civil society consisting of free individuals with changing memberships at the bottom and universalist rules from the top are mutually conditional. A mutual interpenetration and balance of strong hierarchy, strict rule of law and accountable governance is required (Fukuyama 2010).

B. **Values, responsibilities and the power of inspiration**

After having given some examples of the mutual interpenetration and correction of opposing and different values and of the historical worldwide transition towards a larger scale society, it is time to turn to our second proposition. Our second proposition pertains to the question whether a cultural value is adhered to intensely and spiritedly/passionated or just dragged along unconsciously and without noticing (Rosenstock-Huessy 1993). The question is important, because the societal function of a particular value may differ widely according to this alternative. This question is much easier to handle now that we have seen to what extent people are constantly shifting and juggling between different values. Not some values may be better than others, but the right order of this plurality of values and the mutual correction of values may be more fruitful and effective. However, not all values are equally at the core of our inner identity and passion. Besides, that inner identity is changing over time, even sometimes adopting new core values. Individual human beings do so continuously, and even entire groups or communities acquire new cultural garments. Values and attitudes are not held onto or craved for with the same vigor and passion indiscriminately through time. It makes quite a difference whether a value is maintained more or less as a matter of fact, or with an intensely spirited effort.

Some examples may suffice. The paternalistic collectivism of South Korea became an intensely spirited value after the destruction caused by the Korean War, when at the same time the nation was threatened by communist neighbors. All resources were mobilized for the good of the nation under authoritarian paternalistic leadership (Chang 2007). Due to that inspiration and all its deficiencies notwithstanding, paternalism most effectively held the country together and protected it against undesirable external influence. It gave the leaders the courage for long-term investment in the building up of productive capacity of their own nation. This attitude differs widely from the general paternalistic attitude in many African enterprises in our time. Here paternalism is dragged along habitually but not with vigor and real conviction. It does not answer to a real internal need or an external imperative (Jackson et. al. 2008). Nevertheless, a paternalistic attitude can also be deliberately cultivated to train and educate the workforce to adopt a combination of discipline, professionalism and individual judgment. The Ubuntu Company in Durban, South Africa (Kroesen and Rozendaal 2010) is a case in point. In this company 70% were the majority female workers who produced sandals, designed by Dutch students and marketed in the Netherlands. From the onset, it was marked by a paternalistic form of management in which authority and commitment/care was combined. Strict application of rules like being timely on the job, not sitting idle, was combined with opportunities for open feedback from the workforce and a lenient attitude towards family responsibilities if these interrupt the work.

Part of it was a strategy to make the workers more responsible for their own work. They could propose improvements, alternative procedures, raise their voice and all of this was encouraged by the management. It was paternalism combined with individualism and commitment, and that combination made it work. A paternalistic attitude can be demeaning, but not all "fathers" are autocratic. Paternalism as a management attitude can be successful depending on its commitment and inclusiveness, if it avoids preferential treatment (Jackson et. al. 2008). Maybe the combination of such opposite values and attitudes like paternalism and individualism can only be upheld if a high level of commitment and a spirited life bridges the gap between the opposites.

The liberation struggles in Africa were led by the "fathers of the nation" all over the continent, and by that time paternalism was immensely spirited and intense. It created stronger bonds of cooperation. Different times foster different values. The struggle against apartheid in South Africa for instance created internal solidarity and a more open civil society, cooperation and exchange, between the South African ethnic groups. After these struggles and when the attention of international public opinion and NGOs faded away, the influence of particularistic bureaucracy and ethnic division increased. The role of civil society diminished drastically (Wiarda 2003). Apparently it was the pressure of apartheid that had kept the spirit going. So many times crisis is a basis for inspiration.

