

Technology Transfer and the Soul of Africa



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Question and outline

- Africa is lagging behind as producer of goods
- Industrial production and transfer of technology requires a set of attitudes less appreciated in the traditional African value system.
- How can new values and attitudes (human qualities) be integrated into the older cultural framework of communal Africa?



Question and outline

- Open attitude both too the African value system and Western values incorporated in technology and industrialization
- What we are good at unavoidably makes us also one-sided.

Three steps:

1. Framing the problem as a conflict between different sets of values
2. Cases in technology transfer in Kenya
3. Ways forward, integrating old and new paradigms

A small inventory of different cultural values

1. *Power distance* versus *egalitarian* relationships
2. *Collectivism* versus *individualism*
3. *Masculine* versus *feminine*
4. *Uncertainty avoidance*
5. *Universalism* versus *particularism*
6. *Specific* over against *diffuse* relationships
7. *Neutral* versus *affective* behaviour
8. *Status by achievement* or by *position*
9. *Synchronic* or *sequential* time management
10. *Internalism* (or *voluntarism*) versus *externalism* (fatalism, traditionalism)



Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship takes a certain degree of individualism, an open attitude towards the future (no uncertainty avoidance), labor and effort to be valued instead of status on the basis of position, sequential time management, internalism and initiative, being a turning point of change.



A case of solid waste

- Nairobi City Council (NCC) not enough equipment.
- Fragmented regulation and no (or arbitrary) regulation enforcement.
- Illegal dumping – unfair competition
- Some areas served too much, some areas not at all.
- No cooperation/labor division between companies.
- Fear to invest: uncertain future, arbitrary regulation
- No innovation, only sort/recycle plastics
- Decisions of NCC without consultation.



A case of solid waste

- Insufficient organization capacity (e.g. only one manager)
- Pay delay of customers
- Harassment by NCC
- High costs of licenses
- Poor equipment, no protective gear
- Vandalism
- Unreliable spare parts (secondhand tires)



The predicament of Africa

African problems:

- Collectivist entities without cooperation, power distance
- Traditionalism and particularism (relationships – corruption?)
- Patrimonialism, patronage
- Lack of initiative and entrepreneurship (voluntarism), instead uncertainty avoidance (new is bad)
- Lack of “rule of law”, universalism, transparency, checks and balances on government
- Lack of open civil society, no free association and regrouping, selective trust instead



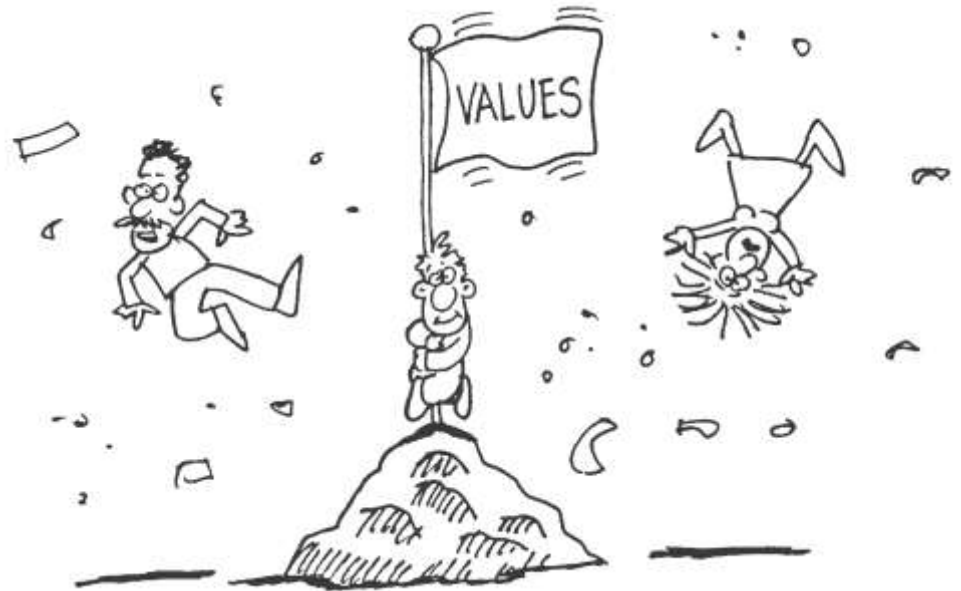
Strong African values

- Respect for the elders - a president is a *mzee figure* with fatherly authority and the monopoly of truth and leadership.
- Notoriously religious. Where is the dividing line? Is respect for the elders secular and respect for the ancestors with religious?
- Communitarianism, the spirit of living together as an organic group



Conclusion

- Technology requires cooperation between many actors, open civil society codes, universalism and equal access to the government bureaucracy in terms of regulation.
- The values underpinning entrepreneurship and civil society often are not well maintained even in Western societies (fragmentization, old boys network etc.).



Conclusion

- Africa needs to find her own way into modernity.
- African communitarianism can be the larger framework in which individual judgment, pluralistic politics, multiple and shifting membership, status by achievement, disciplined labor and time management are integrated.
- The valuable repertoire of an open civil society may renew the old inspiration of communitarianism by the reception of new choral voices as overtones of this continuous bass tone, carrying them forward.