As a historical example the five-year plans of the former Soviet Union may be recalled. After the 1917 revolution the Russians organized the economy by means of comprehensive five-year plans. These plans were the logical application of the "scientific socialism" of the time. State planning supposedly was more efficient and would replace private ownership with its arbitrary exploitation of the workforce. These five-year plans were executed with vigor and conviction, and violence as well. The regions of the USSR were treated as indifferent to each other and as merely resources for efficient production. No difference was made anymore between the Asian tundra and the European part of Russia. The USSR was treated as one big factory in which everything and everyone counted as a force in the scheme of efficient overall production. The emerging middle class, the kulaks, of that time were ruthlessly prosecuted and crushed, because they did not fit in this centralized planning machinery (Rosenstock-Huessy 1993). They had too much a group identity of their own. In Europe efficient individuals would at the same time represent a profession as well as a social group. In Russia the individual could only succeed as an individual by breaking with old loyalties, for the sake of a materialistic theory of history and the concomitant social engineering. Scientific calculation of forces with a cynical attitude is what constitutes the mentality of the Russian Bolsheviks of that time. Acting in that vein they were both destructive and successful. They were destructive due to their one sidedness – everything which could not count as a force in the total scheme of things was cynically neglected and removed or mistreated. They did not take into account any form of a mutual interpenetration of values and approaches as the more effective strategy, as it has so many times been proposed in this contribution. However, they were successful to an extent nevertheless because they were inspired and willing to sacrifice. Sacrifice themselves if necessary, but others as well, like the kulaks who in their view represented the outdated bourgeois society. The Soviet Union has known a long tradition of deporting dissenters to work camps in Siberia. The force of oppression was also the force of conviction. And indeed the central planning mechanism proved to be resilient with respect to the Great Depression of the 1930's and strong enough to build up the Russian economy during the 1950s and 1960s after the Second World War (Hobsbawn 1994). The power of inspiration and conviction enormously contributed to the success. After the rule of Chruzhev who denounced the atrocities of the work

camps the economy stifled under Brezhnev and the inspiration faded away. In the end, in the process of the dissolution of the USSR and the fall of the Berlin wall in 1991 the Communists did not believe anymore in their own cause. Nevertheless, whether for better or for worse, this case shows what inspiration does in adding to the intensity by which particular values are proposed and advanced.

It should, however, also be recalled that the Soviet model had a tremendous impact on India, the Arab states, but also on Africa and Latin America. It offered a model for the centralization required for newly formed nation states after decolonization. The "scientific" total calculation approach of socialism seemed at the same time an ideology apt to overcome tribal and clan divisions. On top of that it seemed to be an instrument to outcompete the liberal capitalism of the Western nation states as old-fashioned and outdated in comparison to this more "comprehensive" approach. The need for centralized control of the government by the new elites in Africa (although resting on ethnic support, tribal coalitions and patronage) and scientific planning by socialism seemed to offer a match. It worked as long as it lasted. It could not last, because it did not take the diversity of society and different social groups into account. Instead, it promoted only one exclusive set of values. It tried to reduce humans to numbers, which was its force in the short term and its weakness in the long run.

Economic culture and values

Not every set of values is equally conducive to economic flourishing. Harrison identifies 10 values or mind-sets that distinguish, as he calls it, progressive cultures from static ones (Harrison 2010). Among them are some we discussed already. With regard to time orientation, cultures that emphasize the future and in which people influence their own destiny are more conducive to economic development. Work is central to the good life in progressive cultures but a burden in static cultures. Merit is central to advancement in progressive cultures, where the radius of identification and trust goes beyond the family ties and proximity. Progressive cultures create equal access, justice and fair play; authority is dispersed and there is more room for the secular sphere. Porter (2000) puts is more succinctly:

…the productivity paradigm gives rise to a whole series of supportive attitudes and values: innovation is good, competition is good, accountability is good, high regulatory standards are good, investment in capabilities and technology is a necessity, employees are assets, membership in a cluster is a competitive advantage, collaboration with suppliers and customers is beneficial, collectivity and networks are essential, education and skills are essential to support more productive work, and wages should not rise unless productivity rises, among others. These can be contrasted with unproductive attitudes and values: monopoly is good, power determines rewards, rigid hierarchy is needed to maintain control, and self-contained family relationships should determine partnership.

Both Porter and Harrison call for cultural change in order to attain the development goals. Although their criticism cannot be dismissed and change should take (and is already taking) place, the question remains whether there is a one fits all solution in applying the right set of cultural values. In this respect Porter's opinion is significant in its ambivalence. On the one hand Porter (2000: 27) states that the convergence of economic ideas and the pressures of the global market have "reduced the scope of cultural variables to influence the economic paths societies

choose," but he also emphasizes that in a global economy "cultural differences that give rise to distinctive products and services should become more celebrated (Porter 2000: 28)."

Between those two statements there is ample room for a new research agenda. On one side it is clear that not anything goes in terms of values. That for instance Africa does produce so little and cannot compete on the global market in making finished products is undeniably related to African cultural traditions (Tshikuku 2001). On the other side it is still an open question in what direction precisely African societies should move and will move. Maybe the best cultural analysts are not yet equipped for that question. Since the future is never a copy of the past it is more of a political than an analytical question. That means that the answer takes a sense of timing, a sense of future chances and opportunities. It also needs experimentation and learning from each other and it needs a historical orientation. If we cannot know the future in advance, we at least can learn from the mistakes of the past. Analytical research is not sufficient. It is focused on the present and only that part of the present that can enter into its distinctive and limited conceptual clarity. By focusing on mere data often the dynamic and multi-faceted truth is sacrificed to a commonsense understanding or worse, to any form of understandability whatsoever. Such "analyses" often lead to paradoxes, for instance, when religion is uncritically identified as a retarding force, while at the same time it is ascertained that ascetic Protestantism caused an important change in the attitude towards labor, which is basic to modern economic performance. Both views are derived from what is "commonly" understood with an emphasis on the word "commonly" and not on "understood".

Different value trade-offs will for certain lead to different futures, but only if they are adhered to spiritedly and passionately. In the 1990s intercultural management professionals predicted that "Confucian dynamism" might outperform Western style egalitarianism and individualism, and the achievement motivation contained in it. Confucian dynamism was understood as a mix of thrift, perseverance, hierarchy, but with the exclusion of "the static values traditionally found in Confucianism (Franke et. al. 1991: 172)." Western individualism, the authors contended, might turn out to be a dependent variable, dependent upon economic performance rather than conditional to it. Are they right or wrong in their judgments? They may as well have misconstrued their concept of "Confucian dynamism" impressed as they apparently were by the economic growth in the Asian nations (Fang 2003). Whether the authors are right or wrong may not be dependent on the right analysis, but on the measure of passion and spirit that goes into either individualistic egalitarianism or Confucian dynamism. It is impossible to predict in which direction the spirit moves and the spirit might move different people in different directions, which is probably the better option. This may lead to a polyphony of cultures and consequently of economies (Rosenstock-Huessy 1993). That might be more interesting than a uniform global society. Returning once more to the quandary of African societies, we may hope that they will not only absorb the heritage of Western civil society values, but also transform them, carving a new path into the future for the benefit of all humanity, an African paradigm that isn't necessarily completely new, but at minimum a new blend of our common human heritage.

Conclusion

The authors have abandoned the usual analysis of static cultural dimensions, because cultures are not repetitive and do not exist in a steady-state, but they are always on the move as they always have been. As members of such

a culture (or subculture) each of us is also constantly moving from one value to another, confirming the past and innovating the future in the process. In a sense we are thereby taking part in the creation of humanity, since our innovations, if they make sense, will become part of the heritage of the next generation. Culture is a journey through time and we are all moving through landscapes where none of us went before.

For intercultural management this means that in each situation we have to find a path dependent way forward. We are bridging the gap between past and future in each step we take. A particular business culture can be established in a particular enterprise and be cultivated and fostered as part of the innovation path. Part of a cross-cultural business plan should therefore be a conscious and intentional deliberation about the codes of living together and of cooperating in this company for joyful and fruitful relationships, but also for survival on the marketplace. Such consensual agreements are of a temporary character and they should be timely construed and maintained in order to be effective. In this way time bows are created, particular procedures or sets of procedures that can last for a while. Such temporary agreements should find a timely and temporary solution on the four eternal challenges of reality (Rosenstock-Huessy 1970): 1. How to respect the achievements and values of the past, 2. How to deal with imperatives and requirements that are urgent considering the future, 3. How to find agreement between different stakeholders and subjects involved on the steps to be taken, 4. How can these agreements and temporary solutions be effectively implemented in the world outside? Responsible attempts to deal with such path-dependent challenges create temporary economic cultures, that can be productive and effective at that time.

In order to do justice to each of these four challenges changeability and flexibility is a necessity, but it should not be arbitrary flexibility. It should be the flexibility of responsibility, responding to ever new challenges and circumstances. Such responses cannot be calculated and designed from behind a desk. "It is our soul that calls upon our name" (Shakespeare): a new answer can only originate in a creative jump forward, right or wrong, in view of a practical predicament and quandary or crisis. Creative combinations of values as much as creative combinations of technical options are "seen" in a flash, in a split second, even if they have to be belabored by much transpiration that always follows the moment of inspiration. This means that on-the-job exposure needs to go before scientific reflection.

This approach requires a change of the research agenda for intercultural management. The time perspective is added to the usual scientific approach of conceptual models and empirical data. A certain confluence of values cannot only be studied any more in a static way, because while being studied, they already change. They themselves exist as a process of change as we have shown so often in this contribution. Thus the need for a research agenda that studies how values interact with each other and describes them in the way phenomenology does, i.e. articulate them while they evolve and follow them in that process (Levinas 1961). Through the interaction and confluence of values people will always have to enter new terrain and be ready to thread untrodden paths. They have to respond to the needs, imperatives and challenges of the future. Such futures cannot be logically derived, but can only be passionately longed for "tried", "attempted" (Kroesen 2015) and tested.

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